
WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

Waukegan Park District and Waukegan Historical Society to Host 26th Annual Oakwood Cemetery Walk

Waukegan, Illinois (September 20, 2021) – The Waukegan Park District and the Waukegan Historical Society are hosting the 26th Annual Oakwood Cemetery Walk on Saturday, September 25 from 12pm to 4pm at Oakwood Cemetery in Waukegan. The Oakwood Cemetery Walk is an annual "living history" event showcasing the rich history of Waukegan using costumed actors to portray local historic figures with connections to the cemetery and Waukegan.

The theme of the 26th Annual Oakwood Cemetery Walk is “Stories of the Waukegan Carnegie Library,” including stories of the historic building’s construction, early years prior to the library, and years while it was open. Included are perspectives from Lucy Clarke, the first librarian of the Carnegie Library; women of the Waukegan Sesame Club who helped form the first public library; the debate between Elam Clark and J. K. Orvis, board members of the Waukegan Library Association, on picking the architect for the Carnegie Library; and more.

In partnership with the Waukegan Historical Society, the Waukegan Park District acquired the historic Carnegie Library from the City of Waukegan in 2020. The Carnegie Library is located at 1 N. Sheridan Road in Downtown Waukegan. Designated as a Waukegan Historic Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Carnegie Library will become the new site for the Waukegan Historical Society’s expanded history programming, archives, collections, exhibits, and research library. The building will also be used by the Waukegan Park District for programs, classes, events, and registrations.

Because there is no public parking at Oakwood Cemetery, attendees must meet at Lilac Cottage in Bowen Park, located at 1911 N. Sheridan Road. Buses will depart from Lilac Cottage to Oakwood Cemetery at 12pm, 12:30pm, 1pm, 1:30pm, 2pm, and 2:30pm. The last tour will begin at approximately 2:45pm.

Tickets in advance are available for \$10 and limited tickets will be available at the door for \$20. The 26th Annual Oakwood Cemetery Walk will be held rain or shine. More details, including tickets, are available at waukeganparks.org/oakwood.

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About the Waukegan Park District

Established on December 26, 1916, the district has 53 properties and more than 742 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, Jack Benny Center for the Arts, Waukegan's Greg Petry SportsPark, Waukegan Skate Park, BMX Track, SplashZone, Percussion Playground, 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. We offer something for everyone!

The District is a member of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD), Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA) and the Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA). The District employs 64 full-time and nearly 200 part-time, seasonal, and temporary employees and is recognized by the IPRA as an Exceptional Workplace.

Nationally accredited by the NRPA Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) and State accredited through the IAPD Distinguished Agency Accreditation. The District has received Government Finance Officer Association (GFOA) awards for Distinguished Budget Presentation and Certificate for Excellence in Financial Reporting for ten consecutive years and received the coveted GFOA Triple Crown Award recognizing the District's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, Popular Annual Financial Reporting and Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for 2019. The Waukegan Park District was awarded the NRPA National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management in 2013 and named a Gold Medal Finalist in 2012, 2013, 2019, and 2021.

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About the Waukegan Historical Society

The 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.

About the Waukegan Carnegie Library

The Waukegan Carnegie Library, designed by the Chicago architectural firm, Patton and Miller, opened on October 1, 1903. Andrew Carnegie donated \$25,000 to the City of Waukegan as part of his library philanthropy initiative. The Carnegie was used as a library until 1965. By then the Waukegan Public Library had been moved to a new location as operations had expanded beyond the capacity of the Carnegie. Since its closing, very little has occurred in the Carnegie with the exception of local preservationists taking action to save the building. In 2007, the Carnegie was designated a Waukegan historic landmark. In 2013, it was nominated and placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Carnegie's design is unique to most other "Carnegies" around the nation due to its prominent location on the peak of the bluff overlooking Lake Michigan. The building was designed to fit the contour of the bluff with multiple sub-floors below ground. Another distinct feature of the Carnegie is the corner entrance on Sheridan Road and Washington Street. The Carnegie was the childhood library and inspiration of renowned author Ray Bradbury.

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