



EVENT LOGISTICS GUIDE:

Planning A Community-Wide VERB™ Activity Zone Event



DANCE



DANCE

VERBTM

ACTIVITY ZONE COMMUNITY

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INTRODUCTION

About VERB™

VERB is a national, multicultural campaign that encourages tweens (9-13 year olds) to be physically active every day. The VERB campaign uses a combination of paid advertising, school and community promotions, and the Internet to promote physical activity as cool, fun, and a way to have a good time with friends. The successful, five-year campaign began in 2001 and comes to a close in 2006.



Communities Getting Involved

Tweens across the country are highly aware of VERB. They like VERB. They think it is “cool” and they know it is all about being physically active. Local communities can take advantage of the VERB campaign’s appeal to tweens by planning activities and holding events that get kids interested in and excited about being physically active. If you choose to hold a community-wide physical activity event, use this document as a logistical planning guide.

Producing a community-wide VERB Activity Zone event is a great way to bring the VERB campaign to your community. Health fairs have long been an effective way to introduce adults to the importance of health screenings and preventive health measures. That, however, does not work for kids. Kids are interested in what is cool and fun. That is what a community-wide VERB Activity Zone event is all about.

The VERB Activity Zone creates an environment to inspire tweens to discover the fun of physical activity. It provides opportunities for tweens to try new, fun, and cool physical activities, while separately introducing parents to the variety of physical activity options available in their communities. And, local organizations that offer physical activities through after-school programs, classes, and clubs can increase patronage by promoting their offerings to tweens and parents of tweens.





THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The Problem

Children today spend less time being physically active and more time engaging in sedentary activities, such as watching television or playing video games. Their activity levels tend to drop even further during adolescence.

The decreased amount of daily physical activity is one of the contributors to the youth obesity epidemic. The number of overweight children ages 6-19 has more than tripled since 1980 (CDC, 2006).

The current lack of physical activity among our children can lead to immediate health problems and can compromise their future health. That lack of physical activity and the increase in unhealthy behaviors contribute to emerging health issues for our children, such as high cholesterol and high blood pressure (Surgeon General, 2001), diabetes, gall bladder disease, and sleep apnea (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2002).

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (CDC, 2002) data shows that 32 percent of children in the United States attend physical education classes daily, down from 42 percent in 1991. Yet, other studies show that children spend almost six and one-half hours each day using media,

including TV, video games, and the Internet (University of Pennsylvania, 2000). Television is the medium with which children spend the most time (University of Pennsylvania, 2000).

The Benefit

Physical activity has been identified as one of our nation's ten leading health indicators in Healthy People 2010 (USDHHS, 2000a). Regular participation in physical activity during childhood and adolescence:

- helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints, and improves aerobic fitness levels
- helps control weight, build lean muscle, and reduce levels of body fat
- prevents or delays the development of high blood pressure and helps reduce blood pressure in some adolescents with hypertension
- reduces feelings of depression and anxiety

Recent research also has shown that higher academic achievement is associated with higher levels of fitness (California Department of Education, 2002). In the long-term, regular physical activity can help reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and some cancers. It also helps to develop skills that can benefit children for life, including:

- goal setting and achievement
- getting along with others
- leadership
- teamwork



AUDIENCES

Tweens

Tweens are at an age during which they are becoming independent and are beginning to make their own decisions. The activities discovered and preferred at this age often become habits and interests into adulthood.

VERB's audience research indicates that tweens are not motivated by the health messages of physical activity. The concept of engaging in healthy behaviors now to prevent chronic diseases in the future is too abstract for tweens. They are motivated to be physically active as a way to have fun, spend time with friends, and try new things. The VERB Activity Zone should speak to tweens in "tween language" such as how cool the VERB Activity Zone is, how much fun being active will be, how they can have fun with friends, and that they have a chance to earn fun prizes.

Parents

While tweens don't respond well to messages that present physical activity as a means of preventing diseases, their parents often do. Parents want what is best for their kids, so they respond to health messages, while kids may be turned off by those same messages. That is why it is important to keep your messages to adults separate from messages to tweens. Parents are motivated to get their children active as a way to reduce the risk of chronic diseases, and to keep their kids busy with positive activities to reduce their engagement in risky behaviors. They are also motivated to get their children active as a way to increase mental alertness and feelings of well-being, which may lead to better mental health or academic performance.

