



CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH MINISTRIES ASSESSMENT REPORT

Building Sustainable Ministries . . . One Church at a Time

www.ministryarchitects.com

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As a part of the ongoing 36-month church wide renovation process for Christ Church Cathedral, (Begun in March of 2017) Ministry Architects has conducted a Children and Youth Ministry assessment. The purpose of the assessment is to plot a course for the church to create strong, meaningful and sustainable ministries for their children and youth as it continues to live into its Mission and Values. Ministry Architects met with 29 participants over the course of four listening group sessions to provide the following report.

ASSETS

Strengths to protect in the current youth and children's ministry

Children's Ministry Momentum

Each of the listening groups overwhelmingly agreed that the children's ministry program has turned a new leaf and is heading in an exciting new direction. Comments like, "The children's program is in a completely different place than it was six months ago," and "We love the fact that our daughter is actually learning things about the faith now," were

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repeated in the listening groups. Listening group participants notes several improved aspects of the children's ministry that seemed to create this change in climate and momentum. Some of the dominant themes of these comments were:

- New staffing structure
- Hayley's leadership in the infant class
- Communication to parents
- Check-In system
- More Volunteers
- Programmatic Intentionality

Needless to say, the children's ministry has turned a corner and is creating a buzz at Christ Church Cathedral.

Curriculum

Parents and volunteers alike were very excited about the new curriculum choices for infant through junior high. One volunteer noted, "It is so much better than what we used to do, the curriculum has a good lesson and activities that the kids really like." A junior high volunteer talked about the lessons saying, "They work well, I am even learning new things by teaching them, the kids are engaged." This ease of entry for the volunteers along with children coming home telling their parents about the things they are learning on a regular basis has created a huge win for the new curriculum at Christ Church Cathedral.

Volunteers

Over the past 10 months the children and youth ministry has seen real growth in the number and scope of their volunteers. Through an intentional recruiting process, background checks and training the church has seen a considerable rise in volunteers in children and youth ministries. The volunteers in the listening groups spoke highly of the staff and the direction in which they have led and provided guidance and resources.

Communication

Communication was one of the major issues identified in the children and youth ministry in the original church wide listening groups. In the past several months this challenge has been turned into an asset! Parents in every listening group raved about how well they were communicated with and how accurate and appropriate the information was. One parent said, "Before, I didn't even know if there was a loop, now I know there is a loop and I am in it!" A volunteer talked about how much more organized the communication had become and how it helped them do the job they have been asked to do. Parents and volunteers especially noted the helpfulness of the weekly emails sent out by Children and Youth Program Coordinator.

CHALLENGES

Obstacles to moving the youth ministry strategically forward

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Youth Programming

One of the glaring challenges that Christ Church Cathedral continues to face is solid youth programming. Listening group participants were able to identify many of the reasons for this:

- Lack of critical mass
- Loss of political capital for events
- No FOMO (fear of missing out)
- Busy schedules
- Lack of buy-in
- No sense of expectancy for the program

While many of the causes were obvious to listening group the solutions were not nearly as evident. The youth and the parents both agreed that “They really just want to be together.” One of the challenges moving forward will be how to create spaces, with critical mass, in which to build community and invite friends.

High School Curriculum

While the infant through junior high curriculum has been a great success, a right fit has still not been found for the senior high curriculum. Some noted, “It is too childish, I feel talked down to.” Others said, “We really like to just be together and discuss what is going on in our lives and in our world.” Everyone loves the high school teachers which is the reason why there is still even a high school class. In order to create critical mass and give a meaningful experience for the high school students an engaging curriculum that offers plenty of dialogue will be necessary.

Where to Go?

One of the few critiques that listening groups gave in regards to the children’s ministry was the need for a clear schedule and demographic definition for each of the options offered on a Sunday morning. There was confusion among many parents regarding the age cut offs for certain programs, what options each child had and ultimately who makes the decisions as to where a child will go at different points of the morning. This primarily centered around 3-5 year old children. Many noted that children are ready for different experiences and possibly different classes at times that has more to do with development and not necessarily age. Others asked to have more definition and prescription of the “who, when and where” so that they could know they were sending their children to the “right” place instead of having to guess. Ultimately, the group asked for “structure with options” as a solution for this challenge.

