

# 2010 NACPRO Excellence in Parks Awards

The NACPRO awards program is intended to recognize and honor excellence in county park and recreation endeavors throughout the nation and to share best practice ideas with other agencies. NACPRO hopes its awards program will encourage dreamers and dreams.

NACPRO recognizes member agencies for successful park and recreation facilities, programs, environmental/conservation initiatives, historical/cultural projects, and removing barrier initiatives.

NACPRO encourages interested readers to learn more about these projects by contacting the winning agencies.

The winners of the 2010 NACPRO County Parks excellence awards are listed and described below.

## Outstanding Public Official

The Outstanding Public Official Award is presented to a nominated, elected or appointed federal, state, or local official (including commissioner or board member) who has contributed significantly to the benefit of county level parks, recreation, leisure services and open space programs.

This year's award recognized two individuals.

The first Outstanding Public Official for 2010 is Mr. Larry Blackstad, nominated by the Three Rivers Park District in Minnesota.

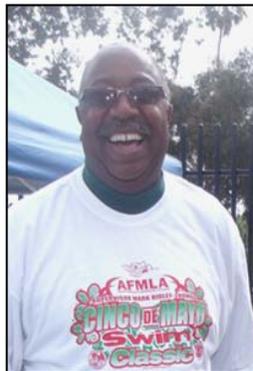
Mr. Blackstad has served on the Board of the nationally renowned Three Rivers Park District, in Minnesota, since 2004. He has been Chair of the board for the past 4 years. Mr. Blackstad has demonstrated a long-term dedication to the environment as a member of the Mississippi River Coordinating Commission, NRPA Public Policy Committee, Great Lakes Regional Section of NRPA, the National Asso-



ciation of County Community Development, the City of Minnetonka Park and Recreation Board, and a local watershed district advisory committee.

Mr. Blackstad's significant contributions to county parks and recreation have focused on consensus building and community partnerships. Under his leadership, three signature facilities opened in 2009: the Dakota Rail Regional Trail, Luce Line Regional Trail, and Siverwood Park – a center for arts and the environment. For each project, he established consensus by working across county and municipal boundaries, achieving considerable public support.

A second Outstanding Public Official Award went to Stan Lee, nominated by the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation.



Mr. Lee has worked side-by-side with L.A. County Supervisors to support the Aquatics Section of the South Agency where he serves as the Executive Director of the Aquatics Foundation of Metropolitan Los Angeles. In that capacity, Mr. Lee generated more than \$150,000 of funding and publicity for programs and maintenance of pool facilities. Due to his efforts, a new Aquatics Training Center will be opened this year at Ted Watkins

Park to assist youth interested in careers in the Aquatic field.

Mr. Lee also leads the efforts of the Los Angeles County Parks foundation, the non-profit fundraising group for the Parks and Recreation Department. His efforts with the Foundation have generated enough funding to afford uniforms and travel for kids attending sports competitions. He always keeps in mind the needs of the parks community and looks for ways to enhance parks for the public's use.

## Fellow Award

The NACPRO Fellow Award recognizes exemplary professionals who are currently employed in county park and recreation service. Each year, just one individual is selected to receive this award.

The 2010 Fellow Award Winner is Bill Palmer, Superintendent of the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge, Louisiana.



Bill, has been a member of NACPRO for many years. He has worked with NACPRO in several board capacities. He has served on the Board of Directors, edited the newsletter, and served as the Vice-President and President. His career includes work as a parks planner for over 30 years.

Bill received his Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from LSU in 1971 and is a licensed landscape architect. His professional experience includes serving as senior landscape architect, and then Superintendent of Planning for the Forth Worth Park and Recreation

## .....More 2010 Awards

Department. Bill returned to Baton Rouge in 1979 to become the Director of Planning and Engineering at BREC. Prior to his appointment as Superintendent, he served as both Assistant Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent. Bill has led the way in implementing the county strategic plan, "Imagine Your Parks."

BREC staff, reports that Bill is a dedicated public servant who works to make his county parks system cleaner, better, and safer every day. With his work already appreciated on many levels, NACPRO was proud to honor him with the Fellow Award.

### Outstanding Contributor

Outstanding Contributor Award went to Sue Turner, nominated by Recreation and Parks Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge.

