



**2020 NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL AWARDS**  
*For Excellence in Park and Recreation Management*



PRESENTED BY:



American Academy for Park and  
Recreation Administration

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



**NRPA** National Recreation  
and Park Association

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# 2019 RECIPIENTS

## CLASS I

**Fairfax County Park Authority**  
Fairfax, Virginia



## CLASS II

**Metro Parks Tacoma**  
Tacoma, Washington



## CLASS III

**The Woodlands Township**  
Woodlands, Texas





## CLASS IV

City of Westerville  
Westerville, Ohio



## CLASS V

Glencoe Park District  
Glencoe, Illinois



## STATE PARKS

Department of Environmental Protection  
Florida State Parks



## ARMED FORCES

Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler  
Okinawa, Japan

The purpose of the National Gold Medal Awards for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management is to select and honor the nation's outstanding park and recreation agencies for excellence in the field of park and recreation management.

A panel of five parks and recreation professionals review and judge all application materials. Judges are chosen for their considerable experience and knowledge in parks and recreation on both local and national levels.

## 2020 GOLD MEDAL JUDGES

### **Cathy Metz**

Parks and Recreation Director  
City of Durango  
Durango, Colorado



### **Rick Atkins**

Parks and Recreation Director  
City of Round Rock  
Round Rock, Texas



### **Randy Bina**

Parks and Recreation Director  
City of Bismarck  
Bismarck, North Dakota



### **Brian Albright**

Parks and Recreation Director  
San Diego County  
San Diego, California



### **Jennifer Cirillo**

Parks and Recreation  
Assistant Director  
Palm Beach County  
Lake Worth, Florida



## National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

### **Kristine Stratton**

President and Chief Executive Officer

### **Gold Medal Co - Administrators**

### **Kevin Roth**

Vice President of Research,  
Evaluation and Technology

### **Jennifer Schleining**

CAPRA Accreditation Manager

## American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA)

### **Dianne Hoover, CPRP**

**President, AAPRA**

Bakersfield, California

### **Jane H. Adams**

**Executive Director, AAPRA**

Sacramento, California

### **Rod Tarullo, CPRE**

**Gold Medal Judges Liaison, AAPRA**

Golden, Colorado

### **Jodie Adams CPRP**

**Gold Medal Committee Chair, AAPRA**

Springfield, Missouri

## CLASS I

Population of more than 400,001

**Dallas Parks and Recreation**  
Dallas, Texas

**East Baton Rouge Recreation & Park Commission**  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

**Metroparks Toledo**  
Toledo, Idaho

**Mesa Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities**  
Mesa, Arizona

## CLASS II

Population of 150,001 to 400,000

**City of Henderson Parks and Recreation**  
Henderson, Nevada

**City of Tampa Parks and Recreation Department**  
Tampa, Florida

**Greensboro Parks and Recreation**  
Greensboro, North Carolina

**Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department**  
Des Moines, Iowa

## CLASS III

Population of 75,001 to 150,000

**City of New Braunfels Parks and Recreation Department**  
New Braunfels, Texas

**Thornton Parks, Recreation & Community Programs**  
Thornton, Colorado

**Carmel Clay Parks and Recreation**  
Carmel, Indiana

**Arlington Heights Park District**  
Arlington Heights, Illinois

## CLASS IV

Population of 30,001 to 75,000

**Evanston Parks, Recreation and Community Services**  
Evanston, Illinois

**Coppell Parks and Recreation**  
Coppell, Texas

**Decatur Park District**  
Decatur, Illinois

**Centerville-Washington Park District**  
Centerville, Ohio

## CLASS V

Population of 30,000 and less

**East Goshen Township Parks and Recreation**  
West Chester, Pennsylvania

**Green River Parks and Recreation**  
Green River, Wyoming

**Valley City Parks and Recreation**  
Valley City, North Dakota

**Vernon Hills Park District**  
Vernon Hills, Illinois

## ARMED FORCES

Representing All Branches of the Military

**U.S. Army Garrison Fort Knox**  
Fort Knox, Kentucky

**U.S. Army Garrison Fort Riley**  
Fort Riley, Kansas

**U.S. Army Garrison Bavaria**  
Grafenwoehr, Germany

**USAG Rheinland-Pfalz**  
Kaiserslautern, Germany

# CLASS I 2020 FINALISTS

## DALLAS PARKS AND RECREATION Dallas, Texas

Caring communities, beneficial partnerships and solid public recreation programs lay the foundation for the multifaceted Dallas Park and Recreation to create leisure opportunities for a thriving metropolitan area.

Each year, more than 30 million visitors enjoy Dallas' 397 parks, 200 miles of urban trails, modern facilities, and wholesome enrichment activities. They see how Dallas Park and Recreation and Parks for Downtown Dallas is transforming the urban core with four new contemporary parks and the multi-million-dollar construction of three more.

With a global and local appeal, Dallas Zoo, Fair Park, Dallas Arboretum, Klyde Warren - the city's first deck park – and other signature parks generate more than \$300 million in annual tourism value. Dallas' trail network has the highest return on

investment (\$50 to \$1), and when new construction is complete, 300 trail miles will give communities more ways to stay healthy. This all happens because of citizens' support for a \$362 million bond program in 2017.

