

# 2018 NACPRO Award Nominations

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## Environmental/Conservation

**Nominee:** Hassayampa River Preserve

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department, Arizona

**Population:** 4.17 million

The Nature Conservancy has been the property manager for the Hassayampa River Preserve for the past 30 years. However, the Conservancy's mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends, not managing individual properties. In 2006, the Conservancy approached Maricopa County about managing the Preserve. As the manager of several conservation areas and thousands of acres of park land, the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department was honored that the Conservancy would put their trust in them to manage the Preserve. By April 2017, the Agreements to bring this to fruition had been put in place, and the Conservancy transferred management of the Preserve to the County.

The addition of the Preserve marks the first new major acquisition of parkland in nearly 20 years for the County. In addition to enabling the County to bring a regional park to the northwest valley, the Preserve will serve as the gateway to the Vulture Mountains Recreation Area, a property the County has entered into a Cooperative Management Agreement with the Arizona Bureau of Land Management to manage.

Since the transition, the County has made structural and cosmetic improvements around the Preserve, while protecting the natural and historical features, to expand services and enhance visitor experiences. Several improvements include: hiring a full-time interpretive ranger to offer a variety of programs; structural repairs such as building patchwork, electrical system upgrades, roofing improvements, a new air-conditioning unit; reconstruction of the Visitor Center's back porch; parking area upgrades, including pipe rail fencing along the driveway; installation of new trail signs and trail reroutes; installation of a new ADA-accessible restroom building; and much more. The project is a prime example of two agencies with similar missions working together to preserve valuable community ecosystem, while bringing additional and affordable recreational opportunities to an area.

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## Environmental/Conservation

**Nominee:** Canoe N Scoop

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, Maryland

**Population:** over 500,000

The Gwynns Falls watershed, a Chesapeake Bay Gateway, is located in the Patapsco River sub-basin of the Chesapeake Bay watershed within Baltimore County and Baltimore City, Maryland. This watershed covers approximately 65 square miles and enters in to the Middle Branch, tidal Patapsco River. This area lined by the 34 acre Middle Branch Park is home to multiple outdoor recreation opportunities from fishing, crabbing, local crew teams and city sponsored canoe/kayak programs. Canoe N Scoop is a city run program started in 2011 to address the watershed trash load that enters the Bay. The program provides boats, instruction, and all materials and supervision for groups of about 20 volunteers, one day a week. Groups of students, corporate groups and dedicated volunteers participate in a weekly clean up from April - October. Since 2011, the program and its 3,500 volunteers have contributed 210,000 hours of service, for a total in-kind contribution of \$5,069,400.00. These volunteers have removed 107,550 pounds of trash and countless tires and other bulk items from our waterways. The real impact of the program has been the ability to create an engaging opportunity to educate participants in the availability of our urban natural resources and one of its major challenges. The program has worked very closely with local watershed groups, our local Department of Public Works, and NGO's. This program provides students community service hours needed to graduate and assists community residents with reducing stormwater fees. The program helps the Department of Public Works keep neighborhoods cleaner and healthier by controlling polluted runoff, by rebuilding and restoring our underground storm sewers, and restoring eroded streams. This has been an invaluable program to bring community awareness to the larger watershed issues facing the local community as well as the growing issues of trash in our oceans and provides direct impact for change.

Partners:

- Blue Water Baltimore: a community based non-profit dedicated to restoration, advocacy, and education to achieve clean water
- Department of Public Works: Community Stormwater Credit Program
- Waterfront Partnership: Healthy Harbor Initiative; Swimmable, Fishable Harbor by 2020

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## Environmental/Conservation

**Nominee:** Art on the Trails

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

The Art on the Trails (AOT) program recycles, reuses and repurposes materials found in nature, i.e., downed trees and other natural materials and changes them into sculpture or park benches that reflect wildlife and the environment of the trail. Part of the marketing plan includes creating a passport of the work with a map of the various locations. Once patrons locate the work they are asked to photograph themselves with the work and upload to the DPR Facebook page. AOT targets users of the DPR trail and park system. These sculptures are located in community, regional parks and along various trails. The 20 youth who were part of the summer camp team learned many things about nature including, but not limited to, how to identify poison ivy, invasive species, what type of trees are best to use for carving, etc. They also learned how to use carving chisels and mallets, tool sharpening techniques, die and angled grinders, sanders, proper use of safety equipment, and eye and ear protection. Youth are gaining an understanding of the artistic process used to create environmental artwork.

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## Environmental/Conservation

**Nominee:** Harrell Road Park

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Knox County Parks and Recreation, Tennessee

**Population:** 4,501,000

Bordered by Beaver Creek and a large residential development, Harrell Road Park was designed to capture and slow down runoff and to greatly reduce flooding in the area. The park takes in stormwater pollutants entering the creek, increases stormwater infiltration, replenishes groundwater stores, and alleviates localized flooding.

The park, a converted derelict tract, features a rain garden, vegetated stormwater ponds, riparian buffers and a permeable parking lot that allows water to be absorbed back into the earth.

The vegetated stormwater ponds hold back runoff and allow the plants to filter nutrients, sediments and pollutants before it enters the stream.

The 19-acre site was donated to Knox County by the non-profit Legacy Parks Foundation in 2008. A number of public and private partnerships then joined together to rehab what was once an exposed clay soil mining area. Roughly 100 trees were planted throughout the park thanks to a TAEP Tree Grant and matching funds from Water Resources, LLC. A layer of compost topsoil was spread on the site and then the site was sprayed with hydromulch that contains a seed mix comprised of native grasses, wildflowers and shrubs.

Interpretive signs that explain the various green practices in the park also were installed along the three-quarter mile walking trail. And, the county built a kayak/canoe launch that connects the park to the Beaver Creek Water Trail.

The park, which opened in May 2017, is the only one of its kind owned by Knox County. It's a busy park frequented by thousands of folks weekly, using it to launch their canoes, walk their dogs and teach local school students about conseration benefits.

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## Environmental/Conservation

**Nominee:** Recycling at Fourth of July Celebration

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Chesterfield County Parks and Recreation, Virginia

**Population:** 340,000

Chesterfield County Parks and Recreation Department teamed up with the Chesterfield County Anti-Litter Program to promote recycling during the 2017 Fourth of July Celebration at the Chesterfield County Fairgrounds. The Fourth of July Celebration is the largest and highest attended event sponsored by the department. This was the first time Chesterfield County promoted a recycling initiative that reached over 9,000 people.

Mark Pinney, Special Event Coordinator with Parks and Recreation contacted Pam Cooper, manager of the Anti-Litter Program, to ask for assistance in executing this recycling initiative. Pam Cooper recruited 30 volunteers from L. C. Bird High School to educate the public on the importance of recycling in Chesterfield County.

As attendees entered the fairgrounds, they received a paper bag and volunteers encouraged everyone to place all their recyclable items into it instead of placing them in trash cans. At the end of the event, attendees dropped their recycling bags into marked recycle containers at various exits.

The volunteer environmental educators distributed handouts, stickers and bags. In addition, recycling signs/banners reminded the attendees of the importance of recycling at the event and everywhere. Approximately 1,000 pounds of recyclables were collected. The diversion of these recyclables made a measurable environmental difference in the community. Because of the recycling, an abundance of trash was eliminated which saved Parks and Recreation staff time and resources that would have been spent picking up trash after the event. The recycled materials were kept out of landfills as well.

The program serves as a model for other communities. This recycling effort was a great partnership which helped promote environmental stewardship, enhance community attractiveness and educate the community. Because of the success of the recycling program, the partnership will continue in 2018 and in the future.

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## Environmental/Conservation

**Nominee:** Acacia Reservation Restoration

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Cleveland Metroparks, Ohio

**Population:** 500,000+

Acacia Reservation is Cleveland Metroparks' 17th park but first converted from golf course to green space. Constructed in 1921, Acacia was acquired in 2012 through The Conservation Fund. Previously a private country club, at 155 acres, this acquisition increased public green space in the Euclid Creek watershed by 30%. In five years, the reservation has been visited by nearly a half million people and Park District staff have offered 164 public programs and led 18 volunteer events.

Soon after acquisition, an Ecological Restoration Master Plan was created to guide restoration while using monitoring to document changes occurring on the landscape. Hence, providing a model to help others faced with similar opportunities. Grants provided over \$2 million to reattach a creek to its floodplain, daylight buried streams, remove drain tile, and plant native vegetation. In total, we planted 6,860 trees and shrubs and 4,174 herbaceous plugs, restored 1,774 linear feet of stream channel, and created 2,535 feet of wetland swales. Results from flow monitoring shows a two-fold reduction in creek velocity. Moreover, wildlife have returned to the site including mink, coyotes, deer, and 139 (and counting) species of birds.

This was a team effort across six Cleveland Metroparks divisions and collaboration with over 20 different entities including Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, Friends of Euclid Creek, Case Western Reserve University, Biohabitats, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, US Coast Guard and several local high schools. Grant funding was provided through Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, The Conservation Fund, and Cleveland Metroparks. As more golf courses around the nation enter this conversion process, Cleveland Metroparks experiences at Acacia have already provided guidance to local (Summit Metroparks) and regional (Park District of Highland Park, IL) entities and is a featured case study in a new national publication.

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## Environmental/Conservation

**Nominee:** Commercial Composting of Organic Materials

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

The Department of Parks and Recreation creates a large volume of organic waste material primarily from the straw and manure at the Prince George's Equestrian Center/The Show Place Arena, plant material removed from the flower beds, and chipped tree limbs collected by our maintenance staff. There is a heavy cost in disposing of this volume of material. For a number of years staff from the Maintenance and Development Division have collected this material and mixed it in to large rows. Over several months it is periodically turned and allowed to break down into a high quality compost. This material is then used as mulch in our flowerbeds, around the base of trees, and in other areas as needed. Further cost savings are achieved since we do not have to purchase mulch for these purposes.

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## Environmental/Conservation

**Nominee:** Quick Connect

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

The Maintenance and Development Division submitted a conservation solution for collecting rain water from several DPR sites and using catchment systems to water flower beds and turf fields throughout the County. Their efforts included several cross divisional partnerships including Park Planning and Development, Natural and Historical Resources, Arts and Cultural Heritage, Administrative Services, and Public Affairs and Marketing.

Quick Connect has reduced water cost for landscape irrigation by 69% (a reduction of 45% is considered success). We are able to conserve water and improve water quality with lower departmental energy costs. The carbon footprint greenhouse gas emission and air pollution, as well as storm water runoff, will be reduced.

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## Environmental/Conservation

**Nominee:** Invasive Plant Species Management Plan

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation, Georgia

**Population:** 900,000

Since its inception in 1987, Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation has been working towards preventing the exponential growth of invasive species within its park borders. In recognition of the impacts to the natural, cultural, fiscal, and overall health from invasive species, GCPR developed the Invasive Plant Species Management Plan for invasive species control, eradication, and prevention within the parks system. The plan also addresses appropriate habitat restoration, staff training, and public outreach and education. Gwinnett County currently holds over 10,000 acres of public lands with over 32% of those acres predominately filled with invasive plant species including Chines Privet, Kudzu and English Ivy. This plan is meant to act as a template for individualized action plans specific to park sites, facing unique issues, infestation and limitations. We have used extensive GIS based searches for "hotspots" or large concentrations of invasive species identified 12 parks as priority sites for the removal of invasive and the reintroduction of native flora. We identify and prioritize areas of greatest risk due to ecological or historical significance or proximity to a disturbed area or a habitat already containing invasive species. Staff removes invasive plant materials through in-house labor force, county and state correctional inmates and volunteer work days consisting of citizens interested in learning and assisting in reducing the invasive plant load density in our county parks. We use surveys conducted by other agencies, including the use of EDDMAPS® and share data collected by GCPR with other institutions. Staff is trained and is currently utilizing this system as needed to assist in its data collection towards the identification of local areas of interest within the project scope. We have maintained awareness of current invasive species research in order to develop and adapt monitoring and management options, through membership with statewide Task Force Groups and ongoing external training.

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## Environmental/Conservation

**Nominee:** Natural Resource Management Plan

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Fairfax County Park Authority, Virginia

**Population:** 1.2 million

The Fairfax County Park Authority's Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) coordinates county efforts to preserve natural resources. There are four program areas under NRMP guidance:

- Inventory and planning for conservation
- Protecting natural resources
- Restoring and managing vital ecosystems
- Involving the public and partnering with organizations to expand natural capital

Prescribed burns, invasive species management, deer management and stream valley restoration are examples of the steps taken in the field.

The NRMP is a 20-year plan entering its fifth year. Through its first four years, the Park Authority has:

- Restored more than 5,500 acres of native habitat.
- Restored more than 4,000 linear feet of streams.
- Preserved natural areas and rare resources by inventorying more than 3,100 acres and designating 18 Resource Protection Zones.
- Protected natural resources by requiring negative impacts to be avoided, minimized, and mitigated more than 1,300 times.
- Conducted natural resource operations on almost 18,000 acres.
- Recorded more than 205,000 hours of volunteer time.
- Partnered with 20 organizations.

One program example that focuses on involving the public to expand natural capital is the Invasive Management Area (IMA) initiative. Since 2014, 9,704 IMA volunteers have donated 33,868 hours battling non-native plants during 1,472 workdays and have removed 6,129 bags of invasive plants while planting thousands of native plants. There are almost 60 active IMA sites across the county. One of IMA's ultimate goals is having naturally regenerating native plant systems and healthy native wildlife populations.

The plan succeeds because it combines a coordinated, hands-on approach to natural resource management based on the best available science and that has clearly defined management goals applied at a large scale.

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## Environmental/Conservation

**Nominee:** Kankakee Sands Habitat Restoration

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Forest Preserve District of Will County, Illinois

**Population:** 677,560

In 1999, the Forest Preserve District of Will County (FPDWC) began land acquisition in the Kankakee Sands region to purchase agricultural lands that separated three state-dedicated nature preserves, which is a designation given to the highest quality natural areas in Illinois. The nature preserves support a high diversity of vegetation types and provide habitat for over 700 species of native plants, including 12 threatened or endangered plant species. The nature preserves provide habitat for over 500 different species of wildlife including two threatened or endangered turtle species and seven insects listed as Species in Greatest Need of Conservation. Once hydrology and plant communities are restored to the former agricultural fields, these lands will once again interconnect and buffer the nature preserves' remnant habitats, resulting in a 1,450-acre high-quality habitat complex adjacent to the Kankakee River.

In partnership with The Nature Conservancy and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the FPDWC has been systematically re-establishing natural hydrology and planting hundreds of native species specific to the Kankakee Sands ecoregion. To date, 550 acres of native sand prairie and wetlands have been restored in the former agricultural fields. These high diversity restorations are important to allow cross-pollination, animal movement, and suitable microhabitats for a wide diversity of insects, birds, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and other wildlife, including the resident threatened and endangered species. The ecological quality of the natural areas have greatly improved through planting native species, controlling invasive species, reintroducing fire by way of controlled burns, and implementing a deer population management program. Visitors to Kankakee Sands can easily access and enjoy this site from a newly constructed parking area with amenities or by hiking the 2.5 mile loop trail through the preserve where there are opportunities for birding, botanizing and nature photography.

<https://www.reconnectwithnature.org/news-events/big-features/restoring-kankakee-sands>

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### **Alternate Contact**

## Environmental/Conservation

**Nominee:** Dictionary Hill Acquisition

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** San Diego County Department of Parks & Recreation, California

**Population:** over 500,000

The County of San Diego preserved one of the last remaining open space tracts in Spring Valley, a park-poor community in south San Diego. Following the progress and of a dedicated group of community activists - the Dictionary Hill Open Space Advocates - the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) swooped in to help conserve the 175-acre property and to protect it from development. Both state and federal agencies had identified at least two threatened species on the land: The California gnatcatcher and the Quino Checkerspot Butterfly. It was a long-fought battle to conserve the 175-acre property, named Dictionary Hill for the hundreds of lots deeded to eager buyers once they agreed to buy an encyclopedia set with a dictionary thrown in.

In 2009, after 6 years of trying to save Dictionary Hill, the advocate group got close, but they needed assistance to prevent developers from slashing valuable wildlife habitat for 200 new homes. In early 2017, after working behind the scene for years with the Advocates group, wildlife agencies, and a local consortium of governments, DPR took control of negotiations with the landowner. In late July 2017, the landowner finally agreed to accept the appraised value for Dictionary Hill if escrow could close in 90 days - a tight timeline for any major deal. DPR accepted the challenge, fulfilling its mission to enhance recreation opportunities while protecting natural resources.

December 2017, DPR placed "Dictionary Hill Open Space Preserve" signs on the preserve's entrance - just minutes after escrow closed. Existing trails were able to remain open, and park programming was introduced to teach residents about the vital role the property plays in the region's ecosystem. Activities are a collaborative effort between DPR, the Advocates group, local schools and neighbors. Today, people across the County are enjoying hikes through this rare and cherished resource.

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## Environmental/Conservation

**Nominee:** Wagon Wheel Creek Restoration

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Orange County Parks, California

**Population:** 3 million

Orange County Parks (OC Parks) operates 544-acre Riley Wilderness Park as part of the County's regional parks system. The park features mature coast live oak trees and a wildlife corridor for animals including mule deer and bobcats. Its trails and rustic setting are popular with hikers and equestrians.

Wagon Wheel Creek runs through the park, and urban runoff from years of nearby development caused severe bank erosion and channel degradation. This created a significant threat to public streets and utilities, trees and the park's overall ecology, and a potential hazard for visitors.

OC Parks, with a consultant, developed a holistic, strategic approach to provide critical erosion control in areas of limited disturbance. The project design included engineering measures coupled with bioengineering protection and native planting to naturally restore the creek's health, increase habitat diversity, encourage the growth of native plant communities and reduce urban runoff pollution via bio-detention and bio-filtration.

The project incorporated design features for erosion control, including terraced timber walls and sheet-pile grade control structures combined with rock channels and energy dissipaters. The result offered creek restoration and water quality benefits for downstream receiving water bodies. The project also created an earthen berm upstream, converting the natural creek storage to an in-stream water quality basin for runoff retention.

Construction took place from December 2016 through October 2017. Post-construction monitoring of mitigation sites, including rehabilitating plants and habitats, continues.

The project corrected a significant erosion problem using minimal permanent-impact engineering techniques, like grouted riprap, concrete and sheet-pile. Using brush mattresses, willow cuttings, earthen berms and timber walls complemented the natural surroundings and maintained the park's wilderness feel.

Despite trail closures, the public supported the project and were very patient throughout construction because they understood the severe erosion could negatively impact future enjoyment of the park.

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## Historical/Cultural Facility

**Nominee:** Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Johnson County Park & Recreation District, Kansas

**Population:** 560,000

The Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center (JCAHC) is a unique partnership between Johnson County Park & Recreation District (JCPRD), Johnson County Government and other community partners. JCAHC is a model in public stewardship, community building and access to cultural opportunities through a shared vision to provide historical, fine arts, dance, and performing arts programming. JCPRD operates and manages the center per a 10-year agreement with Johnson County Government, the facility owner. Formerly a bowling center and ice skating rink that had sat vacant for nearly 10 years, the JCAHC brings life into the historically significant mid-century modern building. Located in the heart of Johnson County on a major through-fare, Johnson County Government acquired and renovated the facility for \$22 million; an additional \$1.8 million, largely through philanthropic community gifts, funded the museum exhibition program. Staff from all entities partnered from June 2015 to June 2017 to design, construct, furnish and program the 80,000 square foot facility.

Major programmatic features include the Johnson County Museum, including the all-electric house that was moved into the structure, a black box theater for Theatre in the Park, fine arts and dance classrooms, an art studio Johnson County Developmental Supports, offices for Arts Council of Johnson County and community rental opportunities for meetings and special events. Overland Park Historical Society displays objects in an exhibit room and advance voting activities occur during election years.

Since opening in June 2017, JCAHC has served more than 77,000 visitors. Grand opening events drew 5,100 people and robust media coverage, with a reach of 2 million people in more than 25 new stories. Museum attendance has increased by 49 percent and 1,780 families have purchased annual museum memberships, up from 273 in 2016.

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## Historical/Cultural Facility

**Nominee:** Locust Grove Historical Home

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Louisville Parks and Recreation, Kentucky

**Population:** 765,352

Locust Grove is a c.1792 Georgian estate and National Historic Landmark, built by William and Lucy Clark Croghan (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPa2wzvOKXk&feature=youtu.be>). The estate has been visited by many historic luminaries, including Lucy's brother, General George Rogers Clark, a Revolutionary War hero and the founder of Louisville. The site was purchased by Jefferson County and the Commonwealth of Kentucky in 1961 and underwent extensive renovations before it was opened to the public in 1964. The ongoing maintenance and preservation of the site is the joint responsibility of Historic Locust Grove, Inc., and Louisville Metro Government, through Louisville Parks and Recreation.

The mission of Historic Locust Grove is to preserve and interpret the remaining 55-acres of William Croghan's estate, Locust Grove, as an example of early nineteenth-century frontier America, and to share the stories of the many people who contributed to the history of the site. The site is open for visitors 6 days each week, features a wide variety of special events, and is available to rent for events and meetings.

Locust Grove is unique in that it is a self-sustaining 501c3, funded by its public events, lectures, performances, and tours, coupled with regular financial support from friends of the property and minimal support from Jefferson County. It interprets the life of an American hero, three generations of social life and family connections on the American frontier, and an exploration of the lives of all people that have lived there, including the enslaved. The site partners with the African American Theater Program at the University of Louisville to portray slave life, including the operation of a still, work that would have traditionally been done by slaves. Locust Grove has recently embarked on a \$3 million capital campaign to ensure stability of the historic home and to develop education programming for children and adults.

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## Historical/Cultural Facility

**Nominee:** Isaac Adair and Lawrenceville Female Seminary

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation, Georgia

**Population:** 900,000

The Lawrenceville Female Seminary and Isaac Adair House, a testimony to Gwinnett County's dedication to the preservation of its history and culture, represent the early period of Gwinnett's frontier days as it transitioned to a successful town. Through the hard work and dedication of local citizens, these buildings and their significant place in history have been preserved for generations to enjoy.

The Lawrenceville Female Seminary was first established in 1837 by a group of local leaders who thought that young ladies needed an opportunity for an education. The school continued until about 1886, and in the 1970s it was threatened to be removed for the construction of a Dairy Queen restaurant. The local community led by Annette Williams Tucker rallied to save this historic building.

The Isaac Adair House, another example of historic preservation, sits adjacent to the Lawrenceville Female Seminary. This house dates to 1827, featuring unique wood craftsmanship. Like the Seminary, the Adair House was saved by local community members, Marvin and Phyllis Hughes who dedicated ten years to the restoration of this home, and awarded the 2018 Excellence in Preservation Service Award from the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation.

Over the past 35 years, the Lawrenceville Female Seminary has seen many students through its doors as they engage in school exercises from the 19th century. Summer camps, family programs, living history programs and bus tours engage thousands of program participants, explore diverse cultures through programs like Archaeology and the Ancient World, Black History Month, Celtic Coffeehouses, Victorian Feasts and the new 3rd Saturday Family programs featuring bilingual educational programs. The upstairs of the facility includes the Gwinnett History Museum, featuring artifacts telling the rich history of the County. As Gwinnett County celebrates its Bicentennial during 2018 these unique architectural treasures tell the rich history of the frontier beginnings of Lawrenceville and Gwinnett County.

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## Historical/Cultural Facility

**Nominee:** Fort Christmas Historical Park

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Orange County Parks and Recreation Division, Florida

**Population:** 1,288,126

On December 25, 1837, a force of 2,000 U.S. Army and Alabama volunteers arrived in Christmas, Florida, to construct a supply depot fort during the Second Seminole Indian War. By 1838 the Fort was abandoned.

In 1930, 10 acres of land was deeded to Orange County for the creation of Fort Christmas Historical Park. Today, the property is 142 acres.

Orange County began construction on a replica of Fort Christmas in 1975. The Fort was dedicated on December 17, 1977. The fort features two blockhouses, a storehouse (featuring a museum), and a stockade. Outside the stockade visitors can tour a replica of a Florida Cracker House, a sugar cane mill and syrup kettle, a stand of sugar cane and a small orange grove.

In addition to the Fort, multiple historic structures were moved to the park to create an interpretive living history village. Many interpretive artifacts used in these structures were donated by descendants of pioneers from the Christmas area. These include the 1917 Beehead Ranch House (interprets the cattle industry); the 1927 Woods house (focuses on the importance of hunting, fishing and trapping); the 1900s Brown house (represents the citrus industry); the 1870s Simmons house (a family farm and temporary post office exhibit); the 1900s Wheeler Bass house (a transitional day laborer's home); the 1890s Yates and Simmons houses (early pioneer dwellings); the 1906 Union School and Lunchroom; and the 1953 Dixie and Emma Partin house and barn. The transport and restoration of the 1937 Christmas Post Office is in progress.

The park's signature events include Cracker Christmas, serves over 50,000 visitors; Militia Encampment, demonstrates soldiers' lives during the Second Seminole Indian War (1885-1842); a Bluegrass event; and a Living History Festival for elementary students.

