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Grand Plaque Recipients Announced at the 2025 National Gold Medal Awards in Parks and Recreation

The premiere award in the park and recreation industry awarded to Public Agencies, State Park Systems, and Armed Forces Installation

Orlando, Florida, September 17, 2025— The [American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration](#) (AAPRA), in partnership with the [National Recreation and Park Association](#) (NRPA), is pleased to announce the Grand Plaque recipients in the 2025 National Gold Medal Awards for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management. [Musco Lighting, LLC](#) is the proud sponsor of the National Gold Medal Award program since 2004.

Founded in 1965, the National Gold Medal Award program honors public park and recreation agencies and state park systems in the United State and armed forces installations worldwide. These agencies demonstrate excellence in parks and recreation through long-range planning, resource management, volunteerism, environmental stewardship, program development, professional development and agency recognition. Applications are comprised of seven classes, with five classes based on population, one class for state park systems and one class for armed forces installations.

The following agencies received the Grand Plaque award after first receiving a Finalist award in their category:

Class I (population 400,001 & over): Johnson County Park & Recreation District, Shawnee Mission, Kansas

Class II (population 150,001 to 400,000): Arlington County Department of Parks and Recreation, Arlington, Virginia

Class III (population 75,001 to 150,000): Lewisville Parks and Recreation Department, Lewisville, Texas

Class IV (population 30,001 to 75,000): Park District of Oak Park, Oak Park, Illinois

Class V (population under 30,000): Oak Brook Park District, Oak Brook, Illinois

State Parks: Ohio State Parks and Watercraft, Columbus, Ohio

Armed Forces Category: US Army Garrison Fort Carson, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Agencies are judged on their management expertise to address the needs of those they serve through the collective energies of community members, staff members and elected officials. Each of these agencies first received the Finalist Plaque in their category. For the Grand Plaque round of judging, each Finalist submits a five-minute video in support their application, and the judges reviewed progress on the applicant's strategic plan.

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

For more information on the National Gold Medal Award program, visit www.nrpa.org/goldmedal or www.aapra.org.

The American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration is a non-profit organization founded to advance knowledge related to the administration of recreation and parks; to encourage scholarly efforts by both practitioners and educators that would enhance the practice of park and recreation administration; to promote broader public understanding of the importance of parks and recreation to the public good; and, to conduct research, publish scholarly papers and sponsor seminars related to the advancement of park and recreation administration. For information, visit www.aapra.org.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is the leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to building strong, vibrant and resilient communities through the power of parks and recreation. With more than 60,000 members, NRPA advances this mission by investing in and championing the work of park and recreation professionals and advocates — the catalysts for positive change in service of equity, environmental resilience, and overall health and well-being. For more information, visit nrpa.org. For digital access to NRPA's flagship publication, *Parks & Recreation*, visit parksandrecreation.org.

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