Accessible programs attract all ages. Dallas offers more than 17,000 activities annually, free out-of-school and late-night teen programs. Resort-styled aquatics are improving water park experiences for communities. An alliance with WellMed Charitable Foundation led to a \$1.4 million activity center exclusively for seniors. Cool School Parks bring safe and easy access to a park or open space within a ten-minute walk of residents' homes.



With innovation, originality, and technology, Dallas Park and Recreation is adapting traditional programs and services to address recent social, economic, and health challenges and deliver essential services in brand new ways.

## EAST BATON ROUGE RECREATION & PARK COMMISSION Baton Rouge, Louisiana

BREC is the agency that connects people to parks and nature in East Baton Rouge Parish. Created in 1946 as a political subdivision of the state of Louisiana, BREC has spent the past 74 years purchasing land and developing parks and facilities to improve the health, environment and quality of life for all residents. BREC was among the first park agencies in the nation to achieve accreditation and recently earned re-accreditation for an unprecedented sixth time meeting 150 out of 151 standards. BREC is a two-time National Gold Medal Award winner and 17-time finalist.

BREC has 176 parks with a unique mix of facilities which mirror the rich history and natural resources in the region; including a state-of-the-art children's museum, swamp nature center, plantation museum, high-tech observatory, performing arts theatre,

equestrian park, art gallery, arboretum and botanical gardens, zoo, six golf courses and an extreme sports park with a 30,000-foot concrete skate park, rock-climbing wall, BMX track and velodrome.

Since the community approved a tax to fund the Imagine Your Parks strategic plan in 2004, BREC has constructed twelve community parks, five dog parks, a family-sized Aquatics Center, a growing trails system, two new conservation parks, the first surfing simulator in the state and procured two mobile recreation units to serve play deserts in the area.

The combination of new and renovated facilities, innovative programming and



Careful attention to community needs help BREC fulfill its mission to make Baton Rouge a better place to live, work and play.

## METROPARKS TOLEDO

### Toledo, Ohio

Metroparks Toledo protects Northwest Ohio's natural resources by using public dollars responsibly to conserve, preserve and restore areas that provide remarkable environmental and economic value for the region.

Parks and open space benefit the community by helping clean the air and water, retaining storm water, providing essential habitat for wildlife and enhancing property values. Metroparks is building on its rich heritage with abundant beauty and biodiversity, boundless opportunities for outdoor adventure and careful planning for the future.

The scenic parks where we go to play with our children, attend family reunions and walk our dogs are more than just pretty places—they are important parts of the Toledo region's story. Regular visitors are well aware of the benefits of Metroparks.

About half of Lucas County residents say they visit a Metropark at least once a month, and almost 70 percent say they visit four to 11 times per year. In 2020, people will visit the Metroparks 6 million times!

The 92-year-old park system also plays a vital role in how the Toledo area presents itself to the world. The 17 clean, green, safe and scenic parks are indelible parts of the region's identity and quality of life.

This year, Metroparks completed one chapter in its history by keeping a promise to open a park within five miles of every residence in the county. At the same time, it started a new chapter that will enhance the Toledo riverfront, connecting six neighborhoods and bringing vitality and investment to the city's core.



## CITY OF MESA PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### Mesa, Arizona

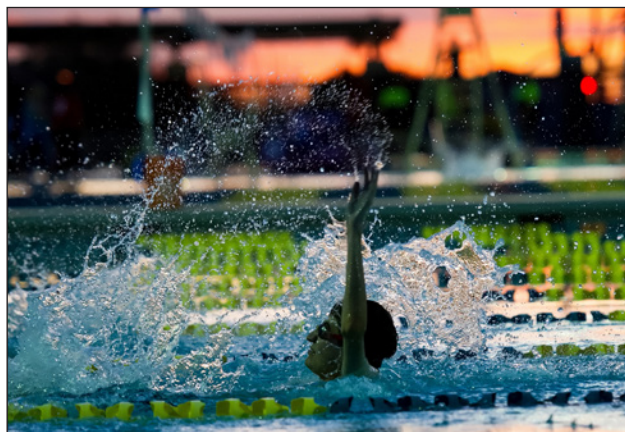
A gateway to one of the most dynamic regions in the country, Mesa, Arizona is a boundless city of 500,000 people. Mesa Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities Department (PRCF) pushes design limits and utilizes innovation to deliver outstanding services and facilities to enhance the quality of life for residents. Mesa's climate, culture and geography provide the setting for programs that are accommodating to all, parks that redefine the concept of play and facilities that offer memorable experiences.

PRCF manages over 5,200 acres of parkland including 205 award-winning parks with unique playgrounds, first-class athletic fields, world-class aquatic centers, splash pads, trails, recreation centers, a championship golf course, convention center, outdoor amphitheater,

cemetery and two professional baseball stadiums.

Through collaborative efforts between PRCF and its partners, we meet the needs of today's residents, while planning for the needs of tomorrow. In Mesa, parks become outdoor classrooms integrating the iconic desert landscape, and recreation programs adapt and accommodate to offer an inclusive place to play. PRCF balances environmental stewardship, economic transparency and social equity concerns to ensure the Mesa parks system grows and evolves as our community changes

Mesa is the first parks and recreation agency in the world to be recognized as a Certified Autism



Center by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards. A CAPRA accredited agency, Mesa Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities Department is committed to providing exceptional experiences and services to create a healthy and vibrant community for all who live, work and play in Mesa.

