

THE BEST OF THE  
*Best*  
AWARDS GALA

November 1, 2019

*Friday, November 1, 2019*  
*Traditions at Chevy Chase Country Club*  
*Wheeling Park District*

Masters of Ceremony  
IAPD Chairman of the Board, Kevin Dolan  
and  
IAPD President and CEO, Peter Murphy



**Illinois Association of Park Districts**

211 E. Monroe Street, Springfield, IL 62701 | (217) 523-4554 | [ILparks.org](http://ILparks.org)

# *This Evening's Program*

**Wall of Wines**

**Dinner**

**Simply the Best Video**

**Board Member Service Anniversaries**

**10 years, 15 years and 20 years**

**Agency Anniversaries**

**50 years, 100 years and 125 years**

**Illinois Parks' Top Journalist**

**Best Friend of Illinois Parks - Business**

**Intergovernmental Cooperation**

**Partnership**

**Arts in the Park**

**Best Green Practices**

**Outstanding Citizen Volunteer of the Year**

# *Board Member Service Anniversaries*

## **10 Years of Service**

Greg Lapin  
Deerfield Park District

Eric Entler  
Park District of Forest Park

Kathleen Repass  
Geneseo Park District

John Frankenthal  
Geneva Park District

Angie Katsamakis  
Glenview Park District

Karen Morrison  
Golf Maine Park District

Sharon Knitter  
Oak Brook Park District

Mary Kay Ludemann  
Plainfield Park District

Tyler Smith  
Rockford Park District

Richard Rosen  
Wheeling Park District

Susan Stein  
Wheeling Park District

## **20 Years of Service**

Tom Barz  
Frankfort Park District

Susan Vanderveen  
Geneva Park District

Jim Long  
Lan-Oak Park District

Thomas Truedson  
Oak Brook Park District

Jacqueline Petty  
Peoria Park District

Bob Thomson  
St. Charles Park District

## **15 Years of Service**

Michael Kenyon  
Forest Preserve District of Kane County

# *Agency Anniversaries*

## *50 Years*

Buffalo Grove Park District  
New Lenox Community Park District  
Woodridge Park District

## *100 Years*

Kewanee Park District

## *125 Years*

Peoria Park District

# *Thank You to Our Table Sponsors*

Bloomington Park District

Buffalo Grove Park District

Call One

Decatur Park District

Dolton Park District

Downers Grove Park District

Forest Preserve District of Kane County

Fox Valley Park District

Geneva Park District

Hoffman Estates Park District

McHenry County Conservation District

New Lenox Community/Frankfort/  
Manhattan Park Districts

Oak Brook Park District

Peoria Park District

Plainfield Park District

Rockford Park District

Schaumburg Park District

St. Charles Park District

Sycamore Park District

TIPS - The Interlocal Purchasing System

Waukegan Park District

Westmont Park District

Wheeling Park District

# *Thank You to Our Sponsors*

**Dinner Sponsor**



**Randy Ramey**

**866.839.8477**

**[randy.ramey@tips-usa.com](mailto:randy.ramey@tips-usa.com)**

**[tips-usa.com](http://tips-usa.com)**

**Beverage & Wine  
Sponsor**



**Larry Widmer**

**312.496.6693**

**[lwidmer@callone.com](mailto:lwidmer@callone.com)**

**[callone.com](http://callone.com)**

# *Visit the Wall of Wines*

Purchase a wrapped bottle of wine from the Wall of Wines.  
With each \$20 pull, you'll unwrap a surprise bottle - your  
choice of red or white. No wine is valued at less than \$20.  
All proceeds benefit **Friends of Illinois Parks.**



# *Illinois Parks' Top Journalist*

*This award recognizes a print, radio, television, social media or website (or individual reporter, journalist or blogger) that has provided responsible and comprehensive coverage of Illinois park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies at the statewide or local level.*

