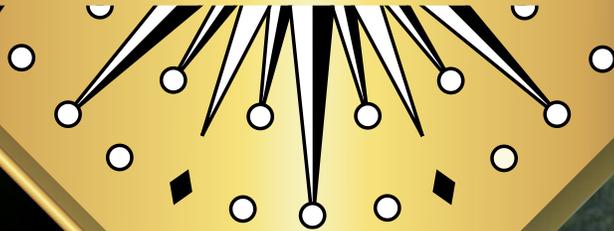


**2021 NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL AWARDS**  
*For Excellence in Park and Recreation Management*



PRESENTED BY:



American Academy for Park and  
Recreation Administration

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



NRPA National Recreation  
and Park Association

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY:



We Make It Happen.

# 2020 RECIPIENTS

## CLASS I

**Metroparks Toledo**  
Toledo, Ohio



## CLASS II

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



## CLASS III

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





## CLASS IV

Decatur Park District  
Decatur, Illinois



## CLASS V

City of Green River Parks and Recreation Department  
Green River, Wyoming



## ARMED FORCES

Fort Riley Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation  
Community Recreation Division  
Fort Riley, Kansas

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.

## 2021 GOLD MEDAL JUDGES

### **Brian Albright**

Parks and Recreation Director  
San Diego County  
San Diego, California



### **Rick Atkins**

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



### **Jennifer Cirillo**

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



### **Randy Bina**

Parks and Recreation Director  
City of Bismarck  
Bismarck, North Dakota



### **Nasha McCray**

Director  
City of Greensboro  
Parks and Recreation  
Greensboro, North  
Carolina



### **Brit Kramer**

Gold Medal  
Administrator  
Lacey, Washington



### **National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)**

#### **Kristine Stratton**

President and Chief  
Executive Officer

#### **Kevin Roth**

Vice President of Research,  
Evaluation and Technology

#### **Gina Cohen**

Vice President of  
Communications

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

#### **Michael McCarty**

President, AAPRA  
Glenview, IL

#### **Jane H. Adams**

Executive Director, AAPRA  
Sacramento, California

#### **Rod Tarullo, CPRE**

Gold Medal Judges Liaison, AAPRA  
Golden, Colorado

#### **Dirk Richwine**

Gold Medal Committee Chair, AAPRA  
Denver, Colorado

## CLASS I

Population of more than 400,001

**Chicago Park District**  
Chicago, Illinois

**Cleveland MetroParks**  
Cleveland, Ohio

**Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board**  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

**Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation**  
Virginia Beach, Virginia

## CLASS II

Population of 150,001 to 400,000

**Chesterfield County Parks and Recreation**  
Chester, Virginia

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

**City of Wichita Park & Recreation**  
Wichita, Kansas

**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**  
New Braunfels, Texas

**Provo Parks & Recreation**  
Provo, Utah

**South Bend Venues Parks & Arts**  
South Bend, Indiana

**Waukegan Park District**  
Waukegan, Illinois

## CLASS IV

Population of 30,001 to 75,000

**Park District of Oak Park**  
Oak Park, Illinois

**Coppell Parks and Recreation**  
Coppell, Texas

**Grapevine Parks and Recreation**  
Grapevine, Texas

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

## CLASS V

Population of 30,000 and less

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

**Deerfield Park District**  
Deerfield, Illinois

**Town of Fountain Hills Community Services**  
Fountain Hills, Arizona

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

## STATE PARKS

State Park Systems

**Delaware State Parks**  
Dover, Delaware

**Ohio Division of State Parks & Watercraft**  
Columbus, Ohio

**Tennessee State Parks**  
Nashville, Tennessee

**Texas State Parks**  
Austin, Texas

## ARMED FORCES

Representing All Branches of the Military

**Naval Submarine Base**  
Kings Bay, Georgia

**Naval Air Station Whiting Field**  
Milton, Florida

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

**Naval Base Coronado**  
San Diego, California

# CLASS I 2021 FINALISTS

## CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT Chicago, Illinois

As the green backdrop of the city, the Chicago Park District plays a prominent role in the Chicago experience. With 99% of Chicago residents living within a 10-minute walk of a park or open space, the Chicago Park District is one of the largest municipal park systems in the nation owning more than 8,800 acres of green space across more than 600 parks. We offer a vast array of facilities and amenities for all ages and interests, including: parks, playgrounds, lakefront beaches, pools, cultural centers, fitness centers, golf courses, museums, and harbors. Chicago's park system has expanded dramatically over the years to add thousands of new acres, millions of dollars in capital investment and thousands of events and program offerings. From basketball courts and artificial turf fields at neighborhood parks to transformational projects,

CPD capital improvements touch the lives of all City residents and visitors. For example, we adapted our successful "Rollin' Rec" program to create "Rollin' Rec-On the Block." This program expands our reach even more broadly and creates fun and positive activities that kick off weekends in the summer. And programs such as the Night Out in the Parks series brings more than 1,200 events to neighborhood parks, making community parks safe havens and hubs of cultural activity. From theater performances and concerts, to community workshops, nature-based programs, dance performances, festivals, and more, there is something happening for everyone in Chicago parks.