Recently added events include Ag Fest with a Cattle Battle and Chicken "Picken," Homesteading in the Wilderness, and gardening classes.

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## Historical/Cultural Facility

**Nominee:** Colvin Run Mill

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Fairfax County Park Authority, Virginia

**Population:** 1.2 Million

The short walk into Colvin Run Mill Historic Site provides a transformation from a parking lot's gasoline-powered metal and composite engines to a 19th century world of wood and water power.

The site, on land once owned by George Washington, preserves a 19th century General Store with merchandise examples, a c. 1809 miller's house, a barn constructed on the footprint of the original, a reproduction blacksmith shop, and the original mill itself, built c. 1811 and still producing flour today. It is a rare Oliver Evans system that revolutionized milling and helped make America the world's leading flour-producing nation. The mill operated until 1934 and was restored by the Fairfax County Park Authority in the 1970s.

A walking path parallels the mill race, and visitors see the water as it flows from the flume over the water wheel. Burr stones line a hillside near the mill. The mill's walls are a combination of original and replacement brick. The overshot waterwheel reproduces as faithfully as possible the original waterwheel. Barn exhibits include a 1/24 scale model of the mill, 19th century kitchen tools, and a map of grain production around the world.

Docents interpret the site through public tours, scout programs, and school field trips that fulfill Standards of Learning requirements. Hundreds of thousands of students have toured the mill. There are camps, including a mini-miller camp, an annual maple syrup boil down, a miller's school and teas. The site hosted the 2011 national conference of the Society for the Preservation of Old Mills. Fairfax County's Cross-County trail runs near the mill, bringing hikers to the site. The mill is recognized as an engineering landmark by the Society of Mechanical Engineers, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is a Virginia Landmark.

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## Historical/Cultural Facility

**Nominee:** Oxon Hill Manor

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

Oxon Hill Manor is a 49-room Neo-Georgian manor that sits high on a hill and offers a picturesque view of the Potomac River from the garden area. The grounds include formal English gardens, rose bushes surrounding a reflecting pool, and a large brick patio for outdoor entertaining. In recent months, the development of the new harbor and casino have brought several construction projects to the area. Management and staff at Oxon Hill have maintained and preserved the historic envelope of the manor while still offering affordable rentals for clients and county residents seeking historical elegance and unique classical charm. With the constant upkeep of a historic venue, Oxon Hill Manor has sustained its definitive character and has most recently received an award from the Maryland Historic Trust for being a good steward of a historic easement property.

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## Historical/Cultural Facility

**Nominee:** Historic Fort Tuthill Quad

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Coconino County Parks and Recreation, Arizona

**Population:** 139,097

Fort Tuthill County Park, located three miles south of Flagstaff in Coconino County, is home to many recreation opportunities, from multi-use, non-motorized trails to a performing arts amphitheater. The park was home to the Arizona National Guard's summer training grounds from 1929-1948, and in 1955 the site became a county park. The historic Quad is home to the annual Coconino County Fair, which celebrates its 69th year in 2018 and averages over 40,000 people during the four-day event. When the historic Quad was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2004, the buildings were returned to their original brick siding and painted their traditional colors of white with green trim. However, the historic Quad remained a sea of asphalt that was failing. When Coconino County residents approved a sales tax initiative in 2002, the renovation of historic portions of Fort Tuthill was one of the projects on the ballot. In 2016, after a series of project planning meetings, construction began.

From Fall 2016 to Summer 2017, the historic Quad's surface was torn up and revamped with new water, electrical, and communications infrastructure. This project generated a great deal of public interest and excitement as the quad is iconic part of the park recognized by many as the home of the county fair. The County's Parks and Recreation Department dedicated the historic Quad in August 2017, just in time for the Coconino County Fair. Fairgoers expressed positive feedback and were treated to smooth concrete walkways that are ADA accessible, with sandblasted military insignia that pay homage to the site's military past, dark-sky lighting, a PA system, and over 30 landscape trees that will provide future shade. The \$4.1 million renovation project illustrates the challenge of updating a park and recreation site while retaining historical integrity.

More info: <http://coconino.az.gov/826/Fort-Tuthill-County-Park-Master-Plan>

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## Historical/Cultural Facility

**Nominee:** Brookwood

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Metroparks Toledo, Ohio

**Population:** 432,488

Brookwood is a scenic, private retreat for special events unlike any other location at Metroparks Toledo. The 50-acre wooded property straddles Swan Creek and is used for programs, small events, and rentals. Opened to the public in October 2017 and operated as part of Swan Creek Preserve, Brookwood represents an important step in the realization of a long-term vision of connectivity in the Swan Creek Corridor. Brookwood was made possible through a generous donation from a conservation minded family-the Belts.

William and Virginia Belt, merged a love of nature and music into their lives and legacy. Shortly after graduating from law school in 1927, William Belt worked for the U.S. Forest Service, an experience that led to a lifetime of appreciation for nature. His wife Virginia not only taught piano, but hosted world renowned musicians in their home. Together, they merged their love of music and nature into their estate. The property has a diversity of wildflowers, native trees, and is a migratory pathway.

From 1999-2003, Metroparks Toledo was gifted the homestead and 50 acres. Interior and exterior renovations were made to the 1940-era home to create a flexible use space with public restrooms, a small parking lot and a path to the creek. A remodeled deck provides tremendous views of the floodplain. Future plans for the homestead and site include access trails from the hillside to Swan Creek, a canoe and kayak landing for recreation access, and connectivity to an additional 67 acres of prime Swan Creek habitat donated from another conservation-minded family. Already since its opening the public has embraced Brookwood through an outpouring of visitation and rental requests. A folk music series along, with nature walks, open air painting classes and photography classes are all opportunities for the public to engage in nature and music at Brookwood.

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## Historical/Cultural Facility

**Nominee:** Gossip Tour of Merestead

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:** Commissioner

**Nominee's Organization:** Westchester County Parks, New York

**Population:** 962,000

Merestead is an early 20th century mansion that was owned by William Sloane who was president of the nationally known furniture/decorating business. Today, it is maintained and operated by Westchester County Parks, with tours of the house offered throughout the year.

In 2016, a new tour debuted called "Gossip as History and History as Gossip" to explore one of the few avenues through which people of the era were able to learn about the lifestyles of the rich and famous, before the world of global media and the internet.

As the curator leads visitors through the house, she relates the story of the family based on clippings and photos that she passes along to the "guests." These clips share news about the Sloanes' engagement, the details of their wedding and honeymoon, and even how much money and property Margaret was left following William's death.

In earlier times, servants of aristocrat families were forbidden to repeat anything they heard in the house. But, during the 1920s, the boundary between what was private and what was public was beginning to dissolve as servants began to speak more openly about their employers. This new "public" private talk resulted in the creation of the so-called society columns in local newspapers.

By hearing these "gossipy" details, visitors get a sense of the history and culture of life for people of wealth and can imagine what their lives might have been like during this time in history.

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## Historical/Cultural Facility

**Nominee:** College Park Aviation Museum

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

The College Park Aviation Museum opened in 1998 and is an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution. The museum is a 27,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility located on the grounds of the world's oldest continuously operating airport in College Park, Maryland. The airport was founded in 1909 when Wilbur Wright came here to give flight instruction to the first military aviators. The museum gallery contains historic and reproduction aircraft associated with the history of the airfield, as well as hands-on activities and interpretive areas for children of all ages. Changing exhibits and new programs every month keep visitors coming back for more. Most recently, the museum added an event space to accommodate meeting rentals. The Operations Building offers a myriad of spaces from a state-of-the-art meeting space, which can also be rented for receptions and other events, to a light filled two-story lobby, and an outdoor terrace overlooking the airfield. With the additional space of the Operations Building, this will allow for additional revenue of the museum and collections as well as alleviate space around the exhibition and gallery hall.

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## Marketing

**Nominee:** eBrochure

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** LOS ANGELES County Dept. of Parks and Recreation, California

**Population:** 10 million

As an agency that serves millions of residents each year by maintaining 182 parks and offering recreational programs and activities across all age groups, the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) needed a communication method that offered residents a fast and comprehensive way to look for and enroll in programs.

The challenge was how could DPR communicate its many programs and activities in a way that was simple, visually appealing, user-friendly, cost-efficient, and reached the widest audience possible? The answer was the production of a quarterly online eBrochure called P&R Magazine.

To meet the changing needs of the community, where printed materials are no longer effective, the Department chose to develop an online publication. It was also cost-efficient in that an online magazine does not require costly printing fees. In order to reach as wide of an audience as the online publication does, DPR would need to mail and print thousands of copies of the eBrochure, and that was both financially cost-prohibitive, as well as an inefficient use of taxpayer dollars.

Residing on the DPR website ([www.parks.lacounty.gov](http://www.parks.lacounty.gov)) that's frequented by approximately 1 million visitors per year, the colorful online magazine contains riveting features, programs and activity information that include times of operation, location, dates of operation, and cost, if applicable.

The online P&R Magazine uses an innovative approach that focuses on providing the public with detailed information about nearly every DPR program and activity offered to residents countywide. DPR relied on staff to design, write and provide photos for the eBrochure.

The eBrochure enables readers to conveniently sign up for nearly 45 percent of Department classes and activities online, rather than having to physically visit a park to do so. This saves the public time and transportation costs.

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## Marketing

### **Nominee:** The Play Faces Campaign

#### **Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

You know that slightly odd, abnormally exaggerated look you get on your face when you are overly excited, making a new discovery, or doing something really fun? At the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Department of Parks and Recreation, they call that strange face, your "Play Face". They believe that your Play Face is not just brilliant and inspiring, but is also as unique as your thumbprint. Eager to share this discovery with current and potential clients, they used imaginative and inspiring messaging to create the Play Faces Campaign.

Its concept demonstrates the exciting and empowering nature of recreation. The campaign celebrates the different expressions of play by their patrons in order to give viewers the opportunity to envision themselves experiencing the exciting programs the Department offers. Although the Department had not used television to reach their audience, they ventured into television advertising, seeing the advantages of using video to capture play in action. They worked with talented and loyal patrons of their Department to create a series of "Play Face" commercials that aired on cable networks and digital platforms.

The campaign delivered a total of 7,058,059 impressions. During the timeframe of the campaign their social media increased by 11% and they had the biggest first day of summer registration in the history of their agency with over 6,100 registrations in a single day. This was a 30% jump from the previous year. The campaign was an exciting and successful way to celebrate the empowering nature of play.

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## Marketing

**Nominee:** Get Outside Yourself

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Metroparks Toledo, Ohio

**Population:** 432488

The majority of Metroparks Toledo users are Lucas County residents. 70% of Lucas County's adults are overweight or obese, and the overall obesity rate (36%) is higher than the statewide or national average. Reaching these at risk populations by getting them active, outdoors and focusing on health and wellness is essential to their futures. The Get Outside Yourself marketing campaign stems from the vision of Metroparks Toledo to connect people and nature through actions and experiences that are meaningful to them. The campaign is designed to inspire increased usage of the Metroparks through active exploration and engagement.

This campaign has a central goal of contributing to the overall mental and physical well-being of area residents by encouraging people to engage with nature and the outdoors. The secondary goal of the Get Outside Yourself Campaign is to increase attendance at Metroparks Toledo's 16 parks to 5 million visits by mixing fun and educational content to create lasting impressions and connections among future voters, volunteers, employees, and donors. A collaborative partnership was formed between Metroparks Toledo and North Design to forge this unique campaign.

Enticing people to engage in outdoor activity is difficult in a world where people are glued to screens. We are using peoples' reliance on digital media as a way to create a robust social media campaign encouraging others to demonstrate digitally just how they have taken advantage of our beautiful Metroparks system. Social media is used to encourage people to participate and invite others to follow suit. Get Outside Yourself is promoting the idea that one doesn't need a gym membership or exercise classes to obtain optimum health. Get Outside Yourself shows just how easy it is to stop into any of the unique settings in our Metroparks system and start your journey to mental and physical wellness.

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## Marketing

**Nominee:** Safe, Clean Neighborhood Parks and Beaches Measure (Measure A)

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Los Angeles County Dept. of Parks and Recreation, California

**Population:** 10 Million

In the interest of replacing expiring voter-approved grant funding for parks projects, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, in its capacity as the governing body of the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District, placed the Safe, Clean Neighborhood Parks and Beaches Measure (Measure A) onto the November 8, 2016 ballot.

For more than 14 months, Department staff and consultants engaged in informational and educational outreach to more than 10 million residents in Los Angeles County. This included messaging in multiple languages through paid digital advertising on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, as well as informational ads through Sharethrough and Google Display Network.

Other targeted outreach included the Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Daily News and affiliated newspapers; KPCC public radio, and other TV, radio and online news outlets. In addition, a website, [www.WeAllNeedParks.org](http://www.WeAllNeedParks.org), was created to house a collection of information and facts about Measure A. The main message was, "We All Need Parks."

Nearly 75% of County voters approved Measure A, exceeding the 2/3 super-majority requirement. This accomplishment followed extensive efforts that helped inform and educate the public and government agencies across the County.

Measure A provides formula-based annual allocations to fund grant projects for the benefit of each of the 88 cities within the County, and more than 140 unincorporated communities. It will fund grants to improve existing parks, as well as develop future parks, playground equipment, recreation centers and senior centers. Initial grant availability is scheduled for July 2018.

Los Angeles County has a need for more than \$21 billion in prioritized parks and recreation projects, deferred maintenance and specialized facilities. Measure A will ensure that approximately \$96 million annually will help to address such needs countywide.

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## Marketing

**Nominee:** Amenity Search

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation, Georgia

**Population:** 900,000

Created mobile friendly interactive mapping and search components, allowing users to quickly locate any of 32 specific amenities at 50 park locations with 63 addresses. We needed to update the website presence to improve customer satisfaction, increase online interaction, and provide better access to park information. With a population of more than 900,000 on 437 square miles with nearly 10,000 acres of public park land, we worked with the Geographic Information Systems section in Information Technology to outline objectives, review requirements and scope, assign responsibilities, outline project constraints, evaluate potential risks and solutions, identify funding, and define the approval process.

32 new icons were created plus new page designs for the program guide, website, and other promotional materials. Parks and Recreation staff worked with IT's network and server teams to ensure the new park amenity map app would be compatible with most modern browsers and mobile devices. We also developed a graphic button for the application on the website and promoted it with print materials.

The result was a new, user-friendly, interactive website feature allowing park patrons to easily locate the nearest park with a specific type of amenity. Users enter an address in the search box, choose an amenity from the list, or use their current location to "find your way to fun!" We were able to add historic sites and walking tour options to increase recreation opportunities for the citizens. The new application launched in November 2016 and by February was averaging 1,171 hits per day, a dramatic improvement from 650 hits per month on the old static chart.

The success of this project depended on good working relationships among six County sections and departments: Parks & Recreation - Operations, Parks & Recreation - Project Administration, Land Information Solutions/GIS, Information Technology Systems, Communications, and Department of Community Services.

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## Marketing

**Nominee:** Great Parks' "Let's Play" Campaign

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Great Parks of Hamilton County, Ohio

**Population:** 809,099

Great Parks' "Let's Play" campaign, which ran from April-September 2017, was designed to motivate families to create memories and enjoy time together in their parks. The campaign featured a mix of traditional and digital platforms and earned, owned and paid media, and it was targeted specifically toward moms, who are the top decision makers in the family (which is Great Parks' number one demographic). This mix included outreach, television news segments, local and family publications, drive-time radio, outdoor advertising and targeted online ads. Great Parks also negotiated a weekly news segment (earned media) on its local NBC affiliate that featured the park district's executive director.

The goal was simple: take your family and play, hike, paddle, camp or otherwise get outside together at a Great Park. It let families know what was available to them in hopes that they would spend their time at a park, thus leading to increased attendance. The campaign showcased specific activities and the artwork allowed family members to see themselves doing activities.

Based on its research, Great Parks found that families were seeking an affordable place to enjoy time together through nature education and recreation. Research also showed that these families struggled with time due to their busy schedules. The "Let's Play" campaign communicated a solution to their needs by showcasing ways they could spend time together at no or a low cost. The message was delivered in through multiple touchpoints to reach moms during their normal routine. A 5.4% increase in park attendance showed that people were influenced by the campaign. Overall, the campaign was an opportunity to reinforce the value that parks bring to people and how easily enjoying the outdoors can become part of their daily lives.

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## Marketing

**Nominee:** Destination Recreation

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation Department, Florida

**Population:** 1.4 Million

The Department created a new video series titled, "Destination Recreation," where we take viewers through different parks and facilities, explaining amenities, history, and giving a behind-the-scenes look at how staff contribute to overall visitor experience. We created the show because, with 85 park locations throughout Palm Beach County, we wanted to take viewers, both residents and visitors, on unique tours that visually showed what they could experience when at our park and facility locations.

Choosing a name that felt like an actual travel show was an important component. A number of our park and beach locations are already favorite destinations among residents looking for a staycation and visitors looking for an inexpensive adventure. The second part of the title, Recreation, was chosen to remind viewers to take a break, take a walk, de-stress, improve physical and mental well-being, and enjoy the beautiful park setting. It also rhymes nicely with Destination.

In the first seven episodes, viewers travel through the Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens, visit the John Prince Park Fitness Zone, West Delray Regional Park, and Glades Parks, tour our amphitheaters and nature centers, and learn about one of the most popular amenities in Palm Beach County - boating.

The ongoing video series plays on Palm Beach County's Channel 20 television station, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, department website, and outreach events. This new marketing tool has helped expose new locations and things to do to viewers. Several thousand people have viewed the videos.

Video Links:

- Destination Recreation 1 - Morikami Museum & Japanese Gardens: <https://youtu.be/ma4xuJToQ6Q>
- Destination Recreation 2 - John Prince Park Fitness Zone: <https://youtu.be/Jl142t7CGK0>
- Destination Recreation 3 - West Delray Regional Park: <https://youtu.be/lbYVT95nBHK>
- Destination Recreation 4 - Amphitheaters: <https://youtu.be/p44QGa3sENM>
- Destination Recreation 5 - Nature Centers: <https://youtu.be/bwJFcbxJ-kQ>
- Destination Recreation 6 - Boating: <https://youtu.be/upPEdTGslx4>
- Destination Recreation 7 - Glades Area Parks: <https://youtu.be/kAwXuT9fwck>

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## Marketing

**Nominee:** Ask a Ranger Videos

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** San Diego County Department of Parks & Recreation, California

**Population:** over 500,000

In recent years, the County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation's (DPR) strategic marketing plan shifted in favor of online communications. Goals were to expand awareness of DPR parks and programs, and to foster an understanding and appreciation of local wildlife. Catchy, shareable visuals became the cornerstone of this growth. The Ask an Expert video series launched in 2016 to help position DPR as a best-in-class provider of recreation spaces and services. Media-trained rangers were interviewed by videographers from the County News Center (CNC) at their home park, sharing tips, tricks and insights on trending topics.

Scripts were drafted by DPR's in-house marketing manager and customized by rangers for more lax and sincere video clips. Most of the work was done one to two weeks in advance, so shoot-time never exceeded two hours. The first videos went live in 2016, with many more in 2017. The most watched video of 2017, "Why do some trails close when it rains?" earned 33,432 Facebook, 3,640 YouTube, and 6,139 CNC views. Another video that got a lot of traction was, "Prickly Situation for Hikers: How to Remove Cactus," collecting 75,346 Facebook, 1,927 YouTube and 1,708 CNC views. To date, 13 short videos have been produced featuring a mix of male and female rangers at desert, mountain, valley, and coastal locations.

Produced internally with significant external results, the videos are part of a much larger plan to expand online fans and followers, sharing DPR's mission and vision across several platforms, in formats that are easy to digest and share. Social media wins include adding 5,000 followers to DPR's Facebook accounts, 1,000 to Twitter, and double the views on YouTube to 45,000. DPR has experienced a noticeable uptick in calls, event bookings, camping reservations, class registrations and resulting revenue - up \$1.2 million.

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## Marketing

**Nominee:** Digital Marketing

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Forest Preserve District of Will County, Illinois

**Population:** 689,529

In 2016, the Forest Preserve District of Will County began an initiative to reduce its traditional print marketing and to focus more on digital. Not only was it cost effective, but we could more frequently and effectively communicate with the public, while using data to better guide our marketing efforts.

Over 24-months, we:

- Aggressively cultivated an audience across 30 Facebook pages, with our general District page ([www.facebook.com/willcoforests](http://www.facebook.com/willcoforests)) being the main avenue for communicating. Facebook pages for individual locations are used to promote site-specific information. In 2017, we shifted some of our attention to focus more on Twitter ([www.twitter.com/willcoforests](http://www.twitter.com/willcoforests)) and Instagram ([www.instagram.com/willcoforests](http://www.instagram.com/willcoforests)), where we've seen explosive growth and a high public engagement rate.
- Launched a new website ([www.ReconnectWithNature.org](http://www.ReconnectWithNature.org)) that is responsive, easier to use, and better organized than the previous one launched in 2009.
- Converted our quarterly print newsletter, The Citizen, into a weekly email newsletter.
- Created "The Weekly Five" email blast, highlighting upcoming events.
- Emphasized videos to not only highlight the beauty of the preserves via stunning footage taken with a drone, but also to showcase the flora and fauna. Our videos are wildly popular on Facebook, being viewed 2.54 million times since March 2016.
- Saw a 1,300 percent increase in YouTube viewership.
- Started a "Will County Wildlife" Facebook Group that has been well received and, in its first week, had nearly 8,000 posts, comments and shares.

Not only does the data support the positive results these initiatives have had but, when people attend Forest Preserve programs, they often say they heard about them through digital communications. The growth we've experienced validates that we've found the right formula for maximizing our marketing, creating a greater relationship with the public and keeping a meaningful conversation going that grows with each day.

The attached brochure includes complete data sets and examples.

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## Marketing

**Nominee:** Cleveland Metroparks Centennial Campaign

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Cleveland Metroparks, Ohio

**Population:** 1,260,000

A marketing campaign was created to commemorate Cleveland Metroparks centennial with goals of reaching as many constituents as possible, showcasing the legacy of the Park District and establishing positive momentum for the next century. Earned, owned and paid media campaign elements generated a potential reach of more than 100 million impressions valued at over \$891,000 representing more than four times the return on investment. Social media provided a platform for broader audience participation generating another one million impressions. Overall visitation grew from attendance at centennial fireworks (over 30,000), plus 300,000 tuned in on Facebook. Additionally, thousands more attended other centennial programs and events.

Cleveland Metroparks engaged the community through a series of free special events, including a custom, choreographed firework and music spectacular at Edgewater Park that showcased live local bands, including Cleveland's own Michael Stanley and Friends, food trucks and outdoor recreation activities topped off by fireworks. Rededications of historic sites and educational programs paid homage to the history of the Park District. Additionally, guests were encouraged to snap photos at a "living billboard" - an eight-foot-tall aluminum and steel structure, planted with nearly 800 sedum plants shaped like the outer ring of the Park District's Centennial Seal. Other opportunities included a coffee table book, The 100 Year Trail, and a commemorative Pathfinder available free-of-charge to guests. The booklet provided a detailed guide featuring maps, historical facts and photography.

Feedback and engagement from the community, including residents, patrons, media, donors, volunteers and staff were overwhelmingly significant and positive. The high volume of personal stories in response to the centennial campaign evidenced the meaningful impact that Cleveland Metroparks has had on the community for the past 100 years. The centennial campaign inspired guests to experience new places within the Park District and learn more about the rich history and mission.

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## Operational Facility

**Nominee:** Watkins Tennis Administration Facility

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland, and Watkins Park & M&D

**Population:** Class II

The Watkins Tennis Administration Facility was designed as a LEED Certified Green Technology facility meeting the guidelines of the Department of Energy standards. The roof, walls and heat gain loss design along with solar automatic dependencies were designed to provide a sustainable building for the department model and to highlight a prototypical energy sufficient building for the public. This facility has a green technology board with a live feed camera of the roof monitoring the equipment and showing the performance of the sustainable equipment and green features. Natural lighting is incorporated into all main rooms and supplemented by vented clerestory windows in the fitness and multipurpose rooms. Green power is used for 35% of the building usage.

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## Operational Facility

**Nominee:** Blue Creek Nursery

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Metroparks Toledo, Ohio

**Population:** 432,488

Metroparks Toledo has recently acquired additional acreage in the biologically rich Oak Openings Region. Several natural community types within this region are globally imperiled. Some have had greater than 99% of their acreage destroyed. Conservation of these habitats often requires the reconstruction of communities and reconnection of remnants through native plantings. Recognizing the need for locally sourced high diversity native plant materials, the Metroparks' Natural Resources department established a native plant nursery within the Blue Creek Conservation Area. Blue Creek Nursery aims to provide high diversity, local ecotype seed for at least 150 acres of ecological restoration projects per year. Started in 2004 and vastly expanded over the last few years, the Blue Creek Nursery is now one of the largest publicly-owned nurseries in Ohio.