# CLASS II 2020 FINALISTS

## CITY OF HENDERSON PARKS AND RECREATION Henderson, Nevada

With a population of 317,000 residents, the City of Henderson is the second-largest city in Nevada. Our Parks and Recreation Department offers residents 66 parks, eight recreation and senior centers, 10 pools, over 180 miles of trails, and special facilities such as the Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve and two BMX tracks plus thousands of diverse programs and events. Access to parks and trails is a priority; our standard for park lands increased from 5.25 acres to 5.5 acres per 1,000 residents. Five parks and trailheads were added since 2015 and trail miles increased 32%. Our award-winning sports program annually provides opportunities to more than 6,500 youth and 5,000 adult players. The all-age therapeutic and inclusion program received \$8 million in funding for an adaptive-use park with construction to begin in 2021. The department provides access to nutrition and healthcare to low-income and senior residents and served nearly 354,000 meals to youth in summer 2019.

The department remains committed to water conservation. Since 2001, we've tripled park acreage while reducing water usage by 40%. Converting to a more drought-tolerant turf on our sports and multi-purpose fields saves 22.4 million gallons of water annually. Within 12 hours of the COVID-19 emergency stay-at-home declaration, the department provided free 24-hour emergency childcare for 100 children of local first responders and healthcare providers. Meals on Wheels to our senior clients doubled to a total of 800 and staff delivered groceries to 1,200 vulnerable seniors at eight senior complexes.



## CITY OF TAMPA PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT Tampa, Florida

The City of Tampa benefits from abundant natural resources from being located along Tampa Bay on the Gulf Coast of Florida. The area features a diversity of cultures in a region that is experiencing a tremendous amount of growth. The Tampa Parks and Recreation Department is a CAPRA accredited agency that strives to meet the demands of this vibrant community.

Our efforts are guided through a collaborative community-based approach. We achieve this through outreach programs and efforts to reduce barriers to participation, ensuring access and inclusivity. We are committed to providing programs for everyone, as evidenced through our Autism Friendly City designation and extensive scholarship program.

Tampa Parks and Recreation is committed to sustainability by maintaining a top-rated urban

tree canopy and preserving natural habitats. Through efforts to reduce pollution and clean up our shorelines, we actively seek to improve the environment. Our team has a lead role in responding to storms when the need arises by addressing tree emergencies and serving on recovery teams.

We celebrate and foster our community's recreation needs and encourage health and wellness by bringing people together through programs that provide a wide range of benefits, maintaining easily accessible park areas, and coordinating numerous special events. Tampa Parks and Recreation continuously strengthens our standards through a highly trained and engaged staff to meet the

growing demands of our residents, while valuing our diversity and adapting to emerging trends.





## CITY OF GREENSBORO PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

### Greensboro, North Carolina

Greensboro Parks and Recreation Department, nestled in central North Carolina, has been proudly serving the community since 1933. The department continues to be a leader in shaping the quality of life and character of Greensboro. With more than 8,000 acres of parkland, 98 miles of trails and greenways, 130 athletic fields, 134 parks, 4 botanical gardens, 14 indoor facilities, 5 pools, 3 lakes, and thousands of unique programs, there truly is something for everyone! Our department had over 4.2 million visits this year. The department opened three new facilities, facilitated dozens of upgrades, and has many exciting projects on the horizon.

In February 2019, the department's 20-year comprehensive master plan, Plan2Play, was unanimously approved. These recommendations reflect the values and expectations of Greensboro residents and park users who provided input into the parks and recreation system.

The department is comprised of a dedicated staff of 150 full-time employees and over 200 part-time employees that make the work a reality each day. However, this could not be done alone. Working with over 100 community partners, the department's reach is expanded even further into the community.

Greensboro is honored to be a CAPRA accredited agency and a three-time winner of the NRPA Gold Medal Award. Every day, the department strives to **ENHANCE** its existing assets, **EXPAND** its offerings through strengthened partnerships and transformative programs, and **CONNECT** communities into a vibrant, healthy, and equitable park system. The goal is for every resident to love where they live, work, and play.



## DES MOINES PARKS AND RECREATION

### Des Moines, Iowa

Des Moines Parks and Recreation has been helping residents live well, play hard and protect the earth since 1892. Starting with just four parks, our system has grown to 75 parks, 81 miles of trails and other many amenities which positively contribute to the great quality of life we enjoy in Des Moines and have played a significant role in the numerous awards our city has received lately. In addition, they have served as a much-needed escape during the pandemic as shown by Google data showing park use increased by as much as 400% year over year.

The spirit of service, innovation, inclusion and collaboration drive our team forward each day. Our volunteer network reaches new heights annually, with over 4,000 individuals donating their time and talents in 2019. Our team offers programs

and events 325 days each year for all ages and interests. A new scholarship program with Des Moines Public Schools opened the door for 25,000 low income kids to participate in youth athletics and swim lessons for just \$5. Recent capital park improvement projects used \$2,897,000 dollars in City funding to leverage over \$18,281,500 in funding from public-private partnerships for more than \$21,178,500 in improvements to the City's parks and public spaces.

Our entire city team is proud and honored to see their hard-work and commitment to equitable services being recognized as a 2020 NRPA Gold Medal Program finalist!



