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# WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Waukegan Park District's Virtual American Independence Parade: Shoebox Edition Recognized with 2020 Overall Outstanding Program & Special Event Award**

**Waukegan, Illinois (January 28, 2020)** – The Waukegan Park District's Virtual American Independence Parade: Shoebox Edition was recognized with the 2020 Overall Outstanding Program & Special Event Award by the Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA) at the 2021 IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference. The Outstanding Program & Special Event Award honors public agencies for outstanding and unique achievements in program development and implementation and special event planning.

The Virtual American Independence Parade: Shoebox Edition was presented via Facebook Premiere and YouTube on Saturday, July 4 at 1pm, reaching over 18,000 people. Fifty-nine mini "floats" made of shoeboxes or similar boxes were submitted by local families, organizations, and businesses. The commentary during the virtual parade was provided by David Motley and Jane Ferry, who have emceed the Waukegan American Independence Parade for years.

After the virtual parade, a mini "float" contest was held on Facebook to recognize the most popular entries. Individuals voted for their favorite virtual parade entry by liking the photo of the mini "float". The winners were Lambda Nu Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated (First Place), Faith in Place (Second Place), and Fat Cat Rescue (Third Place).

Jeremiah Johnson, President of the Board of Commissioners, stated, "Our virtual parade engaged thousands during a summer without the traditional in-person special events. The creativity of entrants and enthusiasm from our community contributed to the success of the event. We are proud to be recognized with an award from the Illinois Park and Recreation Association."

Jay Lerner, Executive Director, stated, "The statewide award from the Illinois Park and Recreation Association is a great honor. It's a reflection of the hard work and dedication of our staff to offer innovative virtual events for our community during the pandemic. The virtual parade was a novel event that allowed our community to enjoy a tradition safely."

#### **About the Waukegan Park District**

Established on December 26, 1916, the district has 50 properties and more than 737 acres of land, including the 18-hole Bonnie Brook and 9-hole Greenshire Golf Courses. Properties are managed to the highest environmental and conservation standards. Facilities operated by the district include the Field House Sports, Fitness and Aquatics Center, the Jack Benny Center for the Arts, the Waukegan's Greg Petry SportsPark, the Waukegan Skate Park, the Waukegan BMX Track, recreational centers, disc golf course, dog exercise area and agility course, outdoor sports fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, splash pads, and sports courts including basketball, tennis and pickleball. A full range of programs and services are offered year-round for all ages, from infants to seniors as well as special needs populations. Healthy lifestyles, wellness initiatives, and a

connection with the outdoors and nature are integrated throughout programs, services, and special events. Cultural events are provided by the Waukegan Symphony Orchestra and Concert Chorus, and the Waukegan History Museum. There is something for everyone! The District is a member of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD), and Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA). The District employs 63 full-time and over 230 part-time, seasonal, and temporary employees and is recognized by the IPRA as an Exceptional Workplace. Accreditation is maintained from the NRPA Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) Distinguished Agency Accreditation and Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA). The District has received Government Finance Officer Association awards for Distinguished Budget Presentation and Certificate for Excellence in Financial Reporting for eight consecutive years. The District was awarded the NRPA National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management in 2013 and named a NRPA Gold Medal Finalist in 2012, 2013, and 2019.

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