# *Ana Belaval – WGN Nominated by the Oak Brook Park District*

WGN's Ana Belaval uses her media influence to bring attention to active, unique, affordable and accessible recreational activities for people and families across Chicagoland. Her coverage of Oak Brook Park District's Sandlot – A Universal Playground in WGN's *Around Town* news segment, increased awareness of the new accessible playground and introduced hundreds of thousands of people to the importance of inclusive, universal play. She highlighted the adaptive equipment and found ways to illustrate how the unique design of the park allows everyone to play together, regardless of age or ability. Ana consistently supports the shared mission of park and recreation agencies throughout the state, and the Oak Brook Park District is extremely fortunate to benefit from her commitment to telling their story.

**CHICAGO'S VERY OWN**  
**WGN9**



HAPPY | FIT | ACTIVE

TOP JOURNALIST

# *Stevie Jay Broadcasting Nominated by the Urbana Park District*

Stevie Jay Broadcasting is a long-time friend of the Urbana Park District. Park district staff are frequent guests on the Stevie Jay Morning Show with Diane Ducey, getting the word out about upcoming programs and events. Diane has volunteered to host the park district's Neighborhood Nights concert series for many years and has hosted the Turkey Trot fun run on Thanksgiving. She also generates publicity by using Crystal Lake Park Family Aquatic Center passes as giveaways and promoting the park district when she makes personal appearances at other events. Stevie Jay Broadcasting is dedicated to promoting good things that enhance the lives of Urbana citizens, including the Urbana Park District.



**Urbana Park District**

# *Goolpe Newspaper and Rogelio Fajardo Nominated by the Waukegan Park District*

Rogelio Fajardo is the publisher, editor and writer for the Waukegan Association for Youth Soccer (W.A.Y.S.) newspaper, Goolpe. The free newspaper, named after a popular cheer often heard at soccer games, prints 10,000 copies and distributes them to various Waukegan locations frequented by Latinx residents. Because it is printed in Spanish, it has become an important communication tool for the park district to reach Spanish-speaking families. The park district has a free, full page, color advertisement in each issue. The W.A.Y.S. and Goolpe photographer, Arturo Ordonez, provides park district staff with professional photos free of charge. The Waukegan Park District has greatly benefited from its relationship with this trusted news source, making valuable community connections and cross-promoting programs, facilities and services.



# *Best Friend of Illinois Parks - Business*

*The Best Friend of Illinois Parks Award is given to a business or corporation that has demonstrated exemplary support of a local park district, forest preserve, conservation, recreation or special recreation agency.*

# *Refreshment Services Pepsi Nominated by the Decatur Park District*

Refreshment Services Pepsi's support of the Decatur Park District goes beyond simply providing refreshments to Decatur park facilities at a reasonable cost. The company is a true community partner, assisting in many areas of the park district. Pepsi demonstrates their continued support through donation of in-kind products and services, which allows the park district to direct taxpayer dollars to enhancing facilities. Pepsi's commitment goes far beyond their business offerings. Representatives from the company attend nearly all of the park district's special events, they enroll their children in park district programs, and they make it a point to spread the word about upcoming events and initiatives. Refreshment Services Pepsi goes out of their way to be a best friend to the Decatur Park District.



# *Laura Ross Stuart, Charles Schrader & Associates* *Nominated by* *the Forest Preserve District of Kane County*

Laura Ross Stuart has dedicated the last four decades to advocacy work for approximately 100 agencies throughout the state, including the Forest Preserve District of Kane County. As a grant writer and consultant, she has successfully helped to bring hundreds of millions of dollars in grant funding to local park and recreation agencies, benefiting nearly every resident of Kane County. Thanks to her creation of the Forest Preserve District's Advocacy Plan, the district has been awarded tens of millions of dollars for open space preservation, development and improvements. Laura Ross Stuart has had a positive impact on nearly every forest preserve, park, trail, shelter, nature center and exhibit in Kane County's open spaces. The Forest Preserve District of Kane County could not ask for a better best friend.