# CLASS III 2020 FINALISTS

## NEW BRAUNFELS PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT New Braunfels, Texas

The City of New Braunfels Parks and Recreation Department is steeped in the history and culture of the town. Founded in 1845 by a group of German immigrants, New Braunfels focuses on small town charm and big city fun. Home to 90,000 residents, New Braunfels was named one of the fastest growing cities in America for the past three years. Our city is a welcome combination of natural resources, recreation and community.

The Department oversees management of 700 acres of park land, two recreation centers, an 18-hole championship golf course, Civic and Convention Center, Nature Education Center, the Comal River Tube Chute, historic cemeteries and a wide variety of parks, trails and specialty facilities.

Protection of our natural resources is a priority focus in New Braunfels. Conservation projects include protecting the fragile Comal Springs and endangered species, restoring over 30 acres of blackland prairie, and maintaining an arboretum with over 80 species of trees.

Fun is always close at hand for our citizens. Programs and events focusing on health, heritage, family, and friendly competition provide many options for our customers.

The Department seeks to foster citizen involvement at all levels through citizen committees, volunteer events, public meetings, open house events, and continuous feedback technologies.

This high-level engagement with the residents led the way to two successful bond packages in 2013 and 2019, providing \$102 million for park development and improvements. As our founders discovered and we still know today... in New Braunfels ist das leben schon (the living is good)!



## THORNTON PARKS, RECREATION & COMMUNITY PROGRAMS Thornton, Colorado

Thornton Parks, Recreation & Community Programs is the agency that engages and connects the community of Thornton by encouraging people to explore, learn and play. We do this with a vast system of parks and interconnected trails, a host of recreation facilities and offerings, and a spectrum of community programs that serve the needs and desires of our community. Our committed staff and elected officials work hard to leverage our resources to address diverse audiences of varied ages, ethnicities, abilities and interests. We are honored to take on this responsibility, and use the pillars of social equity, health and wellness, and conservation to achieve our goals.

Our programs were built with social equity as a central part of the mission. Specifically,

our Community Connections Division and Adaptive & Inclusive Recreation program serve this purpose. Health and wellness are a central part of the Colorado lifestyle. The promotion of health and wellness is integrated for both staff and residents through policies, programs and culture, as well as in the ways we work, recreate, and live. Conservation is also key to our operations, with our commitment to good stewardship of our parks and natural resources. Thornton Parks, Recreation and Community Programs embraces innovation as a thread throughout these three pillars and as a practical way to provide supportive inclusion. At the end of the day, we wear the Parks and Rec mantle to bring us all together as a community.



## CARMEL CLAY PARKS AND RECREATION

### Carmel, Indiana

Established in 1991 through a partnership between the City of Carmel and Clay Township, Carmel Clay Parks & Recreation (CCPR) embraces an entrepreneurial approach to managing public services, achieving over 80% cost recovery for the past decade. This commitment to financial sustainability frees tax dollars to develop and enhance world-class facilities, including \$30 million for our Reimagining Parks initiative to upgrade existing parks.

With a culture of inclusion, CCPR welcomes participants, visitors and employees regardless of their abilities or differences. Nearly 3,000 participants with disabilities are served annually through adaptive programs. Imaginative playgrounds are designed to include all, from individuals in wheelchairs to children on the autism spectrum. Planning efforts incorporate outreach to

traditionally underrepresented populations, including our growing immigrant and LGBTQ+ communities.

Exceptional experiences are provided through innovation and a passion for continual improvement, creating lasting memories for approximately 7.1 million park visitors and 150,000 participants in a wide-range of aquatic, recreation and fitness programs. At the same time, CCPR's commitment to environmental stewardship is demonstrated with over 70% of parkland preserved as natural areas and wildlife habitat. Citizen scientists assist in conservation efforts with BioBlitzs, monarch tagging, and invasive species removal.



Nationally accredited since 2014, our CAPRA-approved emergency management plan provides the framework for keeping residents and employees safe during the pandemic. CCPR's resumption of operations plan was reviewed by a panel of medical doctors to ensure appropriate protocols are in place, resulting in no outbreaks from our programs or facilities and helping mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

## ARLINGTON HEIGHTS PARK DISTRICT

### Arlington Heights, Illinois

Arlington Heights Park District aims to put the "unity" in "community" and serve everyone equally and fairly across its 716 acres, 58 parks and 29 facilities offering 4,600 programs and 80 free events. An Illinois Distinguished Agency, Arlington Heights Park District has maintained a Moody's AAA bond rating for nine consecutive years and received multiple awards recognizing fiscal responsibility for over three decades. These conservative reserves help with minimizing the financial impact of unforeseen hardships like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Arlington Heights Park District engages in regular community listening and staff engagement, and makes strategic use of community partnerships, all toward the goal of enhancing the lives of its residents. These partnerships have resulted in optimizing resources to maximize services and

recreation offerings, and are key to moving forward rapidly in post-COVID life. Arlington Heights Park District also continually seeks methods to reduce costs and environmental impact while maintaining high standards, including the materials used in its buildings and parks, and the use of technology to deliver real-time conservation results.

A 95-year old institution, Arlington Heights Park District has long faced and overcome challenges, whether it be upgrading building infrastructure, adapting to new needs of residents and employees, or facing greater economic or other external situations. With great pride in its community and the experience and know-how to lead in uncertain



times, Arlington Heights Park District is a pillar its diverse population can turn to for fun, fitness and service when the new normal arrives.

