
WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

Waukegan Historical Society Recognized with Award of Superior Achievement from the Illinois State Historical Society

Waukegan, Illinois (April 28, 2021) – The Waukegan Historical Society was recognized with the Award of Superior Achievement by the Illinois State Historical Society, honoring the Waukegan History Museum Companion App in the Special Projects category. The Award of Superior Achievement is the top award given by the Illinois State Historical Society annually.

In 2020, the Waukegan Park District partnered with the Waukegan Historical Society to share local history through the Waukegan History Museum Companion found under “Activities” on the Waukegan Park District’s mobile app or at waukeganparks.org/historycompanion. The mobile app is free and available on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

The Waukegan History Museum Companion gives users the opportunity to participate in virtual history exhibits and self-guided history tours of different locations in Waukegan, including parks, statues, and historic landmarks. Users are also able to read short histories and see photographs of individuals and places with important significance in Waukegan’s history. The Waukegan History Museum Companion is curated by Bryan Escobar, Arts & History Specialist.

Jeremiah Johnson, President of the Waukegan Park District Board of Commissioners, stated, “The Award of Superior Achievement from the Illinois State Historical Society is a reflection of the Waukegan Historical Society’s innovative efforts to share local history with the community. The Waukegan History Museum Companion encourages the public to explore Waukegan to learn more about our city’s history.”

Jay Lerner, Executive Director of the Waukegan Park District, stated, “The Waukegan Park District is proud to partner with the award-winning Waukegan Historical Society to share local history with our community through the Waukegan History Museum Companion. This digital platform has allowed our community to learn about Waukegan’s historic past on-the-go.”

Josh Bill, President of the Waukegan Historical Society, stated, “The Waukegan Historical Society is honored to receive the Award of Superior Achievement. This award is a result of the exemplary efforts of the staff and volunteers to engage our community with local history.”

The Illinois State Historical Society was founded in 1899 to support the Illinois State Historical Library and to encourage research and writing on subjects of Illinois history. The Society encourages everyone from University scholars to local historians to take an active part in Illinois history. Judges with the Illinois State Historical Society stated, ‘The app from the Waukegan History Museum was a great way to connect with people during COVID, and in turn will have a lasting impact that will continue after the pandemic ends.’

About the Waukegan Park District

Established on December 26, 1916, the district has 50 properties and more than 740 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 ten 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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About the Waukegan Historical Society

The Waukegan Historical Society is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit that was established in 1968. For the past 50 years the Society has promoted Waukegan's history through education programs, scholarship, exhibits, and events. The Society operates, in partnership with the Waukegan Park District, the Waukegan History Museum and the Raymond Research Library and Archives. School outreach is a priority of the Society. In the past five years, over 700 free programs on Waukegan's history have been presented in the schools to over 22,000 students. The Society supports student scholarship in history. Over 1,600 high school students from Waukegan and the surrounding communities have utilized the Society's Library and Archives for the Chicago Metro History Fair, with several projects advancing to the National History Day competition. For the past two years, the Society has received awards from the Illinois State Historical Society for its innovative exhibits.

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