Missing Sunday School Demographic

When asked about Sunday school options for adults, the parents of the young children listening group was consistent in their inability to attend any “after church” option available. It was not out of lack of care or desire (in fact most talked about how they really would like to be together more and have a class just for them) but out of the fact

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that their children are “through” at 11:15 and need to go home for lunch and a nap. Because of this and the fact that Sunday School is only offered after church, Christ Church has an entire demographic of families who are not able to attend Sunday school or adult Christian formation time.

Peace of Mind

While the children’s ministry has made incredible strides in the program ministry as well as training and safety, there is still some work to be done. There were several items that the process has not addressed yet that listening group participants said would give them a greater piece of mind about the children’s ministry:

- More consistent check-in/ check-out process
- Information card for all children noting allergies, feeding times, nap times, etc.
- A system of pagers and [stickers](#) for when there is an emergency or restless child
- A formal system for welcoming new babies and families, especially focused on their first time on campus
- Opportunities to build community with other families in the same demographic
- Update the nursery space with new elements especially for those children who are becoming more mobile (ie: [Exersaucers](#), etc.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reframe the next 12 months as a time of building long-term infrastructure for the children’s and youth ministries. Understanding that significant and immediate momentum will be built throughout the process of renovating the children’s and youth ministries, target January 2019 as the date when the children’s and youth ministries renovation will be complete.
2. Partner with the existing Prayer Team to undergird this renovation process.
3. Establish a Children’s and Youth Ministry Renovation Team, made up of at least three non-anxious, goal-oriented volunteers and Alison Mitchell, who will work closely with Ministry Architects to ensure that the outcomes of this assessment are achieved. These recommendations include two overarching responsibilities:
 - a. **Addressing the three primary areas of growth opportunities** facing the ministries as they transition toward thriving, sustainable children’s and youth ministries (e.g., keeping the trains running on time)
 - b. **Implementing the strategic, long-term** recommendations of this report (e.g., building a new railway system)
4. Address the current three primary areas of growth opportunities facing the children’s and youth ministries:

Growth Opportunity #1: Revamp the current EYC Plan for 2018.

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- o Add all 6-12th graders and their families to the existing Remind texting app.
- o Sunday morning
 - 6-8th Grades
 - Explore the possibility of shifting Sunday School to 9:15 a.m. beginning Fall 2018.
 - 9-12th Grades
 - Lectionary Discussion questions
 - Evaluate the success of of Lectionary discussion questions in May 2018.
 - Explore the possibility of shifting Sunday School to 9:15 a.m. beginning Fall 2018.
- o EYC Youth Group Plan for Remainder of 2018 Academic Year
 - February
 - Outing: Five Guys dinner and movie
 - Lock-in: Goal of 10 youth in attendance. Eleanor and Maria are committed to bringing friends and making sure the numeric goal is reached.
 - March
 - Outing: [Break Out](#)
 - Service Project: Volunteering at [Little Sisters of the Poor](#)
 - April
 - Saturday Outing: The Wharf and Sharky's Outdoor Adventure Course
 - Service Project: Volunteering at the [SPCA](#) (check availability of Sunday service option)
 - May
 - End of Year Party
 - Saturday Service Project: [Feeding The Gulf Coast](#)
- o Tell the story about the way that EYC is creating spaces for community, to help build critical mass, and as one mechanism to encourage youth inviting their friends.
 - CCC's youth will create a 1-minute video of each EYC event.
 - This video will be used in all forms of church communication as well as shared on youth's personal social media.

Growth Opportunity #2: Sunday Mornings for CCC's Children and Families are gaining steam. There are a number of factors that will contribute to the

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continued success of the offerings provided on Sunday mornings for children birth through 5th grade that range from programmatic to enhanced processes.