## CLEVELAND METROPARKS Cleveland, Ohio

Established in 1917, Cleveland Metroparks is a CAPRA-accredited regional park system in Northeast Ohio that has helped catalyze the revival of Greater Cleveland and activation of Lake Erie as a regional destination. Building upon a century-old vision of interconnected urban parks ringing the city of Cleveland in an "Emerald Necklace," Cleveland Metroparks spans over 24,000 acres of park land with over 300 miles of trails across 49 diverse communities. The diverse park system features 18 park reservations, eight golf courses, eight lakefront parks, dining and retail venues, five educational nature centers, and the nationally acclaimed Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. Over the last three years, Cleveland Metroparks has built and rehabbed over 27 miles of trails, enhancing connectivity and closing critical

transportation gaps in the region. The park system recently completed the award-winning "Re-Connecting Cleveland" project that links more than 66,000 Cleveland residents to centers of employment, schools, parks, and commerce and provides a new link between downtown Cleveland and its lakefront. Cleveland Metroparks strives to not only provide physical connections to nature and parks but also community connections through thousands of educational and recreational programs each year. As Cleveland Metroparks has grown in size and connectedness, it also continues to grow in popularity including attracting a record-high 19.7 million recreational visitors during the



pandemic-impacted 2020. According to a recent study by The Trust for Public Land, Cleveland Metroparks contributes an annual regional economic impact of \$873 million by enhancing property values, reducing stormwater runoff, improving health and wellness, and attracting tourism.

## MINNEAPOLIS PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

### Minneapolis, Minnesota

Created in 1883, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) is an independently governed park system featuring 180 park properties totaling 6,817 acres of land and water. Its Grand Rounds Scenic Byway, waterfront access, trail system, neighborhood parks, recreation centers, recreation amenities and diversified programming make the park system an important component of what makes Minneapolis a great place to live, work and visit. Approximately 29.6 million annual visits are made to the nationally acclaimed park system. Parks comprise 15% of city land, 98% of residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park, and 97% of lakeshore in the “City of Lakes” is owned by MPRB and open to all. MPRB plays an influential role in addressing critical community issues. Equity and accessibility drive MPRB

decision-making. MPRB was the first American park agency to require, by ordinance, its Capital Improvement Plan use specific, transparent, data-driven measures to ensure park funding equity. During the pandemic, parkways were closed to vehicles to create extra trail space, a Park Ambassador program redeployed staff to encourage public health best practices, a multilingual marketing campaign urged park users to “Do Your Part” to reduce virus transmission, and outreach staff assisted unsheltered people relocate to available shelter. MPRB responded to a youth violence crisis with expanded teen outreach, including teen job and mentorship programs, increased late-night activities, and new,



high-tech spaces for teens to learn from creative industry professionals. MPRB is focused on equity, accessibility and innovation to maintain and improve Minneapolis’ quality of life.

## VIRGINIA BEACH PARKS & RECREATION

### Virginia Beach, Virginia

As it celebrates its 65-year anniversary in this coastal community, Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation is guided by a mission to exceed community expectations in an inclusive, innovative and sustainable manner. The city’s first major park opened in 1966 and today hosts an annual cherry blossom festival and a Japanese Garden. In 1973, Mount Trashmore, the first park in the country was built atop a landfill and is now the city’s most visited park, known for July 4th fireworks displays. More recently a partnership with the local sanitation district led to state-of-the-art 30,000 square-foot skate park built atop an underground wastewater storage tank. Currently, VBPR manages 293 parks, 7,000+ acres of parks and natural areas, a marina, an athletic complex, 3 skate parks, 5 dog parks and hundreds of neighborhood playgrounds.

It provides landscaping at municipal and school sites, along roadways, and at the oceanfront resort and offers year-round sports leagues for youth and adults. It is also the city’s largest childcare provider with programs at all 56 elementary schools. In 1987, citizens approved a dedicated tax for recreation centers, and today seven modern facilities offer affordable fitness, aquatics, childcare, therapeutic recreation and athletic leagues. They also have hosted community events, public meetings, voting, and Covid 19 vaccinations. The department is working toward increasing the percentage of residents within a 10-minute walk to a park, improving the urban tree canopy, modernizing



rec centers and connecting the city through trail projects that accommodate alternative modes of transportation.

# CLASS II 2021 FINALISTS

## CHESTERFIELD COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION Chester, Virginia

Named the 17th Best Place to Live in America, Chesterfield is known for active lifestyles, historic sites, outdoor adventure, and a great quality of life. With engaging recreational opportunities, successful sports tourism venues, and a vibrant park system, the department is a key economic driver. The world-class River City Sportplex generated over \$28 million in economic impact despite the pandemic. Reaching underserved and diverse communities is evidenced by partnerships to provide outdoor adventure programs to those with disabilities and free fitness classes in economically challenged areas. The NACo-award-winning Community Cup strengthens relationships between public safety officers and the Hispanic community. Our unique Santa Trail event serves a corridor with tremendous poverty and lack of transportation. The Rec-n-Roll mobile playground delivers fun county-wide. To address

the burgeoning senior adult population, two satellite facilities began operation and increased program participation by 522%. Staff ingenuity was behind the development of web applications focused on trails and public water access. Trail visitation increased 47% within three months of the trail app release. In response to the pandemic, staff innovated ways to increase class capacity while still adhering to COVID protocols. Our expertise is utilized county-wide for snow removal, storm cleanup, and maintenance on grounds of schools, libraries, and police precincts. With the smallest operating budget of any Virginia agency (population over 200,000), CCPRD delivers high quality programs, world class facilities, and services a step beyond what other localities offer.