# *National Fitness Campaign Nominated by the Hoffman Estates Park District*

The Hoffman Estates Park District knew they could trust National Fitness Campaign when community survey results revealed a desire for free outdoor fitness and wellness options. National Fitness Campaign makes accessible, all ability, body-weight fitness systems. The collaboration was a great success. From the start, National Fitness Campaign went above and beyond on the project, working closely with all departments in the park district. They helped the park district acquire a \$30,000 grant, worked to lower installation costs, and collaborated with marketing teams to promote the new park addition. Thanks to National Fitness Campaign's hard work and dedication, Hoffman Estates now has a new resource to help community members stay active, healthy and engaged. The Hoffman Estates Park District is fortunate to have a best friend in National Fitness Campaign.



# *ENCAP Inc. Nominated by the Sycamore Park District*

The Sycamore Park District and ENCAP Inc. have had a special working relationship for ten years. ENCAP goes above and beyond in their quality of work and assistance to the park district. The company has assisted with grants and financing, helping to secure \$40,000 for a riverbank restoration at the park district's golf course and generously donated \$50,000 worth of native plants and trees to the park district's first dog park. ENCAP also works on restoring natural spaces within the Sycamore Park District. The organization played an important role in the park district's and school district's work to establish a native prairie at the middle school. Their beautiful restoration sites are always well-received by park users. The Sycamore Park District is proud to call ENCAP Inc. a best friend.



# *Intergovernmental Cooperation*

*This award is intended to recognize park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies and the units of government that have collaborated for success. These groups have formed intergovernmental agreements to maximize tax dollars and benefit residents throughout the community.*

# *Decatur Park District with the City of Decatur*

The Decatur Park District and the City of Decatur worked together to develop the city's lakefront and maximize its potential for the community. The project was intended to stimulate the local economy by raising property values, increasing tourism and driving visitors to local businesses. The completed development includes: a boat slip and plaza enhancement at the Beach House Restaurant; the addition of an outdoor fitness court, disc golf and a dog park; the revitalization of an unused golf course into Overlook Adventure; a renovated WPA Pavilion; and the completion of the Devon G. Buffett Lakeshore Amphitheater. Thanks to the cooperation between the park district and the city, citizens of Decatur now have an exciting resource to enjoy throughout the year.



# *Forest Preserves of Cook County with the Housing Authority of Cook County*

The Forest Preserves of Cook County and the Housing Authority of Cook County teamed up to create a unique opportunity for high-school aged residents to learn about careers in wildlife preservation. In the Forest Preserves Experience Program, youth crew members perform conservation-focused work in the forest preserves. They learn about the environment through activities like hiking and canoeing. They also meet with conservation professionals, participate in green career panels and attend financial literacy classes. The Housing Authority of Cook County is both a major financial contributor to the program and a leader in its marketing efforts, causing participation in the program to double since 2016. Thanks to the cooperation of these two governmental entities, hundreds of young people have learned about exciting career possibilities and have gained an appreciation for the importance of protecting our public lands.



# *McHenry County Conservation District with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*

The long-awaited second phase of the Nippersink Creek Restoration Project involved returning 3.5 miles of Nippersink Creek from a straight drainage ditch back into its original meandering course. The McHenry County Conservation District partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to complete the project. Nippersink Creek is the largest tributary to the Fox River, but construction during the 1950s had a negative impact on its ecology. Today, the creek is home to game fish, silt intolerant mussels, ospreys and bald eagles. Its restored wetlands also protect downstream communities from millions of gallons of water that would otherwise flood after heavy rain. Thanks to the cooperation between the McHenry County Conservation District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, people can enjoy paddling and fishing in Nippersink Creek for years to come.



