
WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

Waukegan Park District Named a Finalist for the 2021 National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management

Waukegan, Illinois (May 10, 2021) – The American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association, announced that the Waukegan Park District is a finalist for the 2021 National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management, the nation's highest honor for park and recreation agencies.

The Waukegan Park District is a finalist in Class III, the category for park and recreation agencies serving a population of 75,001 to 150,000. The Waukegan Park District won the prestigious award in 2013 and was named a finalist in 2012, 2013, and 2019.

Founded in 1965, the National Gold Medal Awards program honors communities in the United States that demonstrate excellence in parks and recreation through long-range planning, resource management, volunteerism, environmental stewardship, program development, professional development, and agency recognition. Applications are separated into six classes, with five classes based on population and one class for armed forces.

Jeremiah Johnson, President of the Waukegan Park District Board of Commissioners, stated, “The national recognition acknowledges the Waukegan Park District’s commitment to meet the needs of our incredible community with state-of-the-art parks and facilities and innovative programming. Thanks to the support from our community and the efforts of our staff, the Waukegan Park District is truly honored to once again be named among the best of the best park and recreation agencies in the country!”

Jay Lerner, Executive Director of the Waukegan Park District, stated, “It is a great honor for the Waukegan Park District to be named among the top four park and recreation agencies of our size in the country again. I am especially proud of our Board of Commissioners and staff for their dedication to provide our community with exceptional customer service, programs, parks, and facilities. We are grateful to have a community that continuously supports and participates in our efforts.”

Agencies are judged on their ability to address the needs of those they serve through the collective energies of community members, staff members, and elected officials. A panel of five park and recreation professionals will review and judge all application materials. Judges are chosen for their considerable experience and knowledge in parks and recreation on both the local and national levels.

The Gold Medal Award recipients will be announced during the 2021 National Recreation and Park Association Conference, which will be held in September in Nashville, Tennessee.

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, 2019, and 2021.

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About the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration

The American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration is a nonprofit organization founded to advance knowledge related to the administration of recreation and parks; to encourage scholarly efforts by both practitioners and educators that would enhance the practice of park and recreation administration; to promote broader public understanding of the importance of parks and recreation to the public good; and, to conduct research, publish scholarly papers and sponsor seminars related to the advancement of park and recreation administration. For more information, visit www.aapra.org.

About the National Recreation and Park Association

The National Recreation and Park Association is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to ensuring that all people have access to parks and recreation for health, conservation and social equity. Through its network of 60,000 recreation and park professionals and advocates, NRPA encourages the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles, conservation initiatives and equitable access to parks and public space. For more information, visit www.nrpa.org. For digital access to NRPA's flagship publication, *Parks & Recreation*, visit www.parksandrecreation.org.

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