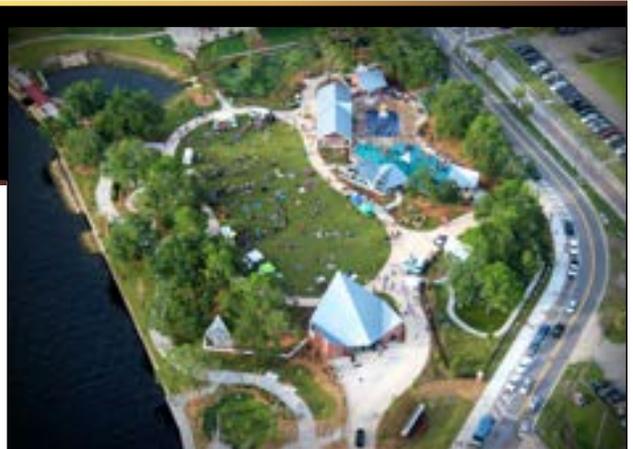


We are proud to be CAPRA-accredited and continue our commitment to demonstrating excellence.

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

Tampa Parks & Recreation is a CAPRA accredited agency with a mission to provide and preserve quality parks and recreation opportunities for all. With almost 400,000 residents, Tampa is one of the fastest growing cities in the nation and strives to protect the natural environment while creatively using resources to meet the growing needs of the community. From pandemic restructuring, hurricane response initiatives and inclusive programming for a diverse community, Tampa Parks and Recreation excels at adapting to ongoing change and harnessing the power of growth. They celebrate diversity, culture, and tradition with over 500 events annually. Activities ranging from festivals and sporting tournaments to holiday traditions, and of course Tampa's signature Gasparilla pirate festivities, drawing several million

people per year to experience what the great city has to offer. The award-winning Tampa Riverwalk features 2.7 miles of preserved downtown trails connecting seven parks, several neighborhoods, and many cultural and tourist attractions. Tampa is rated #1 in the world for tree canopy and the urban forestry division is responsible for maintaining 1,200 miles of street trees and abundant parkland. From planting community gardens and restoring sandy beach shores, Tampa Parks and Recreation continues to transform Tampa's tomorrow. Tampa Parks and Recreation continues to serve residents with a commitment to provide leisure opportunities that create social capital, preserve



a legacy of culture, and steward in the next generation of community leaders dedicated to conserving their unique natural resources.

## CITY OF WICHITA PARK & RECREATION

### Wichita, Kansas

Wichita Park & Recreation's (WPR) greatest strength lies in our commitment to and relationships with the community. Leveraging our community position allows resourceful management of personnel, programming and assets, creating exceptional benefits for our residents. As a two-time CAPRA accredited agency, WPR strives for excellence through extensive public engagement, measuring outcomes from our services, and strategic planning for our future. We work tirelessly every day to ensure inclusive and equitable access to the benefits of our park system, including enrichment of our patron's physical, mental and emotional health, especially during times of COVID-19. The department provides award-winning leisure opportunities and enriches Wichita residents and surrounding communities with outdoor spaces such as parks, trails, golf courses, and natural places.

The department also provides athletic and cultural opportunities, and supports festivals and special events. With more than 5,000 acres of parkland, 86 accessibly-surfaced playgrounds, a newly renovated aquatics system of pools and splash pads, and many regionally-attractive parks and facilities, opportunities abound for residents to love where they live, work, and play. As the foremost quality of life provider in Wichita, WPR ensures avenues are available to strengthen families, provide positive opportunities for youth, and to positively impact the economy, environment, and community well-being. Our long history of distinction in park and recreation management goes back to 1967 when Wichita won the National Gold Medal Award



for the first time. WPR is honored to have its dedicated staff, innovative programs and impactful partnerships recognized again, 54 years later.

## 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 76 parks, 88 miles of trails and other many amenities positively contributing 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. 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 250% 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 nearly \$400,000 in time donated in 2020. Our team offers programs and events 325 days each year for all ages and interests.

Our scholarship program with Des Moines Public Schools opens the door for 25,000 low-income kids to participate in youth athletics and swim lessons for just \$5. Upon seeing the recent increased use and demand for parks, trails and recreational facilities, elected leaders approved a 65% increase in the Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Budget over the 2018 total. In fiscal year 2021, more than \$3.7 million in grants, philanthropic and private dollars were received and secured for parks projects. Our entire team is honored to see their hard work and commitment to equitable services being recognized as a 2021 Gold Medal finalist!



# CLASS III 2021 FINALISTS

## CITY OF NEW BRAUNFELS PARKS AND RECREATION New Braunfels, Texas

New Braunfels Parks and Recreation focuses on small town charm and big city fun. Home to 90,000 residents, our city is a welcome combination of natural resources, recreation, and community. The CAPRA accredited department oversees 700 acres of parkland, two recreation centers, 18-hole championship golf course, Civic/Convention Center, Nature Center, Comal River Tube Chute, 21 historic sites 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 endangered 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. NBPARD is committed to serving all. Staff completed comprehensive training on inclusive services to better understand program delivery. Over \$700,000 of inclusive play elements were installed in existing parks in 2020. A Playcore grant augmented the budget by \$81,000 making one park a National Demonstration Site. Now 1/3 of our playgrounds have inclusive park features. Our Department engages when the community needs it most including the pandemic (providing outdoor, virtual, and modified fitness and childcare programs) to the great winter storm of 2021 (assisting with warming centers and water distributions). As our founders discovered



and we still know today... in New Braunfels ist das leben schon (the living is good)!