Community-Based Organizations

Organizations can take advantage of the VERB campaign's popularity among tweens by incorporating VERB approaches into their programs. Audience research indicates that tweens think that VERB is cool. Now is the time to offer them opportunities to play and be physically active every day in fun, safe environments. If they develop the play habit now, it could benefit them for a lifetime.





PLANNING THE COMMUNITY-WIDE EVENT

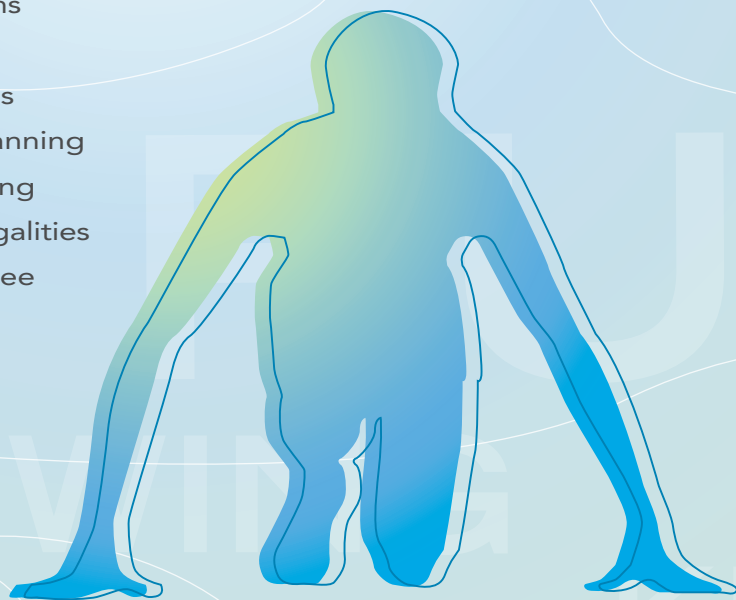
Allow no less than three months to plan a community-wide VERB Activity Zone event. This should allow time to invite other organizations, promote the event, and coordinate logistics. Allow more time if you are planning a large event. The planning period can be shorter if this is part of a larger festival. Holding the VERB Activity Zone event in conjunction with an existing festival or community event is sometimes beneficial because the festival's organizers have primary responsibility for publicity to encourage attendance; however, a downside can be that you place the success of your event outside of your control.

The following pages include logistics and ideas for planning the community-wide VERB Activity Zone event:

- date and time suggestions
- venue suggestions
- suggested exhibitor types
- equipment and space planning
- promotions and advertising
- safety precautions and legalities
- week-by-week agenda (See Appendix A)

Consider the following variables to help plan your event:

- How many tweens do you want to—or can you—reach? This will help determine the venue, how many organizations to invite, and how many prizes are needed. (see the *Having a Successful Physical Activity Event* - Booklet A.)
- Will this event be held once a year or several times throughout the year? In which season will it be and what are the physical activities that are associated with this time of year in your area?
- If the VERB Activity Zone is going to be a separate event, select a date that doesn't conflict with major festivals or events. Weekends are recommended.



VENUE SELECTION

When selecting a venue, there are many variables to consider.

- Convenience is key. If the VERB Activity Zone event is close to home, people are more likely to attend.
- How many people are invited? Are you inviting a few grades from a school or an entire school or after-school program along with family members? Or are you inviting multiple schools or tweens from the entire city?
- Allow ample room for people to walk around, be active, and play.
- Provide areas for each exhibitor to hold an activity demonstration. This could be a soccer kick, dance area, tennis net, etc. We recommend that you provide each exhibitor with 10' x 10' space. You can offer a larger space if needed.
- Some exhibitors may need access to electricity. Is there access to outlets? Will extension cords or generators be required?
- Is there ample and convenient parking? Will traffic control be a problem?



Venue Suggestions

There are many great venue possibilities for community-wide VERB Activity Zone events.

