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# WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

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## PRESS RELEASE

### **North Shore Gas Honored with Best Friend of Illinois Parks Award**

**Waukegan, Illinois (October 18, 2021)** – North Shore Gas was honored with the Best Friend of Illinois Parks Award by the Illinois Association of Park Districts at their 2021 Best of the Best Awards Gala. The award recognizes a business or corporation that has demonstrated exemplary support of a local park district, forest preserve, conservation, recreation, or special recreation agency. North Shore Gas was nominated by the Waukegan Park District.

North Shore Gas, a partner of the Waukegan Park District since 2009, supports healthy habits for children, nature initiatives, child and water safety, swim lessons, and the arts. North Shore Gas supported the Waukegan Park District with funding for an environmental outreach program for students in Waukegan Public Schools, including students in special education programs. From 2014 to 2018, 111 classrooms were visited at nine area schools reaching 1,931 students. During the pandemic, the Waukegan Park District reallocated the funding to expand nature programming and establish Nature’s Classroom at Bevier Center.

In 2021, the Waukegan Parks Foundation and the Waukegan Park District officially opened the Percussion Playground at Corrine J. Rose Park. North Shore Gas was the lead donor with a contribution of \$30,000 to the special playground, kickstarting the Waukegan Parks Foundation’s capital campaign goal to raise \$89,000. North Shore Gas also provided a lead gift to the Waukegan Parks Foundation to support water safety and swim lessons. The gift helped establish free day-long field trips to the Field House Sports, Fitness & Aquatics Center for all second-grade classes in Waukegan. This initiative gets children comfortable in the water, introduces water safety and swimming, and includes fitness and sports segments.

Jacqueline Herrera Giron, President of the Waukegan Park District Board of Commissioners, stated, “North Shore Gas is a valuable partner for the Waukegan Park District. The company’s long-term investment has enabled the Waukegan Park District to reach children in summer camps, classrooms, programs, and field trips.”

Jay Lerner, Executive Director of the Waukegan Park District, stated, “With a long-term investment in the Waukegan Park District, North Shore Gas is an outstanding example of a public-private partnership that tackles real issues to improve the community’s quality of life. The Waukegan Park District is grateful for the company’s support throughout the years.

Polly Eldringhoff, Vice President of North Shore Gas, stated, “The Waukegan Park District is doing wonderful and important work. We are happy to support its initiatives that make living and working here even more vibrant, more educational, and more fun for everyone. North Shore Gas is proud to help our community continue to thrive.”

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## **About the Waukegan Park District**

Established on December 26, 1916, the District has 53 properties and more than 742 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, Jack Benny Center for the Arts, Waukegan's Greg Petry SportsPark, Waukegan Skate Park, BMX Track, SplashZone, Percussion Playground, 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. We offer something for everyone!

The District is a member of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD), Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA) and the Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA). The District employs 64 full-time and nearly 200 part-time, seasonal, and temporary employees and is recognized by the IPRA as an Exceptional Workplace.

Nationally accredited by the NRPA Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) and State accredited through the IAPD Distinguished Agency Accreditation. The District has received Government Finance Officer Association (GFOA) awards for Distinguished Budget Presentation and Certificate for Excellence in Financial Reporting for ten consecutive years and received the coveted GFOA Triple Crown Award recognizing the District's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, Popular Annual Financial Reporting and Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for 2019. The Waukegan Park District was awarded the NRPA National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management in 2013 and named a Gold Medal Finalist in 2012, 2013, 2019, and 2021.

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