
WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

Waukegan Park District Awarded Autism Speaks Grant

Waukegan, Illinois (June 27, 2022) – The Waukegan Park District was awarded a \$45,000 Norma and Malcolm Baker Recreation Grant from Autism Speaks to support special recreation services and programs. The grant will help increase access to recreation programs for individuals with autism and other intellectual disabilities.

Autism Speaks is dedicated to promoting solutions across the spectrum and throughout the life span, for the needs of individuals with autism and their families. The Norma and Malcolm Baker Recreation Grant is focused on promoting local services that enhance the lives of those affected by autism disorders, expanding the capacity to effectively serve the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) community, and increasing the field of national service providers.

The grant will support the following special recreation services and programs:

- **iCan Shine Swim Camp:** The iCan Shine Swim Camp is designed to help individuals with disabilities learn about safety in and around water and increase swim skills. The program will be held from Monday, July 25, 2022 to Friday, July 29, 2022 at the Field House Sports, Fitness & Aquatics Center. Employees who work with individuals with disabilities will have the chance to receive an Adapted Aquatics Training Certification to help improve future swim lesson programs.
- **Club Wellness Training:** Twelve employees from Special Recreation Services of Northern Lake County and Warren Special Recreation Association will participate in Club Wellness training. Club Wellness is a complete program of fitness, nutrition and wellness designed specifically for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities and effective for all.

Janet E. Kilkelly, President of the Waukegan Park District Board of Commissioners, stated, “Special recreation services and programs are essential for many families in our community. With the support from Autism Speaks, the Waukegan Park District will be offering new special recreation programs and training for employees who work with individuals with disabilities.”

Jay Lerner, Executive Director of the Waukegan Park District, stated, “The Waukegan Park District is committed to empowering individuals with disabilities to participate in recreation programs. We are honored to receive the Norma and Malcolm Baker Recreation Grant from Autism Speaks. With this generous funding, we will be able to expand the special recreation services and programs we offer our community.”

More information about special recreation services and programs is available at waukeganparks.org/specialrec.

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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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