

WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

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To: All Media

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Claudia Freeman Awarded the 2013 Illinois Parks and Recreation Community Impact Award

Waukegan, IL (January 30, 2013)... Claudia Freeman received the 2013 Illinois Parks and Recreation Community Impact Award at the Illinois Association of Park Districts and Illinois Parks and Recreation Association's Soaring to New Heights Conference Awards Luncheon on Friday, January 25, 2013.

Ms. Freeman, a parks and recreation professional with more than 30 years experience, positions arts and culture as a strategy for community and economic development with high impact results. As the Superintendent of Cultural Arts, she leveraged grants, sponsorships, and partnerships to offer a range of programs for little or no cost. *Summer Arts in the Parks*, an outgrowth of work on the Chicago Wilderness' "No Child Left Inside" initiative, moved programs combining play, art and culture outdoors into neighborhood parks. Examples are: Summer H*E*A*T*, a weekly 30-minute family program that exposes hundreds of children to History, Earth, Arts or Tales and ArtsPark, an art program that travels to neighborhood parks, with attendance at one site of more than 40 children this past summer. *Summer Arts in the Parks*, fully sponsored, won the prestigious 2012 National Recreation and Park Association Dorothy

Mullen Arts and Humanities Award. The Cultural Arts Division fosters arts startups and partners with local education entities. Successful examples include Acts to Follow, Academia Cultural Xilotl, the Highly Improvables and cooperative performances with the North Chicago Center for the Arts. Claudia actively promotes local artists, arts organizations, and collaborative projects and is a founding member of the new Waukegan Arts Council and chair of its education committee. She served as a member of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) 2040 Task Force for Cultural Vitality Index in 2011 and in 2012, the Cultural Engagement Working Committee. She serves as the Waukegan Park District liaison to the Waukegan Historical Society and Waukegan Harbor Citizens' Advisory Group. Over the past several years, Freeman has worked as a panelist for the adjudication of Illinois Arts Council Multidisciplinary Grants. Under her leadership, the Cultural Arts Division was the winner of the 2011 Illinois Association of Park Districts' Arts in the Park Award.

The Illinois Parks and Recreation Community Impact Award is presented to a current Illinois park and recreation professional who has made a significant impact in the community they serve. According to judges, "They somehow balance family, career, volunteerism and several other outside activities while continuing to achieve their professional mission." This award recognizes Claudia Freeman's significant impact on the community of Waukegan and her continued effectiveness and leadership as a parks and recreation professional.

About the Waukegan Park District

Established on December 26, 1916 the district has 47 properties and 720 acres of land, which includes the 18-hole Bonnie Brook and the 9-hole Greenshire Golf Courses. The District operates recreational centers, the Field House Sports and Fitness Center, the Jack Benny Center

for the Arts, an outdoor swimming pool, outdoor sports fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, basketball courts, the Waukegan Skate Park, and the Waukegan BMX track. A full range of programs and services are offered year round for all ages including special populations. Cultural events are provided by the Waukegan Symphony Orchestra and Concert Chorus, the Bowen Park Theatre Company, and the Waukegan History Museum. Fifty-four authorized full-time staff and over 250 part-time, year round, seasonal and temporary employees. 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 maintains IAPD Distinguished Agency accreditation and is also accredited with the Park District Risk Management Agency and maintains a Level A Loss Control Program. In 2012, the district was named a Gold Medal Finalist.