- o Option 1
 - Possibly move Children's Sunday school to 9:15 a.m. as a way to increase participation of young families whose schedules don't allow them to stay after worship, and capture best energy and attention span of children.
 - Create a Parents of Young Children class during this time as a Christian formation option.
- o Option 2
 - Possibly move all Christian formation classes to 9:15
 - This will also allow the Hospitality hour to only be Hospitality.
- o Update nursery space with play equipment suitable for children who are past the age of being held.
- o Define Christian Education pathway for children and clearly communicate it to all families with children through printed media and website.
- o Develop a "New Parent Packet" that includes child information sheets, information about the program offerings for children, and a "what to do on your child's first day at CCC" information sheet.
- o Create a "New Baby Process" as a way to track the pastoral care given to new families and track the information they've received.
- o Revamp the children's check-in and check-out procedure to ensure the safety of all children.
- o Begin to use a pager system for parent communication while children are in nursery care.
- o Create a succession plan for the Christian Education nursery time, currently being led by Hayley VanAntwerp.
- o Create a childcare policy that includes procedures for crying children, sick children, etc.
- o Create a quarterly event for children and their families to create space for community, build critical mass, and invite friends.

Growth Opportunity #3: Ramp Up Diocesan Involvement by focusing on two events to help create a sense of a larger ministry and connect the youth of Christ Church Cathedral to the greater youth ministry of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast.

- o Host a family "fireside chat" to build consensus on finding two to three Diocesan events to attend annually that will provide opportunities for 6-8th and 9-12th grade involvement.
- o Have the youth and families of the youth to commit to these events therefore creating critical mass and alleviating the fear of "being the only one going" from the youth.

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- o Organize these trips with the Diocesan Youth Team and make them a part of the regular Christ Church Youth Calendar.
5. Build the long-term infrastructure required for long-term, sustainable children's and youth ministries.
- o A broad "fishing pond" list of at least 40 possible volunteers to call about volunteer positions. The list includes people we are sure will say yes, and it includes people we think will never say yes (but we hope they will one day).
 - o Reasonable participation goals are established for all children's and youth ministry events and weekly programs through August 2019 and clear lines of responsibility for filling those events are established.
- o **Control Document Development:** Complete and publish an 18-month calendar, create major event notebooks to help event planners succeed, and generate a preventative maintenance calendar that schedules behind-the-scenes activities for each month (like "September: nail down the date for next year's high school mission trip").
 - o **Attendance:** Track attendance for all children's and youth activities.
 - o **Marketing:** Establish clear internal marketing processes that allow parents, children, youth, leaders, and the broader church to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the children's and youth ministries.
 - o **Communication:** Establish normative processes for effective and timely communication with parents, children, youth, and leaders utilizing as many forms of communication as possible including updating the children's and youth pages of the church's website, Facebook, mass texting, mail, e-mail, etc.
 - o **Children's and Youth Ministries Manual:** Develop a Children's and Youth Ministries Manual, including the most recent children's and youth directories, a 12-18-Month calendar, results-based job descriptions for staff and volunteers, compliance documents, budgets, game plans, a preventative maintenance calendar, and notes for every major children's and youth ministries event.

DEVELOPING AND NURTURING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

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- o **Sustainable Pace:** Help the Children and Youth Ministry Program Coordinator develop a “rhythmic week” including a Sabbath and “balcony” time (that is, time to look at the big picture and make strategic plans).
- o **Volunteer Recruitment:** Build a fortified volunteer leadership team, some of who will do relational ministry with children and youth while others work behind the scenes. Create a clear and complete list of volunteer needs. Create a “fishing pond” list of at least 40 possible volunteers to call on for weekly volunteer positions.
- o **Broaden Volunteer Definition and Opportunities:** Create additional, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in the program. Encourage volunteer involvement in both visible and behind-the-scenes opportunities.
- o **Leadership Launch:** Schedule and implement an inspiring leadership-training event for all volunteer children’s and youth workers at the beginning of each school year.