Through propagation and wild collection of native seeds, the nursery is able to restore threatened natural community types at a landscape scale. In 2017, the nursery collected seed from 303 species and planted over 3,000 plants. Materials produced by the Blue Creek Nursery were used to initiate ecological restoration on 78 acres and enhance 68 acres in active restoration in 2017. Community volunteers were essential to this operation, contributing 1,642 hours of service. As a partner in the Green Ribbon Initiative, a regional conservation coalition, the nursery also provides native plant materials to other landowners in the region and serves as a hub of resources and expertise. By continually connecting restored sites with other natural areas in northwest Ohio, habitats are better sustained for wildlife long-term and more aesthetically pleasing for people. When restored with blooming native plants, these sites offer better opportunities for pollinators and other insects to thrive. Some of the seeded sites are adjacent to a newly established corridor trail and offer better overall wildlife and plant community viewing and educational opportunities.

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## Outstanding Contributor

**Nominee:** Jean and Ric Edelman

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Fairfax County Park Authority, Virginia

**Population:** 1.2 million

Ric Edelman's childhood interest in astronomy was reignited when friends gave him a telescope for his 40th birthday. When he and his wife, Jean, learned that the Fairfax County Park Authority was building a roll-top observatory at The Turner Farm in their Great Falls neighborhood, they saw a chance to share their love of astronomy with generations to come.

The Edelms, financial advisors by trade, donated \$75,000 to complete the observatory and to spark an interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education in local school children. Their money went toward the purchase of high-power telescopes that can be used when the observatory's roof is rolled back to reveal the nighttime skies. The Edelms see the donation as an investment in the future and believe "there's no better way to excite a child about science than astronomy."

For the Edelms, peering into the heavens is "a wonderful way to stay grounded and humble." They have shown this personally, as they have shunned publicity about the amount of their donation.

For the Park Authority, their donation has been invaluable, helping to launch myriad astronomy programs unique to the area. The observatory's indoor classroom offers programs for children, adults and families both day and night. When the building's top rolls back, the walls protect star-gazers from the elements and ambient light. Turner Farm has seen an increase in visitors since the observatory's opening and often draws more than 100 people each month to its cost-free regular Friday night viewing sessions. The observatory the Edelms helped to make possible was honored by the Virginia Recreation and Parks Society as the 2016 Best New Facility (Bricks and Mortar) in a population area greater than 100,000. In 2017, the Edelms were honored by the Fairfax County Park Foundation with the Eakin Philanthropy Award.

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## Outstanding Contributor

**Nominee:** Steve Stolaruk

**Nominee's Title:** owner

**Nominee's Organization:** Star-Batt Mine, Michigan

**Population:** 1.2 million

Steve Stolaruk - Oakland County Parks and Recreation's ORV Park's biggest cheerleader

Since the Oakland County, Michigan Parks and Recreation Commission (OCPRC), Michigan Department of Nature Resources and Groveland Township started talking about creating an off-road vehicle park, Steve Stolaruk had been the biggest supporter of the idea.

In 2013, OCPRC staff met with Stolaruk, then owner of the Star-Batt mine, to propose the idea of an ORV park in Groveland Township. The County staff laid out the vision of a renewed recreational corridor with the off-road vehicle adventure park as a catalyst for state investment and economic development. Stolaruk listened intently, asked questions occasionally, and politely asked for their business cards as he got up to leave. As he stood up, Stolaruk looked at the Groveland Township Supervisor and said "This is exactly what this community needs. We have to have this park."

Stolaruk recently sold his sand and gravel mine to the MDNR to provide about half of the land necessary for the future off-road vehicle park. He was a special guest at the first of the two Dixie Gully Run test events at the site, and was inspired by what he saw. From 2014-2017, Stolaruk had one or two of his employees working six days a week sculpting every inch of the 113-acre property in an effort to get the park developed as soon as possible. His volunteer work equaled thousands of dollars in free material and time. He built hills, dug ponds and mud pits, cut hill climbs, leveled prospective parking areas, and roughed-in more than five miles of winding ORV trails. He also brought in refrigerator-sized boulders and concrete slabs (and more than 150 mammoth tree trunks) to the site.

Until his death on Feb. 12, 2018 at the age of 91, his excitement never waned.

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## Outstanding Public Official

**Nominee:** Dave Somers

**Nominee's Title:** Snohomish County Executive

**Nominee's Organization:** Snohomish County Parks, Recreation & Tourism Dept, Washington

**Population:** 800,000

Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers understands the important and fundamental role that Parks, Recreation and Tourism play in preserving and protecting our environment; building strong and resilient communities and growing our local and regional economy. Snohomish County is in the top 25 fastest growing counties in the nation with just under 800,000 residents and nearly 250,000 more expected by 2050. Dave strongly believes that Parks, Recreation and Tourism are at the heart of building strong individuals and communities. He has said, "Great parks, public spaces and programs make for strong communities." Dave is focused on developing policies that make our communities safer, healthier and more prosperous.

Dave has dedicated his career to the concept of environmental sustainability, preserving and protecting habitat, and growing the region's economy and green infrastructure. Dave graduated from the University of Washington with a B.S. in Fisheries and Master's Degree in Forest Ecology. He worked with Federally recognized Tribes in habitat preservation and restoration for nearly two decades and then entered public service. He served 14 years as a Snohomish County Councilman and was elected Snohomish County Executive in 2015.

Dave values and inspires innovation through an unwavering commitment to the Continuous Improvement. The Department is a national leader in its cost recovery model achieving an ROI of 78.5% of the County General Funds (10.27 million annual GF expenditures with 8.06 million in revenue in 2017). The Department manages its General Fund, Capital Fund, Tourism Funds, Public Facility District Funds, Historic Preservation and Arts Funds, Washington State University Extension Program Funds for a total annual budget of just over 70 million. The Outdoor Recreation, Tourism and Hospitality business sector is a \$2 Billion industry annually in Snohomish County.

The Park system boasts nearly 12,000 acres with 110 park sites; 47 miles of fresh and saltwater shoreline; nearly 5 million annual visitors; 100's of miles of regional and local trails; more than 21,000 overnight reservations annually in our campgrounds; more than the 350,000 in attendance at the 12 day annual Evergreen State Fair, and hundreds of thousands at our athletic, cultural and community events.

County Executive Dave Somers inspirational leadership, desire to achieve excellence and unwavering commitment for true public service are the key to our success and continued prosperity.

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## Outstanding Public Official

**Nominee:** Jack C. Young

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:** Baltimore City Council President

**Nominee's Organization:** Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, Maryland

**Population:** 621,000

Baltimore City Council President Bernard C. "Jack" Young has been a lifelong champion of Baltimore's public parks, open spaces and recreation centers.

As the founder of the Productive Lives, Active Youth (P.L.A.Y.) Campaign, City Council President Young has created meaningful and longstanding connections between Baltimore's young people and the city's myriad recreational spaces.

In 2012, Council President Young's citywide baseball tournament, the President's Cup, was recognized by Major League Baseball for an effort to renovate and help maintain public ball fields throughout Baltimore that raised more than \$166,000.

And for the past seven years, Young has introduced children to the game of street hockey thanks to a partnership between the National Hockey League's Washington Capitals and the Department of Recreation and Parks that features more than 150 children from eight Baltimore City recreation centers competing for street hockey supremacy.

During his time on the City Council, Young has also championed the need for increasing funding for projects related to the Department of Recreation and Parks. In 2014, Young was on hand as Baltimore celebrated the opening of the city's first new recreation center built in 10 years.

And in June 2018, Young will again join Major League Baseball's Baltimore Orioles for his 8th annual President's Cup match at Oriole Park at Camden Yards. A signature event of Young's P.L.A.Y. Campaign, the President's Cup aims to boost youth participation on public fields through the sport of Baseball by uniting students from different backgrounds that normally wouldn't compete with one another.

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## Outstanding Public Official

**Nominee:** Mike McDowell

**Nominee's Title:** VLPRA Board Chairman

**Nominee's Organization:** Valdosta-Lowndes Parks & Recreation Authority, Georgia

**Population:** 100,000

Mike McDowell is currently the chairman of the Parks and Recreation Authority Board and has been a member of the Board since its inception in 2009. He's served the community faithfully for nine years on the all-volunteer Board, receiving no pay for countless hours of work.

In the Board's inaugural year, Mr. McDowell and fellow board members were tasked with migrating a municipal department into a free-standing authority that receives its own millage rate and manages all employees and benefits. He worked diligently to ensure a competitive benefits package, creating insurance and retirement plans for 40+ employees and acting as both their advocate and ambassador.

Since then, he's led the charge for policy updates, including requiring all youth coaches to pass background checks before working with children. Mr. McDowell and the Board have also led the Authority to six years of spotless audits, and guided the budget from a \$250,000 fund balance to a \$3.5 million fund balance over the course of six years. That stewardship is resulting in major construction with minimal loans. He and the Board are currently in the design phase of constructing a new soccer complex and a new Miracle Field Complex, as well as adding six courts to VLPRA's existing tennis complex.

Under Mr. McDowell and Board members' leadership, VLPRA has become a true economic engine by hosting dozens of baseball, softball, and tennis tournaments each year. It's resulted in nearly \$20 million dollars of economic impact over the last three and a half years. Mr. McDowell has championed the full utilization of VLPRA facilities to yield the most impact for the area economy while providing the best possible programs for residents.

His tireless effort for the betterment of VLPRA and the Valdosta-Lowndes County community make him the most deserving recipient of this esteemed award.

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## Outstanding Public Official

**Nominee:** Seve Ghose

**Nominee's Title:** Director

**Nominee's Organization:** Louisville Parks and Recreation, Kentucky

**Population:** 765,352

Seve Ghose has served as the director of Louisville Parks and Recreation since 2015 and has over thirty years of experience in the Parks and Recreation Industry. He is a member of NRPA, has served on two NRPA Test Committees and on the CAPRA Board, is a Certified Park and Recreations Executive, and received the NRPA National Distinguished Professional Award in 2013. Seve also serves on the Board of Regents of the Parks and Recreation Maintenance Management School. Locally, he serves on the Board of 21st Century Parks, the Olmsted Parks Conservancy, the Louisville Metro Parks Foundation, and Brightside. Key accomplishments as our director include:

- Streamlining the CAPRA re-accreditation process for our successful 2017 re-accreditation.
- Introducing a natural playground to our system and creating a policy requiring parks with multiple playgrounds to replace one with a natural playground.
- Growing our naturalization program from 25 acres to over 350 in 2017 to cut costs, improve air and water quality, and let flora and fauna thrive.
- Championing programming and facilities targeted to Louisville's international community, such as World Cup Soccer events, foreign films, and a world class cricket field.
- Spearheading a wage study that found disparities in front-line staff wages compared to other agencies and resulted in the Mayor allocating \$890,000 in a mid-year budget adjustment to close these gaps.

Seve's work has been a huge benefit to all park systems he has worked with. At the Willamalane Park and Recreation District he created the innovative 1PASS program that allowed community youth to purchase a well-priced pass to use at amenities and activities and to ride mass transit. As the Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Davenport, Iowa, Seve created a mobile playground and mobile garden and worked with the city council to fund an \$0.5 million Enabling Garden.

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### **Alternate Contact**

## Outstanding Public Official

**Nominee:** Congressman Ralph Regula

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** U.S. House of Representatives

**Population:**

The year is 1964. Ralph Regula hikes along the Ohio & Erie Canal. As he looks at the land from the towpath adjacent to the canal, he utters "There is no limit to what can be done. Absolutely no limit." Possessing a love of nature and a passion to protect natural resources, Ralph Regula served as a congressman in the U.S. House of Representatives representing Stark County, Ohio for more than 30 years. At the age of 92, he passed away on July 19, 2017. While he is widely celebrated for his political achievements, his greatest legacy is arguably the impressive system of parks and trails he left behind, particularly the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, and the park that bears his name throughout Stark County.

Regula's contributions to parks and recreation cannot be overstated. Through his perseverance and leadership, he ensured the preservation and development of resources throughout the state of Ohio, and the country as well. Launching the movement that saved, restored, beautified, and preserved the canal, Regula's vision single-handedly unlocked the historical and recreational potential of the Ohio and Erie Canal and Towpath Trail.

Regula's commitment to natural resources did not end with the Towpath Trail. He was instrumental in supporting legislation to establish Ohio's first national park, Cuyahoga Valley National Park. In 1974, he garnered support to pass the bill that created Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area. Twenty-six years later, he helped facilitate the change from National Recreation Area to National Park. He also worked to secure funding for the National First Ladies' Library in Canton, Ohio, which is now a historic site under the National Park Service. Regula's dedication to public land, conservation, and access to parks and trails has cemented his legacy as an outstanding public official.

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## Outstanding Support Organization

**Nominee:** Washington Nationals Dream Foundation

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** The Washington Nationals

**Population:** 1.2 million

Monday, August 28, 2017 was a hot day in Fairfax County, Virginia. It was also the first day of school and the day that the Washington Nationals Dream Foundation opened a new Legacy Field at Mason District Park in Annandale. This field honored Hall of Famer Ivan "Pudge" Rodriguez, who was joined at the celebration by players and managers from the Nationals organization. Many Little League players skipped part of their first day of school to attend this star-studded celebration of a new field.

Through the Legacy Fields program, the Dream Foundation renovates one youth baseball and/or softball field in the Washington, D.C. region annually. The Fairfax County Park Authority had nurtured this partnership, locating a field in need of renovation. This field, a bit rundown by years of heavy use, drew players from a culturally-diverse community. Unlike more affluent areas of the county, the Mason District Little League organization struggled to fund capital improvements.

Thanks to the Dream Foundation, the field was fully renovated and enlarged to accommodate different styles of youth baseball play. It will serve the surrounding community, hosting Mason District Little League games for years to come. The renovation included a new scoreboard, covered dugouts, outfield fencing, enhanced batting cages, foul poles, a storage shed, shade structures for existing bleachers, an irrigation system, and a sign marking the field entrance. The Dream Foundation recently announced they will open a second Legacy Field in Fairfax County at Fred Crabtree Park in Reston.

The Washington Nationals Dream Foundation improves the lives of children and teens in the Washington, D.C. region by supporting initiatives focused on academics, the arts, nutrition and sports. The Park Authority is excited to see this partnership flourish and looks forward to watching thousands of youth benefit from the Foundation's commitment to youth athletics.

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## Outstanding Support Organization

**Nominee:** Fort Tuthill Military Museum

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Fort Tuthill Military Museum, Arizona

**Population:** 139,097

The Fort Tuthill Military Museum, located at Fort Tuthill County Park, three miles south of Flagstaff, in Coconino County, tells the story of the Arizona National Guard, the 158th Infantry Regiment, and the role Fort Tuthill played in that history. Fort Tuthill served as the summer training facility for Arizona's National Guard from 1929-1948. The Museum originated from the interest and support of local citizens, including Jim Warbasse, the grandson of Major General Alexander M. Tuthill, after whom the fort is named.

From 2005-2014, the Museum occupied one of the small historic military buildings at the county park, but was severely limited in their exhibit and visitor parking spaces. Because of their partnership with Coconino County Parks and Recreation and the unique story they portray, they were offered two buildings on the historic Quad for their use.

From 2015-2017, Museum Director Marilyn Hammarstrom and many volunteers committed their time, expertise, and enthusiasm re-design the Museum. They secured various donations, including exhibit cases, graphic design, printing, and more, and a result, the Museum has significantly redeveloped their interpretive displays and panels. The Museum does a wonderful job of displaying the significant role Fort Tuthill played in training troops before, during, and after World War II. After two years of fundraising, building modifications, and re-designing exhibits, the Museum celebrated their grand re-opening in May 2017.

They continue to volunteer, host tours, and open the Museum on summer weekends and the Coconino County Fair. During the 2016 and 2017 County Fairs, they hosted over 2,000 visitors. The Museum adds a significant amenity to the park that celebrates the rich military history of the region, state, and country in a way that is engaging and informative. The historical significance was lost until Jim Warbasse and his army of volunteers brought history to life. <http://www.forttuthill.org>

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## Outstanding Support Organization

**Nominee:** West Creek Conservancy

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Cleveland Metroparks, Ohio

**Population:** 500,000+

West Creek Conservancy (WCC) is a conservation organization that protects natural areas, open spaces, streams and waterways in Greater Cleveland through fee purchase and acquisition of conservation easements. WCC reclaims vacant urban lands by restoring streams, wetlands, woods and natural habitats. WCC establishes trails and greenways to link people and neighborhoods not only to these special places, but to each other as well. Their efforts have provided recreational opportunities for local residents and visitors to Northeast Ohio while helping to conserve greenspace and manage stormwater.

WCC formed from a grass roots effort to protect the last remaining large, undeveloped open space in Parma, Ohio. Through grants, voter approved bond issues, and donations, WCC was able to acquire the land. This acquisition led to the formation of Cleveland Metroparks (CM) 16th reservation and the construction of the Watershed Stewardship Center, a partnership of WCC, Cleveland Metroparks, and the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District. WCC seeks creative ways to introduce these amenities to the public by hosting unique events like Tails for Trails, Creatures in the Forest 5k Run and 2017 Conservation Gala.

WCC continues to work with CM and other organizations in land acquisition and regional trail construction. Their West Creek Greenway project will link West Creek Reservation with numerous municipal parks as well as the Cuyahoga Valley National Park and the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. They also acted as an agent for other collaborators to acquire and protect land including an acquisition (Irishtown Bend) that will be critical in completing the Towpath Trail, an 85+ mile link from Canal Lands Park in Tuscarawas County to Lake Erie at Cleveland Metroparks' Lakefront Reservation. Lastly, WCC supports effective and efficient cooperation by steering the Central Lake Erie Basin Watershed Collaborative and chairing the Greater Cleveland Greenways and Trails Conference.

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## Outstanding Support Organization

**Nominee:** Gwinnett Master Gardeners

**Nominee's Title:** Kathy Parent

**Nominee's Organization:** Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation, Georgia

**Population:** 900,000

The Gwinnett County Master Gardeners Association (GCMGA) members offer community educational sessions to continue growth of native plants and ornamental plants in the community. They are instrumental in maintaining, enhancing, developing, financially supporting and educating the community about Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation (GCPR) gardens, and have worked with GCPR since 1999 averaging 1000 hours per year. Members add to the beautification of the parks, and participate in major events. They have revitalized wildlife areas, re-established a Brook garden and regularly served as stewards of the environment by utilizing native plants and best environmental practices. Projects included a pollinator garden that has achieved the Pollinator Habitat Certification and met the standards for the Rosalynn Carter Butterfly Trail.

Kathy Parent, ANR Program Assistant for the University of Georgia Extension has spearheaded the drive and the growth of the Master Gardener program with GCPR, particularly in McDaniel Farm Park. Specializing in agriculture and natural resources, Kathy has lead the charge with Archie's Garden, a 1930's demonstration vegetable garden, produces 30 to 60 lbs. of produce weekly in the growing season, over 600 lbs. annually to donate to a local food co-op. Obtaining a grant to create deer fences and chemical repellent to protect the sweet potato and build trellises for the tomato's, Kathy increased the output of usable healthy produce in a heavily deer stricken garden. Master Gardeners have also completed work at Bethesda Park Senior Center, with Kathy providing advice and assistance in developing the gardens and continued to lead, although her eyesight failed and eventually could not see. GCPR has limited funding and manpower for beautification in our parks and relies heavily on other agencies to maintain our parks to the highest standard possible. GCMGA members served over 1800 hours during 2017 providing opportunities for the public to create their own special garden and educate them on plants, butterflies, bugs and more.

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## Outstanding Support Organization

**Nominee:** Los Angeles Dodgers Dream Foundation

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Los Angeles County Dept. of Parks and Recreation, California

**Population:** 10 million

Many children dream of hitting the deciding homerun during the World Series. For the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, making that dream come true is a part of our collaboration with the Los Angeles Dodgers Dream Foundation.

It started with the renovation of an outdated ballfield at Mona Park in 2011. The project was the first of its kind for County parks. Today, there are nine participating parks. Since the inception of our partnership, approximately \$1 million from the Dodgers Dream Foundation has transformed County park ballfields into some of the most premiere fields in the nation.

Visual upgrades include new backstops, dugout roofs, bleachers, benches, field turf and new sod. To ensure the grass remains a pristine green, each county park also received money from the Dodgers Dream Foundation towards irrigation improvements. Dodger Dreamfields also received solar-powered scoreboards, with the tagline: "Think Blue, Act Green."

Thanks to this partnership, generations to come will now have a new and improved place to create memories of little league games, summer fun, family gatherings and community events on their neighborhood ballfield.

Our partnership with the Dodgers Dream Foundation has expanded well beyond renovated baseball fields. Today, the Foundation sponsors multiple programs through the Dodgers RBI (Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities), a baseball/softball youth development program that simultaneously aims to increase participation in the sport. It does so by using sport participation as an engagement tool that increases access to education, literacy, health, wellness, and recreational resources in some of Los Angeles County's most underserved communities.

Los Angeles Dodgers current and past players have also provided training and tips to kids on how to become better baseball players. Perhaps one of those youngsters will one day become the next hero hitting the deciding homerun to win the championship game for his or her team.

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## Outstanding Support Organization

**Nominee:** Olmsted Parks Conservancy

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Olmsted Parks Conservancy, Kentucky

**Population:** 765,352

The Olmsted Parks Conservancy was founded in 1989 as a 501c3 with the goal of protecting and restoring Louisville's Olmsted park system. The park system was designed in the late 19th century by Frederick Law Olmsted and consists of 18 parks and 6 parkways. The parks had fallen into disrepair in the mid-20th century, leading to concerned citizens launching a grass-roots effort, "The Friends of Olmsted Parks" to draw attention to the deterioration of a great city asset. In 1989, Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson established a task force that recommended the creation of the Olmsted Parks Conservancy.

The mission of the organization is to restore, enhance and forever protect Louisville's Olmsted-designed parks and parkways, connecting nature and neighborhood while strengthening our community's well-being. The Olmsted Parks Conservancy executes projects that achieve the following: community well-being, historic preservation, and environmental protection. Recent projects include the restoration of the Iroquois overlook, an update of restrooms in Central Park, extensive tree plantings throughout the Olmsted park system, and the restoration of two historic limestone bridges in Cherokee Park.

The Olmsted Parks Conservancy is unique in that it is an exemplary model of how to leverage dollars and community resources to support a park system. Since 1989, Olmsted Parks Conservancy has raised \$36 million to fund park improvements. Donations from the Humana Foundation, the James Graham Brown Cancer Foundation and the PNC Foundation made the \$467,000 revitalization of Victory Park possible, while the Stegner Family contributed to the upcoming \$1.1 million restoration of the Bonnycastle Hill area of Cherokee Park. Volunteers are also crucial to helping the Olmsted Parks Conservancy to restore, enhance and protect the park system. In fiscal year 2017, the Olmsted volunteers contributed over 5,600 hours of service to Louisville Parks and Recreation, valued at over \$100,000.

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## Outstanding Support Organization

**Nominee:** Morris Park Alliance

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Morris County Park Commission, New Jersey

**Population:** 500,000

The Park Alliance has supported the Park Commission for 20 years in providing open space, conservation, education, recreation, and wellness. Led by a volunteer board of community leaders from education, business, and non-profit agencies, the Alliance manages a variety of dedicated accounts for projects and programs, totaling \$300,000. Contributions benefit the Park Commission's efforts managing 18,000+ acres. Projects supported by the Alliance include picnic shelters, dog parks, and playgrounds. Program assistance is provided to the Child ID program, Lenni Lenape events, and wildlife education among others. Ongoing efforts provide for benches and trees, paving bricks and dashboards, and banners at dog parks. The highlight to date is the Jets Play 60 All Access Playground, for children of all abilities to play together. The total cost of the playground was \$350,000 and was completed in two years. The playground is a regional attraction. It continues to attract support through `balloon` plaque donations.

Success relies on communication between the board and the Commission. As they come to understand the needs of the system and bring community connections to the forefront, they have created a foundation of support. Their passion and interest to promote the value of parks and recreation as a vital part of the community is truly heartwarming. The beneficiary of an annual golf outing changes according to the current project(s). Last year, a new event recognized outstanding local park and recreation programs, facilities and supporters. These community awards were a `friend raiser` for both organizations. The photo scavenger hunt invited families to find locations in the parks and submit photos for prizes - another example of the efforts to get people to the parks for fun and fitness. It is well recognized by the Morris County Park Commission and staff that the Morris Park Alliance is truly a welcome and appreciated support organization.

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## Outstanding Volunteer

**Nominee:** Jim Martin

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:** Advisory Board Member

**Nominee's Organization:** Shawnee County Parks + Recreation, Kansas

**Population:** 173,000

Advisory Board member/retired engineer Jim Martin quickly recognized the extent of capital maintenance needs for both existing and new facilities within Shawnee County Parks + Recreation. While working professionally, he was the engineer for SCP+R's state-of-the-art Bettis Family Sports Complex and numerous other park projects. As chairman of the Advisory Board's Capital Projects Committee, Martin dedicated an estimated 100 hours to producing a 29-page report identifying \$1.6 million per year in capital needs. The report recommended redefining capital projects and reassessing associated costs, methods of funding, and a potential revised approach to long-term budgeting and public reporting of specific, understandable capital needs. As a result, the county commissioners and SCP+R determined that, as a first step, any unspent funds at the end of each year will be placed into the building and maintenance fund for capital maintenance.