Among them are:

- schools – centrally located to existing audiences of tweens, offer both indoor and outdoor possibilities
- community colleges – may offer more space if you expect a large crowd
- area parks – can draw additional walk-up attendees
- churches and community centers – central to existing audiences, may offer indoor facilities



EXHIBITORS

The goal of a community-wide VERB Activity Zone is to expose tweens to fun and “cool” physical activities that are available in their communities. When considering exhibitors, look for those that offer physical activities specifically for tweens or that include in their program or curriculum, physical activities in which tweens could become involved.

Activity Categories

Invite a broad range of organizations to exhibit. Include activities that are relevant for ages ranging from 9 to 13 or slightly above, for girls and boys, and for various skill levels. The types of organizations that you might contact include:

- team sports – national organizations such as National Little League, U.S. Tennis Association, and the American Youth Soccer Association; church and community center leagues, junior varsity school teams
- studio-based classes – dance, martial arts, gymnastics, etc.
- activity clubs – golf, jump rope, hiking, bicycling, skateboarding, etc.
- summer camps – National Recreation and Park Association, YMCA, YWCA, etc.
- local businesses – bowling alleys, ice skating rinks, etc.

Any type of youth-serving organization that may be able to set up some type of demonstration or provide an opportunity for youth to participate, can be contacted. Many parents perceive barriers to registering their children in organized activities. They may only think of the school sports teams and may not know about other options. They may think that classes and clubs are far away from home, making transportation a burden. They may have concerns about the costs of clubs or classes. Therefore, it is important that the community-wide VERB Activity Zone event feature clubs, classes, and programs that are near the neighborhood from which the attendees will come and that offer a variety of price ranges. This may ease concerns about transportation and cost.

Cost to Exhibitors

There are some costs involved in producing a community-wide event: renting the facility; security and insurance; renting tents, tables and chairs as needed; electrical generator rental, etc. Before inviting organizations to exhibit, estimate the cost. Solicit a sponsor to cover the costs or establish an exhibitor fee which would cover the costs.



Inviting Exhibitors

When inviting organizations to exhibit at the community-wide VERB Activity Zone event, include the following “talking points” in your discussion:

- Physical activity can improve the health of tweens and potentially decrease risky behaviors.
- The community-wide event is an opportunity to expose tweens – and their parents – to fun and cool activity ideas in the community.
- Participating in the VERB Activity Zone event is an opportunity for you to increase your visibility, membership, enrollment, or attendance.
- You have a chance to create an active environment that showcases your tween-oriented physical activity services and programs.

Provide the following directions and guidance to your exhibitors:

- Provide a physical activity demonstration and/or opportunity for kids to do the activity.
- Offer small prizes to reward tweens’ trial of physical activity at their booth. (See Prizes on page 10)
- Contribute a larger prize to an overall drawing at the event.
- Distribute materials about the organization, club, team, or program.

- Provide a sign-up sheet for parents to request additional information.
- Schedule three to five staff or volunteers to supervise the activity station and answer questions.



LOGISTICS

Planning in advance will help you ensure that you have the necessary equipment and materials. Review these recommendations for equipment, supplies, prizes, etc.

Equipment and Supplies

Tables – One or two tables per exhibit station to display materials and/or equipment like TVs or VCRs. Consider renting table skirts.

Chairs – Two chairs per exhibit station.

Water and cups – Multiple water stations throughout the venue. Ask a local distributor to donate water.

Trash – One trash can per exhibit area. Confirm post-event clean-up with the venue manager.

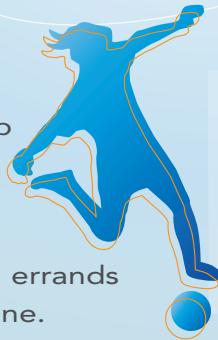
Electrical power – As needed, access to outlets/generator and supply of cords and power strips.

Tent – 10'x10' Tents can provide shade for any outside exhibit areas.

Staff

Volunteers – Solicit help from volunteers for planning, set-up and break-down, greeting attendees, and running errands at the VERB Activity Zone.

Photographer – Assign a volunteer to photograph the day for posterity and publicity.



Parking attendants – If parking and traffic will be a problem, hire security or volunteers to manage traffic flow and parking.