DEVELOPING CLEAR STRATEGIES AND NEW INITIATIVES

- o **Parent Engagement:** Create a written process for engaging the majority of parents in the ministry in some way during the 2018-2019 school year.
- o **Measurable Markers of Effectiveness:** Determine reasonable participation goals for all children’s and youth ministries events and weekly programs through August 2019 and take responsibility for filling those events.
- o **First-Timer Process:** Develop a process for welcoming new families, children, youth, and guests to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed. Document a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.
- o **Family Ministry:** Plan quarterly family events throughout the year focused on building family relationships and fun fellowship.
- o **Rites of Passage (or Milestones):** Develop a written plan for the processes, events, and privileges that includes celebrations like:
 - o **First Steps Milestone**
 - Purpose: introduces the congregation to a few of the youngest members and makes both children and parents more comfortable with Sunday school. It reminds both children and their parents of the importance of attending Sunday school.
 - o **Welcome to Worship**

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- Purpose: intentionally extends the welcome mat to children and their parents. It also introduces children, and the adults who care for them, to worship and worship space.

o Anniversary of Baptism

- Purpose: Reminds those who have been baptized during the past year, their families, and the congregation of the promises made to everyone at baptism. It is an opportunity to remind everyone that living our baptism is a lifelong journey—and one needs to be prepared to live and walk wet.

o Prayer Milestone

- Purpose: To encourage the congregation to can keep its promise to equip and support parents to pass on faith. Through this milestone, children learn they have a direct relationship with God and Jesus through prayer.

o Kindergarten children invited to Children's Church

- Purpose: To invite younger children into the special worship experience of elementary age children.

o Bibles to 8 year olds

- Purpose: To invite children into the community's practice of reading scripture together.

o Acolyte Invitation to 5th graders

- Purpose: To recognize leadership abilities of children in worship.

o 5th graders moving into the middle school ministry

- Purpose: To welcome the rising 6th graders and their parents into the middle school ministry.

o Blessing of the Backpacks

- Purpose: To mark the passage of summer and to help children, youth, and adults transition back into the fall schedule, reminding the children and youth that Jesus is always with us.

o 8th graders moving into the high school ministry

- Purpose: To welcome the new 9th graders and their parents into the high school ministry.

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- o **12th graders graduating from the youth ministry**

- Purpose: To launch the church's high school graduates from the youth ministry, confident that they are surrounded by a supporting church family and committed to live out their faith as adults.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

The following provides Christ Church Cathedral with a timeline that can serve as a blueprint for the strategic launch of sustainable, long-term children's and youth ministries.

February 2018

Focus: Starting Right and Work Begins

Outcomes:

- The Children and Youth Renovation Team for children and youth has been recruited and the first meeting has been scheduled to take place.
- Immediate volunteer needs for the children's and youth ministries have been determined and slots have been filled.
- Work has begun on the 2018-2019 children's and youth ministries calendar.
- A fishing pond of 30 potential volunteers for the 2018-2019 children's and youth ministries has been created.
- The Children and Youth Ministry Program Coordinator has created a Rhythmic Week including balcony time and has begun to live into their Rhythmic Week.

March 2018

Focus: Renovation Underway, Calendars, Volunteers

Outcomes:

- Volunteer recruiting season has opened.
 - o Volunteer job descriptions have been reviewed and updated as needed.
 - o Names of potential volunteers have been added to the fishing pond.
 - o All volunteer needs have been determined for the 2018-2019 school year.

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- o The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list has been merged.
- o Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to children's and youth ministries.
- o New, non-threatening opportunities for adult involvement in the program have been created. Parent involvement has been encouraged, both visible and behind-the-scenes.
- o A process for engaging the majority of parents in the ministry in some way during the 2018-2019 school year has been written and implemented.
- Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators, and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2018-2019.