After SCP+R closed its Lake Shawnee Swim Beach in 2017 due to aged and deteriorating water slides and pumping equipment, county commissioners challenged the department to rebrand and reopen the beach as a new attraction. Martin researched and developed the concept of a Lake Shawnee Family Adventure Park. His online survey and a survey of local school students yielded 1,624 responses indicating that both groups shared the same half-dozen preferred amenities ranging from a floating playground to zip lines, family aerial courses and various water craft. Further public engagement meetings will be held but work on Phase I of the swim beach conversion is underway.

In 2017, Martin developed an animated video fly-through of a proposal to preserve the historic bathhouse building at Lake Shawnee and convert from a rent-free rowing association building to rental or event space to generate revenue for SCP+R. An initial public engagement meeting was held in February to gauge public support for the project. More meetings are planned.

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## Outstanding Volunteer

**Nominee:** Meg Whalen

**Nominee's Title:** Adapted Aquatics Volunteer

**Nominee's Organization:** Fairfax County Park Authority, Virginia

**Population:** 1.2 million

Meg Whalen jumps into the pool at South Run RECenter every weekend to help children, teens, and adults with developmental and physical disabilities learn swimming and water safety skills. She has volunteered with the Adapted Aquatics program for the past decade and provided over 1,050 service hours.

Meg loves what she does and it shows. She brings a positive and encouraging attitude to this work and as a result, is adored by her charges. These are long lasting relationships that help push participants learn new skills and reach their full potential. Meg often works with some of our most challenging swimmers and teaches with great patience and a sense of humor that helps puts anxious swimmers at ease.

Meg can turn an impending in the water "disaster" into victory and on many occasions, has imparted her joy of swimming so that hesitant, tearful first timers become confident and excited. First lessons can be stressful but Meg is willing to do whatever it takes to help her swimmers succeed, even if that means she is treading water for 45 minutes straight while a swimmer practices new skills in deep water.

She goes above and beyond expectations and often volunteers outside of her regular shift to fill in for absent volunteers in other Adapted Aquatics programs. She mentors new volunteers, sharing her experiences and insights. Program like this depend on people like Meg.

Meg has generously shared her time and talents and is a true gift to the Adapted Aquatics Program. We are honored to have her on our team of volunteers and look to her as model for other dedicated volunteers nationwide.

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## Outstanding Volunteer

**Nominee:** Alice Hubbard

**Nominee's Title:** Chair - Little Leaves Program

**Nominee's Organization:** Friends of the Howard P. Rawlings Conservatory, Maryland

**Population:** over 500,000

In the spring of 2015, Alice Hubbard had a vision to bring more underserved Baltimore City students to the Conservatory. She met with Rawlings Conservatory staff to develop a program and by the fall of 2015, the pilot program was operating. Since then, 1,225 second graders from 15 schools have participated in the Little Leaves program.

Alice created a sustainable program that is funded through 2019. Nearly singlehandedly, she recruits, trains, and coordinates program volunteers. She developed marketing materials including flyers and a video (<https://vimeo.com/216213272>). Alice taps individuals, garden clubs, and neighborhood organizations, and in cooperation with a Friends group, she has raised almost \$25,000 to pay for buses and materials.

Alice ensures that each field trip provides a positive and memorable experience for students. Her attention to detail is amazing . . . from going directly to schools to arrange transportation to feeding volunteers to making sure every pencil is sharpened and the program stays on point and on time. The joy that the children exude is palpable. To analyze the program, surveys are collected from all participating teachers, and feedback is used to make improvements. On return to their classrooms, children complete a project to reinforce learning and further connect with the curriculum.

But there is so much more to Alice Hubbard than Little Leaves.

Alice always jumps in to help with the seasonal flower displays and in fact, recruits and coordinates even more volunteers for those events.

Alice provides indispensable planning and logistical assistance to staff for the annual Community Gardening Day - recruiting volunteers and organizing the cook-out celebration. During this event, she is one of our most enthusiastic gardeners . . . going from flower bed to flower bed planting, mulching and watering.

Alice Hubbard is truly an extraordinary volunteer and most worthy of this award.

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## Park & Recreation Facility - Class I

**Nominee:** Hawk Island Snow Tubing Park

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Ingham County Parks Department, Michigan

**Population:** 286,000

The concept of the Hawk Island Snow Tubing Park began in 2006. County staff researched and visited tubing facilities throughout Michigan to determine the feasibility of such a venue at Hawk Island County Park. A land and Water Conservation Fund grant was developed, submitted, and approved by the Michigan DNR in 2009. The \$75,000 LWCF grant, coupled with the 50% match by Ingham County, brought the total initial project cost to \$150,000. Scope items within this grant included a tubing lift, grading/landscaping, and snow tubes.

Construction took place from 2008 - 2011. Soil was brought in from a local CSO (combined sewer overflow) project to increase the top elevation thirty feet. The tubing runs are seven hundred feet long. Electric and water were then installed for snow making, lighting, and lift operation. The majority of the labor involved in the Hawk Island Snow Tubing Park was done in-house. Finally staff purchased tubes, hired staff, and implemented marketing. In 2015, staff decided to remove the cable tow ropes, purchase and install a Magic Carpet (TM) conveyor belt. The Magic Carpet is safer to use than the tow rope system and has a greater load capacity.

The official opening was in December of 2011 and had approximately three-thousand visitors. Since opening, the Hawk Island Snow Tubing Park has more than doubled its visitation with just over ten-thousand people attending in the 2017-18 season. The Snow Tubing Park is unique in that there is no other similar venue within a ninety mile radius. Ingham County gets very little lake effect snow, limiting available winter sports. The ability to make our own snow ensures winter sports activities in central Michigan are available throughout the entire season.

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## Park & Recreation Facility - Class I

**Nominee:** North Sherwood Forest Community Park Site Improvements

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** BREC - Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge, Louisiana

**Population:** 447,037

Major site improvements to North Sherwood Forest Community Park (Baton Rouge, Louisiana) were completed in February 2018 by J. Reed Constructors. A local design team led by Montoya Design Group and ELS Landscape Architecture Studio, took BREC Planning and Engineering staff's vision and transformed this already active park into a true recreation showcase.

The park's military past is celebrated using subtle details throughout the design. During World War II the Sharp Station Depot served as a supplies and disposition facility with several buildings including a mess hall, warehouse, fire station, and housing barrack. Pavilions and a welcome building mimic the architecture of the barrack and other structures demolished over time since the site's decommissioning. Camouflage colors and patterns can be seen in the playground safety-surfacing and subtly in the brick promenade that weaves through the play area overlooking the pond.

A gathering space encircles the play area and splashpad with a custom trellis designed to train sycamore trees as they grow in a unique horizontal roof-like canopy. The trellis and park railings utilize a combination of timber, steel, and cables with simple details while concrete planters and seatwalls reflect the site's former military uses with industrial detailing.

The existing pond was enlarged to 3.4-acres and reshaped creating a dynamic fish habitat. The majority of the site's stormwater is collected in the pond and is filtered through a constructed wetland system. Native wetland plants aide water filtration and create habitat for butterflies and important pollinator species.

In the short time since site improvements at this park have been completed, it has been well received. Patrons enjoy four pavilions and a half-mile lighted walking loop around the lake. A wetland boardwalk, fishing amenities, enclosed sand play structure, outdoor fitness equipment, and nearly 200 new trees round out this fabulous new recreation destination.

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## Park & Recreation Facility - Class I

**Nominee:** Knock Knock Children's Museum at City-Brooks Community Park

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** BREC - Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge, Louisiana

**Population:** 447,037

Knock Knock Children's Museum is a community spark for engaging, playful learning experiences that inspire and support lifelong learning. The museum is a private non-profit organization committed to providing an inclusive gathering place where families and children of all backgrounds and experiences interact and learn through play. The museum opened its doors to the public on August 22, 2017 after 14 years of planning and development and has welcomed over 108,000 visitors since opening. The building was designed by Cambridge Seven Associates and Remson Haley Herpin Architects, and constructed by M.D. Descant, LLC. C7A/RHHA worked closely together to design this compelling building around C7A's intriguing learning zones.

Knock Knock is located in BREC's Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge City-Brooks Community Park, overlooking Historic City Park Golf Course, and City Park Lake. Its prime location on six acres provides access to all communities within Baton Rouge and the surrounding nine-parish area.

The 26,000-square-foot, three-story building integrates beautifully with the site as it steps down the hill threading its way through a canopy of seven mature live oaks taking advantage of not only the stunning views from inside the building, but also drawing attention from the nearby interstate. During the day, the unique geometry and playful colors attract attention, while at night three "beacons" light up the hillside and expose the dynamic exhibits to all passersby.

These beacons are the pitched roof elements of the facility that punctuate the hillside. The highest features a deep, protected entrance with playful logo; the second houses a butterfly mobile that is looped by a pneumatic note-delivery system for young letter-writers; and the third features a Storybook Climber where visitors are rewarded for making the two-story trek to the top of the flying books with a thrilling view across City Park.

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## Park & Recreation Facility - Class I

**Nominee:** The West Fields at Highland Heritage Regional Park

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Douglas County Parks, Trails and Building Grounds, Colorado

**Population:** 325,000

West Fields at Highland Heritage Regional Park are a 19-acre retro fitted active sports complex. This complex consists of 4.39 acres of synthetic turf, with a retractable sports lighting system, picnic-shelters, LED lighting system, parking for 179 and future Picnic/Tournament staging area. The fields are permanently striped for soccer, football, and lacrosse and programmed year-round. This complex was previously leased to a private vendor and operated as a private golf driving range. In 2012 the County was able to purchase the remaining years of the lease and convert the land back to public use.

Several features of the project are unique and will serve as a model for other public agencies to apply these cost saving measures.

The retractable sports lighting system. The light fixtures are the first recreational fields with the application of this technology in the country. With this new lighting system, one electrician can lower the light fixtures to service the lights in a matter of hours. Not needing a bucket truck or high lift, substantially reduces maintenance costs and helps preserve the structural integrity of the synthetic turf fields.

The solar compacting trash cans. Each can is checked daily via a computer application, and only serviced when full, this saves us over 50% of our labor costs per year when compared to standard trash cans. They were purchased with funds provided by the Colorado Lottery.

Synthetic fields are common today, but their significance cannot be ignored. Installing synthetic turf provides year-round play, saves approximately 3 million gallons of water per year over the 4, provides 4 months rest for our natural turf, increases revenue and reduces maintenance costs by 75% over natural turf fields.

Employing 100% LED lights for fields, pedestrian walkways, and parking lots saves 55% in utility costs when compared to other similar facilities.

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## Park & Recreation Facility - Class II

**Nominee:** Winton Woods Crew Team

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Great Parks of Hamilton County, Ohio

**Population:** 809,099

In 2017, the first scholastic high school girls rowing team in the Cincinnati area was born. The team provides the opportunity for female athletes to grow personally and athletically, as well as obtain scholarship opportunities. The only thing that was missing was a location for the team to practice...and that's where Great Parks came in.

The main goal was to provide the Winton Woods female crew team with a convenient location to practice, just a couple miles from school. Great Parks provided the location for the rowing dock and skull storage area at no charge to the Winton Woods City School District. The park district also provided staff to design and produce construction documents as well as provide project and construction management services. Winton Woods City School District provided funding for the purchase and installation of the dock and storage unit as well as all rowing equipment. The US Army Corps of Engineers, the ultimate owner of Winton Lake, provided approvals for the installation of the rowing dock.

Installation of the dock and establishment of the rowing team practice facility was celebrated with a special dedication ceremony on April 13, 2017. The event was open to the public and included school faculty, Great Parks' staff, family, friends and the new Winton Woods High School female crew team. The biggest impact of the partnership between the school district and park district is providing a huge opportunity for young female minority athletes to learn, strengthen and grow in their abilities. These young women may even have an opportunity to attend college as a direct result of being a member of this team, an opportunity that may have been missed without such a facility and program.

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## Park & Recreation Facility - Class II

**Nominee:** Sunil M. Gavaskar Cricket Field

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Louisville Parks and Recreation, Kentucky

**Population:** 765,352

The Sunil M. Gavaskar Cricket Field, located in Hays Kennedy Park and inaugurated on October 15th 2017, serves as the home cricket pitch for the Louisville Cricket Club. The cricket pitch was named after cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar, a former India opening batsman and test captain. The Louisville Cricket Club, which has been in existence since 2013, had been looking for ways to expand its membership and to grow cricket in the region. In 2016, Louisville Metro partnered with both the Louisville Sports Commission and Louisville Parks and Recreation to invest \$150,000 in the new pitch. Ten percent of the funding to create the fields was raised by Louisville Cricket Club members. The Cricket Club has also purchased two pre-fabricated dugouts for players and there are plans to eventually build a pavilion and practice facility.

The objectives of the facility are to grow cricket in the region, serve as the home ground of the Louisville Cricket Club, and to become a destination for national and international cricket competitions. The Louisville Cricket Club is a diverse group, with members from Southeast Asia, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, and the Caribbean. The hope is that this new world class cricket pitch will attract even more members from the international diaspora of Louisville.

The field has had a positive and unique impact on the community. It is the first international sporting facility named after an Indian sportsperson, which has put the spotlight on Louisville in the international press. The pitch has also helped the city to reach out to its global community by catering to their recreation needs, an important component of quality of life. The pitch will also have a positive economic impact on the city by helping to bring people and businesses together to Louisville from all over the cricket-playing world.

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## Park & Recreation Facility - Class II

**Nominee:** Deputy Scott Pine Community Park

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Orange County Parks and Recreation Division, Florida

**Population:** 1,288,126

Opening on February 10, 2018, the 19.5-acre Deputy Scott Pine Community Park in Windermere, Florida, was built in partnership with Orange County Public Schools. The facility was dedicated to Deputy Pine, who was killed in the line of duty while serving the citizens of Orange County.

Orange County Public Schools' (OCPS) Windermere High School, newly opened for 2017-18, and the Orange County Parks and Recreation Division joined forces to build Deputy Scott Pine Community Park because the high school property was not large enough to include a stadium.

Orange County's INVEST program, which allots \$20 million for the development of new parks or the improvement of existing parks and facilities, matched funds of \$3.7 million with the same amount from OCPS for construction of the stadium; the total budget was \$9,737,601.

The site, located approximately one mile from the high school, includes two fields: one for multi-purpose recreation for both school and public use, and the other for the Windermere High School football and track stadium, including bleachers, a concession building with restrooms and a parking lot. Construction began in mid-2017.

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## Park & Recreation Facility - Class II

**Nominee:** Lee District Family Recreation Area

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Fairfax County Park Authority, Virginia

**Population:** 1.2 million

The Family Recreation Area at Lee District Park fills a need in Fairfax County for affordable, accessible outdoor entertainment for families, encouraging fun and physical fitness.

The Recreation Area opened in 2011 with the fully accessible Our Special Harbor sprayground and Tree House. The Chesapeake-Bay themed spray park features a spraying osprey nest, Chessie the sea serpent, misting sunflowers, a computerized water maze and a dumping crab basket. A beach area offers softer bubblers and interactive water tables. The Tree House allows visitors to explore the park's treetop canopy from winding ramps and observe nature from a new perspective.

The park has since added Chessie's Big Backyard, a fully accessible playground with slides, swings and specially-designed equipment that allows children of all abilities to play together. In 2017, the Recreation Area was finally completed when a Chesapeake Bay-themed carousel opened, offering those in wheelchairs the unique chance to move vertically, as well as "round and round". In addition, a special 2,160-foot children's trail opened nearby. Trail visitors encounter stepping blocks, a chalkboard wall, rock steps, a nest seating area, spinning rocks, a boardwalk, a sidewalk with animal tracks, a stone abacus and a log stone secret path.

The park is a model for others as the features, except for the carousel, are free to families, and the crowds that regularly fill the park are testimony to its success. It provides a unique recreational experience by drawing inspiration from the local environment, and it offers an inclusive play experience that goes beyond traditional access ramps. In addition, these features are within walking distance of the Lee District RECenter and an outdoor amphitheater to round out the parks' physical fitness and cultural offerings. The Family Recreation Area was funded through an innovative use of voter-approved Park Bonds, state grants and donations.

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## Park & Recreation Facility - Class II

**Nominee:** Edgewater Beach House

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Cleveland Metroparks, Ohio

**Population:** 500,000+

Cleveland Metroparks acquired six (6) urban lakefront parks along Lake Erie's shores under a 99-year lease from the City of Cleveland in 2013. Opened in 2017, the Edgewater Beach House and surrounding open spaces were designed through unique and extensive community feedback which included input during park master planning process, one on one park patron interviews, and a unique online format (MindMixer / My Sidewalk) which garnered 3,000 unique interactions into the planning process.

The 12,000 square foot, two-story Beach House was designed with accessibility at the forefront to provide spaces and amenities that positively impact quality for the diverse population of Northeast Ohio, tourists, and visitors. The Edgewater Beach House was commissioned to replace two utilitarian and small open-air pavilions and a concession and restroom facility built in 1984. The new building is thoughtfully sited in the 147-acre regional park to serve as a major node connecting the beach and two halves of Edgewater Park, the Cleveland Lakefront Bikeway, and an elevated pedestrian connector from the second floor that leads directly to the Detroit Shoreway neighborhood. The Edgewater Beach House has expanded food and beverage service, restrooms with changing stalls, and a second-floor deck with a seasonal beach bar with sunset and skyline views. The overall site includes a multipurpose Centennial Plaza space that overlooks the beach, outdoor beach showers and foot wash stations, a concession seating area, and a bosque with tables and popular family-sized swings hanging from the elevated pedestrian connector.

The design and planning of the Beach House incorporated placemaking, programming, universal access and social equity into all of unique components. The result is a universally embraced asset that not only pushed visitation to Edgewater Park over 1.5M visitors for 2017, but connected Clevelander's to their greatest natural asset, Lake Erie.

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## Park & Recreation Facility - Class II

**Nominee:** Imagination Playgrounds

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

Developed with interactive play in mind, some themed playgrounds include Archeology Dig, Gone Fishing, Wizard of Oz, Pirate Ship, and Frontier Fort playground. These amazing, themed playgrounds were designed with attractive, colorful, unique play equipment that promotes imagination play. Playgrounds are at several sites including Adelphi Mill, Berwyn Heights Park, Indian Creek Playground, Fairland Regional Park, Fairwood Park, Glenarden Community Center, Good Luck Community Center, Marlton Park, Meadow Brook Park, Mellwood Hills Park, Mitchellville South Park, Mt. Rainier South Park, South Bowie Community Center, Walker Mill Regional Park and Watkins Regional Park.

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## Park & Recreation Facility - Class II

**Nominee:** The Glass House Conservatory at Lasdon Park

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Westchester County Parks, New York

**Population:** 962,000

After decades of planning and fundraising, the new Lasdon Glass House Conservatory opened to the public in mid-June of 2017 at Lasdon Park, Arboretum and Veterans Memorial in Somers. It is the only one of its kind in Westchester County and is the latest attraction in the Westchester County Parks system.

The new 2,500-square-foot, 28-foot-high, glass and steel structure is similar in design to the conservatory at the New York Botanical Garden. The interior exhibit and most of the installation was accomplished by Westchester County parks staff, while additional assistance was provided by private contractors for installation of the water features and masonry work.

The Glass House Conservatory is the result of a public-private partnership among Westchester County government, the Friends of Lasdon volunteer advocacy group, and several private local businesses. Funding for the Conservatory was provided by net proceeds from various events and fundraisers at the park which generated over \$700,000, along with a \$1.3 million grant from Westchester County and several local businesses. It is maintained by Lasdon staff and supported through the Friends of Lasdon, and supplemented by donations.

The Conservatory opened with its first exhibit "The Rainforest: Tropical Treasures," featuring native plants and animal sounds, complete with streams and waterfalls, along with signage discussing the importance of the rainforest to create an awareness of protecting this valuable habitat.

The Conservatory offers educational class trips, guided horticultural tours, music performances and programs for all ages. It is a wonderful complement to this horticulturally-oriented park, adding an indoor dimension to all of the outdoor collections at the park.

Since its opening in June, the Conservatory has become a unique and important educational and recreational asset for the people of Westchester County, a place where families can go to learn about nature year-round, relax in a natural environment and have fun together.

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## Park & Recreation Facility - Class II

**Nominee:** Lilburn Activity Building

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation, Georgia

**Population:** 900,000

Renovation of the 30 year old existing 10,518 sq. ft. Lilburn Library Building and its 2 acre site into the Lilburn Activity Building. The existing building was constructed in 1988, with the parking lot in the 100 year floodplain, not allowing an expansion or significant modification of the property outside of the building walls. The area was identified as underserving the community in recreation needs.

In 2015-2016 a study was conducted to reveal that the building needed a fire suppression sprinkler system to meet current code, complete reroofing, and the construction of new and larger restrooms to meet current ADA requirements. The old library's periodical room became the new restrooms, while the staff lockers, break room, restroom and lounge area became the new dance studio. An existing storytelling room was modified as the new classroom. The original small restrooms were demolished for offices. The large area of the library was broken up into a corridor to allow access to the new rooms and a large activity room with catering kitchen and various supporting storage rooms. The design included a system of walls and partial ceilings to form the primary building corridor and enclose the activity room, while maintaining visual access to the heavy beam trusses and lighting from the clerestory lights.

The new building will be linked to the City Hall complex in Lilburn via a sidewalk project in the future. The new facility brings recreation opportunities to an underserved area of the county. Community buildings increase the capacity of a neighborhood to identify needed changes, be involved in those changes, and sustain positive revitalization. The entire project was funded through the recreation fund capital program, since no SPLOST funds were allocated for this building. The construction started February of 2017 and completed in July of 2017 with a total cost of \$1,014,234.

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## Park & Recreation Facility - Class II

**Nominee:** Stoneview Nature Center

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Los Angeles County Dept. of Parks and Recreation, California

**Population:** 10 million

Stoneview Nature Center is a five-acre urban sanctuary located in Culver City, California, which was built and is operated by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). Opened April 8, 2017, it offers residents a chance to escape the hustle and bustle of urban living to decompress and connect with nature.

Park visitors marvel at their ability to get close and personal with the local wildlife, as they develop a new appreciation for animals and plant life. Patrons also sign up for workshops that include yoga and meditation. A Demonstration Garden and an outdoor kitchen enable patrons to the Department's first urban nature center to learn how to grow their own food and cook healthy meals.

During park planning, a major priority was winning over community support. Many residents expressed concern over the potential for increased noise, crime and traffic. To allay concerns, DPR held several community meetings, and sought public input throughout the conceptual design.

Today, the community surrounding the park embraces the park, with DPR assurances that the goal of the Nature Center is to provide visitors with education on the native flora and fauna, enhancing recreational opportunities aimed at promoting a healthy lifestyle, and strengthening the community through diverse physical, educational and cultural programming.

To help residents escape city life, dynamic components were added to the park that include demonstration gardens that show people how plants grow. An aquaponics garden that demonstrates alternative gardening methods to grow food was also added, as was a bee hotel, and flora was planted in several sections. A zone with live quails also exists to enable visitors to get a closer look at where food comes from, in this case, eggs.

Stoneview Nature Center provides an urban sanctuary for both wildlife and the community.

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### **Alternate Contact**

## Park & Recreation Program - Class I

**Nominee:** Senior Summer Camp

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Loudoun County Parks, Recreation & Community Services, Virginia

**Population:** Less than 500,000

Who says summer camps are just for kids? After reading about a senior camp in California, staff researched and developed an adventure camp for individuals 55 years or older in August 2017. The four-day camp explored the native flora and fauna of Virginia within an idyllic ecological setting.

Nineteen campers quickly enrolled for the first-ever 55+ camp conducted by recreational and aging services professionals in cooperation with ecology, biology, astronomy and natural history experts. Campers met at a central location and were transported daily by bus to Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve in Leesburg, Virginia, while enthusiastically singing songs during the bus rides. Each morning began with a "coffee & connect with nature" session in which campers learned about the daily nature theme. Learning formats included lectures, demonstrations and hands-on field activities. Nature-theme highlights included:

Day 1:

- Stream health and aquatic invertebrates
- Viewing the American Solar Eclipse with a NASA expert!

Day 2:

- Native and invasive plants
- Monarch butterflies, host plants, life-cycles and long migrations
- Riparian habitats and bird community associations
- Butterfly and bird watching

Day 3:

- Blue gill and bass fishing
- Native raptors
- Optional tubing trip down the Antietam Creek

Day 4:

- Native bee pollinators & plants within the pollinator meadows
- Buffet style luncheon with foods exclusively derived from pollinators - "bee-licious!"

