



GLENN MOORE/TRACY PRESS

Mark Honberger runs the specialty classes through the Parks and Community Services Department.

On the recreation train

Sit down and talk to Mark Honberger about being a recreation supervisor and you will quickly realize that his job is just a working expression of who he is inside. He is passionate about making a real difference in this community with the tools his job gives him, and he is proud of the fact that his efforts are actually helping to build strong families — something he takes to heart.

Mark's job description is completely in line with his values. His professional goals are to help create and maintain classes and programs offered through the Tracy Parks and Community Services Department that fit two criteria, first and foremost. They must fit the budget and reflect the mission statement.

Considering that Mark's personal beliefs match the department's mission statement, he's having a great time doing his job. At the core of it all is one focus: to create opportunities for families to get out

of the house, learn new things, meet new people and connect with the community — because, Mark believes, this leads to strong families, which leads to strong communities.

He doesn't stop at his job description, though. Mark finds time to work on other projects, including the Chamber of Commerce 4th of July Day in the Park. He's rolling up his sleeves for the community, and this year will be his first time experiencing the

annual Independence Day event. If all goes well, he will be able to stand back for a minute, take a look at all the families having fun with their friends and neighbors, and know once again that he had a hand in bringing them together. That is, after all, what he's working for.

Our Town: What does a recreation supervisor do?

Mark Honberger: Being in the recreation profession is all about creating opportunities for the community. We create opportunities for leisure, to learn a new skill, to make new friends, to improve physical fitness, to increase community pride, to adopt a healthy lifestyle, and for families to grow stronger.

In a nutshell, the recreation profession is all about creating community. Therefore, as a recreation supervisor, my role is to develop

Name: Mark Honberger

Age: 33

Occupation: Recreation Supervisor, Tracy Parks and Community Services

Philosophy of life: Always trust in God; always sow that which you wish to reap; always see the best in people; approach life with enthusiasm, energy and excellence.

Spotlight: Helping families make connections to the community

(Continued from page 1) ways for that to happen. It may occur by creating and improving our own programs and activities, or it may occur by working with other organizations here in Tracy to provide programs and activities that meet the needs of the community.

OT: In your eyes, what is the definition of a successful program?

Mark: The definition of a successful program is much more than just great participation levels. It is really about the benefits derived from participation in the program or activity. The Tracy parks and community services department is committed to "Building Strong Families."

We believe that strong families lead to strong neighborhoods, which then leads to a strong community. A successful program, therefore, would be one that positively connects people with their families, their neighbors, or their community.

I'm in a position to put into practice the goals of the department and to make sure programs we offer allow participants to meet other people in the community who share the same interests or life situations, such as the Parent Connection Service, where parents of small children can meet other parents of small children. Also important are programs that allow people to give back to their community, such as the Park Cleanup Day.

And then there are the programs that provide fitness opportunities and encourage a healthy lifestyle, such as Athletic Conditioning Camp, which is geared toward inactive youths as well as those more sports-minded.

OT: Why did you pursue a degree, and then a career, in recreation administration?

Mark: I discovered the recreation profession while working as a part-time recreation leader for the city of Roseville. It was there that I first discovered how rewarding it is to be able to provide people with positive leisure experiences. This discovery prompted me to change my college major so that I could pursue a career in this incredible profession. I have always believed in giving back to the community, and have usually done so through various volunteer opportunities. Now I have the unique opportunity to give back to the community on a full-time basis. I am truly blessed to be able to serve the community in such a way.

OT: Please tell us about the recent Whole Needs Assessment document produced by the parks department and how it reflects your beliefs.

Mark: The document is the product of Tracy parks and community services effort to understand the community, its wants and needs. This was accomplished by looking at numerous sources of information: demographics, trends,

community input through Tracy Tomorrow, the Tracy Master Plan, staff workshops, phone surveys, etc.

From this compilation of information, some themes consistently emerged. The community identified the following characteristics as being most important:

A place to raise strong families;

A strong sense of community;

Places and programs for children to develop.

Armed with this information, the department strives to align both current and new program offerings with these themes. In fact, the community will find our current activity guide complete with classes, activities, and services designed to meet their needs. I am proud to be a part of such a needs focused organization. Indeed, I believe that a strong community can only happen where there are strong families.

OT: Are you the type of person who would sign up for one of the classes or programs offered through a parks department?

Mark: I love being outdoors, be it hiking, biking, or activities in the park. With three small children under the age of 6, my wife and I continually find ourselves at a park. One of my favorite family parks in Tracy is Hoyt Park. We also partake in numerous preschool programs, ice skating classes, gymnastics, etc. I

am always looking for things that will help my kids to grow and discover. Also, my wife and I like to find recreation classes that we enjoy. The best ones are those that we can take together, such as ballroom dancing classes.

OT: As a member of the working community in Tracy, in what other ways do you contribute to the city?

Mark: Growing up and living in the greater Sacramento area, I have always believed in giving back to the community, and have usually done so through various volunteer opportunities. For Yolo County Special Olympics, I was a coach, tournament director, and volunteer coordinator for many years. Also, for many years, I thoroughly enjoyed being a mentor and activities director for my church's teen programs.

Since moving from Sacramento, I have been looking for ways to give back to the community again. Being involved on the Fourth of July Day in the Park committee is just one small way that I can give back.

In the Spotlight is a weekly feature profiling members of the community who have been nominated by a friend or neighbor. If you would like to nominate someone who lives or works in Tracy, please contact Bronwyn Ashbaker at the Tracy Press at 830-4230, fax her at 835-0655, or e-mail her at ourtown@tracypress.com.



Mark Honberger hangs out at Hoyt Park.

GLENN MOORE/TRACY PRESS