## PROVO PARKS & RECREATION Provo, Utah

Provo City Parks and Recreation Department pursues a mission of providing a broad range of dynamic recreation programs, quality services and world-class facilities to its 117,000 residents. Recent successes are a direct result of the local value placed on department facilities and programs. This public support is validated through multiple community assessments, indicating exceptionally strong participation and satisfaction. Provo provides next-level opportunities for community inclusion with diverse operations featuring an industry leading recreation center, 61 miles of trails, a former Olympic venue ice arena, a revolutionary 33 hole golf course with facilities serving beginner, youth and championship players, a highly utilized performing arts center, and 2,195 acres of parks and open

space. Fiscal responsibility is a hallmark of department management culture as each operation is analyzed for efficiency and effectiveness. Recent facility renovations, operation consolidations and consistently outstanding participation revenue have reduced the general fund subsidy commitment by \$3.2M annually. The recreation center, golf course and ice arena operations have become completely self-sufficient and all costs of operation, including future capital needs, are covered by usage revenues. Continual improvement is ensured through dynamic leadership and a standard-setting reputation for delivering outstanding park and



recreation services to the community. CPRP credentialed management staff set a local example of professionalism, operations and performance. These efforts have been recognized both locally and nationally, culminating in 2020 CAPRA Department Accreditation. Provo Parks and Recreation contributes to the high quality of living aspiration that is captured in the city branding message, Welcome Home!"

## SOUTH BEND VENUES PARKS & ARTS

### South Bend, Indiana

South Bend is located in the northern portion of the State of Indiana and has approximately 103,000 residents. It manages a diverse system including more than 50 parks, including two 18-hole golf courses, an accredited zoo, and North America's first artificial white-water course in its downtown. South Bend Venues Parks & Arts is the municipal component of the city responsible for traditional parks and recreation operations in addition to an arts and culture component. The "MY SB Parks & Trails" initiative embodies the principles that drive our agency. In the past few years, we leveraged several strategies to invest over \$60 million into park redevelopments and upgrades. This is the single largest investment in the city's shared public spaces, it's still growing, and it was funded without adding or increasing any taxes. Each one of these projects contained our

signature surprise & delight as well as award-winning design detail. More importantly, they each were done through the lens of our five measurable impact drivers: Social Equity, Ecological Stewardship, Economic Development, Health & Wellness, and Public Safety. In a short amount of time, studies, surveys, and analytics reveal that these investments have created a more equitable, safer, sustainable, healthier, and economically thriving community. The new operational models, programs, and partnerships we have concurrently developed will ensure this continues for generations.



## WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

### Waukegan, Illinois

The Waukegan Park District Board and Staff are honored to be a 2021 Gold Medal finalist. The state and nationally accredited District is proud to serve nearly 90,000 residents of diverse backgrounds and needs. Access to beautiful natural spaces is available via its 53 properties on 742 acres of preserved and restored parks. Highly trained staff take pride in meeting community needs using innovation, excellence, and dedication to friends and neighbors, supported by an engaged elected board. Programs and services span the entire spectrum, with something for all ages and abilities, and are focused on inclusivity and community needs. Healthy lifestyles, wellness initiatives, and connecting with nature form the basis of programs, services, and special events. Multicultural events allow learning about different

cultures while experiencing new sights and sounds. Playgrounds and facilities benefit the community. The new SplashZone features a three-story water-play structure, 500-gallon dump bucket and attached water spray pad. The new dedicated Nature Classroom provides outstanding experiences and learning opportunities. Despite the pandemic, programs and services were converted and virtual within days of the shutdown; there was even a virtual parade for Independence Day! Fitness and fun were provided using virtual programs, including games, crafts, workouts, and the district mascot, Parky, at times. The Waukegan Park District



is stronger because of its many community collaborations which leverage resources where they will be used to achieve maximum impact. A new financial modeling system allowed the district to remain strong and continue its 105-year history of fiscal responsibility.

# CLASS IV 2021 FINALISTS

## CENTERVILLE-WASHINGTON PARK DISTRICT Centerville, Ohio

The Centerville-Washington Park District (CWPD) focuses on preserving green space, conserving natural habitat, environmental education and outdoor recreation. The vision for the District is “to become the outdoor recreation destination of choice for the community we serve.” CWPD services and programs are geared for the outdoors, from hiking to soccer; and prairies to playgrounds. With 51 parks in a community of 56,000, they double the national parkland average, offering one park per 1,100 residents and more than 18.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Everyone in the community lives within a ten-minute walk of a park! Committed to conservation, CWPD has added nearly 100 acres of pollinator habitat in 25 parks over the past three years. They have created a natural habitat explosion of wetlands, monarch waystations, rain gardens and certified wildlife habitats. They’ve also planted more than

1,000 trees in response to the emerald ash borer. Program staff quickly pivoted to create a new program delivery model in 2020. With indoor facilities closed due to Covid-19, getting outdoors was more desirable and valuable than ever. CWPD was ready to meet the demand! Almost immediately, they had new self-directed program variations, video classes, and take-home ReckKits ready. By year’s end, more than 600 children enjoyed safe day camps, 1,000 people participated in self-directed park programs, and 63 separate ReckKit opportunities were available—more than one per week! Ohio Business Magazine selected CWPD for the “Ohio Success Award-Covid-19 Response” for “companies [that] have had to innovate like never before.”