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**

# *Schaumburg Park District with School District 54*

The Schaumburg Park District and School District 54 have an Intergovernmental Cooperation Playground Agreement that allows for the park district to manage select parks at school sites. The organizations work together to make sure all children have a safe space to play and learn. Along with utilizing facilities to their maximum potential, School District 54 hosts special events in collaboration with the Schaumburg Park District to make their impact on the community even stronger. School District 54 also provides facility space for the park district's KASPER program, which provides before and after school care. Support from School District 54 helps the Schaumburg Park District achieve its mission to serve the community by providing versatile leisure opportunities through enriching programs, quality facilities and environmental stewardship.



S · c · h · a · u · m · b · u · r · g  
**PARK DISTRICT**



**SCHOOL DISTRICT 54**

Ensuring Student Success

# Partnership

*This award honors organizations, churches, foundations, associations, not-for-profit and other groups that have partnered with a park district, forest preserve, conservation, recreation or special recreation agency on projects that truly make a difference. These special partnerships enable our agencies to continue to complete projects, provide programming and offer resources to residents in their community.*

# *Bloomington Park District with Bloomington Church*

When the Bloomington Park District's recreation center was under renovation last year, Bloomington Church stepped up to provide space for the park district's preschool, before and after school care and other early childhood programs. In addition, the church provided office space for a park district recreation supervisor and granted access to its gymnasium to run a variety of youth sports programs. This was the culmination of a partnership that has grown stronger throughout the past 7-8 years. After initially agreeing to promote each other's programs, the church and the park district have shared volunteers and venues for an array of events. The Bloomington Park District and Bloomington Church are a wonderful example of a partnership that has greatly benefited the community.



# *Buffalo Grove Park District with the College of Lake County TRiO Educational Talent Search Program*

The Buffalo Grove Park District and the College of Lake County TRiO Educational Talent Search Program work together each year to put on Parks and Rec Career Expo Day, an event for minority students from four at-risk area high schools. The students visit four park district facilities, where they receive a tour and listen to short presentations from staff members who describe their jobs, the different aspects of their work days and some of their personal history. The short-term goal of the program is to increase students' knowledge of the wide range of career possibilities available in a park district setting. The long-term social equity goal of the project is to increase underrepresented minorities of full-time employment in the park and recreation field.



BUFFALO  
GROVE  
PARK  
DISTRICT



# *St. Charles Park District with For Scout Foundation Sensory Cove Swim Program*

The Sensory Cove Swim Program offered at Otter Cove Aquatic Park by St. Charles Park District provides one-on-one instruction with specially trained swim instructors for children who might not benefit from group swim lessons. Creating an environment free of sensory overload stimulators is essential for some students. During lessons, minimal water features are turned on and very few people are in attendance, making it a comfortable learning experience for participants. Program creator Katie Cantrell secured funding to offer these unique lessons at no charge. Not only does the program fulfill a need in the community, but it also honors her sister, Scout, an avid swimmer who passed away at age 9 in 2014. To date, staff have accommodated more than 50 participants, and in Katie's words, "Projects like Sensory Cove are most definitely making the world a little bit better place, and I hope my sister is smiling in Heaven. I think she is, especially on Sunday mornings at Sensory Cove."



**PARTNERSHIP**

# *Arts in the Park*

*This award recognizes park districts,  
forest preserves, conservation, recreation  
and special recreation agencies that have  
been able to create amazing art programs  
and incredible large-scale art projects to  
benefit their communities.*

# *Fox Valley Park District*

The Fox Valley Park District is committed to supporting the growing arts scene in Aurora and offering a variety of cultural enrichment opportunities for residents. Its performing arts program includes theater, dance and music offerings. This year, the park district began a partnership with the Paramount Theatre, which recently opened its Paramount Arts School. The park district also boasts a public art walk, a neighborhood summer art camp, a summer concert series and hundreds of other annual programs. Art is incorporated into the regular Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math curriculum for the park district's Creative Play and Nature Play preschools in order to promote creativity and a love of art in young children. The Fox Valley Park District truly prioritizes creativity and the arts as vital parts of a thriving community.