# CLASS IV 2020 FINALISTS

## CITY OF EVANSTON PARKS, RECREATION & COMMUNITY SERVICES Evanston, Illinois

The City of Evanston Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department plays a critical role in creating opportunities to improve the quality of life for its residents. Our department encompasses 76 parks, 50 playgrounds, 7 recreational facilities, six beaches and five community gardens, all within our 7.8-mile radius. Remarkably, 98% of households live within a half-mile of green space.

Evanston is located along the shores of Lake Michigan north of the City of Chicago. It is a resilient community strengthened by the diversity of its residents, culture and opportunities.

Our department actively practices inclusion and dedicates department resources to destroying institutional barriers by offering fee assistance, scholarships, special recreation programs, translation services, complimentary beach

tokens, and transportation support to all who need them.

We continue to respond to the pandemic by providing food security resources to our community. We offer a free bi-weekly produce mobile, providing healthy food to low income families and operate our farmers market with over 50 local vendors. We distributed thousands of meals from our facilities to seniors and youth who normally receive meals during school hours.

The new Robert Crown Community Center and Library offers interdepartmental opportunities to provide a multitude of services from a centralized location. The 130,000 square-foot



facility provides a multitude of traditional sports programs alongside library resources, after school youth services, state licensed child care, a wellness studio, art workshops, and more. Conservation remains a priority through our Ecology Center, home to environmental classes, an apiary, pollinator gardens, and an urban demonstration garden.

## COPPELL PARKS AND RECREATION Coppell, Texas

Nestled amid the bustling metropolis of North Texas, just 22 miles northwest of Dallas, Coppell is the portrait of a small, tranquil community cultivating modern, family living. Outstanding quality of life, highly-rated schools, community diversity and abundant recreation opportunities create a unique and desirable location for residents of all ages.

Serving an active community of over 41,000 residents, Coppell Parks and Recreation maintains 544 acres of parkland, with 17 parks tucked into neighborhoods throughout the city. Residents enjoy a family recreation and aquatic facility, tennis center, senior and community center, nature education center, 9 playgrounds, athletic complexes, a regionally recognized farmers market, dog park, cemetery and 23.6 miles of multi-use trail throughout the city.

A focus on cultural arts has resulted in partnerships to display 21 sculptures in park spaces and the development of the Coppell Arts Center (opening Fall 2020) as a creative space for local and national touring artists. Other community-driven projects including a healthy living initiative and 3 community gardens are results of citizen collaboration and visionary planning.

Redevelopment of community jewel Andrew Brown Park created over 10 acres of open, civic green for recreation and free events. Fourteen annual special events serve 50,000 attendees. Innovative and inclusive programs focus on environmental education, healthy living and



fitness, literacy, and water safety, contributing to an equitable, healthy, and sustainable community.

Through a connection of people, parks and programs, Coppell Parks and Recreation contributes to Coppell's reputation as an exceptional place to live, be healthy and just have fun!

## DECATUR PARK DISTRICT

### Decatur, Illinois

Decatur is coined as one of the fastest shrinking cities in Illinois, with 25% of residents living in poverty, 20% over the age of 65 and 75% free lunch eligible school children. Combating the challenge of a shrinking population, declining EAV and negative internal & external community perceptions, the Decatur Park District (DPD) continues to provide leadership by exceeding the national average of 10.1 acres of park land per 1,000 residents by providing 27 acres per 1,000. This brings area residents within a ½ mile of any neighborhood park creating accessibility to 36 parks, recreation and open space. We are also focused on developing integral parts of “Lakeshore Landing”, a repurposed golf course turned lakefront redevelopment providing amenities to attract visitors, retain businesses and enhance quality of life. In addition to our accessible park system, unique park amenities include an AZA accredited

zoo, regional airport, 1100 acres of farmland, nationally recognized cultural arts programming, regionally recognized amphitheater and the newly developed 1,000-person capacity waterpark. We continue to grow our offerings at a sustainable rate due to sound financial stability. The national average for general fund tax support is 59.3% while DPD is uniquely positioned at 38%. Exceptional community support from sponsorships, corporate partnerships, admissions, programs and philanthropy result in DPD’s extraordinary non-tax recovery rate of 62% percent. Looking ahead, we will continue to drive economic vitality and quality of life to address Decatur’s pressing need to reinvent our community as an attractive place for people to work, live and play!



## CENTERVILLE-WASHINGTON PARK DISTRICT

### Centerville, Ohio

The residents of Centerville and Washington Township enjoy 51 parks encompassing more than 1,030 acres in their southern Ohio community. The Centerville-Washington Park District (CWPD) doubles the national parkland average, offering one park per 1,100 residents and more than 18.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Everyone lives within a ten-minute walk of a park!

CWPD delivers fun, healthy and outstanding park experiences that connect their community with the outdoors. They embrace technology to encourage park visits, announcing popular challenges exclusively on social media. When residents requested more outdoor fitness opportunities, CWPD responded by boosting fitness and wellness programs by 119%! In addition, they took the lead in forming a partnership remedying a community

wide programming shortfall for residents with disabilities.

Committed to conservation, CWPD recently added 94 acres of pollinator habitats within 25 parks throughout the community. They have created a natural habitat explosion of wetlands, monarch waystations, rain gardens and certified wildlife habitats. In response to the emerald ash borer, CWPD developed grant-funded Operation Forest Re-Leaf, involving local schoolchildren with reforestation efforts.