## COPELL PARKS AND RECREATION Coppell, Texas

Nestled amid the bustling metropolis of North Texas, 22 miles northwest of Dallas, Coppell is the portrait of a small, tranquil community cultivating modern, family living. Outstanding quality of life, community diversity and abundant recreation opportunities make Coppell a unique and desirable home for all ages. Coppell Parks and Recreation’s (CPAR) commitment to connecting people, parks and programs through nature and recreation makes Coppell a standout in the region. At 14 square miles, we maintain 544 acres of parkland, including 17 parks tucked into neighborhoods throughout the city. Nearly 41,000 residents enjoy a family recreation and aquatic facility, tennis and pickleball center, senior and community center, arts center, nature education center, playgrounds, athletic complexes,

a regionally recognized farmers market, dog park, cemetery and 23 miles of multi-use trail. One of the first agencies in Texas to receive CAPRA accreditation, CPAR most recently met all 154 standards during 2020 reaccreditation. Approaching challenges as opportunities and pursuing continuous progress has generated numerous state and national recognitions, including being a 3-time National Gold Medal finalist. Through cooperative partnerships with our engaged community, CPAR continues to grow and innovate. Local support of the arts resulted in the construction of a new arts center and curated public art displays. An enthusiastic pickleball community inspired



CPAR to repurpose courts, expanding pickleball play offerings. Volunteer gardeners donate 26,340 lbs of produce annually to provide fresh pantry options to local service organizations. CPAR’s dedication to each citizen and to building community through public service helps our community thrive.

## GRAPEVINE PARKS AND RECREATION

### Grapevine, Texas

The City of Grapevine is a historic community nestled in the heart of the Dallas-Fort Worth metro-plex that has managed to maintain a strong sense of individual character and identity amidst the fast pace of surrounding cities. With a diverse and progressive team, we research to provide the most innovative and unique recreation opportunities to Grapevine residents and visitors. The Department's vision is to make our community a happier place to live and play through diverse programs, organized sports for youth and adults, dance, special events, health and fitness, outdoor recreation, volunteering and more. By providing access to 67.68 miles of hike and bike trails, 2,860 acres of parkland, 50 parks, 32 playgrounds, 12 boat ramps, 5 state-of-the-art sports complexes, and the multi-generational center,

The REC of Grapevine, we enrich the quality of life for our residents. We empower citizens to go learn, go discover, go grapevine, and live life to the fullest while building a strong community. Through the adoption of the three pillars established by the National Recreation and Park Association, Grapevine ensures that everyone have easy access to park and recreation opportunities in a sustainable community.



## PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK

### Oak Park, Illinois

Established in 1912, the Park District of Oak Park has a long history of developing green space and offering recreational opportunities for our residents. We have a community of 52,000 yet only 84 acres of land. Thus, staff must be creative when offering our 3,000+ programs and maintaining our spaces. The District is proud that our sustainability commitment aligns with the expectations of our residents. We implement best practices through construction of LEED, Net Zero, and Passive House designs for our facilities as well as installation of bio-swales, solar, rain-harvesting, geo-thermal, and more. Since 2016, our electricity usage has decreased by 25% and we have saved over 1,000,000 gallons of water annually. The District is passionate about innovation and engaging staff and the community. Since 2017,

508 staff ideas were posted on Launchpad, over 2,000 comments were made on these ideas, and 90 ideas were officially launched. The District's dashboard information system provides performance data to staff and the public with real-time information for planning, decision-making, and transparency. Reaching the under-served is a priority for us as we have expanded scholarships and childcare discounts. Additionally, the construction of a new Community Recreation Center will provide free after-school hours for grades 6-12, our first indoor gymnasium and walking track, e-sports room, inclusive locker room, and more. Finally, our Social Equity



Committee focuses on diversifying our recruitment efforts through community partnerships to reach new audiences. We align our efforts with our commitment to mother-earth and the health and wellness of all residents.

# CLASS V 2021 FINALISTS

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

East Goshen Township Parks and Recreation, 2019 PRPS Agency of the Year, leads a community that truly values its open space, with 497 acres of park land and eighteen parks. A department with one full time staff, it has experienced tremendous growth recently, increasing programming over 47% through dedicated cultivation of partnerships and a burgeoning, skilled volunteer base.

East Goshen Township has historical assets dating to the 1600s, and Parks and Recreation weaves this rich history into many of its programs, most recently with an Escape the Blacksmith Shop and Ghost Walk experiences. At this year's Oktoberfest, the department is partnering with Locust Lane Brewery to feature the Blacksmith Shop on custom labeled beer options. The department also maximizes sustainability efforts, in 2018 being named a Pennsylvania

gold level sustainable-certified community, one of twenty in the state. The Township is also nearly completely built out at 96%, with little land canvas to prepare for new generations and changing recreational needs. With an eye towards millennial interests, the department will complete four transformative park projects by the end of 2021 that included securing an \$8M bond alongside \$5.6M in grants. East Goshen Township Parks and Recreation...in the Business of Making Memories!