East Baton Rouge Parish would be a different place if not for Sue Turner. Sue has been a parks community activist for decades. Her association with a cause conveys a sense of stability and trust to the general public. Sue makes a difference in her community through her support and work on behalf of many different groups. Sue's longtime association with BREC has provided a sense of community.

One example of her leadership speaks for many others; targeted by land developers, Magnolia Mound Plantation's Historic House was to be destroyed to make way for high-rise condominiums. Realizing this unique property was in peril, Sue and other concerned citizens ag-



gressively petitioned the local and state government to save the property. It was to the great relief of those involved that in 1966, Magnolia Mound was saved. BREC took responsibility of the site and in 1975 Magnolia Mound Plantation was opened to the public as a public park.

Recently, Sue has donated \$425,000 to the BREC Foundation in order to build a new welcome center at Magnolia Mound.

Sue was one of the original incorporators of the BREC Foundation and has served on the Board of Directors since its establishment. She pinpoints aspects that need amplification and brings up historical precedents of which many people are unaware. Sue has worked with many organizations which span the parish, the state of Louisiana, and the nation. Sue Turner's activism has melded together the tapestry of the past as well as the hope and progress of the future. She has truly made her community a better place.

### Outstanding Volunteer

The 2010 Outstanding Volunteer award was presented to an individual who made a significant contribution of personal time and talent to county parks and recreation.

The Outstanding Volunteer Award was presented to Kim Rhoads of Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, California.

For 12 years, Kim Rhoads has volunteered thousands of hours at Los Angeles County's Castaic Sports Complex in Castaic, California. Al-



though knowing nothing about the game, she helped launch Division I Soccer and became one of its first coaches.

She devotes more than a hundred hours annually to the park's special events and on the three annual "picture days," she organizes and entertains 500 children from the sports leagues waiting to have their pictures taken.

Kim has worked tirelessly to build a great day camp, providing organizational and promotional skills and innovative thinking.

Kim was recognized with a 2007 L.A. County "Urban Hero" Award, the 2007 L.A. County "Volunteer of the Year" Award, and the California Parks and Recreation Society's 2008 "Champion of the Community" Award.

What distinguishes Kim from other dedicated volunteers is that she has a terminal illness- a diagnosis that has barely slowed her. Her courage, selflessness and enthusiasm have brought the community closer together and taught everyone important lessons on how life should be lived.

### Outstanding Support

The Outstanding Support award is presented to an organization that has made a major contribution to benefit park and recreation programs or facilities. The contribution may be in terms of facility or program development, operation or support.

The 2010 Outstanding Support Organization Award went to the Eaton Canyon Nature Center Association and the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation.

Easton Canyon Nature Center Associates (ECNCA) is a non-profit group founded to develop in children and adults an appreciation of the natu-

# ..More 2010 NACPRO Excellence Awards

ral world and to preserve Eaton Canyon as a natural area for future generations. For over forty years, ECNCA has supported the County of Los Angeles Eaton Canyon Natural Area and Nature Center by helping to provide quality programs for the public. Families rely on Eaton Canyon for its low cost or free programming.

Currently, ECNCA funds and staffs nearly all Park programs including guided hikes, birding, plant and moonlight walks, school tours, field trips, nature camps, after-school Jr. Ranger Programs, Student Naturalist and special events. During 2008-2009, 2,400 students benefited from hands-on experience that most schools can't afford.

With ECNCA's support, Eaton Canyon Natural Area Park and Nature Center has provided quality programs that engage the public in great outdoor experiences even during economic downturn and difficult times.



## Park and Recreation Program

The Park and Recreation Program Awards recognize county park and recreation agencies for unique or exceptional programs, activities, or events which provide an out-

standing example for other agencies. The Class II Parks and Recreation Program award is presented to park and recreation agencies from counties with a population over 500,000.

The first Class II Program Award was given to The Desert Critter Scene Investigator program, developed by the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department and Phoenix Zoo.



This program focuses on reconnecting youth with nature by having them examine objects and clues left behind by Sonoran desert animals. Children who have this knowledge will be better prepared for what they may find on hikes and walks in the desert.

While the training won't alleviate an impulsive nature, it can help focus a child's attention and keep them alert to possible danger. It can also give their treks purpose instead of aimless wandering which can lead to trouble.