Prizes

Prizes serve as incentives for tweens to visit each exhibit and as a reward for trying every activity. Exhibitors provide prizes at each station and/or contribute to a larger pool of prizes. If there is a pool of prizes, consider using a “scorecard” system (See example in Appendix B) to track how many exhibits each tween visits. As tweens enter the VERB Activity Zone, give them a scorecard. Each exhibitor puts a sticker or stamp on the scorecard after a tween tries the physical activity at that station. As they leave the VERB Activity Zone, tweens can redeem their scorecard for a prize or prizes. Prizes awarded could range from tattoos to memberships based upon the availability of prizes and the awards criteria that you establish. You could even have an hourly “must be present to win” drawing for larger prizes. Prizes should encourage physical activity. Consider athletic equipment such as balls, flying disks, and jump ropes. Tweens also like trinkets such as rubber band bracelets. Be prepared with enough prizes for each anticipated participant. Small prizes can be found in bulk at reasonable cost. Also ask local businesses or sporting equipment stores to donate prizes.



SAFETY PRECAUTIONS AND LEGALITIES

A successful event is a safe event. Consider the following safety precautions and legal requirements as you plan the event.

Permits

Ask your local municipal office if you need a special permit to hold an event at the chosen venue.

Insurance Coverage

Confirm with the venue that they have injury and liability insurance and that it extends to cover VERB Activity Zone event participants. If the VERB Activity Zone event is produced through the school system, confirm that this kind of event is covered by their insurance.

Waiver Forms

When attendees enter the VERB Activity Zone area, ask parents to sign a release form giving permission for their children to participate in the activity stations and to be photographed for promotional use. (See Sample Release Form in Appendix C)

If your liability insurance allows you the option, post a sign that provides essentially the same information indicating that by entering this VERB Activity Zone area, individuals accept liability for any injuries, damages, or loss of personal property to self or children in their care and grant permission for themselves or children to appear in person or in

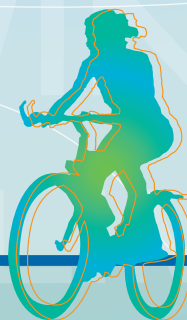
voice, video, or photographic representation related to this event. This option makes sense when there are extremely large crowds.

Emergency Preparation

Medical Staff - Arrange for medical presence, e.g. school nurse, EMT, etc. In trying many new activities, it's possible that there may be minor injuries.

Security Personnel - If needed, hire staff for security.

Walkie Talkies - Rent or borrow from the school system or other local organizations. Provide to event organizers, runners, and medical and security personnel.



ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

The primary audience for the VERB Activity Zone event is the tween audience. Promotional efforts should be dedicated to bringing tweens to the event.

Here are suggested methods to advertise your event. Choose the tactics that work best in your community.

Advertising

Posters – Hang posters at community centers, schools, and at businesses in the surrounding area.

Flyers – Print color posters or black and white posters on colored paper according to your resources.

Print ads – Contact city, community, and school newspapers for advertising space. Ask for free ad placement.

Radio – Ask local radio stations to make announcements about the community-wide VERB Activity Zone event. Consider the reach of the radio station. If your VERB Activity Zone event is intended for a small community, not the entire city, radio may not be an appropriate vehicle.

Announcements

Send multiple announcements throughout the weeks prior to the event. The more times people are reminded about the VERB Activity Zone event, the more likely they are to attend. (See Appendix D for a template of the

Announcement). Places where you might send your announcement include:

PTA – Announce the event through PTA bulletins.

Faith-Based Groups – Ask area churches and synagogues to include an announcement in their printed or e-mail bulletins, and/or to distribute flyers.

Schools – Ask schools to promote the event during their morning announcements or send to parents in their e-mail announcements.

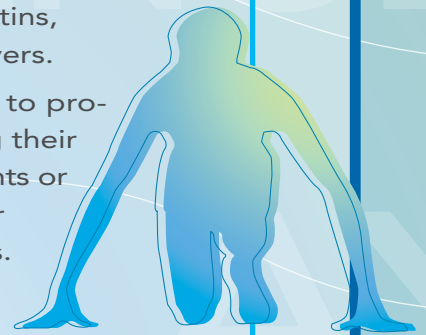
Press Relations

Informing the press about the community-wide VERB Activity Zone can serve two objectives: to raise awareness about the event, and therefore, raise attendance; and to raise awareness about the issue of youth physical inactivity and one way the community is addressing this concern.

