

WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

North Shore Gas Lead Program Sponsor for Waukegan Park District's Teach Our Kids to SwimSmart

Waukegan, IL (May 24 2016) . . . North Shore Gas is the lead sponsor for the Waukegan Park District's new Water Safety Campaign, Teach Our Kids to SwimSmart. The utility which provides natural gas to customers in the North Shore and surrounding communities recently awarded an \$8,000 grant to the Waukegan Park District to support the two year initiative.

The grant's purpose is to teach Waukegan children to swim and be safe in and around water. The North Shore Gas grant will enable 720 children, ages 4-8, to learn how to swim at the new aquatics center located at the Field House, 800 N. Baldwin, Waukegan, IL. The indoor pool and aquatics center will open in the fall of 2016.

At a recent Waukegan Parks Foundation Board meeting, Andrea Danks, Government and Community Relations Representative for North Shore Gas learned about the critical need and opportunity to teach local children to swim. When presented with the national statistics about drownings and the fact that Waukegan is located on the shore of Lake Michigan, she realized that something needed to be done to keep Waukegan children safe in and around water and to teach them how to swim. Working with the District, she proposed an \$8,000 grant from North Shore Gas to fund this important program. "I also want to challenge other like-minded corporations and individuals in the Chicagoland-area to join me in supporting the Teach Our Kids to SwimSmart Campaign," said Danks. "Programs like this have an impact! The more sponsors that participate, the greater the number of kids that learn how to swim and be safe in the water."

According to USA Swimming

- Approximately 10 people drown every day in the U.S. (Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)).
- More than one in five fatal drowning victims are children younger than 14 (Source: CDC).
- Participation in formal swimming lessons can reduce the risk of drowning by 88 percent among children aged one to four years. (Source: Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine 2009)
- Seventy percent of African-American and sixty percent of Hispanic/Latino children cannot swim. (Source: National research study by the USA Swimming Foundation and the University of Memphis)
- African-American children drown at a rate nearly three times higher than their Caucasian peers. (Source: CDC)

- If a parent does not know how to swim, there is only a 13 percent chance that a child in that household will learn how to swim. (Source: National research study by the USA Swimming Foundation and the University of Memphis)

On a local level, 3,547 African American and 8,492 Latino children in Waukegan under the age of 18 do not know how to swim. Danks stated, "Partnering with the Waukegan Park District to teach children to swim and be safe in and around water is essential in this lakefront community. It makes perfect sense for North Shore Gas to support such an endeavor since we are a company known for our commitment to public safety."

About the Waukegan Park District

Established on December 26, 1916, the district has 48 sites and more than 735 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 and Fitness Center, the Jack Benny Center for the Arts, the Waukegan SportsPark, the Waukegan Skate Park, the Waukegan BMX Track, recreational centers, an outdoor swimming pool, disc golf course, dog exercise area and agility course, outdoor sports fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, 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 award-winning District employs 61 full-time 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 national accreditation from the NRPA Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), the Illinois Association of Park District (IAPD) Distinguished Agency accreditation and the Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA) accreditation and sustains a Level A Loss Control Program. The district was a NRPA Gold Medal Finalist in 2012 and 2013, and awarded the NRPA National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management in 2013.

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