April 2018

Focus: Database, Communications, Fall Kick-off

Outcomes:

- Work on the children's and youth databases has begun, collecting the most recent information for families, children, and youth. All are categorized in a manner that will follow up on MIA families, children, and youth. Each child and youth has been classified in the following categories:
 - o **Active Children and Youth** are the ones whose families are members of Christ Church Cathedral and have attended at least once in the past year – plus visitors who have become a regular part of the group. They should show up in your printed children's and youth directories.
 - o **Member Inactive (MIA)** are still a part of the flock. You may not need to send them a Facebook message every time the group gets together, but you'll want to regularly pursue these children and youth, whether they ever show up or not.
 - o **Visitor Active** are those who regularly attend weekly programs and/or activities but are not an official member of the church.
 - o **Visitor Inactive** are the ones who may have visited, but you are confident they will never become a regular part of the group. This group requires no follow up. But you'll want to keep their information for the occasional big event to which you'll want to invite everyone you know.

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- o **First Timers** refer to visitors who have attended a program for the first time. You'll want to have a process for capturing their information on their first visit and follow up with them within one week of their visit.
- Communication norms have been determined and those best practices have been implemented.
- A Fall Kick-off for the children's and youth ministries has been scheduled for August. A team of parents has been recruited to implement the Fall Kick-off.

May 2018

Focus: Compliance, Database

Outcomes:

- A database of all youth, children, and their families has been compiled and each person has been "tagged" with a category.
- A thank you event for all children's and youth volunteers has taken place.
- All children's and youth programs have adhered to the safe church policy.
- A Leadership Launch has been scheduled for August for the volunteers in the children's and youth ministries.
- Reasonable participation goals have been established for all children's and youth ministries events and weekly programs through August 2019 and there are clear lines of responsibility for filling those events.
- One or two family events have been calendared for the upcoming year. They have focused on building family relationships and fun fellowship.

June 2018

Focus: Volunteers, Calendars

Outcomes:

- All volunteer needs for the 2018-2019 school year for the children's and youth ministries have been filled.
- The 2018-2019 children's and youth ministries calendar has been distributed to all youth, children, and their families. The calendar has been publicized and major event dates have been put on the church's calendar.

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- A game plan for welcoming new families, children, youth, and guests to the church so that they feel warmly welcomed has been implemented. The plan has included a timely follow up plan to ensure their return to the church.

July 2018

Focus: Participation Goals, Mid-Course Evaluation, Volunteers, Curriculum

Outcomes:

- Reasonable participation goals have been determined for all children's and youth ministries events and weekly programs through August 2019 and steps to accomplish those targets have begun to be implemented.
- The Renovation Team has completed a 6-month mid-course evaluation of the renovation process and made any adjustments that are necessary to improve the work being done.
- The Renovation Team has met monthly.
- A volunteer application, an application process, and a screening process for all weekly hands-on volunteers have been created and implemented
- The effectiveness of this past year's curriculum has been reviewed and decisions have been made for any necessary changes for the upcoming school year.

August 2018

Focus: Directory, Communication, Leadership Launch, Fall Kick-off,

Outcomes

- Communication methods currently being used to promote the children's and youth ministries and share the successes with the congregation have been evaluated and added to if necessary.
- The collection of updated information from each youth, child, and family has been completed and the database for the children's and youth ministries has been updated with that new information. Every child and youth has been "tagged" with a category.
- All volunteers have experienced a Leadership Launch, lasting 2-4 hours, that clarifies their roles, inspires them to grow in their own faith and, equips them to serve the children and youth of Christ Church Cathedral. The

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Safe-guarding God's Children Policy has been reviewed and adopted by all volunteers.

- A Fall Kick-off has taken place for the children's and youth ministries that welcomed youth, children, and parents into a program they can get excited about, introduced parents to a format and structure they can feel confident about, and provided a forum for receiving information from families. All participants felt energized and enthusiastic about the coming year's programs.