As the campers immersed themselves in the preserve environment, they fell in love with nature all over again! A post survey showed 95% were satisfied with the adventure camp and 67% requested to have two camps offered next year. The smiles, laughter and positive survey comments reminded staff that summer camps are NOT just for kids! A senior adventure camp resource manual is available for programmers to easily replicate for older adults in their communities.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class I

**Nominee:** Bensley Futsal Program

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Chesterfield County Parks and Recreation, Virginia

**Population:** 340,000

Bensley Futsal Program: New Life for Unused Tennis Courts

In 2014 after baseball and football programs were unsuccessful at Bensley Park, we collaborated with a local nonprofit to offer youth soccer programs. The program was an immediate success with over 100 youth signing up the first season. This was the first time the Hispanic community (44% of the Bensley area) embraced a program and took ownership in Bensley Park.

The new demand on the athletic fields made it difficult to prevent them from being damaged due to overuse. The fields were unusable after rain and cancelling games led to frustration. Realizing teams needed a place to practice when fields were wet, the department decided the seldom-used tennis courts would better serve the community as futsal courts.

The idea of converting the unused tennis courts to futsal courts received overwhelming support, including from the Bensley Civic Association, citizens, coaches, players, and community leaders. There was no opposition to converting the courts to futsal.

In 2015, the Chair of the Board of Supervisors, who represents the Bensley community, approved \$10,000 of district improvement funds to convert the courts. Construction was completed on June 28, 2016 at a cost of \$10,925.23. A ribbon cutting ceremony took place on August 2, 2016.

The goal of the Futsal program is to use sports to teach young people important values and life skills that will help them lead healthy and productive lives. Confident and healthy young people will make a positive impact on their community and be successful in life. Core values of the program are honesty, respect, accountability, and generosity.

The program serves youth 5-18 years of age at \$65 per season. No child is turned away for inability to pay. The futsal courts are open to the public and see 30-40 participants daily. This is a dramatic increase from the unused tennis courts.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class I

**Nominee:** Cooks in Training

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Columbus Parks and Recreation Department, Georgia

**Population:** 200,000

Our new Cooks in Training program through our afterschool program was designed to inspire the love of cooking and expose young people to a variety of culinary techniques, foster an appreciation of cooking at home, and encourage independence and creativity in the kitchen as well as help children to learn a little science and math along the way. Participants learned basic kitchen safety rules along with obtaining the knowledge of simple food preparation. Children are now more often not given the opportunity as people were in the past to learn to measure food in proportions. This could be in the amount of ingredients used in a recipe or in the amount of food needed to feed a family, group or person. Through this program, children learned through hands on experience how to measure, cook, handle and maneuver in a kitchen in a safe and fun way so that they can appreciate that food is more than what we get from a package or in a drive thru. Cooking at home is becoming less and less of a norm in today's households. Parents and guardians often do not have time to cook and do not have time to teach their kids how to cook. As a result, the health of our youth is on the decline and fast food has become a regular part of society's diet. The Cooks in Training program provides a way to teach kids how to cook so that they can live healthier lives. The program has had a positive impact on both the participants and the community by promoting healthy eating habits and by teaching the participants how to cook healthy foods. This hands-on experience provides early career training in the culinary arts, which can inspire the participants to pursue career in the culinary field.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class I

**Nominee:** VLPRA Youth Basketball League

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Valdosta-Lowndes Parks & Recreation Authority, Georgia

**Population:** 112,000

VLPRA's Youth Basketball Program is truly unique as it highlights what Valdosta is known for: school spirit. In a city known as Tiletown for its athletic achievements, school loyalty runs deep. That's why our school-based program resonates with our community.

Our objective was to collaborate with local schools to expand basketball and make it appealing in what is traditionally a football town. We also wanted to expand to areas of the community that weren't participating in basketball.

Our previous setup was a standard youth basketball program with about a dozen co-ed teams. In 2013, we worked with local school districts to set up joint use agreements and began offering school-based teams. We also started offering separate leagues for boys and girls. Children sign up by grade to play with their classmates and represent their school. VLPRA facilitates the program and provides uniforms in the school colors, with the school name on the front. Practices are at the children's schools so they are convenient for parents. Games are also held at area schools as well as at VLPRA facilities. VLPRA is the only area program that is school-based and the only option offering separate girls leagues.

In our first school-based season, we had 30 teams. Our most recent season had 84 teams, which is a 600% increase from the league prior to our school partnership.

The response has clearly been overwhelming. Children and parents both adore the school-based concept and school communities rally around their teams. It's common to see teachers and principals in packed stands, cheering their students on during a Saturday game, while parents come decked out in their school colors. The program celebrates school spirit, builds community, and encourages kids to be healthy and active. We are proud to say we expect continued growth in the future.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class I

**Nominee:** Spooktacular Shoot

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Metroparks Toledo, Ohio

**Population:** 432,488

Westwinds Metropark in Holland, Ohio is a 173-acre park with a static, practice archery range and a 3-D archery trail. Since Metroparks Toledo began offering archery three years ago to provide new opportunities for outdoor recreation, an ever-growing fan base of archers has sought new ways to keep the sport fresh. The Spooktacular Shoot creates a free, nighttime, Halloween-themed archery shoot. Metroparks Toledo staff turn Westwinds into a zombie apocalypse for one night. Park visitors are encouraged to bring Halloween costumes, glow-wear, flashlights, and archery equipment. Metroparks provided equipment.

The goal of the Spooktacular Shoot is to create a new and unique opportunity for both new and experienced archers. Objectives include an increased awareness of Westwinds by providing a safe, non-competitive, festive event where people who are not avid archery enthusiasts feel welcome and to provide new challenges to deepen engagement with archery program participants. At the first Spooktacular Shoot, there were 180 total participants, and 70 were under age 12. Based on enthusiastic feedback from participants, the program was expanded to two days in 2017 doubling attendance.

Archery is beneficial on many levels. It builds focus, discipline, confidence and perseverance. It also benefits the community by getting people outside to connect with both nature and each other. The Spooktacular Shoot turns park visitors into archers, and the archery ranges at Westwinds Metropark enhance enjoyment and accessibility for the archery community that Metroparks is building. The Spooktacular Shoot program, along with other archery programs offered, increase the value of the park to the community. Local archery retailers we work with report seeing an increase in archery sales since Metroparks opened Westwinds Metropark. Visitors to the park continually provide positive survey feedback for programs. Westwind's provides the opportunity to have a safe and interesting place for archers to hone their skills.

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### **Alternate Contact**

## Park & Recreation Program - Class I

**Nominee:** ZimSculpt

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Metroparks Toledo, Ohio

**Population:** 432,488

Metroparks Toledo's mission emphasizes the importance of green space for the "benefit, enjoyment, education and general welfare of the public." An educational art exhibit at the Toledo Botanical Garden (TBG), "A Garden of Wonders: Stone Sculptures of Zimbabwe," provided a rare opportunity to experience international art, meet and watch artists at work, draw the community to the park and financially support a nonprofit community program. From September 2-October 29, 2017, more than 100 stone sculptures were displayed on the 66 acre grounds of TBG. In addition, Metroparks actively engaged over 1,000 local school children through the GLOBE initiative, (Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment). This science and education program provides students and public worldwide participation in data collection, scientific process, and meaningful understanding of Earth's systems.

Typically the Zimsculpt exhibit requires a paid admission. Through Community Engagement surveys, Metroparks learned that visitors are unlikely to attend events in the parks with fees. Therefore, Metroparks wanted to provide this experience to all the visitors free of charge to encourage the most visitation possible. This became the first free admission Zimsculpt exhibit in the United States. Visitation to TBG exceeded 50,000 for the two month exhibit which far exceeded anticipated counts. In addition, over \$13,000 was raised for Toledo Grows, a long standing partner at TBG that provides over 130 neighborhood gardens to residents.

The ZimSculpt exhibit exposed visitors to sculpture in a unique, natural setting. Visitors observed the pieces and interacted with the two artists in residence who worked six days a week, creating new works of art and providing demonstrations. There are few sites in Ohio that can capture the essence of Zimsculpt as it was intended to be-- in a natural setting where pieces suggest movement and flow. The venue of TBG accomplished this challenge.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class I

**Nominee:** Gallops Active Aging

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Columbus Parks and Recreation Department, Georgia

**Population:** 200,000

Retirees nowadays are changing the way many senior programs are offered. Gone are the days that senior citizens want to sit around and play bingo or shuffle board. Seniors today are looking to get more involved with more challenging activities. They become interested in programs that take them places and keep them busy creating a more active life which usually means a better quality of life. Many programs for seniors require little to no physical activity. The challenge is what can be done to get seniors to change their focus and actively participate in activities that are not only more challenging but also require more movement.

Our Gallops Active Aging program has altered the way many of our seniors think of exercise. Offering more than the basics of regular exercise classes from low impact to high impact classes. They also participate in a chair volleyball team that competes with other senior facilities within the community making this a fun physical activity with lots of social interaction. We initiated a walking program that each month plans exercise away from the facility. This can mean getting out and walking at our local community parks or traveling to a new trail, path or activity just to try something new. The group has walked the entire length of our Fall Line Trace, a total of 11.5 miles. They have hiked at Dowdell's Knob Loop, a 40.3-mile intermediate hiking trail located in Pine Mountain, Georgia. The group has gone canoeing on the pond at FDR State Park. As well as putting on the necessary gear and ziplining across the Chattahoochee River going from Georgia to Alabama and zipping back to Georgia from Phenix City, Alabama. This program engages the whole person and our seniors love it.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class I

**Nominee:** 1917 Courthouse Centennial Celebration

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Chesterfield County Parks and Recreation, Virginia

**Population:** 340,000

On October 26, 2017, Chesterfield County celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Historic 1917 Courthouse. It is a Chesterfield County Historic Landmark, a Virginia Historic Landmark and on the National Register of Historic Places.

This special event commemorated the centennial anniversary of the day the cornerstone for the courthouse was laid in 1917. The courthouse cupola used to contain the bell from the 1749 courthouse, but the 1749 bell was removed for restoration and replaced with another bell, from 1860. The 1749 bell, which is the oldest historic artifact in Chesterfield County, and three years older than the Liberty Bell, is now on permanent display in the Chesterfield County Museum, along with a new exhibit, "Ring in the Centennial of Chesterfield's 1917 Courthouse." This exhibit commemorates the last months of Chesterfield's 1749 Courthouse, the building of the new 1917 Courthouse and its preservation over the last 100 years.

The replacement 1860 bell was rung 100 times to open the ceremony. The celebration included guest speakers, music and the unveiling of a new interpretive sign on the courthouse green. 2017 also was Fort Lee's centennial anniversary. Fort Lee personnel participated with 100 soldiers representing the WWI draftees from 1917, the Fort Lee 392nd Band performed, and staff brought displays of tactical vehicles from the 502nd Transportation Company, and displays about their 100 years of history.

After the event attendees could witness a reenactment of the first court case in 1918 in the courthouse, as well as tour the 1917 Courthouse, County Museum and Historic 1892 Jail. The celebration attracted a crowd of 400 including dignitaries, such as U.S. Representative David Brat.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Opening of the Glass House Conservatory at Lasdon Park

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Westchester County Parks, New York

**Population:** 962,000

In June of 2017, the Glass House Conservatory opened to the public at Lasdon Park, Arboretum and Veterans Memorial in Somers with the debut of "The Rainforest: Tropical Treasures" exhibit, a magnificent display brings the lush beauty of this tropical environment indoors. The exhibit was designed to positively influence members of the community to take ownership of the environment and to create awareness of one of the world's endangered but valuable habitats.

On opening weekend, there were guided tours through the Conservatory by the Lasdon horticulturist as visitors walked on a simulated forest floor surrounded by lush vegetation, enveloped in the ecosystem of the rainforest. Outside the conservatory, there were family-oriented activities such as face painting and bracelet making, along with food and beverages offered for sale.

As part of the opening festivities earlier that week, a gala fundraiser was held on June 14, and the rainforest theme was even extended to include the type of foods served at the event, along with live animals such as lizards, iguanas and exotic birds from the rainforest on view. And, music for the event was provided by Andes Manta, a local trio that performs music typical of the South American rainforest.

Opening weekend events attracted several hundred people and raised awareness of this unique facility in Westchester County Parks. Since its opening in June, attendance has steadily been increasing as word has spread and the conservatory has become a unique and important educational and recreational asset for the people of Westchester County.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Growing Up Strong!

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, Maryland

**Population:** 621,000

Saturday, October 21, 2017 from 12-4p.m. at C.C. Jackson Community Center, Baltimore City Recreation and Parks in collaboration with Baltimore City Health Department, Baltimore City Police Department, Johns Hopkins Hospital and motivational speaker with Victorious Attitudes for Everyday Life Inc., held an event, Growing Up Strong! It was an open forum and inter-active workshops open to the public for teens 13-19 years of age on teen dating and bullying.

The event was planned to empower teens and raise awareness about the mental, emotional and physical effects date violence and bullying has on individuals. The goal of educating is to stop the violence before it begins. Teens are learning the skills they need to form positive, healthy relationships with others. It is an ideal time to promote healthy relationships and prevent patterns of teen violence that can last into adulthood. Participants spent the afternoon in powerful workshops where they opened up and shared with the group, learned and walked away with a wealth of information. In addition, fitness, smoking cessation and healthy nutrition was also part of the event.

More than 100-youth were in attendance rotating through workshops such as Teen Dating, Bullying, Adolescent Health, and more. Particularly valuable were the collaborative efforts of other jurisdictions and private entities. Imagine the effect of empowering and educating teens throughout recreation nationwide on topics of teen dating and bullying violence. Reaching more teens and providing the resources and information to make wiser decisions to aid in life changing results could have a positive effect that trickles down to future generations thereby, building stronger communities. The event was well received with positive energy from attendees, as well as, parents and participating agencies and organizations.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** RAPP - Recreation Assistance Partnership Program

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Oakland County Parks and Recreation, Michigan

**Population:** 1.2 million

Since its inception in 1982, Oakland County Parks and Recreation's Recreation Assistance Partnership Program (RAPP) has provided recreation yearly to more than 1 million Oakland County, Michigan county residents who might not otherwise have had access to recreation.

RAPP is an element of the parks system's evolving Strategic Master Plan and commitment to serve all areas and citizens of the county's throughout the county's 62 cities, villages and townships. Bordering to the north of Wayne County and City of Detroit, the southern end of Oakland County is heavily urban with limited green space and several lower income communities. Through the RAPP program, grants are awarded in the form of OCPR mobile recreation program activities which include outreach programs, nature education and bus transportation to cities, villages and townships; community parks and recreation departments; schools; downtown development authorities; non-profit organizations; and underserved populations. In the current OCPR budget, the Parks Commission allocated \$200,000 toward the program.

A RAPP grant provides up to two outreach programs such as Get Outdoors! Cache, Get Outdoors! Fish adventures and inflatables, one nature education plus one bus trip. One recent example was a trip to a Detroit Tigers baseball game for a group of children from Pontiac where the per capita income is \$15,842 and 22.1% of the population is below the poverty line. The RAPP grant provided bus transportation for the 30-mile trip to the stadium in downtown Detroit, a city most had never been to and to an event they might not have had an opportunity to experience.

In 2017 a nature component was added to the grant programs. The requests for nature programs doubled from 20 to 40 this year.

The RAPP program ensures that recreational needs of its diverse citizen population throughout Oakland County are met.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Arts on a Roll

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

Arts on a Roll is a mobile art service that provides fun and exciting arts activities for county residents. The mobile unit offers unique workshops in theatre, dance, music, and visual art for the young and the young-at-heart. The Arts On A Roll Arts Integration Workshop was held at Brentwood Arts Exchange in February 2017. Instructors from Arts On A Roll demonstrated workshops and crafts to a collection of area teachers to highlight what programs the service has available for area classrooms.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Operation Observation

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Great Parks of Hamilton County, Ohio

**Population:** 809,099

Participants at park nature programs often went home wondering, "What can I do to help?" Great Parks' new Operation Observation series, which began in 2017, gave participants opportunities to learn about a natural science topic while connecting them with reputable, well-established research projects that they could contribute to from the convenience of their own backyards, with no prior knowledge needed.

The Operation Observation series focused on a new topic and research project each month, and included urban birds, bee and ladybug populations, frog and toad audio surveys and more. Participants could come to one of the two events each month to learn about the topic and then learn the basics of how it tied to a national-level research project and what they could do as citizen scientists to contribute to that project. After completing each program, participants would receive special patches designed by Great Parks. These patches demonstrated their involvement as a citizen scientist, but also had a "collect them all" feel in order to drive them to attend more programs in the series.

This series provided a concrete way for participants to take part in ongoing research on their own time and in their own place. For example, while recording the timing of the buds bursting on their favorite tree in their yard, they were observing the impacts of climate change. And while finding and photographing bees, they were helping track population numbers. Each program helped visitors appreciate and understand the world around them a little better. It gave them the opportunity to see their observations counted as serious data to help improve the world around them.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Morikami Stroll For Well-being

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation Department, Florida

**Population:** 1.4 Million

The Stroll for Well-Being is a therapeutic garden walking program for participants to immerse themselves in the natural beauty, peace and serenity of the Japanese gardens. In 2006, Morikami conducted a study with FAU's Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing, funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, culminating in the establishment of the Stroll for Well-Being program. In 2011, the Morikami received a grant to extend the program to participants of non-profit therapy and counseling programs who are likely to benefit from reflective walks but were unable to afford this service. Research has shown that the simple act of walking in a natural environment or garden setting has positive effects on mood and outlook in individuals. The therapeutic walking program at Morikami provides a peaceful experience in an environment that promotes well-being and resilience in the face of adversity.

Participants have three group meetings with a facilitator over an 8-week period. At the first meeting they receive a stroll journal. They may visit the garden as often as they wish, but are encouraged to visit at least twice a week during the first 8-weeks. The journal presents several themed walks that identify points along the way at which to pause and reflect. Some themes include awareness, trust, possibility, joy and fulfillment, and are designed to elicit reflection on one's life. Space in the journal allows participants to record their thoughts and feelings.

Since the start of Stroll for Well-Being, we had over 1172 participants in the program representing over 35 non-profit organizations. Morikami's Curator has been awarded a 2018 Hero in Medicine award from the PBC Medical Society. The Morikami has also presented at three conferences promoting the program, and now other gardens are using the Morikami's Stroll for Well-Being as a model for their garden space.

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<https://www.nextavenue.org/therapeutic-gardens-offer-healing-for-the-sick-and-stressed/>

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Hops in the Park

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Chesterfield County Parks and Recreation, Virginia and the Henricus Foundation

**Population:** 1,500,000

Hops in the Park: A Blueprint for Public/Private Partnerships & Regional Cooperation

Henricus Historical Park, a living history museum located in Chester, Virginia, occupies 10 acres within a conservation area on the historic James River. It consists of two re-created 17th century sites: the 1611 Citie of Henricus and the Powhatan Indian community of Arrohatock. Henricus provides costumed historic interpretation, educational programs and special events.

In 2015, the site developed and hosted the first annual Hops in the Park harvest festival. In partnership with local jurisdictions, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Old Dominion Hops Cooperative, and supported and promoted by the Virginia Secretary of Agriculture, more than 20 craft breweries and ~3,000 visitors join yearly in celebrating the local and regional's specialty brewing industry and in commemorating the rich history of brewing in Virginia. For brewers to qualify for Hops, they must use at least one Virginia-grown ingredient in their product. Henricus raises its own hops and other ingredients used in the colonial brewing process.

Hops in the Park includes educational seminars, colonial brewing demonstrations and tasting opportunities at craft brewery booths set within the re-created colonial site. The event also features musical performances, farmer's market, food vendors, craft booths and a children's activities area.

Funded through tasting and vendor fees, sponsorships and a 2016 start-up state donation, this unique event is admission free. The goal of the event is to raise money for the Henricus Children's Education Fund, while attracting a wider range of public interests, demographic groups and varied income ranges. Proceeds help fund educational programming for nearly 30,000 students and teachers from the Richmond area and surrounding districts who visit each year for history, social studies and STEM-aligned academic programs.

Hops in the Park is innovative, safe and fun and has quickly become one of Henricus Historical Park's most important, iconic and popular annual events.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Discovery Trail Map

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Fairfax County Park Authority, Virginia

**Population:** 1.2 Million

2017 was the fourth year the Park Authority offered the Discovery Trail Map summer activity and the first year the agency introduced a character, Thomas, Lord Fairfax VI, to serve as a brand ambassador. The purpose of this promotion was to increase park visitation and social media engagement. The map encourages children and adults to join Lord Fairfax along the trail and visit at least eight of the 12 featured parks. Those who visited eight sites won a prize packet full of tickets to park amusements and were entered in a drawing for one of four new bicycles donated by a local bike shop.

The Lord Fairfax character helped connect the map's theme - moments in park history - to the year-long, countywide campaign to commemorate the 275th anniversary of Fairfax County. Lord Fairfax (a cardboard cutout) was moved to a different park each week, and Facebook clues were posted weekly telling participants where to find him. Park visitors who posted a selfie with him on Instagram with #WhereIsLordFairfax were eligible to win mini golf or RECenter guest passes. The promotional period ran from Memorial Day - Labor Day.

Budget:

- 20,400 printed maps: \$2,026 Total Materials Cost: \$3,644
- 4 Lord Fairfax Cutouts \$ 480 Cost of staff time - 29 hrs.: \$ 960
- Prize Packet materials/printing \$ 782
- Display Boxes/printing \$ 356 Total promotion cost: \$4,604

Cost Effectiveness: There was no budget for traditional advertising. The Fairfax County Park Foundation provided \$4,000 for campaign materials and staff costs were covered by the Park Authority. Social media was the primary form of communication for this campaign, which contributed to 14,760 park visits - a 28% increase over the previous year, and increased the Park Authority's social media engagement by as much as 788%.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Centennial Celebration

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Cleveland Metroparks, Ohio

**Population:** 500,000+

The Centennial Fireworks presented by KeyBank was a free community-wide celebration held on the eve of Cleveland Metroparks 100-year anniversary. The celebration was designed to commemorate the historic event, thank the community, and provide an additional opportunity to celebrate the Park District's century-long legacy of conservation, education, and recreation. The family-friendly celebration was comprised of live musical performances and a custom choreographed firework display over Cleveland's lakefront at Edgewater Beach, marking the first time in a decade that fireworks were displayed at this location.

### Program Goals

Cleveland Metroparks set out to:

- Make this celebration free for the public
- Provide entertaining and diverse line-up of performers, food trucks, and vendors
- Secure partnerships with local organizations Leverage local media and social media to spread awareness and enable guests who could not attend to view via a live TV broadcast and social media

A hometown partnership with KeyBank allowed Cleveland Metroparks to present The Centennial Fireworks for free to the 30,000+ guests who were in attendance. Thousands more viewed from satellite locations and the live TV broadcast, and over 300,000 viewers tuned in on Facebook live. Social media engagement generated more than one million impressions and thousands of users.

Dozens of local food trucks and vendors lined the perimeter of Edgewater Beach. A diverse line-up of performers across genres from Jazz to Rock provided the celebration's soundtrack with a closing from Cleveland's hometown act, Michael Stanley and Friends, which drew the crowd together over nostalgic hits and created a sense of hometown pride.

Feedback and engagement from the community, including residents, patrons, media, donors, volunteers and staff were overwhelmingly significant and positive. The high volume of personal stories in response to the centennial campaign evidenced the meaningful impact that Cleveland Metroparks has had on the community for the past 100 years.

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### Alternate Contact

## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Louisville is Engaging Children Outdoors (ECHO)

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Louisville Parks and Recreation, Kentucky

**Population:** 765,352

Since 2008, Louisville Parks and Recreation's Natural Areas division has offered free youth programming with our Louisville is Engaging Children Outdoors (Louisville ECHO) initiative. Louisville ECHO is a largely grant-funded program initiative to increase equitable opportunities for children, predominantly youth of color and youth from low-income backgrounds, by providing interactive experiences in the outdoors. It consists of multiple, complementary components that are intended to create multiple opportunities for youth to experience nature from "cradle to career". Current components include school-based field trips for elementary-age students, engaging out-of-school time (OST) programming for youth age 3 to 16, and resume-building summer job opportunities for youth adults age 17 to 21.

Since 2008, ECHO has reached 3,045 4th Graders from 8 Jefferson County Public Schools. In 2014, ECHO began offering out of school time programming 4 nights per week to 3,498 participants. The summer jobs component, which is in its inaugural year, had 6 participants who served 194 youth. 74% of ECHO participants are non-white, while 90% receive free and reduced lunch. ECHO provided 122 children a high dosage (10+ hours) of nature-based programming in 2017.

Louisville ECHO is working to combat many challenges to equitable access to nature with its portfolio of unique programmatic offerings. In West Louisville, the geographic focus of the program, 24.7% of residents are without a high school diploma, 22.7% are unemployed, and 42.9% live at or below federal poverty level. 58% of children live in poverty and 74.6% receive free or reduced meals. 34.1% of households do not have access to a vehicle. Access to nature can have positive impacts on quality of life components such as health, education, employment opportunities, and crime rates, and Louisville ECHO is providing these to West Louisville's urban neighborhoods.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** She The People

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

`She the People Politics Camp` was held at Palmer Park Community Center from July 10-14, 2017 with eleven girls ranging in age from 12-17. Participants learned about women in politics, history, introduction to debate, and public speaking. Guest speakers and contributors included: Delegate Joseline Pena-Melynck from the 21st legislative district of Maryland, Ciara Robinson, running for Town Council in Capitol Heights, Andrea Harrison, Councilwoman Karen Toles, Congresswoman Donna Edwards, State's Attorney Angela Alsobrooks, M-NCPPC Chair Betty Hewlett, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and Senator Chris Van Hollen.