## DEERFIELD PARK DISTRICT Deerfield, Illinois

Deerfield Park District serves a small-town community maximizing partnerships with governmental entities, school districts, neighboring park districts, special recreation providers, sports affiliates, non-profits and corporations to provide a well-rounded service model meeting the recreational needs of our community members through shared resources. Spanning 350 acres, popular amenities include a user-designed skatepark, two outdoor pools, a dog park, 17 playgrounds and an 18-hole golf course. The addition of no-mow zones, a bee-keeping program and partnerships with Go Green Deerfield align with our environmental stewardship strategic plan initiative. At Sachs Recreation Center, an 11-year practice facility partnership with the WNBA Chicago Sky includes rental revenue,

game tickets for residents, media publicity and player appearances by US National and Olympic athletes. Additionally, North Shore Rhythmic Gymnastics Club rents 6,000 square feet where 170 athletes train in a world-renowned Olympic program. For active adults age 50+, we offer over 2,000 yearly recreation, social, health and aging programs at our Patty Turner Center. An intergovernmental agreement with the Village of Deerfield covers 50% of the annual operating costs and capital purchases. Over 225 community supporters raised \$125,000 to renovate Brickyards Park Playground and rename it in memory of 21-year-old Kenny Rudin. Extensive planning, preparation and



research showcase Kenny's love of playgrounds focusing on inclusive sensory integration and adaptive equipment that support play for individuals with and without disabilities. Unique, well-designed, lasting partnerships created and fostered by Deerfield Park District staff allow us to continue enriching lives, promoting healthy living and inspiring memorable experiences.

## TOWN OF FOUNTAIN HILLS COMMUNITY SERVICES

### Fountain Hills, Arizona

Fountain Hills Community Services (FHCS) is a small but impressive team that operates with a culture of passion and commitment. We shine brightest when it comes to increasing community advocacy, earning the trust of our leadership, and magnifying our limited fiscal resources. Encompassing five divisions with 13 full-time staff, we represent the broadest, most public-facing department within the town. As a community, we do not levy a primary property tax therefore funding and financial forecasting can be one of our biggest hurdles, however, FHCS continually finds a way to excel. Our values push us to refine and improve, asking how we can do more, go further, and dream bigger. The department provides a variety of programs and facilities to our 25,000 residents. Overseeing 125 acres of developed park space, a 30,000 sqft. Community Center, 822 acres

of preserve space, and dozens of miles of desert and urban trails, our small team provides a level of quality and service that far exceeds expectations. Throw in dozens of community events, programs and classes for youth, teens, adults, and seniors as well as over 700 volunteers, a home-delivered meal program and a Mayor's Youth Council and you have one very busy group! These are just a sampling of the tangible efforts that staff is spearheading to bring a brighter, more vibrant system to Fountain Hills. Through the commitment and passion of the Community Services team, we are dedicated to building a community that thrives and a department of distinction.



## VERNON HILLS PARK DISTRICT

### Vernon Hills, Illinois

For nearly 50 years, the District continues to bring memorable experiences to all ages through diverse programming. The District encompasses 5 facilities, 10 miles of paths, and 25 parks situated on 460 acres of land. Through the collaborative efforts of the Park Board, professional staff, sponsors and volunteers, the District is an award recipient of the 2018-2023 Illinois Distinguished Accredited Agency Award. 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. 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. Our facilities include Lakeview Fitness with amenities of 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 six 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 5 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.

# STATE PARKS 2021 FINALISTS

## DELAWARE STATE PARKS Dover, Delaware

Delaware State Parks manages parks, nature preserves, greenways, marinas, golf courses, historic forts, and the state's only AZA-accredited zoo. Delaware State Parks attracts more than 6 million annual visitors who spend their day enjoying a variety of attractions. Visitors can surf at Atlantic Ocean beaches, kayak through the northernmost stand of bald cypress trees in the nation, tour a Civil War fort, camp, rock climb or explore wooded trails. Delaware State Parks administers Delaware's land protection programs, provides educational and interpretive programs, acquires and develops recreational lands through the Open Space program, and plans for statewide recreational needs. In 2020, 2,565 volunteers contributed 118,791 hours or the equivalent of 61 full-time employees. Delaware State Parks provides the highest quality of interpretive programming

for curriculum-based school programs, outreach, theme-based interpretive programming, recreational opportunities, trainings and day camps. The parks provide more than 100 day camps for children, and Friend volunteer groups offer scholarships so kids can come to explore and enjoy the outdoors regardless of their financial abilities. Delaware State Parks is committed to working with the community to shape excellent and engaging communication around equity. The park system has constructed accessible buildings, piers, docks, hunting stands, playgrounds, wagon rides, trails, campsites and kayak launch ramps. Delaware State Parks is a truly unique, world-class park system that enhances the quality of life for both citizens



and travelers from all over the world. Delaware State Parks: your outdoor adventure starts here!

