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# WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Waukegan Park District a Finalist for the 2022 National Gold Medal Award**

**Waukegan, Illinois (May 6, 2022)** – The American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA), in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), notified the Waukegan Park District that they have been selected as a finalist for the 2022 National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management, the nation's highest honor for park and recreation agencies. The 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, 2019, and 2021.

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.

Jacqueline Herrera Giron, President of the Waukegan Park District Board of Commissioners, stated, “This recognition from the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration and National Recreation and Park Association acknowledges the dedication of leadership and staff to providing exceptional programs, events, parks, and facilities for our community. The Waukegan Park District is honored to be recognized and selected as one of the best park and recreation agencies in the country!”

Jay Lerner, Executive Director of the Waukegan Park District, stated, “It is truly an honor to again be named a finalist for the National Gold Medal Award, the highest nationwide recognition for a park and recreation agency. This recognition reaffirms our position as a leader among the top park and recreation agencies in the country. I am proud of our Board of Commissioners and staff for their commitment to serving our residents. I am especially grateful for the support from our community, who motivate us to do what we do every single day.”

Agencies are judged on their ability to meet the needs of those they serve through the collective energies of community members, staff, 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 winners will be announced during the 2022 National Recreation and Park Association Conference, to be held September 20-22 in Phoenix, Arizona.

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## **About the Waukegan Park District**

Established on December 26, 1916, the Waukegan Park District (WPD) 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 WPD include the Field House Sports, Fitness and Aquatics Center, 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 need populations. Healthy lifestyles, wellness initiatives, and a connection with the outdoors and nature are integrated throughout programs, services, and special events. Arts and cultural activities are provided by the Jack Benny Center for the Arts, Waukegan Symphony Orchestra and Concert Chorus, and the Waukegan History Museum. We offer something for everyone!

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 WPD employs 66 full-time and 290 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 WPD has received Government Finance Officer Association (GFOA) awards for Distinguished Budget Presentation and Certificate for Excellence in Financial Reporting for eleven consecutive years and received the coveted GFOA Triple Crown Award recognizing the WPD's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, Popular Annual Financial Reporting and Distinguished Budget Presentation Award in 2019. The WPD 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, 2021 and 2022.

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