CWPD is persistent about getting the community engaged. It works! In 2017, voters enthusiastically agreed to renew CWPD’s tax levy with a 78.3% yes vote – the highest in CWPD’s 60-year history.



Also persistent about pursuing grants, they have increased the district’s grant funding by 595%. Building on positive momentum, CWPD recently adapted the Design Thinking Process to plan park improvements. Residents participate in exercises to cull out and define unique priorities – powerfully connecting them with their parks!

# CLASS V 2020 FINALISTS

## EAST GOSHEN TOWNSHIP DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION West Chester, Pennsylvania

East Goshen Township Parks and Recreation, 2019 PRPS Agency of the Year, is a community that values its open space, with 497 acres of parkland alongside eighteen parks. Despite only having one full time staff member, it has experienced tremendous growth as the community has taken ownership and breathed life into its efforts. Since 2016, \$4.5M in grants have been secured alongside an \$8M bond to support four capital park projects, a substantial investment for a municipality with a \$10.1M operating budget. Last year, East Goshen Township achieved Gold Level Sustainability Certification, a goal achieved by less than 0.1% of Pennsylvania communities. East Goshen Park's new destination playground opened in 2018 with many nature play components, later named the Burke Playgrounds 2018 national project of the year.

Settled in the 1600s, the department weaves its historical assets throughout its programming, most

readily seen in its Escape Room series created by the department Poet Laureate. Our 300-year-old Blacksmith Shop hosts these events, introducing new generations to the building in a frightful fashion! We also look to meet emerging recreational pursuits, most notably seen in our Southeastern Pennsylvania Teen Filmmakers Showcase. A public-private partnership with the Movie Tavern Exton, the festival gives emerging filmmakers opportunities to see their film on the big screen! Our most recent event received nearly 1100 submissions from 78 countries around the world, and expanded to include a COVID-19 edition. East Goshen Township Parks and Recreation, serving a community of 18,000 residents, is in the business of making memories.



## CITY OF GREEN RIVER PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT Green River, Wyoming

In addition to maintaining a park within a 1/2 mile of every resident in the community, and 13 miles of walkable pathways, the Green River Parks and Recreation Department maintains the cemetery, street lights, citywide building maintenance, event management, weed and mosquito mitigation, all with one of the lowest operating expenditures per acre of parkland in the Country.

Partnerships with area trona mines, schools and businesses for park expansion, wellness programs and event promotions are of great value. While embracing our western culture; with rodeos, municipal horse corrals capable of housing 564 horses, offering indoor and outdoor archery ranges, an outdoor shooting range, and rodeo arena as afforded us the honor of hosting National High School Finals Rodeo events.

Positive impacts to public safety, health and wellness for our community, from youth to our senior population, include rodeos, youth sports, summer day-camps, after-school programs quilting shows, 5k run/walk events, swim lessons, Silver Sneakers classes, Senior Strength Clinics, pickle-ball, adaptive physical education classes for grades K-5, and hosting Forward Stride Adaptive Equestrian programs.

Cultural Preservation/Citizen involvement encases supporting wildlife habitat by planting Cottonwoods in the Wetlands, managing the river corridor through bank stabilization and a Russian Olive/Tamarisk abatement program. Our wetlands became an Important Bird Area through



the Audubon Society, hosting a 30-year running Quilting Show and a 37-year Tree City USA status. Our Master Plan involved public input and staff serves on 11 citizen volunteer committees.

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## VALLEY CITY PARKS AND RECREATION

### Valley City, North Dakota

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Over the years Valley City Parks and Recreation (VCPR) has grown into one of the biggest assets our community has. We provide over 120 youth and adult programs, a \$16 million dollar Wellness Center, 16 sites and numerous other amenities that enhance the lives in our small rural community. Our youth and adult programs offer people a chance to play team sports. Of these programs, our after school program LEAP is what we are most proud of; LEAP offers homework and reading help, exposure to different sports and a time to be creative. At our wellness center, we provide a family friendly environment where people can play, exercise and socialize. All 16 of VCPR sites offer a wide range of services for people within Valley City and surrounding communities. We offer camping sites, numerous outdoor playgrounds, indoor and outdoor shelters for events, walking trails and greenspaces.

These amenities wouldn't be possible without the close partnerships within our community. VCPR works with different organizations to provide scholarships and additional programming along with other offerings. Furthermore, these partnerships allow us the opportunity to expand our resources to provide even more to the community. Kayak and bike rental stations have recently been installed and future projects include an all-inclusive playground and a mountain bike trail. The projects allow people in the community ways to get more active and explore what Valley City has to offer. We are constantly looking ahead and finding ways that we can better serve our community.



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## VERNON HILLS PARK DISTRICT

### Vernon Hills, Illinois

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For nearly 50 years, the Vernon Hills Park District continues to bring memorable experiences to all ages through diverse programming promoting healthy lifestyles. The District encompasses 5 park and recreation facilities, 10 miles of paths, and 25 parks situated on 460 acres of land. Through the collaborative efforts of the Park Board, professional staff, generous sponsors and dedicated volunteers, the District is an award recipient of the 2018-2023 Illinois Distinguished Accredited Agency Award.

Lakeview Fitness includes a group exercise studio, cardio and free-weight rooms, indoor pool, and spa area. Little Learners Childcare, a fully licensed DCFS facility, is for ages 6 weeks to five years old. The District's preschool is offered for 2-5 year olds. The District's Before and After School Program, PALS, is held in 4 elementary schools.