Outlined here are tactics to solicit press coverage for VERB Activity Zone events.

Media List

- Create a list of local media including TV, newspapers, and radio. Include all outlets that might cover the event, like school newspapers and community newsletters.
- Call each outlet to find the reporters who cover community, youth, and/or health topics. Ask them how they prefer to receive information: via phone, fax, or e-mail.

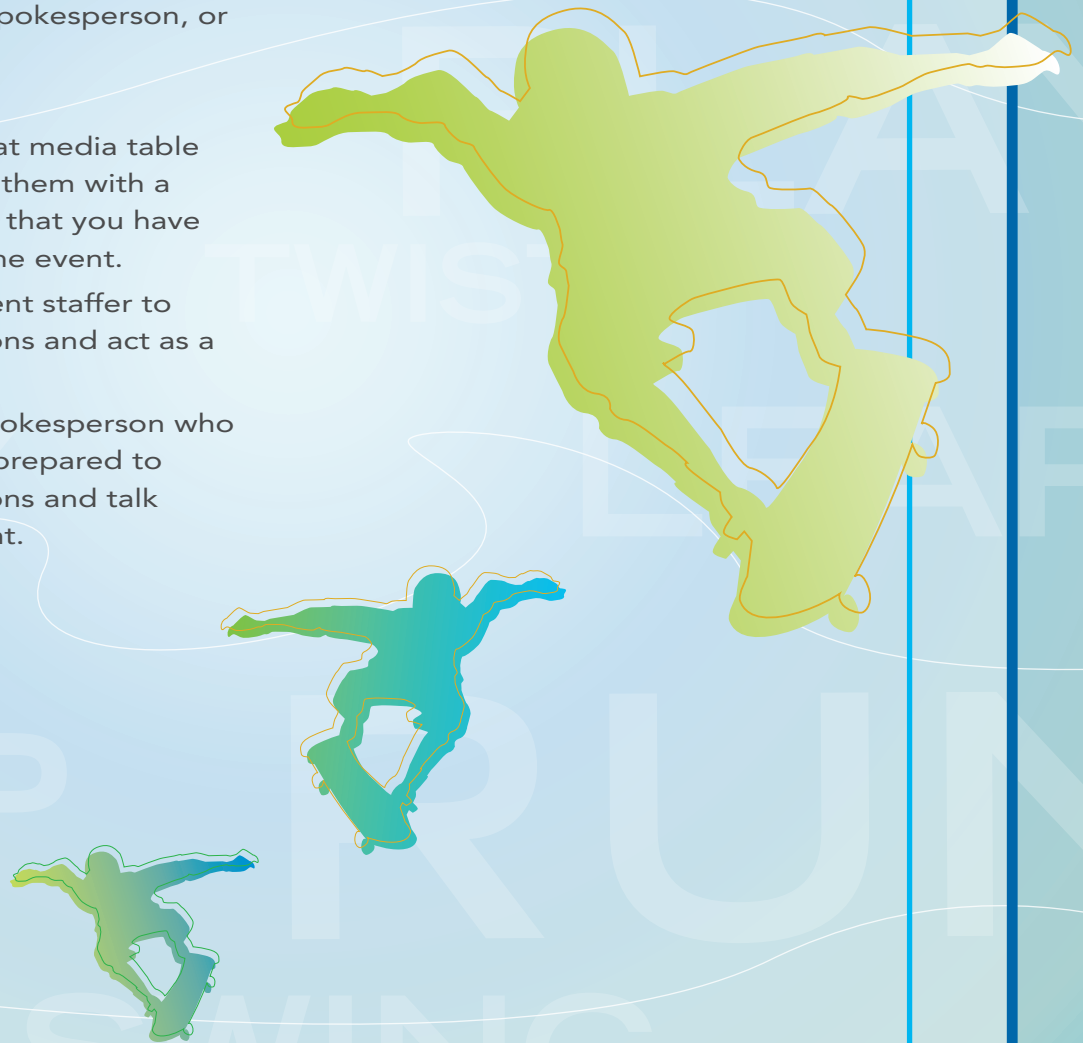


Press Announcements

- Send a “hold the date” media advisory (See Appendix E) to fax or e-mail to media outlets two weeks prior to the event.
- Repeat the media advisory two days prior to event with updated information.
- Follow-up the final media advisory fax or e-mail with phone calls to the news desks, pitching the event and describing any exciting visuals, a recognized spokesperson, or VIP attendees.

