SESSION TITLE : Embracing cultural diversity in volunteer programs

CONVENER(S): Laura Belleville, ATC

PARTICIPANTS: N/A

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS and/or RECOMMENDATIONS:

In 2040, current Latino, Asian, African American populations will be the majority.

What does that mean for the partnership/National Trails?
Are users, volunteers, staff culturally diverse?

Some NSTs removed from urban centers – barrier to access?
Cultural differences about what different groups enjoy and/ or the ways they use trails.

Success Story:

- PCTA – Charter HS with environmental focus – several over night maintenance trips ~ 33% return. Possibly a way to get word out to new communities.
- Trail to Every Classroom – TTEC >10,000 students engaged in 5 years.
- Sierra Club Inner City Outings – use as a model
- University culture – clubs provide guidance to those new to trails/outdoors
- Families on Foot – 50-60 organizations engaged in bringing children outdoors
- FTA – success in meshing older and younger groups
- Corporate Groups Wellness – Blue Cross Blue Shield – Virtual hikes/ use distance traveled to gauge progress

Solutions/Ideas:

- Can children/youth introduced to the trail engage parents?
- Provide "stair – stepping" opportunities – start simple move to more involved projects
- Show case/share experiences
- Remove barriers (cost/gear) to spending time outdoors/anxiety about spending time outdoors to those new to it
- Cater to beginners
- Some have the perspective that trails are for hard core users only
- Don't be too insular, reach out to other organizations
- Take advantage of/share available research on barriers to diversity – what is out there, are we applying it? Research clearinghouse?
- AND collaborate on identifying topics that require research
- Explore partnerships with faith based communities – some research cited "African American women identify most strongly with their faith community
- Corporations may be interested in volunteer work days, hikes (other "wellness" activities), team building exercises.

- Stories of international efforts may be interesting stories – put a new face on outdoor recreation community as they were developed for multiple purposes – tourism, religion, etc. These stories may draw people in.
- Hiring – are trails thinking of diversity (but avoiding tokenism)

RECOMMENDATION for PNTS ACTION: None