



2018 NACPRO Awardees

PROFESSIONAL LIFETIME AWARD

John VonDeLinde

Anoka County Parks and Recreation, Minnesota



John VonDeLinde has been an accomplished leader in the parks and recreation field since 1978, and retired 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 served for over 16 years as an active member of NACPRO Board in a variety of capacities. 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).

With the support of his wife Sue and three children, John has achieved impressive outcomes in his work and personal life. Based upon his contribution to NACPRO, the parks and recreation field, and great impact with co-workers, stakeholders, and friends, please congratulate John VonDeLinde for the 2018 NACPRO Lifetime Professional Award.

Joseph O'Neill

MNCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County, Maryland

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



the group. He is constantly bringing new information to the team and is constantly researching new ways to improve the Commission program.

In addition, his breadth of experience has provided the 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 set an exceptional example, providing a balanced and fair approach. This includes being the management team representative during union represented contract negotiations.

In addition to these many fine work attributes, Joe has been very active in outdoor industry organizations. Joe has practiced in the field for over 40 years and has presented at numerous state and local conferences as well as at the NRPA Congress.

PROFESSIONAL FELLOW AWARD

Brian Zimmerman Cleveland Metroparks, Ohio



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's leadership helped drive a record 18.5 million visitors to Metroparks assets.

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.

OUTSTANDING PUBLIC OFFICIAL AWARD

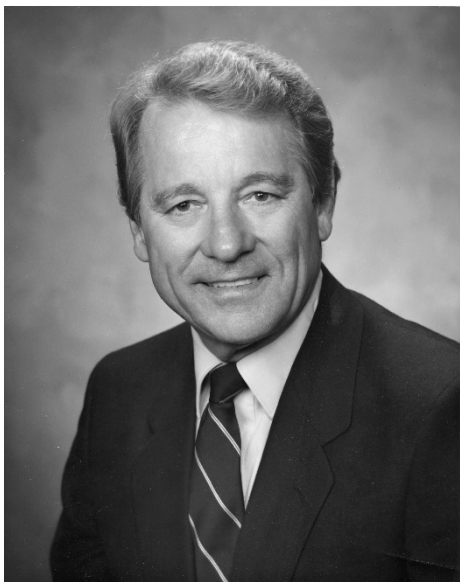
Baltimore City Council President Bernard C. “Jack” Young

Baltimore City Council President Bernard C. “Jack” Young has been a lifelong champion of Baltimore’s public parks, open spaces and recreation centers and has served on the city council for over 20 years.

As the founder of the Productive Lives, Active Youth or (P.L.A.Y.) Campaign, Mr. Young has created meaningful and longstanding connections between Baltimore’s young people and the city’s myriad of recreational spaces. He has partnered with Major League Baseball and the National Hockey League to promote both baseball and street hockey, bringing together Baltimore’s youth from a variety of backgrounds through the PLAY campaign, Mr. Young has made a lasting impact on the youth in the greater Baltimore area.



US Congressman Ralph Regula Nominated by Starks Parks, Ohio



The late Congressman Ralph Regula represented Stark County for over 40 years in a variety of public positions including more than 30 years as a US Congressman. Mr. Regula’s contributions to parks and recreation cannot be overstated. 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.

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 Ohio and Erie Canal, Regula’s vision single-handedly unlocked the historical and recreational potential of the Ohio and Erie Canal and Towpath

Trail. 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.

OUTSTANDING SUPPORT ORGANIZATION AWARD

Olmsted Parks Conservancy

Louisville Parks and Recreation, Kentucky



The Olmsted Parks Conservancy was created as a 501c3 in 1989 with the goal of protecting and restoring Louisville’s Olmsted park system, originally designed by Frederick Law Olmsted in the late 19th Century. 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.

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTOR AWARD

Jean and Ric Edelman

Fairfax County Park Foundation, Virginia

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 Edelmans, financial advisors by trade, donated \$75,000 to complete the observatory and to spark an interest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math also known as STEM 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 Edelmans see the donation as an investment in the future and believe “there’s no better way to excite a child about science than astronomy.”

OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEER AWARD

Jim Martin

Shawnee County Parks & Recreation, Kansas



Advisory Board member and retired engineer Jim Martin quickly recognized the extent of capital maintenance needs for both existing and new facilities within Shawnee County Parks + Recreation. 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.

PARK & RECREATION PROGRAM CLASS I AWARD

Senior Summer Camp

Loudoun County Parks, Recreation and Community Services, Virginia

Who says summer camps are just for kids? 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.



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.

Cooks in Training

Columbus Parks and Recreation Department, Georgia



Cooks in Training is an afterschool program 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 or individual. 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 and to cook healthier options.

PARK & RECREATION PROGRAM CLASS II AWARD

RAPP - Recreation Assistance Partnership Program Oakland County Parks and Recreation, Michigan

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

RAPP is an element of the parks system's evolving Strategic Master Plan and commitment to serve all areas and citizens throughout the county's 62 cities, villages and townships. 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 mobile recreation program activities which include 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 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.

Hops in the Park

Chesterfield County Parks and Recreation and the Henricus Foundation, Virginia



Henricus Historical Park, a living history museum located in Chester, Virginia, occupies 10 acres within a conservation area on the historic James River. 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, 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 regional 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.

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 who visit each year for history, social studies and STEM-aligned academic programs.

PARK AND RECREATION FACILITY CLASS I AWARD

Knock Knock Children's Museum at City-Brooks Community Park

Recreation and Park Commission of East Baton Rouge, Louisiana

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 26,000-square-foot, three-story building integrates beautifully with the landscape and takes 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.

The West Fields at Highland Heritage Regional Park **Douglas County Parks, Trails and Building Grounds, Colorado**



West Fields at Highland Heritage Regional Park is a 19-acre retrofitted active sports complex. This complex consists of 4.39 acres of synthetic turf, with a retractable sports lighting system, picnic-shelters, LED lighting system, ample parking and a future tournament staging area. The fields are permanently striped for soccer, football, and lacrosse and programmed year-round. This complex was previously leased to a 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.

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, 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 similar facilities.

PARK AND RECREATION FACILITY CLASS II AWARD

Lee District Family Recreation Area **Fairfax County Park Authority, Virginia**

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 different 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. In addition, a special 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.

Edgewater Beach House **Cleveland Metroparks, Ohio**

Cleveland Metroparks acquired six 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 the park master planning process, park patron interviews, and an online format (using MindMixer and 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 offer quality experiences for the diverse population of Northeast Ohio, tourists, and visitors.



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

TRAILS AND CORRIDORS, CLASS I AWARD

Dodd Park Trails Renovation **Chesterfield County Parks and Recreation, Virginia**



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 and park staff, the park has the most diverse physical features of any park within the county. 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 the trails at Dodd Park. The project developed 1.32 miles of gravel surfaced walking and biking trails including directional signs.

Work was completed and the trails were ready for use by December 2016. As expected, trail use increased by 30,000 because of the expansion and renovation. This trail serves the needs of the public by providing quality walking and biking route that meets current department design standards for safety and signage.

Rogers Lake Trail System

Coconino County Parks and Recreation, Arizona

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. The two trails, 2-Spot and Gold Digger, total six miles, and feature views of forested uplands, the lake bed, and the San Francisco Peaks. Coconino County Parks and Recreation began trail construction in 2014 and completed the trail system and two trailheads 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 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.



TRAILS & CORRIDORS CLASS II AWARD

Middlefork Savanna Bridge and Trail Connection

Lake County Forest Preserve District, Illinois

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 Illinois 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.

Kids in Kayaks on Captain John Smith Water Trail

Baltimore City Recreation and Parks, Maryland



Since 2015, Kids in Kayaks has provided Baltimore City middle school students two seasonal opportunities to learn kayaking while simultaneously learning curriculum based science and 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 powerful teaching moment. Community stewardship begins when students understand the land water relationship. 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.