Participants visited the County Council and County Executive offices, American History Museum and Newseum, Supreme Court and U.S. Capitol.

The goal of the camp was to get girls excited about politics and interested in running for office. On the final day of camp, the girls participated in a debate, in front of family, friends and DPR leadership. Participants learned leadership skills, public speaking, advocacy, networking and the structure of the political system. The camp was a huge success and will be taking place again next summer.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Partnership Program with Gwinnett County Library System

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation, Georgia

**Population:** 900,000

Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation (GCPR) in partnership with the Gwinnett County Public Library System expanded the limits of reading for residents by moving the story time outside, creating new and innovative programs with aquatics, and bringing the library to communities that lacked access. Programs integrated reading and parks and recreation. StoryWalk in the Park divided up sections of books and placed them along the park trail to encourage physical activity and literacy education. StoryTime at the Park held readings by librarians at the pavilions, along with crafts, and songs for summer campers and other park patrons. Swingset StoryTime held pop-up reading time and games and singing at various playgrounds. The Summer Reading Program kicks off every year at summer camp with the incorporation of active games at the parks. Live Healthy Gwinnett interns to visit library branches throughout the summer, implementing the summer feeding program, lead nutrition education activities and games, and cover topics related to health and wellness. Pop-Up Libraries, purchased through a grant, move among GCPR community recreation centers and senior centers. Library staff attends the annual National Lights on Afterschool event at parks, promoting year-round STEAM programming, group reading, and activity dates. Summer campers visit a nearby library branch once a week.

The award-winning Aquatic Literary Nights brings literary works to life at the aquatic facilities. Library staff engages the participants by reading portions of the works aloud and often recreate the works through acting with both staff and participants, direct engagement of participants and story through dialog, as well as song and dance. Portions of the aquatic facility receive makeovers to recreate scenes from the works they highlight. The partnership offers an antidote to the plugged-in lives of today's generation, allowing children to be more physically active, more aware of good nutrition, more creative, and more civil to one another.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Shakespeare in the Parks

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

Prince George's Shakespeare in the Parks was established in 2012 as an initiative of the Department of Parks & Recreation Year of the Arts.

Prince George's Shakespeare in the Parks provides opportunities for county-based directors, designers, actors, and musicians to share their creativity and expertise with residents of all ages. Productions travel throughout the county during the month of July - frequently performing in beautiful, outdoor performance spaces found in the county's many parks. Previous performances include: As You Like It, Twelfth Night, Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and The Tempest.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** JAPA, Junior Academy for Performing Arts

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

The Junior Academy for the Performing Arts is a new musical theatre class for Prince George's Parks and Recreation that focuses on the disciplines of singing, acting and dancing to create honest and entertaining musical theatre. Sessions are ten weeks each. The fall session was held at Joe's Movement Emporium and the spring session will be held at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland. We offer classes to students ages 8-17 and each class concentrates on skills appropriate to their age group. At the end of the session the classes come together to perform a show for friends and family. In a safe and creative environment, we challenge our students to push past their comfort zones to learn more about their talent, make new friends, and contribute to the group to create riveting and heartfelt performances.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Three Kings Day Celebration

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

The "Three Kings Day Celebration", in its 8th year, was the brainchild of Carlos Ocasio, Area Specialist, M-NCPPC Department of Parks and Recreation, Northern Area Operations. Created as a way to engage the growing Latino population in Prince George's County, particularly in under-served communities, the program combines cultural tradition with education and fun!

To fulfill the goal of reaching under-served communities, the program rotates Community Centers every 2 years. This has helped the program gather a loyal following, as well as engage new audiences. The 2018 program was held Saturday, January 6th from 10am - 1pm, at the College Park Community Center with over 200 families in attendance.

Families pre-register to participate at no cost. Once checked-in on site, the day of the program, participants enjoy face painting, a Spanish-speaking balloon twisting clown, as well as the official "Three Kings" program. The program begins with a fun, educational musical presentation: "1-2-3 con Andres", by Latin-Grammy winner Andres Salguero during which children and adults are encouraged to participate by singing and dancing. Families are then treated to a typical Latino lunch, including the "Rosca de Reyes" (a traditional Mexican sweet bread served only on Three Kings Day). The program ends with three community leaders-including a State Senator, Delegate, and a local Spanish-language radio personality who, dressed as the Three Kings, distributes age-appropriate gifts (donated by local organizations) to the children in attendance.

The program is the only one of its kind in Maryland, and in addition to helping engage the Latino population; it has been an opportunity to share/cross-market facilities, programs and activities the Department offers throughout the year. It also has grown as a cultural education forum, as participants now include, not only members of the Latino community, but people of varying cultures that may not traditionally celebrate Three Kings.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Juneteenth Festival

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. Marking the date that the last enslaved people learned of their freedom, the month of June and the nineteenth day were combined to form the word Juneteenth. From its Galveston, Texas origin in 1865, the observance of June 19th as the African American Emancipation Day has spread across the United States and beyond. Juneteenth is an official holiday recognized in over 43 states and the District of Columbia. This festival commemorates the emancipation of African Americans during and after the Civil War, as well as their historical achievements in the period following the war through the present. Juneteenth features live entertainment, food, art exhibits, and activities designed for all ages.

This free family event is open to the public, and is part of our ongoing mission to provide exciting and unique cultural programming to county residents. Over 1400 people attended the festival this past June.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Snow Plow Art

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

Thirty-three youth between the ages of 12 and 18 participated in this project as part of the Expressions: Talk Up, Not Down camp held at Patuxent River 4-H Center in July. Participants in this camp are recommended by social workers and school counselors.

A primary goal of the camp is to provide the opportunity for County youth to work with six master poets learning to use poetry as a positive tool of expression. The teens work with poets three to five hours a day creating poetry that is presented in a final performance on the last day of the camp. The poetry is also printed in a book which is given to each participant.

In addition to poetry, the teens work on a group art activity along with painting/drawing self-portraits. Two visual artists worked with campers to create both the mural and self-portraits. Two teams of teens each painted one plow. In addition to art and poetry activity, the teens are exposed to nature with outdoor hikes both day and night, camp fires, mediation exercises, self-esteem, mentoring and leadership training. The Expressions participants were able to transform a piece of work equipment into a work of art due to an innovative idea and desire by the Commission to create an atmosphere of teamwork. The snowplow mural will be seen around the county as our streets are cleared and kept safe. The artwork created by the camp participants won an American National Art Award for Innovation from the Get to Know Your Wild Neighbour Foundation.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Girls Lacrosse

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Los Angeles County Dept. of Parks and Recreation, California

**Population:** 10 million

Before launching in 2015, Girls Lacrosse was literally an unknown sport at Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) parks. Since then, DPR's Girls Lacrosse program has continued to gain popularity. Now being played at 10 County parks, this program featured 156 girls participating in the fall 2017 season, which ended Dec. 9.

The Department launched the program after seeing the need to get girls more involved in non-traditional sports that could perhaps open doors for them in the future. The response was very positive. Anticipation about a new sport for girls being played at our County parks sparked an interest in many communities, and soon, more and more people requested information.

Girls who had never played a sport - or maybe tried one, but felt timid or shy - have become excellent lacrosse players on the field. The sport has undoubtedly also opened new horizons to young women by giving them confidence and raising their self-esteem.

Girls who didn't know how to hold a lacrosse stick or use a mouth-guard in the beginning of the season left the program with a sense of empowerment. Today, they know they can apply the strength and discipline learned on the field to help them succeed in life.

In addition to learning the sport, participants also attend lacrosse clinics taught by professional college players, and some attend games at the University of Southern California and Whittier College. Those who had never thought about college learn that participating in a sport - such as lacrosse - is an asset that can get them there.

DPR's Girls Lacrosse Program has proven to be beneficial to young women in many ways, as it's given them a new avenue to be active, challenged, while having fun at the same time.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Strikeforce Drumline

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

The Strikeforce Drumline program has offered an extracurricular opportunity for youth to be involved in a positive community-based activity. In addition to teaching drumming, the program helps participants focus on the development of self-respect, respect for others, discipline and pride in our community. The mission of the drumline is to empower adolescents to make healthy life choices through the enriched and creative disciplines of dance, percussion, service and team building. Drumline students participate in music courses, perform for the public and for Parks and Recreation events. All uniforms, equipment and instruction are fully funded.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Mis Quince Años Program

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

I am proud to nominate Mis Quince Años Program from Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Prince George's County, for the NACPRO Park and Recreation Program Award. Programming staff from our agency coordinated a 12+ week program for girls ages 14-15 that celebrates the journey from childhood to maturity, embracing the Hispanic tradition of the Quinceañera. This program began its journey in 2007 with only 6 participants and 7 sessions but has grown over the years to serve 15 young ladies and 15 Chambelanes (young men who are the formal escorts).

The goals this committee meets every year include:

- Inspiring cultural awareness and identity
- Fostering high self-esteem and self-confidence
- Encouraging college preparation and academic growth
- Introducing positive role models, network opportunities and community engagement
- Improving family communication and community integration
- Facilitating service learning opportunities
- Teaching new skills and knowledge with priority on healthy habits and conservation

This program consisted of workshops two times per week on the following topics: College Preparation, Etiquette, Resume Writing and Interview Skills, Public Speaking and Communication, Self-Esteem, Personal Development, Financial Education and Inclusion/Sensitivity Awareness. Mis Quince Años Program participants also have an opportunity to participate in projects and trips such as: Food Bank Distribution, Good Neighbor Day, Patuxent River Native American Hut Project, and Performances at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland. The 12 weeks of workshops end with a formal presentation of the Quinceañera to their family and friends.

The Mis Quince Años Program also brings community leaders, business owners and local politicians in to mentor the young people throughout the process. Many businesses have also contributed to the success of this program through sponsorship opportunities. This program encompasses the true spirit of NRPA's 3 pillars. Health and Wellness is achieved through fitness and nutrition workshops, swimming and self-defense classes. Conservation is accomplished by connecting the participants with opportunities such as the CHISPA Conservation Project and a community "Clean Up, Green Up". It was also important for us to seek out social equity by providing an opportunity for youth in the Latino community to participate in this cultural rite of passage when their family may not have been able to provide for this occasion. We are proud to have such an amazing program to offer the youth in our county.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** The B Side Experience

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

The B-side experience is a partnership between Bowie State University and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission that brings two powerhouses together at one of the region's newest state-of-the-art performing arts centers. Working together with the Fine and Performing Arts department at Bowie State University (BSU FPAC), our programming at the BSU FPAC will educate through innovative courses and lectures led by distinguished faculty, elevate through the presentation of world-class performing artists, and entertain through immersive and inclusive performances. This year's performances were The CrossRhodes, Debbi Morgan, and Balance. The tagline for the B-side experience was sophisticated, exclusive, authentic; and was developed as a new series of eclectic, fun, and intimate entertainment with artists at the cutting edge of music, theater, dance and spoken word. Three-time Grammy nominee Raheem DeVaughn and Wes Felton performed in concert at Bowie State University on the Main Stage on August 12. These hip-hop artists mesh lush neo-soul crooning with socially conscious lyrics and have been crowned "the future folk-soul heros" by Complex Magazine.

Debbi Morgan played the role of Angie Baxter-Hubbard on the ABC soap opera All My Children for which she was the first African-American to win the Daytime Emmy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Drama Series in 1989. She is also known for her roles as the Seer in the fourth and fifth seasons of Charmed. In film, she received critical acclaim for her performance as Mozelle Batiste-Delacroix in Eve's Bayou (1997). On October 21 and 22 she performed her one-woman play, "The Monkey on My Back," at Bowie State University in the Recital Hall. The play is about her family's struggle with domestic violence and how they broke this generational curse. \$10 of every ticket sold was donated to the Family Crisis Center of Prince George's County - the County's only shelter for domestic violence victims.

An original production featuring some of the region's most familiar faces in the arts, business, broadcasting and public service told their stories of how they manage work/life relationships to find balance in their lives. On November 17th, Balance! was presented in the Recital Hall of Bowie State University. The production included a video package that preceded each person who spoke to give background and context to their remarks. Speakers included County Executive Rushern Baker III, The CrossRhodes (Raheem DeVaughn and Wes Felton), Lonise Bias, the mother of Len and Jay Bias, and circus aerialist Kaely Michels-Gualtieri. Opening remarks were given by Bowie State University President Aminta Breaux. The emcee was Tracee Wilkins.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** American Indian Village

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

The American Indian Village at Patuxent River Park is replicated from the Eastern Woodland Indian Village giving visitors opportunities to experience the history of the Indigenous Peoples of Prince George's County, Maryland and the surrounding areas. Built largely by local teenage volunteers, the village replicates eastern woodland villages. Different items at the village, which was built over 18 months, include a 40-foot long longhouse, a wigwam, archaeological exhibits, a garden, and stations showing the processes for hide tanning, net weaving and mat making.

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## Park & Recreation Program - Class II

**Nominee:** Black History Month Poster Internship Program

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

Launched in 2016, this internship program merges the fields of history and the visual arts to explore African American history with interns selected from Prince George's County high schools. Over the course of this eight-week program, interns participate in a variety of discussions, lectures, and hands-on activities. The internship also includes field trips to historic sites, art galleries, and museums throughout Prince George's County and the Washington, D.C. region. Additionally, interns in this program work closely with a local artist to produce the Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation's Black History Month poster, a beloved art project in Prince George's County that dates back to 1989. Distributed throughout the County and beyond, this poster has become a treasured collector's item and showcases the artistic talent of Prince George's County youth.

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## Planning Initiative

**Nominee:** Mississippi Gateway Regional Park Master Plan

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Three Rivers Park District, Minnesota

**Population:** 812,214

The master planning process for Mississippi Gateway is a model for outreach and development of a park designed to introduce new visitors to nature-based parks and recreation. The planning process purposefully targeted equity markets that have historically been underrepresented in the visitor base for nature-based parks: minorities, non-English speaking households, new immigrants, low-income households and people ages 45+.

The planning process involved 30 community events that engaged over 1,200 people. Feedback loops were developed and follow-up community-wide, neighborhood and organization meetings were held to review draft plan ideas. The over-arching message we heard was that potential visitors want to visit nature-based parks, but are uncomfortable in "wild" settings.

The result is a master plan that truly creates a "Gateway" for new visitors to nature-based parks. Upon entering the park, new visitors experience a fairly urban setting, with a visitor center, classic picnic and play areas, community gathering spaces, outdoor recreation skills classes, nature programming, and a "mini-Mississippi" river. The opportunities then begin to transition to a more natural setting as visitors move south along the river, highlighted by a tree-top canopy walk, nature play area, paved trail network, and observation points along the Mississippi. The lower third of the park is limited in development to non-paved trails and an education outpost on a pond. In this way, the new visitor can choose to explore increasing degrees of "wilderness." Ideally, these new visitors will then want to branch out and explore other Three Rivers' nature-based parks.

Development of the park is estimated at a total cost of \$21 million, with a target of opening in 2022. Visitation when completed is estimated to be 600,000 annual visits. The master plan process was led by Kelly Grissman, Director of Planning at Three Rivers. The consultant on the project was WSB and Associates.

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## Planning Initiative

**Nominee:** Cleveland Metroparks ADA Barriers Assessment

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Cleveland Metroparks, Ohio

**Population:** 500,000+

Surprisingly, there are still a substantial number of agencies that have not completed Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-Evaluations and Transition Plans as originally required by Federal law more than 25 years ago. The task can be daunting, overwhelming, and difficult and there is a critical need for administrators, planners, front line staff, and facility managers to understand the ADA and the required Transition Plan.

The Cleveland Metroparks has taken a unique approach to developing their Transition Plan and linked the effort to master planning. Following the hiring of an industry expert, the Metroparks trained over 50 staff members to "train the trainer" and indoctrinate the ADA language and knowledge into the organizational culture. Since March of 2016 these efforts have continued in earnest to train and educate staff on the nuances of how the rules and regulations apply to the Park District's 23,000+ acres and 18M+ annual visitors.

The Metroparks established an internal team of ten staff members (ADA Champions). The ADA Champions created and utilized one-of-a-kind technology including software, GIS, and data recorders to survey 300+ sites throughout the expansive park district. Staff then developed additional software with the integration of GIS to analyze data collected by custom designed equipment analyze outdoor developed areas and trails. The result of the extensive evaluation produces not only a Transition Plan to be executed over many years that informs master planning efforts and capital project priorities, but also created field guides, formatted real time reports, and helpful information located on the Cleveland Metroparks Employee Portal for on-demand access and assistance.

The staff-driven development of the Cleveland Metroparks Transition Plan has instituted a sense of ownership in the process and outcome. The process has created universal buy-in which in turn creates positive outcomes relative to master planning, park culture, and visitor experience.

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## Planning Initiative

**Nominee:** Historic Architectural Assessments

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

Department of Parks and Recreation for Prince George's County draws upon traditional historic preservation methods for making modern progress in addressing their inventory of Historic Architectural Resources. Recently the Park Planning and Development Division conducted a Historic Architectural Assessment of several (66) of their historic sites and structures recognizing the crucial importance of investigating and identifying, retaining and preserving the historic inventory of the Department. With this assessment, the Department can begin to prioritize work projects and identify funding needs to preserve the history of our County. Accurate records will be kept and a broad scope of cyclical maintenance will be adopted for all historic sites and structures in the Department.

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## Planning Initiative

**Nominee:** Health & Wellness Action Plan

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

The Health & Wellness Action Plan implements the health and wellness objectives of Formula 2040: Functional Master Plan for Parks, Recreation and Open Space and demonstrates how the Department, in collaboration with community partners and stakeholders, intends to (1) reduce obesity in the County, (2) elevate the Department's role as a health and wellness provider, and (3) increase resident participation in healthy lifestyle activities.

At its core, the Plan guides the work of the Department as it relates to improving overall health outcomes in Prince George's County. The Health and Wellness Action Plan was developed over a period of 18 months, to both develop strategies to implement Formula 2040 objectives and establish a focused health and wellness work program for the Department. A core group of staff from the Health and Wellness Team and Special Projects Unit developed an initial overall logic model with multiple themes. The resulting model was then reviewed and amended in a series of staff focus groups and work sessions with internal and external subject matter experts. Forty-one measurable outcomes were developed across a set of six thematic areas: (1) Signature Programs; (2) Standards, Guidelines, and Policies; (3) Partnerships, Sponsorships, and Grants; (4) Facilities; (5) Marketing; and (6) Staff Training.

At present, the Department has already made great strides towards completing many of these outcomes. Overall, the Action Plan aligns the Department with national public health movements. Through partnerships, policies, marketing, training and more, the Department is committed to being a leader in addressing the health and wellness needs of Prince George's County residents.

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## Professional - Fellow

**Nominee:** Reginald Moore

**Nominee's Title:** Director

**Nominee's Organization:** Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, Maryland

**Population:** 621,000

Reginald Moore has made a lifelong commitment to improving recreation and parks and making services accessible to all. Reginald was appointed by Mayor Catherine E. Pugh to serve as the Director of Baltimore City Recreation and Parks in 2018. Prior to this appointment, he served as the Director of Parks and Recreation at Macon-Bibb County (MBC) for two years and assistant Director for five years. During his time at MBC, Mr. Moore accomplished a great deal. He established and adopted a clear mission and vision statement for the department, renovated 3 recreation centers, initiated the CAPRA Accreditation process, initiated the construction of MBC's first Gilead S.T.E.A.M. Center and new senior center, oversaw the renovation of three community parks, oversaw the completion of the brand new Fillmore Thomas Park which won Keeping Macon-Bibb Beautiful "Beautification Award" in March 2018, and oversaw the renovations of Central City Park including the addition of the new Skate Park and the ICB Sports Complex with newly constructed multi-purpose fields. The magnitude of these accomplishments led MBC to name a day after him upon his departure.

As the Director, Mr. Moore is responsible for overseeing the agency's 262 parks, 170 athletic fields, 120 playgrounds, 110 tennis courts, 101 basketball courts, 12 neighborhood pools, 6 large swimming pools, 3 indoor pools and 2 splash pads. He also administers 700 full time, part-time and seasonal staff within the agency. Since becoming Director, he has assessed the needs of the community and the department; established strategic planning sessions for the agency and created robust programming that includes a Drone Academy, STEM camp, DJ apprenticeship, Journalism classes, a Baltimore City Choir, and extended recreation center hours. Reginald Moore is highly recommended for the NACPRO Professional Fellow Award.

Article in Macon, Georgia's "Political Notebook":

<http://www.macon.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/political-notebook/article152792559.html>

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## Professional - Fellow

**Nominee:** Brian Zimmerman

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:** Chief Executive Officer

**Nominee's Organization:** Cleveland Metroparks, Ohio

**Population:** 500,000+

Dear NACPRO Selection Committee:

I wish to nominate Brian M. Zimmerman for the National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials (NACPRO) 2018 Fellow Award. As Chief Executive Officer of Cleveland Metroparks, Brian has been transformative across every aspect of the 23,000-acre Park District, which includes 18 park reservations, eight golf courses, and a nationally acclaimed Zoo.

In 2017, Brian guided the Park District through its centennial year. As CEO, he has acquired land at a faster rate than any Cleveland Metroparks leader in its 100-year history aside from the park's founder. Brian has fulfilled his own park district's commitment to protecting greenspace, advancing connections, and providing access to quality parks for everyone. Brian places a great deal of emphasis on relevancy, looking at how we can reimagine parks in a way that engages new audiences, capitalizing on these valuable community assets which helped drive a record-setting 18.5 million recreational visits in 2017.

Brian spearheaded the revitalization of Cleveland's urban core - including the transformation of waterfront parks and beaches into safe, clean, and beautiful attractions for the community. By strategically acquiring nearly 750 acres of urban parks and working with partners to build expanded trail connections, the Park District continues toward fulfilling a goal of bringing park access to densely populated and underserved neighborhoods. Brian has been a champion of reaching every person that his park district serves, driving awareness of the more than 19,000 free recreation and nature education programs.

Since 2010, Cleveland Metroparks has secured over \$150 million in outside grants and donations - evidence of the confidence in Brian's leadership and mission. Within his seven years as leader and the record-setting centennial year, Brian has assured that his legacy will have a lasting and positive regional impact.

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### **Alternate Contact**

## Professional - Fellow

**Nominee:** Denis Franklin

**Nominee's Title:** Natural Resources Supervisor

**Nominee's Organization:** Metroparks Toledo, Ohio

**Population:** 432,488

Denis Franklin is a dedicated leader in the area of conservation and outdoor recreation with more than 30 years of service to the Ohio Division of Wildlife at Magee Marsh and currently in his role as a Natural Resources Supervisor with Metroparks Toledo.

For over 30 years, Denis Franklin managed the 2,000 acre Magee Marsh for the Ohio Division of Wildlife (ODNR), one of the few remaining wetland complexes on the Lake Erie shoreline. Denis worked cooperatively with the USFWS, Ducks Unlimited, Friends of Magee Marsh, The Nature Conservancy, Pheasants Forever, Black Swamp Bird Observatory, and many other conservation organizations. As a conservation leader, Denis consistently worked to effectively manage this fragile ecosystem for the benefit of wildlife and the people who come to enjoy it. During his tenure at ODNR, Denis was well known, respected and appreciated by all that knew him, and as a result, the main park drive (Denis Franklin Road) was named in his honor.

After retiring from ODNR, Denis felt compelled to return to public service and lead Metroparks Toledo in the Howard Marsh restoration project. This 987 wetland restoration, scheduled to open in April 2018, is considered one of the largest coastal zone restoration efforts in a 22-state region. His passion for wetland restoration is evident as he continues to enthusiastically share and interpret all aspects of planning and construction, as well as the future impact this project will have on the coastal wetland ecosystem. Furthermore, Denis shares his passion by providing his staff with opportunities to enhance their knowledge in the field of natural resource management. Denis works tirelessly to ensure that Howard Marsh will be a premier site for conservation and recreation. This transformational project simply would not have been possible without Denis's leadership and extensive knowledge of wetland management and restoration.

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### **Alternate Contact**

## Professional - Fellow

**Nominee:** George Page

**Nominee's Title:** VLPRA Executive Director

**Nominee's Organization:** Valdosta-Lowndes Parks & Recreation Authority, Georgia

**Population:** 112,000

George Page is the Executive Director of the Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks & Recreation Authority, a role he has held since 2011. Mr. Page has been a recreation professional for more than twenty years and uses that experience as he works tirelessly to provide a high quality of life for residents. He strives to provide quality programs and facilities through collaborative efforts, while promoting VLPRA as an economic engine.