The success of the Park District is also contributed to the evolution of numerous Master and Strategic Plans. The community is involved in the planning process through surveys, focus groups, community meetings, and social media engagement. This valuable information provides the District the tools to plan for the future needs of our community.

The District enriches the quality of life to our residents through our commitment to preservation and conservation. Located within a commercial district of nearly 1,000 businesses, we promote urban forestry. A seven-acre Oak Savanna was restored in our 48-acre Sullivan Woods by



removing invasive trees. Additionally, our 116-acre Century Park is the only accredited Park District Arboretum in Illinois. The District is committed to protecting the environment while showcasing nature's beauty in all its parks and facilities.

# ARMED FORCES RECREATION 2020 FINALISTS

## FORT KNOX DIRECTORATE OF FAMILY & MORALE, WELFARE AND RECREATION

Fort Knox, Kentucky

Fort Knox Directorate of Family and Morale Welfare & Recreation is a leader in the U.S. Army, focusing upon customer service, program performance, conservation and leadership development. Serving a multi-functional installation unceasing in its transition, the Knox DFMWR team utilizes the Recreational Delivery System (RDS) to offer customer focused, innovative and relevant recreation programs that enhance readiness, retention and resiliency. Knox DFMWR focuses upon the whole, integrating health and wellness into its wide variety of programs and services, with offerings designed for all, including special needs populations. Relying upon more than tried and true practices, Knox DFMWR is creative and innovative, with examples including but not limited to developing name brand royalty rights agreements for food and beverage services and marketing and heightening awareness of its offerings through the work of the Brand Activation Team (BAT). Knox DFMWR continually adapts and offers new

services, transforming itself annually for Cadet Summer Training, the largest training mission in the Army. Its broad investment to positively serve the community includes creative implementation of the Army Combat Fitness Test (AFCT), the Library's renowned author series, and a wide variety of festivals and events. The results of services and programs are demonstrated to decision-makers and customers in Knox DFMWR's active role providing recommendations to the Installation Planning Board and Board of Directors, its continual measurement of benefits-based outcomes and collection of polling data and field input through the marketing department. All of this work is supported by public support, citizen involvement and staff engagement.



## FORT RILEY DIRECTORATE OF FAMILY AND MORALE, WELFARE AND RECREATION COMMUNITY RECREATION DIVISION

Fort Riley, Kansas

The Fort Riley Community Recreation Division provides great recreation programs and services that increase the quality of life for our community members and build readiness and resiliency. We are agile in meeting the ever-evolving needs of our Soldiers and Family Members. Examples of creative efforts to support our dynamic demographic include converting a golf course into an adventure park, adding parent and child workout areas in our fitness centers, starting an animal shelter and adoption program and redesigning our standard outdoor pool into an aquatic park. When the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to close front doors, we immediately shifted our focus to delivering virtual programming. Our team carries 21 individual professional certifications including, but not limited to, Certified Park and Recreation Professional, Lifeguard Instructor Trainer, Aquatic Facility Operator

and Certified Program Planner. We became CAPRA accredited in 2015 and presented at the NRPA conference in 2016, 2017 and 2019. Our dedication to professionalism compels us to do things right, maintain strong peer relationships, keep up with trends, attract quality applicants for key positions and preserve credibility in the eyes of our community members. Our relationships allow us to expand the array of great recreational opportunities available to our community members. Our partnerships with Kansas State University and the City of Manhattan have resulted in several meaningful recreation experiences for our Soldiers and Families that we could not provide alone. We



are proud to help make Fort Riley the best place to live, train, deploy from, come home to and retire!



## U.S. ARMY GARRISON BAVARIA Grafenwoehr, Germany

U.S. Army Garrison Bavaria Family and MWR, located in picturesque southern Germany, is an agile and innovative multi-discipline team that delivers a comprehensive network of social, recreational and leisure support. We proudly serve a population of 47,000 service members, families, civilians and retirees at our multiple locations dispersed over 190 miles.

USAG Bavaria welcomes approximately 12,500 people annually to our footprint. Family and MWR offers programs and services to assist newcomers to adjust to living in Germany through cross-cultural exchanges, exploration and travel. From introducing the latest technology trends to providing a variety of entertainment options, we are committed to keeping our community grounded and engaged.

Health and wellness is critical to

the readiness of our community. We promote fitness, life skills, active outdoor adventures and team building through programming for all ages. Additionally, USAG Bavaria is a good steward of our host nation lands and we prioritize managing and protecting its natural resources.

USAG Bavaria Family and MWR reacted early to the coronavirus pandemic by providing community support during initial restrictions and eventual closure of most facilities. Programs and services transitioned to an online format. Technology became the conduit for connected shareable experiences when social distancing was enforced. The Virtual MWR website, paired

with social media, featured support resources, videos and activities for the entire community. Throughout it all, we host a myriad of safe social pursuits and foster healthy networking opportunities to offset community stress levels. Supporting a ready and resilient Army is our driving force.



## USAG RHEINLAND-PFALZ Kaiserslautern, Germany

United States Army Garrison Rheinland-Pfalz Family and MWR's outstanding commitment to Soldiers and their Families is most obvious through their robust volunteer program. Over 7,500 volunteers provide services at recreational facilities, on sports fields, in community theater and at many other places across the garrison. In 2019, 144,861 volunteer hours equated to over \$3.8 million of labor cost savings.

