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# WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Waukegan Park District Reopens Eugene P. King Park following Renovation**

**Waukegan, Illinois (October 27, 2020)** – The Waukegan Park District officially reopened Eugene P. King Park. Located at 301 South Avenue, King Park was improved with new amenities, including additional playground equipment, a half-court basketball court, a half-sized soccer field, an improved baseball field, a fitness challenge course, a picnic shelter with grills, and a restroom. A large open field will remain for recreational use and family gatherings.

The renovation of King Park is one of 89 projects funded by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grants in 2019. OSLAD grants are funded by the State of Illinois' Real Estate Transfer Tax and awarded to local governments to develop land for public outdoor recreation. The City of Waukegan also contributed project funds through its Community Development Block Grant program.

King Park is named after one of the first African-American physicians in Waukegan, Dr. Eugene P. King. Dr. King started baseball leagues for African-Americans in the 1950s and 1960s when the sport was not yet integrated. Dr. King was an avid gardener and responsible for a massive community garden that employed youth and supplied his neighborhood with fresh vegetables. With the renovations, Dr. King's legacy in the community was reinforced for future generations.

Waukegan Park District President Jeremiah Johnson stated, "In the heart of the south side, the renovated King Park will bring activity to the neighborhood with sports, fitness, and community gatherings. We are extremely proud of the partnerships that made this project a reality. The renovated park is an excellent tribute to Dr. King and his support for youth in Waukegan."

Waukegan Park District Executive Director Jay Lerner stated, "The renovation of King Park was a long-term plan and priority for us. The Waukegan Park District has acquired adjacent houses to expand the park space for new amenities, like our first fitness challenge course. We're excited to see the neighborhood enjoying outdoor recreational activities with the new and improved features at King Park."

### **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 award-winning District employs 63 full-time and over 230 part-time, 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), Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) Distinguished Agency accreditation and Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA) accreditation and maintains a Level A Loss Control Program. 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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