OPERATIONAL FACILITY AWARD

Watkins Tennis Administration Facility

MNCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County, Maryland

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.

Blue Creek Nursery **Metroparks Toledo, Ohio**

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.

HISTORICAL/CULTURAL FACILITY AWARD

Johnson County Arts & Heritage Center **Johnson County Park & Recreation District, Kansas**

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. The 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 thorough-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.



Gossip Tour of Merestead

Westchester County Parks, New York

Merestead is an early 20th century mansion that was owned by William Sloane who was president of the nationally known furniture and 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. 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 Sloane’s’ 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 public was beginning to dissolve as servants began to speak more openly about their employers, which resulted in the creation of the society columns in local newspapers.

Environmental/Conservation Award

Harrell Road Park

Knox County Parks and Recreation, Tennessee

Bordered by Beaver Creek and a large residential development, Harrell Road Park was designed to capture and slow runoff, and to 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. 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 conservation benefits.

Acacia Reservation Restoration Cleveland Metroparks, Ohio

Acacia Reservation is Cleveland Metroparks' 17th park but first converted from a 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, 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, 6,860 trees and shrubs and 4,174 herbaceous plugs were planted, 1,774 linear feet of stream channel was restored, and 2,535 feet of wetland swales were created. 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.

Wagon Wheel Creek Restoration Orange County Parks, California



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.

Orange County Parks, with a consultant, developed a holistic, strategic approach to provide 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. Brush mattresses, willow cuttings, earthen berms and timber walls complement the natural surroundings and maintain 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 would impact future enjoyment of the park.

REMOVING BARRIERS INITIATIVE AWARD

Egg-ceptional Egg Hunt

Valdosta-Lowndes Parks & Recreation Authority, Georgia



Valdosta Lowndes Parks and Recreation Authority's 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 the 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.

The event is for children with disabilities from 2-12 years old. It's also open to their siblings so families participate together. 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. Parks and recreation authority staff say that it's a joy and an honor to provide this program.

Evergreen State Fair Morning of Dreams

Snohomish County Parks, Recreation & Tourism, Washington

The 12-day Evergreen State Fair, operated by the Snohomish County Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department, and is the largest community event in the area with about 350,000 attendees. In planning the 2017 fair, we realized there was a need to provide a sensory-friendly event for individuals prone to overstimulation from sights, smells and sounds.



Evergreen State Fair staff met with local parents who have autistic children, organizational experts and partners to understand how to develop a sensory event. 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 and included activities such as Farmer for a Day, 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. Every aspect was a huge success and the only critical feedback received was to expand the event so that more families could participate.

The largest compliment received from many parents was, "You gave my family the chance to feel normal".

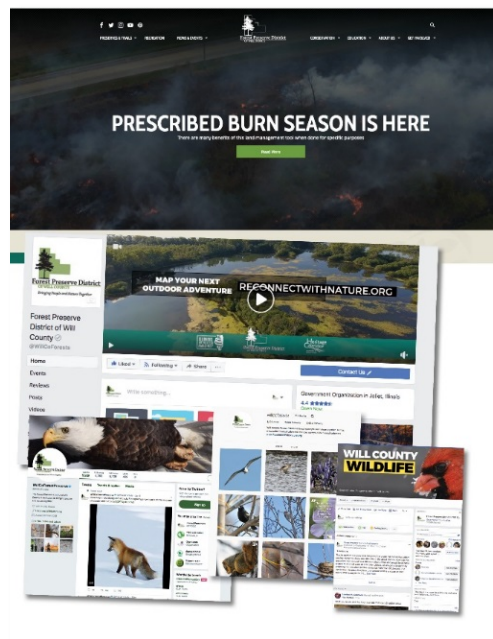
MARKETING AWARD

Digital Marketing

Forest Preserve District of Will County, Illinois

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 staff could more frequently and effectively communicate with the public, while using data to better guide our marketing efforts.