## OHIO DIVISION OF STATE PARKS & WATERCRAFT Columbus, Ohio

Whether it's a field of wildflowers in the spring or a lakefront beach in the summer, a hike on any of our 1,500 miles of trail through the fall leaves or past a frozen waterfall – there is something for everyone, 365 days a year, at Ohio's 75 state parks. 5.2 million visitors used our new website to plan their trip to one of Ohio's state parks, searching by location, activity, and amenity to find their perfect destination. More than 19,000 visitors commemorated their journeys with a State Parks Passport, taking home a stamp and a memory with every adventure. They found the perfect places to roam using DETOUR, our new trails app, developed with trail partners and legislative leaders. Families enjoyed the benefits of being outdoors together, as they explored our 11 new Storybook Trails, designed to engage and educate our youngest visitors. Our overnight facilities were

revamped, thanks to \$127 million in improvements which allowed us to host 1,035,000 overnight bookings last year - 120,000 more than the year before. And with more than 300 YouTube videos from our park naturalists, anyone can improve their outdoor IQ. Millions of viewers have brushed up on everything from redbud jam to the legend of Bigfoot. From the shores of Lake Erie through the Hocking Valley, down to the Ohio River, Ohio State Parks welcomes everyone during every season to find their space and explore the great outdoors -- there's no telling what adventures await.



## TENNESSEE STATE PARKS

### Nashville, Tennessee

Our love of Tennessee begins with the mountains in the east and continues through to the banks of the Mississippi. With 56 parks, Tennessee State Parks preserves and protects the natural, cultural and scenic areas which encompass the identity of our state. Since 1937, we have been committed to providing a variety of safe, quality, outdoor experiences, so everyone can disconnect from the ordinary by reconnecting to a park.

As a CAPRA-accredited system, we manage recreation destinations with a commitment to free entry and equity-based pricing for tours, rentals and reservations. We connect visitors from around the world with Tennessee's natural and cultural heritage. These connections provide an economic impact of \$1.84 billion and are felt locally, where in some rural communities, the park is the only major economic driver. Tennessee State Parks are also a

partner in public health with a focus on healthy living and sustainability. Our Go Green With Us initiative challenges every park to operate sustainably and inspires our visitors to do the same. We are expanding our efforts by reducing our environmental footprint. We strive for zero waste and are replacing traditional water fountains with water bottle filling stations, and we have begun installing electric vehicle charging stations and modernizing our fleet. With future generations in mind, we are removing barriers to access for children and underserved communities. Through continuing facility improvements, resource protection, diversity efforts and staff training we ensure



support for these spectacular places. Tennessee State Parks – For the Love of Tennessee.

## TEXAS STATE PARKS

### Austin, Texas

Texas State Parks manage diverse resources with diverse operations for a diverse population. With 638,000 acres tucked into 89 corners of the 2nd largest U.S. state, we manage resources in each of Texas' seven natural regions. We protect habitat for more than 50 threatened and endangered species, and protect nearly half a million acres of aquifers and drinking water sources for the majority of Texans. 12,000 years of human stories exist in our sites, including five National Historic Landmarks and 29 parks built by the CCC. This varied landscape requires intricate expertise. Park operations at two parks are never the same: maintaining Spanish Missions, relocating trouble alligators, clearing mud from dinosaur footprints, and interpreting pictographs for world-champion rock climbers - just another day at the office for

Texas State Parks staff. Close to a thousand field staff are responsible for the safety of eight million annual visitors. Our 140 park peace officers patrol parks, support border security, respond to natural disasters, and engage in community outreach. We do all this for the 29 million diverse people who call Texas home. Our 190,000 park pass holders include avid birders, backpackers, bikers, boaters, and beyond. To help us engage all Texans, our diversity and inclusion goals are supported by 14 dedicated D&I professionals, a workforce culture planning team, and a strategic plan that guides the actions of the rest. We're



proud of our team, and it is the diversity of Texas and Texans that make Texas State Parks great.

# ARMED FORCES RECREATION 2021 FINALISTS

## NAVAL SUBMARINE BASE Kings Bay, Georgia

Nestled in rural Camden County, Georgia, sits Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay. Aboard this unique installation operates the highly accredited Morale, Welfare, and Recreation department. A customer-driven organization, MWR Kings Bay takes pride in offering new, innovative programs geared towards improving the entertainment, fitness, and recreation opportunities for the new generation of military members. Comprised of Sailors, Marines, Coast Guard service members, retirees, civilian government employees, and their families, the diverse community of just over 26,000 patrons provides the customer-focused MWR Kings Bay team of 120 employees with ample opportunities to meet and exceed expectations. Evidenced by their central roles in the MWR Kings Bay mission and vision statements, the importance of quality customer service and satisfaction is unparalleled. Serving the military

community is why we exist. MWR Kings Bay's foundation of strategic planning provides the assessment and planning necessary to deliver the most effective, efficient programs. MWR Kings Bay's strategic plan, a living, transparent document, focuses on program self-evaluation, setting achievable goals, and maintaining high program standards. The hard-working, professional MWR Kings Bay team not only understands the plan but believes in the processes required to achieve greatness. Together they have accomplished countless recognitions such as multiple Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) and Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC) 5-Star program accreditations, and the 2014 National



Morale, Welfare, and Recreation - Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay

Gold Medal Award. MWR Kings Bay sees the future as an opportunity to rise above challenges and deliver ground-breaking programs to meet the ever-evolving needs of the Kings Bay community.