Unveiled at Cave Creek Regional Park in 2008, the agency has offered two programs attended by several hundred participants. The programs unique hands-on interaction between wildlife and the Sonoran desert have peaked curiosity among youth to learn more about nature and have prompted repeat visits to the parks. This is a great program

could easily be adapted to accommodate other types of climates.

The second Class II program award went to the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Department in Michigan.

Tuning Your Tot or (TYT) is a quarterly program offered by Oakland County Parks at the Wint Nature Center of Independence Oaks County Park in Clarkston, Michigan.

TYT's objective is to build a foundation of environmental awareness in children by providing opportunities to explore the wonders of science and the natural world. In each season, TYT presents a new theme or focus to engage and teach children about the natural world.

TYT was developed when the nature center opened 25 years ago. The fundamentals of child development are interpreted and transferred to the science/nature topic that is the focus of each session. Although TYT emphasizes music as a tool to involve the pre-school child in "active" learning, the program offers indoor and outdoor activities that engage all five of the children's senses.



Over the past 25 years, there have been 353 TYT sessions. As a result, 5,295 "learning experiences" have taken place by children and 4,236 by adults. Additionally, many adults who attended the program as youths now bring their own children to have the same experience.

## .....Even More 2010 Awards

### Areas and Facilities

The Areas and Facilities awards are presented to recognize and honor excellence in recreation and park facilities; to focus national attention (both public and professional) on the very best of facility design; to encourage outstanding efforts in planning, design, construction, and benefits to the community; and to be a resource of information for the highest quality of facility development.

The Class I Park and Recreation Facility Award went to the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge. Class I Counties have a population of less than 500,000.



Flanacher Road Park is the most recent neighborhood park and regional sports park completed by BREC. This previously undeveloped park is a 175-acre site featuring pristine wooded areas and vast open spaces containing stands of large mature specimen oak trees and other hardwoods.

A public meeting in June, 2006 to gather suggestions from citizens on the Conceptual Master Plan for the park. The final plan produced by BREC included the development of a new 2600 square foot Recreation Center, soccer complex, disc golf course, fishing pond, extensive walking paths, playground, picnic areas and picnic shelters. Work was completed in April of 2008. Construction costs for Flanacher Road Park Phase One totaled

roughly \$3.2 million. Funding for the development of the park was made possible by the "Imagine Your Parks" tax passed by voters of East Baton Rouge Parish in November 2004.

Amenities along the trail include a campground, golf course, baseball and softball facilities, multiple shelters, gardens, marina, arboretum, playgrounds, tennis courts, fishing docks, and restrooms. As it meanders through the rolling terrain of Lake Shawnee Park, the trail provides trail users with multiple recreational opportunities as well as wonderful scenic views.

The Class II Award for Parks and Recreation Areas and Facilities is presented to counties with a population over 500,000.

The first Park and Recreation Facility Class II Award was presented to the San Diego County Parks and Recreation Department for the San Elijo Lagoon Nature Center.

The new San Elijo Lagoon Nature Center is nestled on the banks of the 1,000 acre San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve in the community of Encinitas, California. Development of the Nature Center required a County led partnership between several governmental agencies, including the City of Encinitas, California Coastal Commission, California Department of Fish and Game, San Elijo Joint Powers Authority, and the non-profit San Elijo Lagoon conservancy.

The County used State and Federal grants to design and build this \$5.6 million dollar facility. Uses include a large exhibit room, ranger offices, restrooms, a classroom and an outdoor balcony. The building is designed to demonstrate the effectiveness of a variety of green technologies. These include, photovoltaic panels, low emissivity windows, renewable bamboo, recycled content

concrete, planted green roof, radiant floor heating and solar tubes for natural lighting.



In addition to the building's technological features, it has many interactive exhibits dedicated to educating the public on the history and importance of the Reserve, its ecosystems, and sustainable building design and operation. As a result of all these efforts, the San Elijo Lagoon Nature Center recently attained LEED Platinum certification from the US Green Building Council, the highest level of recognition for sustainability and energy efficiency in the Nation.

The second Class II facility award was earned by Palm Beach County, Florida for the South County Regional Park development.

South County Park got its start during South Florida's population explosion 35 years ago when 816 acres of land were acquired by Palm Beach County. The new park was slated to be the primary provider of recreation services for the vast, growing region.