Day of Event

- Sign-in media at media table and credential them with a “Press” badge that you have designed for the event.
- Assign one event staffer to answer questions and act as a media liaison.
- Designate a spokesperson who is trained and prepared to answer questions and talk about the event.



FOLLOW-UP

Thank You

After the event, send thank you letters to:

- venue manager
- medical staff
- security
- volunteers
- exhibitors
- schools who attended
- sponsors
- anyone else who contributed or donated materials or supplies

This shows your appreciation and may motivate repeat participation.

Evaluation Form

Provide evaluation forms (See Appendix F) to schools, community centers, exhibitors, staff and volunteers, asking them to provide feedback about the VERB Activity Zone event and suggestions for future events.

Post-Event Publicity

Write a press release (See sample Press Release in Appendix G) and include pictures to promote the success of the event. Send it to local and community newspapers.

Keep the Momentum

Continue the momentum of the VERB Activity Zone community event by promoting physical activity in everyday life.

- Incorporate it into weekly or monthly youth programs.

- Establish an after-school carpool program for children who attend the same activities so that parents can share the responsibility.
- Post the roster and contact information of participating organizations and programs on your website.



WEEKLY PLANNING

Week One

- Meet and decide the primary coordinator of the event.
- Research local clubs, teams, and organizations.
- Plan an informational meeting for potential exhibitors.
- Research venues with capacity to house the number of anticipated youth, parents, and activity stations. See the Venue Selection section for suggestions. Schedule site visits as needed.
- Develop a list of potential sponsors to defray costs of advertising, staffing, equipment rental, prizes, water, etc. Contact them throughout the planning process.
- Decide from where you will draw your tween audience. Who will you invite? See Planning a Community-Wide Event section for ideas.

Week Two

- Send invitation letters to potential exhibitors. The invitation invites them to exhibit and also invites them to attend the informational meeting. Follow up with telephone calls.
- Meet with the necessary parties to secure the venue.
- File any necessary permits or notices. See Safety Precautions and Legalities section.
- Arrange for medical presence.

Week Three

- Contact leadership at schools and organizations who will be invited to the VERB Activity Zone event. Provide them with early notice of the date and location of the event.
- If needed, rent equipment such as perimeter fence, chairs, tables, etc. See Logistics section.

Week Four

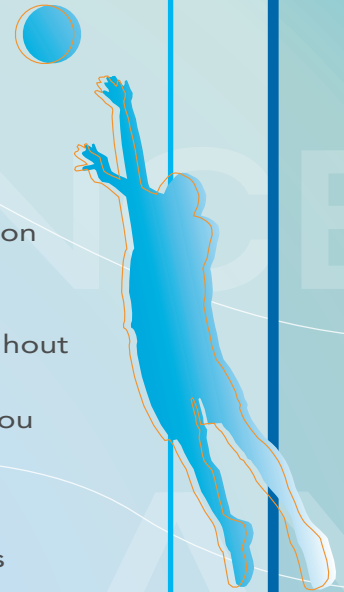
- Hold informational meeting for potential exhibitors.
- Develop advertising and promotional materials. See Advertising and Promotion section. Allow 2-3 weeks for design and printing.

Week Five

- If needed, hire staff for security and/or traffic control. See Logistics section.
- Plan and coordinate student transportation to the event if necessary.

Week Six

- Determine how many stations there will be and the amount of space that will be needed.
- Solicit commitment from invited exhibitors. Assure variety. Don't confirm with more exhibitors than your space will allow.



Week Seven

- Continue to confirm exhibitors.
- Work with confirmed exhibitors to determine their needs; e.g. equipment they plan to bring or will need.
- Continue promotion and advertising efforts.
- Confirm with donors about the availability of all contributions like water, prizes, tents, etc.
- Develop a media list. See Advertising and Promotion section.

Week Eight

- Continue promotion and advertising efforts, with emphasis on newsletter placement and advance media coverage.
- Solicit volunteer staff to greet attendees, help with set-up, hand out prizes, do crowd control, etc.

