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# WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Waukegan Park District Celebrates 2021 Arbor Day**

**Waukegan, Illinois (April 30, 2021)** – The Waukegan Park District is celebrating the 2021 Arbor Day on Friday, April 30 by planting an Eastern Redbud Tree at Bowen Park, located at 1800 N. Sheridan Road. Artemio Aguirre, Jose Bedoya, and Rafael Murillo from the Parks Department were selected to plant the ceremonial tree near the ravine.

Traditionally, the Waukegan Park District invites local students to plant trees at parks on Arbor Day. However, due to the pandemic, students from Glen Flora Elementary School submitted questions about trees that were answered virtually by horticulture experts in the Parks Department. The educational video is available at [waukeganparks.org/arborday](http://waukeganparks.org/arborday).

The Eastern Redbud Tree is native to North America where it grows in woodlands and along creeks and rivers. The trees are primarily found as an understory tree growing along with taller hardwoods and conifers, so they can tolerate partial shade conditions found at Bowen Park.

Julius Sterling Morton, who had a passion for planting trees helped establish the first Arbor Day on April 10, 1872 in Nebraska City, Nebraska. It is estimated that nearly one million trees were planted that day. Today, Arbor Day is celebrated on the last Friday in April to encourage individuals to plant trees and many communities traditionally take the opportunity to organize tree plantings on or around the holiday. Sterling Morton stated, “Other holidays repose upon the past; Arbor Day proposes for the future.”

Jeremiah Johnson, President of the Waukegan Park District Board of Commissioners, stated, “Trees are essential for healthy communities. The Waukegan Park District plants hundreds of trees in parks every year and we encourage our community to plant trees in their own yards.”

Quincy Bejster, Superintendent of Parks, stated, “To commemorate the 2021 Arbor Day, we selected Artemio Aguirre, Jose Bedoya, and Rafael Murillo from the Parks Department to plant our ceremonial tree at Bowen Park. During their time at the Waukegan Park District, these three outstanding employees have planted hundreds of trees throughout parks in Waukegan.”

#### **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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Josue Pasillas  
Communications Supervisor  
Waukegan Park District  
(847) 360-4789  
[jpasillas@waukeganparks.org](mailto:jpasillas@waukeganparks.org)  
[waukeganparks.org](http://waukeganparks.org)