

St. Louis Park Parktacular Junior Ambassador Program

The St. Louis Park Parktacular Ambassador Program is currently accepting candidates for this year's Ambassador Family. The following information may help you decide if this program is right for your child as well as your family.

What is the St. Louis Park Parktacular Ambassador Program?

The St. Louis Park Parktacular Ambassador Program selects up to three young adult ambassadors, two senior ambassadors, and up to four junior ambassadors to represent and promote the St. Louis Park Parktacular Festival, the City of St. Louis Park and the Children First Initiative during the Parktacular Festival and throughout the year. The Ambassadors do so by appearing at community festivals and celebrations, such as parades, coronations, and luncheons, throughout the Twin Cities metro area, out-state Minnesota and western Wisconsin. In addition, the St. Louis Park Parktacular Ambassadors serve as community volunteers with local non-profit organizations.

The program is part of the St. Louis Park Parktacular Festival and is run by volunteers. It is the desire of the Parktacular Board and the Ambassador Program Directors to give each candidate the best experience possible, no matter what the outcome of the final ambassador selection may be.

Who can participate the Junior Ambassador program?

Boys and girls who are entering first grade through sixth grade in the fall of the current year may run. They must either reside or attend school in St. Louis Park. Children attending only daycare or childcare programs in the city are not eligible.

How does my child become a candidate?

Anyone who meets the qualifications and submits an application will automatically become a candidate, however, space is limited to the first 12 registered applicants. All candidates should be advised that they are expected to act with discretion for the duration of their candidacy.

How much does the program cost?

There are no fees to be considered. Candidates will be provided a candidate sash. Candidates are expected to provide the following wardrobe items:

- Black pants
- Khaki shorts (length should be no more than 2" above the knee)
- Black, flat dress shoes

Our goal is to allow all children to participate in this program. Those who are selected as Junior Ambassadors are provided with a wardrobe and all fees for participating are paid for by the program. However, many families do decide to purchase coordinating outfits for certain events. These costs are absorbed by each family. Examples include matching cowboy shirts for western themed parades or costumes for the Anoka Halloween parade. We also coordinate an overnight at a hotel with a parade during September or October. This event, while not required, is a highlight of the year and the costs are borne by each family.

What are the benefits?

Ambassadors will be given the opportunity to gain poise, self-confidence, social skills, meet many new members of the community, and make new friends. In addition, as a candidate, there will be many fun-filled activities for your child to participate in.

How are the Ambassadors selected?

Judges will choose the candidates they feel will do the best job of representing the community for the coming year. Many of these individuals are involved with other communities and have experience in working with ambassadors. They will consider personality, speaking ability, maturity, grooming, poise, confidence, and a willingness to commit to the program and its scheduled activities. They will also consider the ability of the candidates to work together as a family and how they interact with the Senior and Young Adult Ambassadors. **This is not a beauty, talent nor popularity contest.** All positions are selected on a gender blind basis.

How does the selection process take place?

Candidates are observed by the selection team at different events. They may include candidate activities such as:

Meet the Candidate: Each candidate dresses in an outfit of their own choosing that represents something about themselves (hobby, sport, career goals, etc.) and introduces themselves to the selection team. During this time, they explain their wardrobe and how it describes them. Each person usually speaks for about 2 minutes. This event, while open to the public, is usually attended by parents and friends.

Personal Interview: During a candidate event, the selection team interviews each candidate. This is the most important part of the ambassador selection process. Some questions may originate from your child's application, while other questions may be formulated by the judges to evaluate your child's understanding of the community, his/her commitment to the program, and his/her ability to speak spontaneously.

Parade: The selection team is given the option of attending the Parktacular parade. During the parade, the selection team will observe the candidates as they interact with each other as well as the parade goers.

Coronation: The selection team will observe how comfortable your child is in front of many people. So there will be no surprises and your child will feel comfortable, the emcees will ask each child a question from their application. The emcees have experience working with children and will help them through the process. There are no right or wrong answers, just how the candidate interacts with others as well as how the candidate handles unrehearsed situations.

How much time commitment is expected of the new Ambassadors and their families?

Ambassadors are expected to make their appearance schedule a priority. Some flexibility will be allowed for school, but most events are planned around the events listed in the St. Louis Park Community and School Calendar. Most of the summer events are given on a preliminary calendar during your child's candidacy. We cannot stress enough that attendance and punctuality are important.

Many of the summer appearances occur on weekends and evenings. There will be activities during the school year but education is a priority and events are scheduled to avoid any known school activities, if possible. Most activities from September to May occur on weekends.

You can anticipate approximately 60-65 appearances during the year. These appearances will be in the form of parades, coronations, receptions, fundraisers, community events and community service. In addition, we will be joining ambassadors from other communities around the state for dances, caroling, and visiting senior residences, etc.

What awards/prizes are given?

At the end of their term, provided all requirements have been fulfilled, each Junior Ambassador will receive an award for their participation in the form of an educational experience.

In addition, each Junior Ambassador will receive to keep:

- A crown/scepter
- Sash
- Embroidered polo shirt
- Casual outfit
- Semi-formal outfit
- Formal (dress or suit)

- Accessories
- Duffle bag

Ambassadors are provided on a loan-only basis:

- Cape (girls only)
- Winter coat
- Winter hat, scarf, gloves, mittens, and pants
- Apparel necessary for certain activities

How much commitment has to come from the parents?

Most parents or guardians are excited to have their child selected as a Junior Ambassador and are expected to participate equally with their child. Parents are required to sign a contract and we ask that, from the beginning, they help to outline the ambassador expectations to their child. Sometimes another family member over the age of 21 can stand in for the Ambassador's parent or guardian so there is some flexibility.

Our program is run by volunteers and help is always needed. St. Louis Park Parktacular uses a 30-foot float for parades and help is required to set up/take down and tow the trailer. Parents usually enjoy going to the parades and many volunteer to help by providing water at the parades, taking pictures, improving/repairing the float, chaperoning at events, and sewing wardrobes. While their children are becoming friends on the float, many parents enjoy the company of the other parents and the Ambassador family continues to grow stronger through these connections.

Why do children become candidates?

Lots of reasons!

“It looks like a lot of fun”

“My friend did it”

“Our family would like to become more involved in the community”

Whatever the reason, we welcome your child as a candidate.

Applications may be downloaded from the Parktacular website, <http://parktacular.org/ambassadors>. As a reminder, the first 12 qualified applicants will be accepted into our Junior Ambassador Candidate program. We recommend that you send in your child's application early.

For additional information or questions, please email us at slpambassadors@gmail.com.