## NAVAL AIR STATION WHITING FIELD Milton, Florida

Residing in Milton, FL NAS Whiting Field is the busiest Naval Air Station in the world with roughly 1.1 million flight operations each year. Our mission is producing the military's finest Aviation Warfighter. NAS Whiting Field impressive footprint includes 12 Outlying Fields spanning four counties across two states. The efforts of our team contributed to the selection as the Secretary of the Navy's top base in Environmental Stewardship and Energy Savings, the Commander Navy Installations Command 2020 Best base in the Navy, the Department of Environmental Protections "Clean Marina" and earned status of a CNIC MWR 5-Star Accredited program. We continually develop MWR business models that exact our resources and activities to meet the need of our community. With a 1.4 million dollar grant we renovated a bowling alley into a vibrant community center. We expand

our services by transforming spaces, including the conversion of a softball field into a dog park, a paintball course into a driving range, and a racquet ball course into a Family Fitness Room. Additionally, we opened a dedicated Navy Operational Fitness and Fueling System Zone in our Fitness Center utilized by over 90 thousand people yearly. Our team creates exemplary programs. Whether in a pandemic or emerging into a new normal, our team develops unique and diverse quality events. Our constant drive to deliver more creates memorable experiences for our community. MWR Whiting Field team effectively delivers exceptional quality of life services as to sustain the fleet, enable the fighter and support the family.



## NAVAL BASE CORONADO

### San Diego, California

Naval Base Coronado MWR is a diverse, committed group of professionals working toward common goals; warfighter readiness and family resiliency. From providing world class facilities to adventures specific to beautiful Southern California, our entire team creates a positive impact on our military family no matter the obstacles presented. The team boasts 52 undergraduate degrees ranging from recreation and physics to economics. This enhances our ability to attack dynamic problem sets through an interdisciplinary approach. The team adds another 14 Master's degrees and 44 advanced certifications. The Naval Base Coronado MWR program has received back-to-back Five-Star Accreditation awards demonstrating our ongoing commitment to excellence. Our contributions to the quality of life on the installation have been highlighted in NBC's Installation Excellence Award

submissions resulting in second place (2019) and third place (2020) finishes for the large installation category. The team's success in serving those who serve has driven our philosophy of cross-training and collaboration across all operations and programs. Our departments collaborate to deliver targeted events that have increased patronage and awareness resulting in the Sailors being more likely to utilize on base services. Our interdisciplinary problem solving approach has been invaluable in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These skill sets supported the quick and decisive comprehensive mitigation strategies, fueling our team to face the pandemic head on, adapt to and overcome challenges to our service delivery



models, and allowing us to continue providing programs that consistently exceed standards when our Sailors and families need them the most.

## US ARMY GARRISON BAVARIA

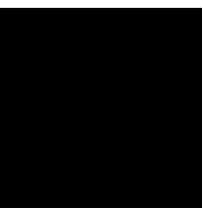
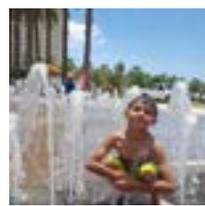
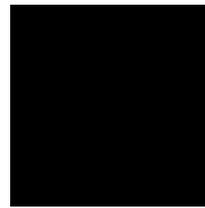
### Grafenwoehr, Germany

U.S. Army Garrison Bavaria Family and MWR is an 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 locations dispersed over 190 miles. USAG Bavaria welcomes 12,500 people annually and Family and MWR offers programs to assist our community living in Germany. From introducing technology trends to providing entertainment, we are committed to helping our community stay engaged. Our free and low cost programming provides financial and social equity to our population. 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.

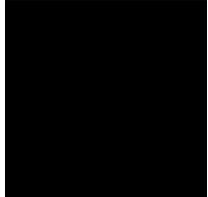
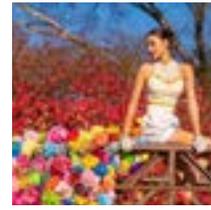
Additionally, USAG Bavaria is a good steward of our host nation lands and we prioritize managing and protecting its natural resources. We received the U.N. Decade on Biodiversity Award and the Secretary of Defense Environmental Quality Award. During ongoing lockdowns we promoted the benefits of outdoor activities for mental and physical health and our facilities remained open and generated revenue that was reinvested in our parks and recreation programs. Our community support services transitioned to alternative formats. Technology connected us when social distancing was enforced. The Virtual MWR website, paired with social media, featured resources 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.



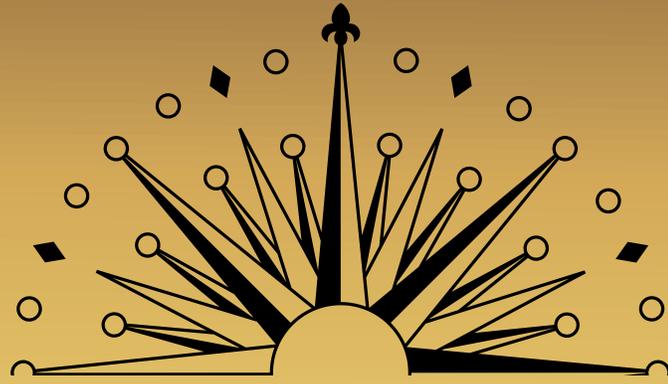




FOR EXCELLENCE IN PARK AND RECREATION MANAGEMENT







---

# MUSCO LIGHTING

## Congratulates All 2021 National Gold Medal Award Finalists

---

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.



**We Make It Happen.**  
[www.musco.com](http://www.musco.com)