NRPA's Pillar of Health and Wellness ranks highly within USAG Rheinland-Pfalz FMWR. Two Outdoor Recreation Centers, one Aquatic Center and seven Physical Fitness Centers offer well-rounded team and individual sport, fitness, aquatic and high adventure programming designed to teach and build new life and resiliency skills.

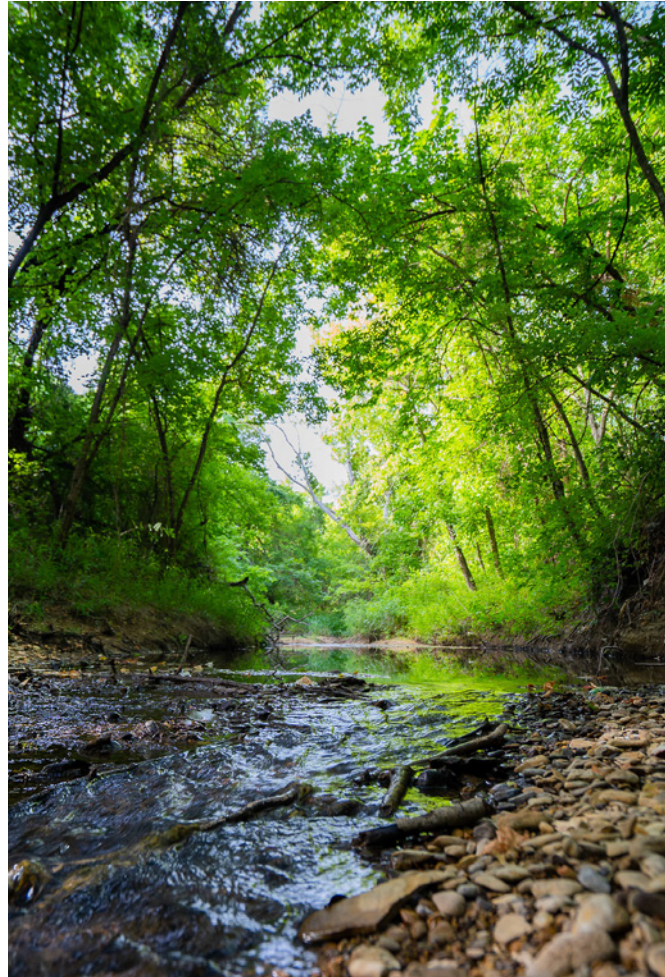
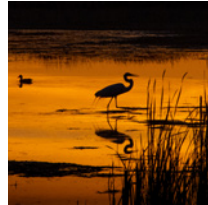
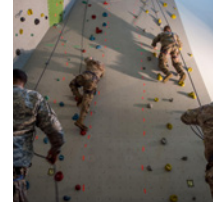
The community was positively impacted by a \$4.9 million investment to renovate the Aquatics Center, the Army's only indoor pool in Germany. Water survival training for military personnel and recreational swim programs take place year-round.

The theatre program produced 37 musicals, comedies and dramas in the last 3 years. This volunteer program brings together a wide variety of participants and greatly impacts the quality of life in the community.

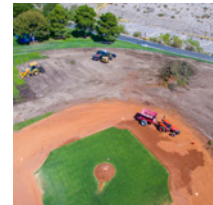
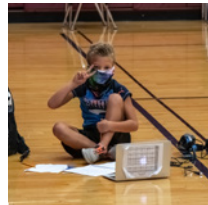
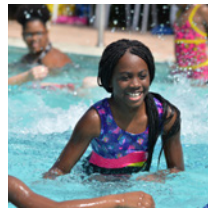
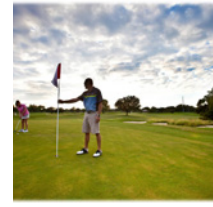
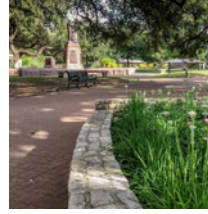
Five 3-day bazaars not only offered unique international shopping experiences, employment and social engagement opportunities but also generated

an additional net income of \$293K for reinvestment into the community through facility renovations and increased programming. A new \$45K pavilion for one of the community parks was made possible this way. COVID 19 did not stop FMWR's commitment to excellence. With robust virtual programming and events reinvented services, continued with all hygiene requirements in place.









FOR EXCELLENCE IN PARK AND RECREATION MANAGEMENT







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# MUSCO LIGHTING

## Congratulates All 2020 National Gold Medal Award Finalists

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From the Heartland to the Gulf Coast, from the Smoky Mountains to the Rockies, and around the globe, park and recreation professionals are committed to improving their communities through dedicated service. Musco Lighting is proud to recognize the efforts of individuals and agencies making a difference in the lives of so many, increasing opportunities for life-enhancing activities at all levels.

Whether it's pools, trails, nature, sports, environmental restoration, or green space improvement; the activities, programs, and management efforts of these dedicated organizations span the broad range of interests and needs in their communities. All finalists are actively involved in finding the solutions best suited for their communities, and their communities are better for it.

Through the expansion of programs devoted to the well-being and health of their citizens, recreation and parks departments are positively impacting current and future generations with better prospects for healthy lifestyles, communities, and environments. Musco salutes these programs and the people who have brought them to life.

