

Reaching New Heights with *Project Inclusion*

Twice a week all summer long, kids of all ages, sizes and cultural backgrounds stand in line with eager faces as if waiting for the circus to arrive. Instead, a truck, trailer, and 24' mobile climbing structure arrives and the kids begin to don helmets, attach carabiners, strap into harnesses and prepare to scale one of the two mobile rock walls that tour the city parks of Portland.



For the past two years, Portland Parks Foundation's *Project Inclusion* has worked with community partners and Portland Parks & Recreation to make it possible for mobile rock walls to travel to Portland's neediest and most underserved neighborhoods. Members of the climbing crew report that kids not only learn to climb—something usually experienced in expensive rock wall gyms—they also reap the benefits of improved strength and motor skills, self-confidence, trust and cooperation. The climbing walls provide a way for them to succeed at their own pace in a structured, supervised and safe outdoor environment with mentors and friends cheering them on.

By providing this positive fitness activity at no cost, the financial barriers are removed, allowing kids to participate who would otherwise find it out of reach. And while the two walls travel to parks throughout the summer, access exists in some parts of town, but not in others. Our vision is to reach out to those neighborhoods where the arrival of the mobile climbing wall may be the best thing happening in that neighborhood all day—all week—all summer.



With the recent donation of two new mobile walls, we now seek support to mobilize these walls into neighborhoods that could benefit the most. Program support includes funds to provide the ever-important staffing, the hands-on mentoring that enables these kids to test their limits and literally, reach new heights. Beyond that, our vision includes shoes for children, because some may not have them; we see gym shorts and T-shirts, caps and backpack; water bottles to keep kids hydrated; ropes, helmets, stop watches, and sun screen.

We thank our community partners in advance for their efforts to make a great program even greater—and for working with us to expand this outreach program to maximize the reach of this phenomenal program that

engages young people in healthy activities in the parks—something they can carry with them as they grow into their teens.