September 2018

Focus: Compliance, Major Event Notebooks

Outcomes

- Background checks have been done for all weekly hands-on volunteers.
- All paperwork for hands on, weekly volunteers has been updated and in compliance with the safe church policy.
- Work has begun on major event notebooks – a template has been created for the notebooks and information has been collected on each youth event.

October 2018

Focus: Budget

Outcomes:

- A detailed 2019 budget for the children's and youth ministries has been completed and submitted to the appropriate group.

November 2018

Focus: Marketing, Attendance, MIA, Major Event Notebooks

Outcomes:

- A process for tracking and recording attendance in all children and youth programs has been created and implemented.
- MIA children and youth have been systematically contacted.
- Major event notebooks for each major children's and youth event have been

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completed.

- Clear, internal marketing processes have been established that allow all church members to be exposed to the successes and good news surrounding the children's and youth ministries.
- All game plans that have been launched in last 12 months have been evaluated and tweaked as necessary for impact and sustainability.

December 2019

Focus: Catch Up, Summer Calendar, Benchmarks

Outcomes:

- Work has begun on the summer calendar for 2019.

January 2019

Focus: Volunteer Training, Calendars, Database

Outcomes:

- Work has begun on the 2019-2020 children's and youth ministries calendar.
- The summer 2018 calendar has been completed.
- A mid-year training event has taken place in which all volunteers have received support and training in their specific roles. A "check-in" with each volunteer has taken place to evaluate how the volunteer has been doing in their role and addressed any concerns.
- The collection of updated information from each youth, child, and family has been completed and the database for children and youth has been updated with that new information.

February 2019

Focus: Calendars, Volunteer Recruitment

Outcomes:

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- The 2019-2020 children's and youth ministries calendar has been completed through August 2020 including a Fall Kick-off.
- A plan for the Rites of Passage processes, events, and privileges has been launched that includes celebrations like:
 - **First Steps Milestone**
 - Has introduced the congregation to a few of our youngest members and made both children and parents more comfortable with Sunday school. It reminded both children and their parents of the importance of attending Sunday school.
 - **Welcome to Worship**
 - Has intentionally extended the welcome mat to children and their parents. It has also introduced children, and the adults who care for them, to worship and the worship space.
 - **Anniversary of Baptism**
 - Has reminded those who have been baptized during the past year, their families, and the congregation of the promises made to everyone at baptism. It was an opportunity to remind everyone that living our baptism is a lifelong journey—and one needs to be prepared to live and walk wet.
 - **Prayer Milestone**
 - Has been a way a congregation can keep its promise to equip and support parents to pass on faith. Through this milestone, children have learned they have a direct relationship with God and Jesus through prayer.
 - **Kindergarten children invited to Children's Church**
 - Has invited younger children into the special worship experience of elementary age children.
 - **Bibles to 8 year olds**
 - Has invited children into the community's practice of reading scripture together.
 - **Acolyte Invitation to older elementary children**
 - Has recognized leadership abilities of children in worship.
 - **5th graders moving into the middle school ministry**
 - Has welcomed the rising 6th graders into the Jr. High ministry.
 - **Blessing of the Backpacks**
 - Has marked the passage of summer and helped children, youth and adults transition back into the fall schedule and has served as a reminder that Jesus is always with us.
 - **8th graders moving into the high school ministry**
 - Has welcomed the new 9th graders and their parents into the youth ministry

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- **12th graders graduating from the youth ministry**
 - Has launched the church's high school graduates from the youth ministry, confident that they have been surrounded by a supporting church family and committed to live out their faith as adults.

- Volunteer recruiting seasons has opened.
 - Volunteer job descriptions have been reviewed and updated as needed.
 - Names of potential volunteers have been added to the fishing pond.
 - All volunteer needs have been determined for the 2019-2020 school year.
 - The volunteer needs list and the potential volunteers list have been merged.
 - Current volunteers have been asked to evaluate and possibly renew their commitment to the children's and youth ministries.
 - Recruitment has begun for hands-on weekly volunteers, event coordinators, and behind-the-scenes volunteers for 2019-2020.

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