Over a 24-month period, Will County launched a new website, cultivated an audience across 30 Facebook pages, converted the quarterly newsletter to a weekly email newsletter, created “The Weekly Five” email blast highlighting upcoming events, and utilized a drone to create video content showcasing flora and fauna. Since 2016 there have been over 2.5 million views and YouTube viewership increased 1,300 percent.



Ask a Ranger Videos

San Diego County Department of Parks and Recreation, California

PARKS AND REC

Prickly Situation for Hikers: How to Remove Cactus



By José Eli Villanueva, County of San Diego Communications Office
Jan. 31, 2017 | 2:51 PM

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 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 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.

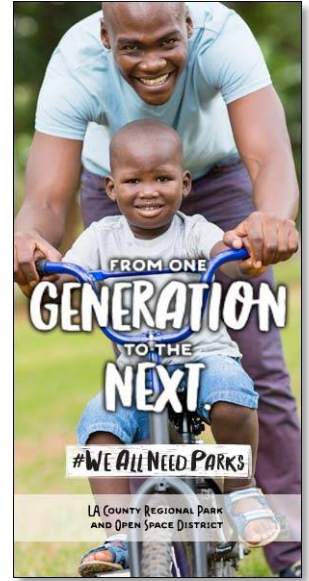
The first videos went live in 2016 with more added in 2017. The most watched video of 2017, “Why do some trails close when it rains?” earned 33,432 Facebook, 3,640 YouTube, and 6,139 CNC views. Another video that got a lot of traction was, “Prickly Situation for Hikers: How to Remove Cactus,” collecting 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.

Safe, Clean Neighborhood Parks and Beaches Measure (Measure A)

Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, California

In the interest of replacing expiring voter-approved grant funding for parks projects, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisor placed the Safe, Clean Neighborhood Parks and Beaches Measure (Measure A) onto the November 2016 ballot.

For more than 14 months, 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 advertising on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, as well as informational ads through Sharethrough and Google Display Network. Other targeted outreach included the local newspapers, radio stations, television and online news outlets. WeAllNeedParks.org was created to house a collection of information and facts.



Nearly 75% of county voters approved Measure A, exceeding the 2/3 super-majority requirement. 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.

PLANNING INITIATIVE AWARD

Mississippi Gateway Regional Park Master Plan

Three Rivers Park District, Minnesota



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 involved 30 community events that engaged over 1,200 people. Feedback loops were developed and 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.

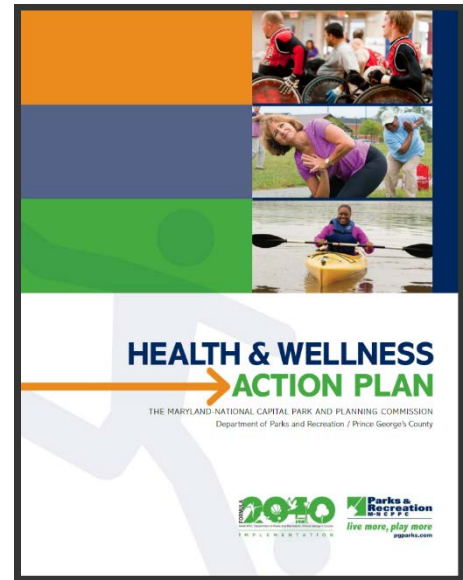
The result is a master plan that truly creates a “Gateway” for new visitors to nature-based parks. Upon entering the park, new visitors experience a fairly urban setting, with a visitor center, classic picnic and play areas, community gathering spaces, outdoor recreation skills classes, nature programming, 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.

Health & Wellness Action Plan

MNCPPC, Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County, Maryland

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 reduce obesity in the County, elevate the Department's role as a health and wellness provider, and increase resident participation in healthy lifestyle activities.

The 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. Forty-one measureable outcomes were developed across a set of six thematic areas: signature programs; standards, guidelines, and policies; partnerships, sponsorships, and grants; facilities; marketing; and staff training.



Special Thanks to our Sponsors

