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# WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICT

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Waukegan Park District's Arts Park Program Honored by the Illinois Association of Park Districts**

**Waukegan, Illinois (November 11, 2022)** – The Waukegan Park District's Arts Park Program was honored by the Illinois Association of Park Districts with the Arts in the Park Award. The award recognizes park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation, and special recreation agencies that support the arts and partner with artists and arts organizations to enhance the quality of life in their communities.

The Waukegan Park District's Arts Park Program was established in 2011 to create a free arts experience across parks in the community. The Arts Park van goes on the road taking free arts and crafts to parks and events throughout Waukegan during the summer. Participants have the opportunity to learn about different cultures through the crafts and guest artists.

With approximately 30 participants per program in 2022, the Arts Park Program reached its highest participation. From worry dolls to African unity beaded bracelets, the crafts and activities were intended to highlight the diverse cultures in Waukegan.

The Arts Park Program is supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency. The mission of the Illinois Arts Council Agency is to build a strong, creative, and connected Illinois through the arts.

Janet E. Kilkelly, President of the Waukegan Park District Board of Commissioners, stated, "Arts help youth build self-confidence, improve self-expression, enhance problem solving, encourage innovation, and build community. With the Arts Park Program, the Waukegan Park District engages the youth in our community with cultural arts that give them an outlet to express themselves artistically."

Jay Lerner, Executive Director of the Waukegan Park District, stated, "The Waukegan Park District's Arts Park Program is a free offering in neighborhood parks that gives participants the opportunity to build community with their neighbors while learning about art from around the world. We are proud to be able to provide this type of arts programming across Waukegan."

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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 the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Triple Crown Award for receiving the GFOA's Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting, Popular Annual Financial Reporting Award, and the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award. The WPD was awarded the NRPA National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management in 2013, and was named a Gold Medal Finalist in 2012, 2013, 2019, 2021 and 2022.

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