Mr. Page has brought community members together in an unprecedented fashion. He spearheaded the effort to bring a Miracle Field to Valdosta and has collaborated with the Miracle League of Valdosta to plan and design the new MLV complex that will break ground this spring at one of our parks. This project incorporated city and county leaders, school systems, and non-profit organizations.

Mr. Page also created joint use agreements where previously there were none. VLPRA has an outstanding relationship with local school systems and our local university which results in collaborative programming and the ability to host tournaments together that benefit the local economy. He actively contributes to that effort: he's spent years traveled the country, encouraging tournament directors to visit Valdosta. That results in dozens of hosted tournaments and huge economic impact: more than \$5 million in 2017 alone. This amount eclipses VLPRA's total budget by nearly a million dollars, meaning VLPRA has a greater economic impact on the community than the amount taxpayers pay to fund the agency.

Mr. Page has also excelled at balancing the budget while managing large scale capital projects. When he arrived at VLPRA, the fund balance was approximately \$275,000. It is currently around \$3 million. That's all while renovating buildings, updating landscapes, creating new programs, and preparing to build a basketball court, five new baseball/softball fields, six new tennis courts, and a new soccer complex.

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### **Alternate Contact**

## Professional - Fellow

**Nominee:** Tim Fulton

**Nominee's Title:** Parks Administrator

**Nominee's Organization:** Louisville Parks and Recreation, Kentucky

**Population:** 765,652

Tim Fulton is currently the Parks Administrator over Operations for Louisville Parks and Recreation and has over thirty years of experience in the Parks and Recreation Industry. He has served on the Board of Trustees for the National Association for Olmsted Parks and the Board of Directors for Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER.

Key accomplishments at Louisville Parks and Recreation include:

- Expanding partnerships with the Olmsted Parks Conservancy to address the needs of our historic Olmsted Park System.
- Implementing zone management at Central Park (one of Louisville's Olmsted Parks).
- Spearheading the operations team to take on a 5S workplace organization process at six maintenance barns.

Tim has implemented park operations best practices in all park systems he has worked with. At the City of Las Cruces, New Mexico, he also established zone management, created and managed a tree inventory of all city properties, and partnered with the New Mexico Department of Health to develop and install way finding signage on the city's trail system. At the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy he created and taught a zone gardener training program for new staff and was able to improve park maintenance and reduce costs throughout the park system.

Tim has also served the parks and recreation field through his work with support organizations. At Groundwork Buffalo, he developed the Green Lots Program which connected neighborhoods with volunteers, business and resources to transform city-owned vacant lots into community gardens, conservation areas, and other community assets, and also developed and launched the Buffalo Green Team, an environmental education and employment program for youth from Buffalo's underserved communities. He followed this work up at Groundwork Dona Ana County, where he also created job training and certification program for young adults from underserved communities.

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## Professional - Fellow

**Nominee:** Greg Kearns

**Nominee's Title:** Park Naturalist

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

Gregory Kearns is a Park Naturalist for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. For nearly 30 years, he has worked for the Patuxent River Park where he has studied and protected the web of organisms centered on wild rice. Starting in the 1980s, he spearheaded the study of the Sora rail, a native migratory waterfowl that depends on the wild rice. Through this study, he connected the decline of the Sora to the decline of the wild rice, and, in turn, to the boom of Canadian Geese that decimated the rice. In 2000, Kearns launched a wild rice restoration project in Jug Bay, which has led to the full restoration of wild rice wetlands in the area, the recovery of the Sora, and a more stable, diverse Jug Bay ecosystem.

After spending 16 years restoring the wild rice of Jug Bay, this past August Greg Kearns resumed the banding and telemetry study of Soras -- incorporating an automated telemetry tracking network, which contains over 350 receiver stations in eastern North America, Central and South America. This widespread international connection allows Greg and his team to track the full cycle migration of individual birds - providing vital information on this secretive species. This latest phase of the project will answer critical questions including: Where the migrant Soras originate and what is their ultimate destination? How long does it take to migrate and how fast do they fly? How does the population fluctuate from year to year? What is the survival and life expectancy? How important are the freshwater tidal wetlands as a migratory stopover habitat?

Spanning nearly three decades, Greg's innovative work has provided critical information on the migration and stopover ecology of the Soras, the importance of wild rice habitat, the impact of Canadian Geese and much more.

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## Professional - Lifetime

**Nominee:** John VonDeLinde

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:** Division Manager, Parks & Community Services

**Nominee's Organization:** Anoka County, Minnesota

**Population:** 344,000

John VonDeLinde has been an accomplished leader in the parks and recreation field since 1978, and will be retiring on April 27, 2018 from Anoka County. John became the second Anoka County Parks Director on December 29, 1994 and was promoted to a County Division Manager on September 1, 2013. Throughout his 24 years with the Parks Department, and with the support of the Anoka County Board of Commissioners, John acquired 3,500 acres of park land and received over \$70 million in federal, state, and regional grants to develop the Anoka County Parks System.

John's service within NACPRO began with his appointment to the board in 2001. He has served as Third Vice President (2004-05), Second Vice President (2005-06), President Elect (2006-07), and President (2007-08). Outside of 2004-08, John was a Director on the board. He has also served on NACPRO Committee Assignments which include: Newsletter Chair (2001-02), Membership member (2001) and Chair (2002-04), Awards member (2002, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2017) and Chair (2010), and Board Nominations member (2008). John retired from NACPRO in 2017.

Throughout John's career he has been supported and nominated by his colleagues. He is the recipient of the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association President's Award (1992), Jack Niles Award (1993), and the distinguished Clifton E. French Award (2008). In addition to his 40 years in parks and conservation, John also holds a bachelor's degree in Parks Administration and a master's degree in Public Administration.

With the support of his wife Sue and three children (Peter, Tyler, and Ben), John has achieved impressive outcomes in his work and personal life. Based upon John's contribution to NACPRO, the parks and recreation field, and great impact with co-workers, stakeholders, and friends, he is a deserving candidate for the 2018 NACPRO Lifetime Professional Award.

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## Professional - Lifetime

**Nominee:** Joseph P. O'Neill

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:** Division Chief of Maintenance & Development

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

Joseph O'Neill has spent his career dedicated to the public in parks and recreation. His leadership most recently has been with M-NCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation for Prince George's County, Maintenance & Development Division. Coming from an operational background including aquatics, Joe has brought exceptional brand leadership to our group. He is constantly bringing new information to the team and is constantly researching new ways to improve the Commission program.

On September 23, 2013, Joe became Division Chief of the Maintenance and Development Division providing professional, maintenance services for all parks and recreation facilities. He supports the Department's diverse work programs and customers with a safe, well maintained, beautiful park system and facilities.

Joe works directly with the Fleet Manager to partner with Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation for the snow and ice removal program in addition to numerous park sites.

In addition, his breadth of experience has provided our management team an exceptional resource for problem solving. Joe is thoughtful and mindful not only with budgets and programs but also in the area of staff development and staff discipline. He sets an exceptional example, providing a balanced and fair approach. This includes being our management team representative during union represented contract negotiations.

In addition to these many fine work attributes, Joe has been very active in outside industry organizations. Joe O'Neill has practiced in the field for over 40 years. He has presented at numerous state and local conferences as well as at the NRPA Congress. In addition to teaching courses in Parks and Recreation administration at five different universities, Joe served as President of the NRPA (1991-1992) and President of the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association (2011-2012). Joe is also listed in "115 Legends of Parks & Recreation" (Sagamore Publishing).

### Education

- Master's Degree - Temple University

### Affiliations

- Chair of Finance Committee and Conference Program Committee - Maryland Recreation and Parks Association, Inc.
- Board Member - Planning Commission
- Member - American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration

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## Professional - Lifetime

**Nominee:** Dianne Bailey

**Nominee's Title:** Real Property Administrator

**Nominee's Organization:** Snohomish County Parks, Recreation & Tourism Dept, Washington

**Population:** 780,000

Dianne Bailey filled the role of Real Property Administrator for the Snohomish County Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism from August 1, 1990 to May 31, 2017. For twenty seven years Dianne was the face of the property acquisition and management side of the Department and the "go to" staff person for property acquisition, understanding property history and implementing new agreements for property use. During Dianne's tenure, the Department grew from 2,640 acres of park land to just over 12, 000 acres, encompassing 110 individual park properties.

Dianne's service to the community isn't seen only at ribbon cutting or ground breaking ceremonies, but also in her skill and persistence in working through complex government processes. Dianne has shown unusual talent in navigating these regulations, resulting in successful acquisition of properties for public use. As an example of one of the complex projects that Dianne led, in 2016 she was charged with completing a series of FEMA buyouts, within an extremely short timeline. Dianne researched the complex acquisition requirements that had to be followed, coordinated with other Departments and Agencies to ensure those requirements were met, worked with one other support person to reach out to owners of over 100 parcels and ultimately closed on seventy four properties within nineteen months. This was an enormous effort and was only successfully completed because of Dianne.

Performing title searches, identifying deed or title restrictions and drafting purchase and sale agreements are tedious but important tasks that Dianne performed tirelessly to serve the citizens of Snohomish County. Dianne's attention to detail, perseverance, tenacity and follow-through are skills that she perfected during a long career in public service that may have occurred behind the scenes but influenced long term quality of life to everyone who lives in or visits Snohomish County.

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### **Alternate Contact**

## Professional - Lifetime

**Nominee:** Grant Guess

**Nominee's Title:** Division Director of Project Administration

**Nominee's Organization:** Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation, Georgia

**Population:** 900,000

Grant has overseen the development of the Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation (GCPR) since its inception as a countywide department in 1987. He worked on the 1986 Comprehensive Master Plan that led to the successful public referendum establishing the current department. Under his direction, GCPR flourished to the 50 current parks totaling almost 10,000 acres, positively impacting the quality of life in Gwinnett County.

Grant directs his department in evaluating potential park sites, reviewing boundary surveys, and preparing feasibility studies. He is responsible for environmental assessment reports, geotechnical analyses, park designs, oversight of renovation and capital improvements to existing parks and facilities, master planning parks and construction of new parks.

His diligent involvement with Citizen Steering Committees has been instrumental in developing master plans for the parks in Gwinnett County. More than 138 citizen steering committee meetings have been held, resulting in major new state-of-the-art aquatics facilities, lighted walking/jogging tracks, skate parks, dog parks, special needs playgrounds and ball fields, gymnasiums, community and senior recreation centers, historic preservation projects, and an environmental education and heritage center.

Grant's focus on long-range planning has enabled GCPR to better plan for future growth. Under his direction, the county applied for and received the allotted amount for the second year of the Georgia Greenspace Program totaling \$3,142,726. He completed the Gwinnett County Open Space and Greenway Master Plan, serving as a guide for future development. The \$20 million Environmental and Heritage center was constructed under his direction and awarded Gold LEED certification. He directed to preserve and raise Freeman's Mill 20 ft. out of the 100-year floodplain, ultimately saving it during the record-breaking floods of 2009.

As a result of Grant's innovative thinking and dedication GCPR has been able to promote environmental awareness and winning the National Gold Medal of Excellence Award by National Recreation & Park Association in 2008 and then again as a finalist in 2013.

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## Professional - Lifetime

**Nominee:** Tom McDowell

**Nominee's Title:** Associate Superintendent

**Nominee's Organization:** Three Rivers Park District, Minnesota

**Population:** 812,214

Throughout Tom McDowell's 39-year career with Three Rivers Park District, he demonstrated a passion for excellence, an unending commitment to public service, and a love for the Park District and its mission. He wrote Three Rivers' mission statement: "To promote environmental stewardship through recreation and education in a natural resources-based park system," and his career with the Park District has been a testament to putting those words into action. Tom retired at the end of October 2017 from his position as Associate Superintendent for the Division of Recreation, Education and Natural Resources.

Tom was instrumental in major land acquisitions and facility development opportunities such as Gale Woods Farm, The Landing-Minnesota River Heritage Park, Baker Near-Wilderness Settlement, and Silverwood Park. At Gale Woods Farm in Minnetrista, Minnesota, Tom directed staff efforts to develop sustainable agriculture programming for all ages.

Baker Near-Wilderness Settlement provides conservation education in a residential-overnight setting, ranging from cabin camping experiences for adults to youth hunter education training and mentored hunts. Silverwood offers nature-based arts education in a park just minutes from Minneapolis and Saint Paul, and The Landing-Minnesota River Heritage Park is a living history museum dedicated to educating about the cultural history of the Minnesota River Valley.

Tom played critical roles in facility and program development for each of these parks; his leadership has been integral to their success. He contributed expertise to write and implement Board-adopted ordinance revisions, program statements, a dog exercise management plan, and the fee-based cost recovery model in use by the Park District.

Tom has been integral to the growth and innovation of Three Rivers Park District and is a champion of environmental stewardship, outdoor education and nature-based recreation as well as a much respected and appreciated coach and mentor for staff new to the parks profession.

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## Professional - Lifetime

**Nominee:** Joanne Kearney

**Nominee's Title:** Graphic Artist

**Nominee's Organization:** Fairfax County Park Authority, Virginia

**Population:** 1.2 million

Joanne Kearney served Fairfax County, Va., residents for more than 27 years. Her original role with parks was as a child growing up in the county and visiting its parks. Hired in 1991 as the Park Authority's sole graphic artist, her position evolved into a communications specialist, and her manual production techniques evolved alongside to include electronic design, data management and writing.

Ms. Kearney took the agency's promotional materials from a cut-and-paste era to cutting-edge technologies. She took her Exacto knife and cut a trail into desktop publishing and digital design through floppy disks, hard disks, CDs, DVDs, digital drop boxes and the cloud.

She produced thousands of products for every Park Authority division, including flyers, posters, brochures, programs, banners, logos, reports, newsletters, stage set designs and 104 quarterly issues of the agency's signature magazine, Parktakes. Under her watchful eye, Parktakes evolved from a small, two-color, newsprint publication to a full-scale, full-color, award-winning publication with a circulation of more than 200,000. It generates \$17 million in annual program revenue. Ms. Kearney's workload included digital graphic designs for video, RECenters, websites and social media.

Ms. Kearney was masterful at juggling multiple projects on ambitious deadlines while delivering creativity and accuracy. She was keenly aware of variables, from the technological to the meteorological, that could jeopardize deadlines.

During her career, Ms. Kearney was named the Park Authority's Employee of the Year, was a three-time recipient of the agency's Team of the Year Award, received a county Outstanding Performance Award, and received numerous awards from the National Association of Government Communicators, the Virginia Recreation and Park Society, the Virginia Government Communicators Association and the American Marketing Association.

Her work arguably may have reached all 1.2 million county residents either through Parktakes, banners at concerts, or posters at schools or in parks.

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## Removing Barriers Initiative

**Nominee:** Therapeutic Sensory Room

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

The South Bowie Community Center staff along with the Special Programs Division and Maintenance & Development staff completed the renovation of an underutilized racquetball court to create the Therapeutic Sensory Room. The Sensory Room is a safe and nurturing environment that transcends age range and abilities for children and adults with disabilities to enjoy calming and relaxing activities at their own pace. It offers participants the opportunity to discover and explore stations through senses: tactile, auditory and visual. As the first of its kind on this scale, it will become a beacon for the tristate area for persons with disabilities.

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## Removing Barriers Initiative

**Nominee:** Cooperative Garden of Morris County

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Morris County Park Commission, New Jersey

**Population:** 500,000

The Cooperative Garden of Morris County started 5 years ago as a grant funded project. Two grants were used to build the garden and initiate the plantings and materials needed. The National Recreation and Park Association ACHIEVE grant, and the New Jersey Healthy Communities Network grant were used to create a fenced in area with 13 framed beds and three raised beds. A shed, tools, a patio set, ground hog netting and a solar fountain were also included. The concept was unlike anything we had seen before - offer a gardening opportunity to those who could not access fresh and nutritious vegetables while also providing the chance to learn about gardening and healthy eating. The garden is supervised by a part time garden manager. Four social service agencies and non-profits come with clients to plant, water, weed and harvest. The clients keep the harvest - to take home or to use as part of a group activity.

The partners included Homeless Solutions, Family Promise of Morris County, ECLC of Morris County, CHAMP (group homes), and St. Clare's Behavioral Health Center. Each partner is responsible for establishing the schedule, providing a staff supervisor to communicate with the manager, and to chaperone the clients. The clients are people with developmental disabilities, psychiatric issues, and transitional homeless individuals and families. There are multiple benefits besides having fresh vegetables that they grew themselves. There is physical activity, socialization and the connection to the outdoors. A compost bin receives waste from the garden and contributions from a juice bar at the local grocery store. More recent grants have provided for the planting of pollinators to attract bees and butterflies. This one of a kind program is a true community benefit that can be replicated by other park and recreation agencies.

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## Removing Barriers Initiative

**Nominee:** Egg-ceptional Egg Hunt

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Valdosta-Lowndes Parks & Recreation Authority, Georgia

**Population:** 112,000

VLPRAs Egg-ceptional Egg hunt is an annual special event for children with disabilities and their families that offers a fully accessible egg hunt, games, and prizes. This type of recreation isn't always feasible for children with disabilities, especially those with sensory issues. That's why our goal is to provide individuals of ALL abilities the opportunity to hunt Easter eggs while promoting sensory encouragement, hand-eye coordination, and social networking with other area families.

Therapeutics Coordinator, Tammy Crosby, dreamed up this idea and put it into action. It's held at our Craig Center, which is a fully-accessible facility with a fenced in area perfect for an egg hunt. The event is for children with disabilities from 2-12 years old. It's also open to their siblings so families participate together. The hunt is separated by ages with small children in their own area. VLPRAs provides 3,000 toy and candy filled eggs, purchased from a company that employs adults with special needs. VLPRAs appreciates the opportunity to provide joy for children with special needs while empowering adults with disabilities.

VLPRAs provides tennis ball baskets to children in wheelchairs so they can independently pick up their own eggs. We also have audible "beep" eggs for children with visual impairments. There are treats for the children who find "prize eggs". After the hunt, children play games for donated prizes, like theme park tickets. We also have arts and crafts and sensory bins.

The program is free and is the only area egg hunt specifically for children with disabilities. Parents rave about the event, which has served hundreds of families since its inception in 2014. Children who have never hunted eggs are giddy with excitement as they fill their baskets with their loved ones beaming beside them. It's a joy and an honor to provide this program.

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## Removing Barriers Initiative

**Nominee:** ServiceSource Partnership

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Fairfax County Park Authority, Virginia and ServiceSource

**Population:** 1.2 Million

There is never a shortage of trash in Fairfax County Parks. Budget cuts throughout the years have made collecting garbage from more than 427 local parks expensive and challenging. However, an innovative collaboration that works for parks and also for individuals with disabilities is changing all that.

A 2017 partnership with ServiceSource - a leading nonprofit disability resource organization with programs in 10 states - has provided a dedicated and cost-effective workforce that travels from park to park providing much-needed and greatly appreciated park clean-up, especially at unstaffed parks and lakefront parks that are heavily used. Initially, the work was done at just a few sites on a trial basis but the word spread quickly that ServiceSource workers performed well, and it was determined to expand the scope by increasing the number of parks as well as the type of work performed.

These workers have a range of developmental disabilities. However, that does not stop them from getting the job done and attaining new independence through this program. They gain purpose in life, receive a paycheck, learn new responsibilities and are accountable for their performance. They earn competitive salaries and work in parks during off-peak hours, ensuring park sites are ready for visitors during busy times. The benefits of this program are now tangible: reduced costs, reduced park staffing demands, cleaner parks and fewer complaints from residents. This unique workforce enables the Park Authority to utilize staff in other places, which reduces our maintenance backlog.

ServiceSource now has multiple contracts with Fairfax County and they have earned a reputation for hard work and dependability. Our parks are cleaner, more closely monitored and this work group takes pride in their work. This partnership helps make Fairfax County a great place to live, play and work!

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## Removing Barriers Initiative

**Nominee:** Lake Metroparks Painesville Township Park Pier

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Lake Metroparks, Ohio

**Population:** 228,614

Painesville Township Park was once part of a century-old 300-acre estate along the Grand River and Lake Erie, which served as a family farm. A descendant sold 39.3 acres of the family property to become a park in 1911. The allure of Lake Erie drew visitors to enjoy beachfront swimming and sunbathing as well as baseball, dancing and picnicking along the bluff overlooking the water.

In 1991, Lake Metroparks entered a 25-year cooperative lease agreement with the Painesville Township Park board of commissioners to manage and operate the park. Improvements made to the park include extensive renovation of the dance hall and five ball fields, and ongoing efforts to control erosion along the lakeshore. In 2014, the lease management agreement was extended for an additional 25 years. Both parties also addressed the ongoing shoreline erosion that was having a devastating effect on the park by partnering on a shoreline project to include protection of the shoreline, and the addition of a new 200-foot pier and ADA access to Lake Erie.

This project has made a significant positive impact on the community and is embraced by the public. It removed barriers for persons with physical challenges and limitations. More broadly, barriers were removed for the neighborhood adjacent to the park by improving the appearance and appeal of one of the most economically-depressed areas of Lake County, Ohio. The completion and opening of this pier in Lake Erie on October 17, 2017 was a celebration of a four-year effort to protect the failing shoreline and provide safe, public access to the greatest natural resource in northeast Ohio. People of all abilities enjoy visiting and fishing from the pier, which has special "24/7" extended operating hours to provide safe, public access to Lake Erie and its spectacular views, sunsets, fishing and summer breezes.

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## Removing Barriers Initiative

**Nominee:** Gramping

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** San Diego County Department of Parks & Recreation, California

**Population:** over 500,000

An estimated 24,000 grandparents are raising grandchildren in San Diego County. The county hosts many activities to strengthen the bonds between these families and to expand awareness and acceptance of programs that can help. It's an ever-evolving effort; one that changes regularly to match shifts in resources and familial priorities.

In September 2017, the County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) hosted its first intergenerational camping event. Marketed to grandparents who serve as primary caregivers for their grandchildren, Gramping brought families together for two days of games, nature walks, education sessions, stargazing, storytelling, dancing, a tree planting and a lesson on how to safely build a campfire to roast s'mores. Forty-eight people attended the wildly successful and innovative program, affectionately called Gramping, which catered to first-time campers and provided all the necessary resources for those in socio-economically challenging situations. Camping gear was provided, food was prepared, and park fees were waived - so families could enjoy their time in the quaint mountain town without burden; free to focus on themselves and their roles as caregivers. Held over two days and one night, attendees forged new friendships while boosting their own self-awareness, confidence and drive.

Gramping was facilitated by DPR via its Lakeside and Spring Valley community centers and staff at Dos Picos County Park, in partnership with the County's Health and Human Services Agency and Aging and Independent Services Department. Bringing families to parks is in sync with DPR's mission to enhance the quality of life in San Diego County by providing exceptional parks and recreation experiences. Sunshine and fresh air support physical health, mental stability, and increased brain activity. Moreover, spending time in parks learning about plants, animals and local ecosystems spurs pride in residents and encourages future park use supporting operational goals and revenue generation.

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## Removing Barriers Initiative

**Nominee:** Adaptive Ice Skating Program

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

Megan Keller used to be a competitive figure skater until she was in a car accident which caused a traumatic brain injury. Megan now has limited use of her arms and legs and can only support some of her body weight for a short period of time. The Adaptive Ice Skating Program at Herbert Wells Ice Rink has afforded her the opportunity to get back onto the ice and into a recreational pursuit she truly loves!

The Adaptive Ice Skating Program is for children and adults with disabilities. The program requires specialized adaptive equipment to be able to participate in all aspects of ice skating. The goals and therapeutic benefits of the program are to improve posture, promote fine and gross motor coordination, strengthen muscles, improve balance and coordination, increase confidence and positive self-image, and encourage positive social skills. As designed, the program provides classes for both the beginner and intermediate skating skills.

The Adaptive Ice Skating Program is designed to improve the overall health and wellness of an underserved community, those with disabilities, and increase social equity to ensure that all members of the community have access to recreation. This program is the first offered by a Parks and Recreation organization and continues to position the Department of Parks and Recreation as a trendsetter and leader in the field of recreation.

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## Removing Barriers Initiative

**Nominee:** Inclusive Playground at Ridge Road Park

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Westchester County Parks, New York

**Population:** 962,000

In July of 2017, the new inclusive playground at Ridge Road Park in Hartsdale opened to the public as the second facility of its kind in Westchester County Parks.

The first handicapped-access playground opened at Saxon Woods Park in White Plains in 1998 and was the first of this type in our park system. It has been embraced by the community and has been enjoyed by kids and their families for years.

The new playground at Ridge Road Park has components that are accessible to wheelchairs via ramps or at grade on a rubber safety surface. It features a "double wilder" slide, "sky-hi" tube slide, clover leaf climber, wave climber, "DNA climber," so called for its chain-like appearance, and a "rock 'n' raft" glider.

The new playground is open during all park hours, 8 a.m. to dusk, seven days a week all year long.

It was built using funds from the Westchester County Capital Program and was part of an active-recreation project. The cost was approximately \$3.3 million.