Week Nine

- Develop a map of the facility, assigning each exhibitor a space. Include areas for registration, prizes, water, medical care, etc.
- Confirm medical and security staff, as needed.
- Send letters to confirmed exhibitors with details about the event and inviting them to a meeting to be held during Week 11 to discuss last minute logistics.

Week Ten

- Ask schools to promote the VERB Activity Zone event during daily announcements during the next two to three weeks.
- Ask PTAs to distribute flyers to parents.
- Fax or e-mail a "hold the date" media advisory notifying local media. See template in Appendix E.
- Contact volunteers to request that they attend a briefing session prior to the event. You can choose to hold the briefing the morning of the event or the day before.

Week Eleven

- Hold a meeting with confirmed exhibitors to discuss event-day logistics. Call exhibitors who don't attend to answer last-minute questions.
- Meet with the venue manager to confirm logistics such as sufficient electricity, air conditioning or heat, clean-up, set-up and break-down hours, etc.
- Confirm volunteer staff.
- Print participation release forms.



Week Twelve

- Produce exhibitor roster. See Logistics section.
- Repeat the media advisory with updated information and follow-up with phone calls to local news desks to invite media to the VERB Activity Zone event.
- Prepare emergency contact list. See Safety Precautions and Legalities section.
- Hold briefing session for volunteers - either the morning of the event or the day before.
- Handle the last-minute details!

Week Thirteen

- Send thank you notes.
- Send pictures and evaluation forms to schools and volunteers. See Follow-Up section for details.
- Send press release and pictures to local newspapers.



APPENDIX B

VERB Activity Zone Scorecard



APPENDIX C

Release Form

VERB Activity Zone

I agree that _____, nor its employees, agents, or volunteers shall be held responsible for any injuries, damages or loss of personal property that occur during the VERB Activity Zone to myself or to the children on whose behalf I am signing this release. I further grant permission for myself and any of the children for whom I am signing this release to appear in person or in voice, video or photographic representation to radio, TV or print media reports and/or media campaigns resulting from participation in the VERB Activity Zone.

Full Name (Printed)	Parent? Teacher? Coach?	Signature	Youth under 18 for whom you are signing (List each child separately.)
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

APPENDIX D

Announcement

[Insert sponsoring school/organization name] is holding a VERB Activity Zone event for middle-school-aged children (children ages 9-13). Explore activities, clubs, and teams offered in the area. There will be [insert sample of activities like soccer, dance, martial arts, etc] and more. Students can try their skills at a range of activities; and parents can learn about local options for after-school, weekend, and summer programs. Come on out [insert date, time, and location]. See you there.

APPENDIX E

Media Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE [TODAY'S DATE]

CONTACTS: [Event spokesperson or organizer(s)] [phone number]

(Your Organization) Hosts VERB™ Activity Zone

WHAT: To get kids excited about and more involved in physical activity, (your organization) is bringing a VERB Activity Zone to (your community). Kids ages 9-13 will have an opportunity to try fun physical activities and even earn prizes just for trying. They'll run, jump, skip, and toss and are likely to find something that will keep their interest for a lifetime.

WHO: Organizations from throughout the community will be on hand providing demonstrations and opportunities to participate. This is one way that our community is addressing the concern of obesity in our youth. There to greet the kids will be [name of local high school, college or pro athletes, their titles, and their interest in participating], [head of your organization ...], [TV or radio personalities..., etc].

WHEN: [Day of the week, date]

WHERE: [Location] [Street Address] [cross streets if appropriate]

All special guests [or name of designated spokesperson] will be available for interviews following the event.



APPENDIX F

Exhibitor Survey

VERB Activity Zone Exhibitor Survey

How many people do you estimate participated at your station or watched your demonstrations? ____ Don't know ____

Comments:

If you stamped scorecards, how many did you stamp? ____ Don't Know ____

Comments:

Has your business/organization received any inquiries as a result of your participation in the event?

Have you registered any new members or seen participation among current members improve/increase?

What did you like most about the event?

What did you dislike most about the event?

Did you experience any difficulties on the day of the event?

Do you have any suggestions for making the next event better?



