

Ridding Hissey Playground of Needles

By Julien Carrasquillo, Stewardship Coordinator

“HISSEY IS OVERRUN WITH NEEDLES!!!” This is the email I woke up to just days before the Martin Luther King Jr. Service Day was to take place at the playground. As the Parks & Recreation Department hurried to take action at Hissey Playground, my friend and resident superhero DJ Patty-Pat declared that she and I would go to Hissey the next day to remove the needles. I had heard stories from the Friends of Hissey Playground about the needle problem, but it wasn’t until I actually removed the needles myself that I realized how big of a problem it truly was.



They were everywhere: by the playground equipment, basketball court, baseball dugout, and all the benches. The thought of a kid innocently playing in his or her community playground and being pricked by a potentially life-threatening needle haunted me for the next couple of days. Luckily, Patty-Pat and I removed them in time for the MLK Service Day, but what about all the other days and future events planned for the upcoming year? Something needed to be done.



**PHILADELPHIA
PARKS & RECREATION**



After doing some research, and brainstorming with peers, I found a local nonprofit called [Prevention Point Philadelphia](#) that I thought might be interested in helping. Prevention Point Philadelphia provides a variety of services, including a needle exchange program, counseling and legal services, using a harm reductionist approach to improve the lives of individuals and communities affected by substance use. After many phone calls and emails, I was able to meet with their executive director Jose Benitez. Together, we worked to set up a weekly needle clean-up, on Monday mornings, and Jose agreed to have Prevention Point provide an educational session for the Friends of Hissey Playground.



PHILADELPHIA
PARKS & RECREATION

Although, the snow delayed us from our first two Monday clean ups, I am proud to say that on March 9, 2015, Philadelphia Parks & Recreation and Prevention Point Philadelphia joined forces to rid Hissey of needles. To me, this story shows how important Stewardship can be not only for Parks & Rec but for any other city department. Creating partnerships, holding each other accountable, and implementing new ideas can change things for the better in all of our neighborhoods. We at Parks & Rec have the enormous goal of making sure all parks are clean, safe and ready to use, but we wouldn't be able to do it without the great help from our volunteer Friends groups and organizations like Prevention Point Philadelphia.



**PHILADELPHIA
PARKS & RECREATION**