The recommendations of a citizen's advisory committee led to the initial conceptual master plan for the park. A portion of the first phase opened in 1994 with much needed ball fields, picnic facilities, restrooms, and parking. Phase I was completed two years later with the

# ..More 2010 NACPRO Excellence Awards

addition of a new nature center, athletic fields, basketball and volleyball courts, a racquet center, bike paths, and picnic facilities. A second phase featured affordable, family-friendly Coconut Cove Waterpark and Recreation Center with waterslides, a water playground, lazy river, concession, classrooms, and party rooms.



Despite challenges along the way, all agree that this remarkable regional park has been well worth the wait. As the finishing touches are made to Osprey Point, a new 27-hole golf course enrolled in the Audubon International Classic Signature Golf Course program, this extraordinary regional park begun in 1975 is a tribute to all who helped make it a reality.



## Environmental/Conservation

The Environmental/Conservation Award is presented each year to recognize an exceptional effort to reclaim, restore, preserve, acquire, or develop unique and natural areas and programs.

This year's first Environmental/Conservation Award went to Orange County, California for the Second

Sundays Habitat Restoration Program.

Second Sundays are three-hour events that take place on the second Sunday of Each month and host more than 100 volunteers, resulting in thousands of volunteers annually who work tirelessly to improve habitat for wildlife. The goals of the program are to increase habitat values on degraded portions of the Upper Newport Bay Nature Preserve by planting and seeding with native species and removing invasive, non-native plants.



This program has leveraged the efforts of three Orange County staff members into more than 3,600 hours of volunteer restoration maintenance annually. The results represent a massive savings for Orange County. Second Sunday's restoration sites have grown to cover 5 acres, with more than 6,000 plants installed and countless pounds of non-native species removed.

Prior to the conservation of Newport Bay as designated open space, the lands were subject to grazing, grading, a salt works, mining and other activities that degraded the land in many areas. Reclaiming these beautiful coastal lands is vital to support native plant and animal species dependent on the habitat and protection provided by UNBNP in the midst of an urban setting.

The second 2010 Environmental/

Conservation Award was received by Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation Department for the Riverbend Park Project.



Riverbend Park represents the culmination of a successful 32 year restoration and preservation effort of 684 acres of historically and environmentally significant land in this densely populated region of South Florida. This formidable undertaking required unique partnerships of local, State and Federal agencies, and coordination of resources, and successfully achieving consensus among diverse public user groups passionate about their respective interests regarding the development, access, and protection of the property.



With its restored waterways, native re-vegetation, and the many species of native wildlife that now make Riverbend its home, the park serves as the only surviving example of a subtropical cypress forest river system remaining in Florida. Riverbend has become the connecting hub of larger trail systems, such as the Florida Trail, the Northeast Everglades

## ..... Even More Awards

Natural Area, and Ocean-to-Lake (Okeechobee) Trail.



Riverbend is now recognized as a significant cultural and historical resource for the community. Special events and demonstrations provide a unique living history experience in the authentically-constructed Seminole Village and Pioneer homestead. This gem in Palm Beach County's park system has clearly become an exceptional and popular destination for many seeking a picturesque getaway and a taste of Old Florida.

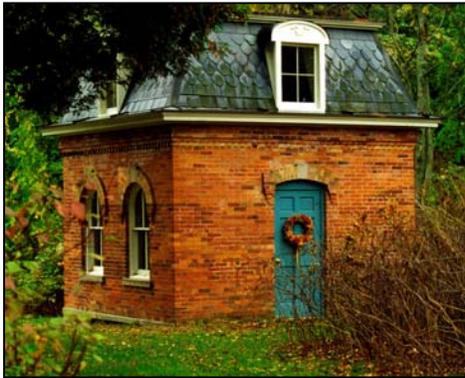
### Historical/Cultural

The Historical/Cultural Facility Award is awarded to a unique facility development dedicated to historical or cultural preservation, recreation, and/or interpretation. This year, NACPRO made two awards in this category.

The first 2010 Historical/Cultural Facility Award was presented to Oakland County Parks, Michigan, for The Historic Buhl Estate. In 1969, Oakland County acquired



the Tudor Hills Gun Club and Game Preserve and opened Addison Oaks County Park to the public for day use and camping. The site originally dates to 1833 when a man named Dennis Snyder built a log cabin and cleared 12 acres for crops.