The location for the new playground at Ridge Road Park also makes it a complement to the adjacent Miracle Field, a custom-designed field with cushioned, rubberized tiles to help prevent injuries, wheelchair-accessible dugouts and a completely flat, barrier-free surface to ease access for visually impaired players or players in wheelchairs. The field was installed in the park in 2006.

The new playground provides members of the disabled community and their families with the opportunity to enjoy a playground that is open and accessible. It is a great place where people with varying abilities can just be kids and interact with their peers, parents and siblings while they get some great exercise and fresh air. Best of all, the playground can be enjoyed by all kids, not just those who are physically challenged.

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## Removing Barriers Initiative

**Nominee:** “BmorevisAble” Art Show

**Nominee’s Title:**

**Nominee’s Organization:** Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, Maryland

**Population:** over 500,000

On Friday, November 3, 2017, the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks’ (BCRP) Therapeutic Recreation (TR) Division, in partnership with Make Studio, conducted its first annual “BmorevisAble” Art Show. The exhibit was hosted at Make Studio in the Hampden neighborhood of Baltimore City and featured the creative work of artists with disabilities in the Therapeutic Recreation Division art programs. The exhibit was truly professional in content and presentation, with professional lighting, staging, atmosphere and location. The Art Show was a culmination of an eight week art class program conducted at Farring Baybrook Recreation Center and taught by instructors from Make Studio. Artists were encouraged to be self-expressive, try new materials & methods, and connect with each other & their communities through art. All of the art work was for sale, with all of the proceeds from ticket and art work sales benefitting ongoing arts programming within the Therapeutic Recreation Division. Over 100 people attended the art show which included food and beverages from local area restaurants, musical entertainment by the TR Division’s own Matt Zorzi, and a raffle for a gift card to “The Food Market” for anyone purchasing an online ticket. The program received incredible, positive feedback from all involved. Plans are already underway for next year’s event.

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## Removing Barriers Initiative

**Nominee:** Bow Hunting for Hunters with Physical Disabilities

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Great Parks of Hamilton County, Ohio

**Population:** 809,099

Great Parks of Hamilton County has run a controlled bow hunting program since 2005 in order to maintain deer densities at ecologically acceptable levels. Recently, Great Parks modified its program in order to better accommodate hunters with physical disabilities. Since most bow hunting program standards do not provide accommodations for hunters with disabilities, Great Parks had to determine how to tackle issues like access to hunting areas, parking, terrain, safety and tracking and retrieving of deer for those hunters.

Through a lot of research and meetings in the field with one of the program's volunteer coordinators, who has a physical disability, Great Parks was able to understand issues that disabled hunters were having and provided solutions to those issues. Additional onsite meetings with experts from Great Parks planning and natural resources departments were also conducted to make sure all designated areas followed park district rules and regulations. Challenges included various obstructions to access areas. In one situation, a bridge was needed to cross a stream, but since one could not be installed before hunting season began, a new access route was created. Additionally, fallen branches needed to be removed periodically. Great Parks was able to do that by establishing GPS points of the hunting locations and access routes so that staff could regularly check for debris blocking access points.

Since Great Parks started providing designated hunting areas for hunters with physical disabilities, word has spread throughout the hunting community about the opportunity. By the end of the hunting season, the program saw a noticeable increase in interest by hunters with disabilities. It has been enough of an interest that Great Parks is considering opening other designated areas in other parks to serve these hunter's needs. Overall, accommodating hunters with a physical disability has opened up a new opportunity for them to be able to enjoy an activity that they otherwise would not be able to do.

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## Removing Barriers Initiative

**Nominee:** Evergreen State Fair Morning of Dreams

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Snohomish County Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department, Washington

**Population:** 780,000

The 12-day Evergreen State Fair, operated by the Snohomish County Parks, Recreation & Tourism Department, is the largest community event in Snohomish and surrounding counties each year with about 350,000 people in attendance. In planning the 2017 Fair, it became apparent that residents of Snohomish County were thirsting for a sensory-friendly event to allow individuals the opportunity to experience the fair without being overstimulated by sights, smells and sounds.

Evergreen State Fair staff met with local parents who have autistic children, organizational experts and Fair partners to see what could be done in terms of a sensory event at the fair. After much research and planning, staff named the two-hour morning event "Evergreen Morning of Dreams". To avoid a crowded environment, the fair opened an hour early to participants and included activities such as Farmer for a Day Interactive Display, Petting Zoo, Animal Barns, Display Halls, Calm Areas and select Carnival Rides operating without lights and sounds. In order to maintain a calm environment, registration was capped off at 500 participants for the first year event. Every aspect was a huge success and the only critical feedback received from the public was to expand the event so even more families have the opportunity to participate.

The largest compliment received from many parents was, "You gave my family the chance to feel normal..." Incorporating the Morning of Dreams event into the fair didn't require any additional financial resources, just time and dedication from staff and partners. The 2018 event planning is already underway with hopes to double the number of registrants. It was evident that adding a sensory focused event was deeply appreciated by our community and we would encourage any other organization look at what they could offer to meet the needs of their community in a similar way.

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## Removing Barriers Initiative

**Nominee:** Veteran's Garden of Giving

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Columbus Parks and Recreation Department, Georgia

**Population:** 200,000

The Healthy Futures component of our RSVP grant drives us to plan and organize community activities that promote and support healthy lifestyles. This directive brought us to our community garden. Our garden is unique in the fact that the garden is not only operated by the Gallops Senior Center participants but by any Veteran who wishes to participate, maintaining, planting and harvesting. Our Veteran's Garden of Giving at Gallops serves Veterans who have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The garden serve as a therapeutic intervention to help ease combat soldiers back into civilian life. It helps to reduce their feelings of isolation and eliminate the stigma of getting mental health treatment.

Mr. Joe Kuppe, a volunteer at the Gallops Senior Center, served as Project Leader in organizing this effort. Mr. Willie Jones, a Gallops Senior Center Volunteer, serves as Master Gardener. Recently an old community swimming pool at the Gallops Senior Center was removed and space for a garden was added. Next Mr. Kuppe contacted several local Veterans organization for support. The VA endorsed his effort. The Central Alabama Veterans Healthcare System and the VA office in Montgomery, Alabama came on board by busing Veterans from their organization here to Columbus to tend to the garden. The Columbus City Council approve the department request to seek and ask for donations. Local companies were contacted for various donations including sprinklers, lumber, fencing, cement, wheelbarrow and garden rakes. The seniors at Gallops will use the harvest produced in the garden and all organizations and individual are welcomed.

Gardens help to improve the life of seniors and others living alone and provide a better access to food resources.

Please see link below for related news clip:

<http://wrbl.com/2017/11/22/ blessings-of-the-garden-a-columbus-ptsd-effort/>

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## Removing Barriers Initiative

**Nominee:** Adaptive Recreation Summer Camp

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Loudoun County Parks, Recreation & Community Services, Virginia

**Population:** Less than 500,000

We believe that individuals of all abilities have the right, and should be given the opportunity, to participate in recreation and leisure activities of their own choosing. It is our desire that participants have fun, but also find success and gain greater independence, while exploring new interests in Adaptive Recreation Summer Camp (AR Camp). This innovative program embraces this philosophy by providing a camp-like environment for school-age children with disabilities requiring mild support to complete care.

In partnership with Loudoun County Public Schools, AR Camp is held at an elementary school, which is transformed into a summer oasis, based on a theme each year. An average of 120 campers spend six weeks in a safe, nurturing, fun environment where activities are modified according to each camper's abilities. Campers are encouraged to choose opportunities that enhance their quality of life and foster respect for acceptance in a community setting. Recreation and leisure choices include sports, arts, crafts, games, field trips (e.g., the weekly swim trip includes complete-care campers) and special events. A highlight for campers and families is the annual variety show. Each group practices and performs an act showcasing individuals' talents.

AR staff initiated the program and are trained to provide a quality camp based on proactive planning and modeling activities. They actively engage with campers during passive and active pursuits, motivate participation and provide a fun, positive experience while celebrating each camper's successes. A successful summer means that campers discovered their unique abilities for a successful inclusion experience; expressed emotions and talents that do not have outlets during the school year; and realized a positive experience in the community with minimal supports. Such successes, attributed to the passion of staff, families and campers, are why AR Camp should be used as a model for others to follow!

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## Trails & Corridors - Class I

**Nominee:** Dodd Park Trails Renovation

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Chesterfield County Parks and Recreation, Virginia

**Population:** 340,000

R. Garland Dodd Park at Point of Rocks has the second oldest trail system in Chesterfield County, with 3.5 miles of trails. Initially constructed by the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) and park staff, the park has the most diverse physical features of any park within the county. The trail renovation project included newly paved handicap accessible and stone dust trails, new trail markers and signage (previously lacking), and adding/upgrading foot bridges. Construction started in April 2016.

A grant from the VA Department of Conservation and Recreation through the Virginia Recreational Trails Program provided financial assistance. The funding allowed for the construction and rehabilitation of recreational trails at Dodd Park. The project developed 1.32 miles of gravel surfaced walking/biking trails including directional signs. The Grant program was an 80/20 federal/local reimbursement match with the county's match of \$43,700 of the \$214,000 total project.

Substantial reduction in project planning and cost were a result of using the Chesterfield County's existing landscaping vendor to perform the work. Logistical support was conducted by Parks and Recreation staff which consisted of daily onsite vendor supervision, a service typically performed by a general contractor. This savings allowed for the expanded project scope that included a connector trail leading from the parking lot to the existing trail which became fully handicap accessible.

Careful environmental protection and erosion control measures were followed throughout the construction.

Work was completed and the trails ready for use by December 2016. As expected, trail use increased by 30,000 visitors because of the expansion and renovation. This trail serves the needs of the public by providing a resurfaced, rerouted walking and biking route that meets current department design standards for safety and signage. Results are increased trail and park usage, accessibility and a better-quality experience.

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## Trails & Corridors - Class I

**Nominee:** Rogers Lake Trail System

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Coconino County Parks and Recreation, Arizona

**Population:** 139,097

The Rogers Lake County Natural Area Trail System is located 10 miles southwest of Flagstaff in Coconino County. Rogers Lake, an area known for its significant natural and cultural resources and incomparable wildlife viewing, became a county natural area in 2010. Two trails, 2-Spot and Gold Digger, total six miles, and feature views of forested uplands, the lake bed, and the San Francisco Peaks. County Parks and Recreation began trail construction in 2014 and completed the trail system and two trailheads with parking in August 2016. In April 2017, CCPR finished a watchable wildlife viewing platform that overlooks the lake. This platform includes viewing telescopes, interpretive bronze castings of wildlife examples, and was built completely in-house by our talented parks staff. The public's response has been very positive and more people are visiting the site. The County held a BioBlitz citizen science project in April 2016 and the Arizona Watchable Wildlife Experience group held a program in Summer 2017.

The multi-use, non-motorized trail system was built in a sustainable manner as to prevent erosion, while at the same time taking advantage of the natural features to create an excellent trail experience. The trail enhancements are sustainable in design using re-purposed materials throughout. Some of the sustainable features that staff have completed include: a ramada structure built from recycled lumber that diverts rainwater to a water feeder for birds, bats, and small mammals; two trailheads with parking lots made from milled asphalt diverted from a local highway re-alignment project; and ADA trail surface made from repurposed, engineered crushed stone originating from a renovation project at Flagstaff Pulliam Airport. This trail system serves as a sustainable trail model for local and regional trails in Northern Arizona, with the capacity to divert materials from the landfill for a new, purposeful use.

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## Trails & Corridors - Class I

**Nominee:** Oak Openings Greenway

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Metroparks Toledo, Ohio

**Population:** 432,488

Lucas County is highly regarded for its abundant natural resources including the Oak Openings Region, a globally recognized rare ecosystem declared by the Nature Conservancy as "One of America's Last Great Places." It was clear that immediate action was needed to save the best remaining examples of Lucas County's unprotected natural areas. With input from community leaders, conservation planners, and regional stakeholders, Metroparks developed a strategic land acquisition plan to acquire a minimum of 4,300 new acres of parkland. Specific to the Oak Openings Corridor, objectives included acquiring at least 1,800 acres of high quality natural areas within the Oak Openings Corridor, and develop a future recreational trail.

It was clear that Metroparks could not complete its land acquisition plan without broad community support and financial resources. Metroparks passed a 10-year land acquisition levy in 2002 to generate \$23 million to purchase land. In 2012, another levy passed for the purpose of general operations, land acquisition, land development, and capital improvements. Metroparks worked with a broad coalition of partners to obtain external funding to match taxpayer funds. From 2003-2016, Metroparks completed 163 individual land transactions, acquiring 4,387 acres of parkland, with 2,520 acres of land in Oak Openings. This required an agency-wide commitment to excellence, ensuring that natural areas were inventoried, restored and managed appropriately.

Metroparks is implementing its new Strategic Plan to develop 10 new parks in 10 years, guaranteeing that every Lucas County resident lives within 5 miles of a Metropark. As a result, two new parks opened in the Oak Openings Corridor in 2015, 1,500 acres of Oak Openings habitat were restored, and construction of the Oak Openings Corridor Trail is underway. Metroparks has guaranteed that Lucas County's natural heritage is protected for the benefit and enjoyment of all its citizens for generations to come.

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## Trails & Corridors - Class II

**Nominee:** Middlefork Savanna Bridge and Trail Connection

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Lake County Forest Preserve District, Illinois

**Population:** 703,047

The Lake County Forest Preserve District led a public-private partnership to construct a trail connection for an area where both a railroad and a state highway blocked pedestrian and bike traffic. A total of \$350,000 was raised from individuals, corporations, and other partners, and \$512,000 in District bond funds were provided to match a \$2 million Transportation Alternatives Project (TAP) grant. Key components of this project include a 221-foot long steel pedestrian bridge over the Canadian Pacific Railroad, a revised crosswalk at IL Route 60, a scenic overlook and new asphalt trails.

Coordination with the railroad schedule was critical and bridge installation had to occur between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m. Installation was permitted as long as freight trains could pass through and were held up for only short amounts of time. A 30-second time-lapse video of the installation brought broad awareness, resulting in 14,000 viewers and 50 shares on Facebook, thereby creating a larger public conversation about the project. Please use the following link to see the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-znIXIU2XM>

Located east of the railroad are the Middlefork Savanna Forest Preserve, Elawa and Meadowood Parks, Middlefork Farm and Mellody Farm Nature Preserves, Wildlife Discovery Center, residential communities and regional bike paths. Located west of the railroad are the Lake Forest Academy (boarding school), Townline Community Park, residential communities and a future regional trail. The public has responded with great enthusiasm. Residents have expressed excitement for their new access to these parks and recreational areas. A bike commuter who previously carried his bike across the tracks now uses this safe route. Students from the Academy have used the project for both academics (communications class assignment) and athletics (cross country practice). Families have also driven to the site to watch passing trains from the new bridge above.

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## Trails & Corridors - Class II

**Nominee:** Kids in Kayaks on Captain John Smith Water Trail

2018 Awardee

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, Maryland

**Population:** 621,000

Since 2015, Kids in Kayaks has provided Baltimore City Middle School students two seasonal opportunities to learn kayaking while simultaneously learning curriculum based science/history. Starting from Middle Branch Park, students explore the Patapsco River on the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail and the small tributaries nearby. Being an urban ecosystem, trash washed from streets through local storm drains collects along the shoreline, providing a "wow" teaching moment. Community stewardship begins here when students realize the land water connection! Back on land, students visit stations to learn about Baltimore history and Chesapeake Bay biology. Recreation and Parks provides water-based equipment and instructors. Partners staff the learning stations. The program goal is to connect students with our natural areas through a fun activity in a way that encourages an ethic of stewardship.

"I have been teaching in Baltimore City for 11 years concluding in June. I have been blessed with the opportunity to take my children on several field trips to many different places. The Kids N Kayaks program is one of the best field trip series I have ever had the opportunity to be a part of. It expands the horizons of children by providing them with an opportunity to learn in nature and learn about how the city of Baltimore's historic landmarks are connected to American history... It is a phenomenal program that had a phenomenal year and we look forward to participating next year." - Baba Olumiji, Teacher, Mount Royal Middle School.

**Funding:** National Park Service and Baltimore National Heritage Area.

**Fall Session:** September- October

**Spring Session:** April- June

**Students served:** 400-500 yearly

**Partners:**

- Maryland Zoo in Baltimore
- Fort McHenry National Monument
- NPS-Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail
- Star Spangled Banner Flag House
- Maryland Historical Society
- National Parks Conservation Association
- Baltimore National Heritage Area
- Baltimore Museum of Industry
- Tree Baltimore
- Outward Bound
- Baltimore City Public Schools

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## Trails & Corridors - Class II

**Nominee:** Opening of Missing Link for Westchester County Trailways

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Westchester County Parks, New York

**Population:** 962,000

After years of efforts on the part of the Westchester County's Parks and Planning departments, on October 21, 2017, the final segment, or "missing link," between the South County Trailway and North County Trailways in Westchester County was completed, connecting the two previously separate trailways into one that now spans an uninterrupted 37 miles from the New York City border to the Putnam County line.

These trailways are one of the most popular of Westchester County's parks, utilized by thousands of residents and regional visitors throughout the year. They comprise a paved bicycle and pedestrian path located primarily on right-of-way lands of the former Putnam Division of the New York Central Railroad as part of a nationwide "Rails-to-Trails" conversion campaign.

New York State began construction of the North County Trailway in the 1980s, leasing the rights to the county. In 1991, Westchester acquired the right-of-way for the South County Trailway. In June of 2016, the County Board of Legislators approved a \$2.75 million bond act for the project to close this one-mile gap in the trail in Elmsford, as well as a 25-year lease with the New York State Department of Transportation to construct and operate a portion of the trailway on state property along the Saw Mill River. Construction of this final phase began early in 2017.

This new trailway even continues into the next county, further extending the distance of the course for an additional 12 miles. The joining of this "missing link" of paved recreational pathways has been a boon to the residents of Westchester County and surrounding areas as something that has been eagerly awaited for decades.

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## Trails & Corridors - Class II

**Nominee:** QR F.I.T. Trail

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** M-NCPPC Prince George's County, Maryland

**Population:** Class II

The QR F.I.T. Trail System is a new technology that provides you with a new way to exercise and improve your fitness level. QR F.I.T. Trail signs are placed along the fitness trail in order to get you involved in self-directed exercising!

You can use your smartphone with a camera and download a free QR code reader application available through your phone's application store. You can then use the videos provided to become physically fit as you go along the trail. No additional fitness equipment is required.

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## Trails & Corridors - Class II

**Nominee:** Liberty Bell Trail

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Fairfax County Park Authority, Virginia

**Population:** 1.2 million

Good things often come in small packages, and that's certainly the case for the Fairfax County Park Authority's Liberty Bell Trail. Though less than a mile long, it provides a vital link to wooded trails, commuter routes and commercial enterprises in the Burke, Virginia, community that it serves.

There were smiles from officials, commuters, nature lovers, joggers and bicyclists of all ages when the ribbon was cut on the 4,400-foot trail in June 2017. The ten-foot-wide asphalt pathway is the newest segment of Pohick Stream Valley Trail, which is part of the county-wide Gerry Connolly Cross County Trail.

The Liberty Bell Trail provides a link to the Burke VRE (Virginia Rail Express) Trail completed in 2012. VRE is a popular form of public transit for commuters into Washington, DC. When combined with public and private trails and sidewalks, Liberty Bell provides access to two VRE Stations, the Burke Village Shopping Center and many residential communities.

Residents of Fairfax County consistently rate trails at their top priority for the Park Authority, and the Liberty Bell Trail is a direct response to public needs. Construction of the \$895,500 trail began in July 2016 and was funded by the Federal Highway Administration reimbursable grants program.

As it winds through wooded parkland, users can enjoy the trail simply as a brush with nature or use it as a means to another destination. Cyclists say the new trail makes biking far easier in the county and allows them to ride from the commuter train station to destinations across the county and beyond while staying mainly on trails and in bike lanes. State Senator Dave Marsden rode his bike to the ribbon-cutting to show how trails such as Liberty Bell can help local residents avoid the acute traffic congestion endemic to this region.

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## Trails & Corridors - Class II

**Nominee:** McDaniel Farm Park Trails

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation, Georgia

**Population:** 900,000

There are a total of 2.3 miles of 12' wide asphalt paved trails located within 133 acre McDaniel Farm Park, a former farm site in Gwinnett County, Georgia. Historic farm buildings, green pastures, and shaded tree groves line the trails, offering a glimpse of the historic past and natural oasis amid the progress of business and retail establishments. The trails were recognized as National Recreation Trails by Department of the Interior in 2013. The original 125-acre parcel remained relatively unchanged from the 1820 land lottery drawing to the mid 2000's when Gwinnett County developed it into a passive park to protect this historic greenspace, further enriching the community and adding recreational aspects. Located near high density retail and corporate building zones, the trails offer a scenic tranquil environment in the midst of the modern day "mall sprawl". Nearby residents walk and run the trails on a daily basis and enjoy the benefits of an active lifestyle of health and fitness.

The park expanded in 2017 to the 133 acres offering nearby residents an opportunity to walk and run the trails on a daily basis and to have an active lifestyle of health and fitness. The expansion included soft surface trails that wind through recently restored seven-acres of grass and wildflower meadow as well as a paved trail connection to the existing trail system, a farm-themed playground, a new dog park area, and a 2,300 square-foot rustic pavilion. The master plan and design was for minimum impact on the historic buildings and/or elements, and the natural environmental features. Interpretive signage along the trails and throughout the park allows visitors to take self-guided tour. Summer camps, with a "Civil War" or military theme, schools, scout troops, and daycare centers all enjoy the park throughout the year. As tools for ecology and conservation, trails help preserve important natural landscapes and historic sites, provide needed links between fragmented habitats and offer tremendous opportunities for protecting plant and animal species.

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## Trails & Corridors - Class II

**Nominee:** Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Three Rivers Park District, Minnesota

**Population:** 812,214

The Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail spans the communities of Hopkins, Minnetonka, Edina, Richfield, and Bloomington in suburban Hennepin County, Minnesota. As a critical component in Three Rivers Park District's regional trail system, the trail provides vital non-motorized recreation and transportation connections for residents of the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan area, as well as connections to Fort Snelling State Park and the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center.

The 15-mile paved, multi-use trail utilizes existing parkland and open space to the greatest extent possible to create high-quality recreational opportunities. The regional trail corridor follows its namesake, Nine Mile Creek, for several miles and incorporates vistas over wetlands, areas for environmental education and interpretation, and several places to appreciate and interact with nature close to home. The trail also serves a linking function by connecting the regional parks and trail system to itself, connecting people to destinations including job centers, schools, libraries, retail/commercial nodes, churches, and parks, and provides a safe, non-motorized transportation option for a wide variety of user groups and skill levels. Trail/pedestrian bridges were built over two major highways (MN TH100 and TH62), which help to connect communities and provide safe routes to schools.

Three Rivers Park District conducted an extensive planning and public engagement process. The Nine Mile Creek Regional Trail completes a significant component of the Park District's First Tier Parks, Trails, and Greenway Master Plan, which served as a planning document for regional trail construction in the first-tier communities surrounding Minneapolis - areas where the Park District hadn't previously operated facilities. Throughout the planning process for the Nine Mile Creek trail, the Park District collaborated closely with stakeholders and residents, and utilized a variety of public outreach and engagement techniques.

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## Trails & Corridors - Class II

**Nominee:** A.B. Williams Woods Sylvan Loop Trail

**Nominee's Title:**

**Nominee's Organization:** Cleveland Metroparks, Ohio

**Population:** 1.3 million

A.B. Williams was the first naturalist to work for Cleveland Metroparks and one of the oldest forests groves in Ohio, located in Cleveland Metroparks, bears his name. The steep Sylvan Loop trail in these woods suffered from severe erosion: exposing slick roots, loose gravel, and creating mud pits. The trail was contributing to resource damage including soil loss and harming old-growth trees. Vegetation was trampled as users widened the trail and formed new paths to avoid wet areas.

The Trails Development team was tasked with improving access while protecting the resource, a delicate balance requiring creative techniques. The design plan was generated through stakeholder meetings including the park manager and director, natural resource specialists, nature center staff, and trail users.

Restoration goals:

- Utilize universal access trail design principles as set forth by the Architectural Barriers Act through the Forest Service Trails Accessibility Guidelines.
- Utilize “found wood” from within the park to be milled in-house for all trail structures.
- Minimize environmental impact of equipment used to build trail Incorporate a post-construction restoration plan.
- Reduce maintenance by using sustainable design, integrating drainage structures.
- Improve wayfinding.
- Integrate Forest Service Trails Accessibility Guidelines (FSTAG) while protecting the unique characteristics of the natural setting of A.B. Williams Memorial Woods.

Trail volunteers working alongside staff was key to maximizing efficiency. Native wood structures made with in-house milled boards were built with a 1930's Civilian Conservation Corps look while using modern variations such as elevated structures to minimize old-growth tree root damage. An elegant design improved aesthetics and drainage while conserving natural resources.

Sustainability in this trail design demonstrates problem solving for the future and transferable techniques. The Park District can meet the needs of a large contingency of people while still prioritizing the needs of resource conservation and protection.

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