Included in the park today is the original 320 acre farm. A later owner, the Buhl family, established a family estate and constructed a large Tudor home on the site in 1927. The estate included a pool and bathhouse, horse stables, barns, servants quarters, tennis courts, and a historic milk house.

Today, the site features the historic Buhl home which is now used as a Conference Center, hosting events for up to 500 people. An outdoor garden is perfect place for on-site weddings. Addison Oaks County Park is a model of how other park systems can restore and use a historic estate as a modern park.

The second 2010 Historical/Cultural Facility Award was presented to Orange County, California for the Clark Interpretive Center. The center features a "fishbowl" laboratory that allows volunteers to work on curation and preservation of fossil specimens so that their work is viewable by the public touring the museum. Museum staff members supervise college students from Fullerton College, California



State University Fullerton, as well as other local colleges and universities on volunteer and research projects.

This Facility is an amazing resource for local educators to teach students about prehistoric species and scientific methods. The interpretive center offers a two hour program called "Fun with Fossils" for school-aged children throughout the academic year. In 2009, the center drew more than 5,000 students for this program. The center has provided an important asset to the community and is in following with Orange County Parks' mission of remaining a steward of natural resources and the education of Orange County's Citizens.

### Removing Barriers

The Removing Barriers Initiative is presented to an agency with a unique program or facility that enables and encourages greater participation in parks and recreation by persons with disabilities. This year, there were two awards.

The next special award is the Removing Barriers Initiative. It is presented to an agency with a unique program or facility that enables and encourages greater participation in parks and recreation by person with disabilities.

This year's Removing Barriers Award is presented to Kent County, Michigan for the Townsend Park Open Shelter ADA Improvement Project. Built in 1926, the open

# ..More 2109 NACPRO Excellence Awards

shelter at Townsend Park is Kent County Parks Department's oldest structure. For more than 80 years, the open shelter has been a favorite site for picnics, family gatherings and weddings. Constructed of field stones and timber on a hilly terrain, the shelter rises above the park.

Previously, the cobblestone approach and a demanding set of concrete steps excluded many from using the popular facility.

Built in the days when universal access wasn't a consideration the shelter was not designed to address modern expectations for accessibility. Kent County Parks considered several options to provide access and still respect the historical character of the structure. The boldest option, to bury the steps and create a plaza in the front of the shelter, was chosen. An accessible walkway connecting the side of the plaza to new parking provides easy access along with new set of steps and railing that are much more user-friendly.



The Department received a 50% matching grant for improvements totaling \$40,000 through MRPA's Access to Recreation Program. The project included construction of an accessible walkway, parking, plaza, new steps, a boulder wall and landscaping. The surrounding area was seeded using a wild flower mix. The transformation of the open shelter has been a huge success, allowing the historic parks icon to meet the needs of today and tomorrow.

## Planning Initiative

The Planning Initiative Award is presented to recognize an agency that conducts a research or planning initiative that has provided the agency with important data to aid in decision-making and which contributes to a body of knowledge that will be valuable to other county agencies.

This year's Planning Initiative Award was given to the Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge, Louisiana for their Capital Area Pathways Project or CAPP.

Through a series of public polling's, BREC learned that Trails were the number one public request. They prioritized their development within their strategic plan, "Imagine Your Parks." The CAPP project is an initiative to identify routes and build a network of trails and greenways throughout East Baton Rouge and surrounding Parishes.

## Award Program Sponsors

NACPRO thanks this year's award program sponsors, including:

**Biological Mediation Systems, Inc. (BMS)**, providing the Parks and Recreation profession with systems and buildings to meet outdoor restroom needs; and **Pilot Rock**, providing landscaping equipment products wherever people gather to enjoy the outdoors; and **TrafficGuard**, specializing in the manufacture of top-of-the-line manually operated removable and collapsible vehicle access control systems; And **Sybertech Waste Reduction Ltd**, committed to providing cost saving services and products that help keep the environment cleaner and the work place safer.

## To Enter the 2011 Awards Competition:

Nominations will be accepted beginning February 1, 2011 for the NACPRO County Parks Excellence 2011 Awards. Presentation of the awards will be made at an award banquet in conjunction with the NACo meeting to be held mid - July 2011 in Portland, Oregon.

**For details and application forms check the NACPRO website <http://www.nacpro.org/> in February.**