# *North Berwyn Park District*

The North Berwyn Park District makes a tremendous impact on the overall quality of its communities by supporting the arts. The park district offers a variety of excellent arts programming for residents of all ages, abilities and interests. It is through partnerships and participation with community organizations that the North Berwyn Park District accomplishes so much for the residents of Berwyn and beyond. North Berwyn's youngest and oldest residents can take classes in visual arts, theater, music or dance. The park district offers preschool art classes that emphasize learning through play, and senior studio classes show that it's never too late to find a new passion. Through its arts programming, the North Berwyn Park District improves the look and feel of neighborhoods, helps people develop confidence and express themselves and connects members of the public in new and exciting ways.



# *Palatine Park District*

Through the wide variety of arts programming available at the Palatine Park District, residents can explore their creative side, meet new friends, connect with neighbors and share ideas. Participants can enjoy music, theatre, dance and visual arts classes and programs. The park district's theater program allows young people to become acquainted with performing arts, and adults can produce and perform original works. Similarly, children can sing with the Palatine Children's Chorus, and adults can participate in the Allegro Community Chorus. Those wishing to enjoy diverse musical offerings can listen to rock, jazz, rumba and mariachi music during the annual Sounds of Summer Concert Series. The park district has established a scholarship program to make sure everyone can enjoy the arts by providing financial assistance to those in need. The Palatine Park District is dedicated to making art accessible to everyone.



# *Urbana Park District*

The Urbana Park District encourages residents to engage with art in the parks in a variety of ways. This year, the park district embraced technology as a way to help people enjoy art in the parks. Park district staff created a free app that allows people to take an online tour of all the art pieces throughout the district. The park district also worked with 40 North this summer to bring artists from all over the Midwest to the inaugural Crystal Lake Art Fair, which drew more than 2,000 visitors. In addition to visual arts, the park district highlights music through several events that encourage people to enjoy the beauty of the parks while listening to local musicians. The Urbana Park District is committed to continuing its strong support of the arts for years to come.



**Urbana Park District**

# *Best Green Practices*

*This award recognizes park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies that go above and beyond with their green initiatives.*

*Agencies that make continuous efforts to preserve our environment by using sustainable resources, incorporating green practices and upgrading equipment make a great impact on the environment we all share.*

# *Forest Preserves of Cook County*

The Forest Preserves of Cook County, one of the country's oldest and largest forest preserve districts, is committed to taking serious action to address the most pressing issues facing our natural spaces: climate change, pollution, invasive species and habitat loss and fragmentation. The Forest Preserves of Cook County's Sustainability & Climate Resiliency Plan sets a goal of making the forest preserves carbon neutral by 2050. It is dedicated to implementing responsible practices to mitigate environmental stressors and to ensure that public lands continue to thrive. It is also working to adapt management practices to ensure resiliency through a changing climate. The Forest Preserves of Cook County is dedicated to making sure that its native landscapes, plants and animals are safe and secure for years to come.



# *Park District of Oak Park*

The Park District of Oak Park takes a holistic approach to sustainability, focusing on diverse areas such as: recycling and waste reduction, energy efficiency, green energy production, employee and community education, water conservation, storm water management, native plantings and elimination of herbicides and pesticides. In the past year, the park district installed more than 600 solar panels, built beehives and began rain harvesting in five cisterns. It also initiated a composting program and held “plastic free” summer camps. The park district makes sure all staff are trained on its sustainability plan and on recycling and composting. The Park District of Oak Park is always looking for innovative ways to implement new green practices.



**PARK DISTRICT**  
of OAK PARK

# *Plainfield Park District*

After receiving a \$1 million grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, the Plainfield Park District set out to make their new indoor recreation facility energy efficient. The Prairie Activity & Recreation Center will be the first Illinois indoor recreation center and the first building in Will County with a net zero designation, meaning it produces enough energy to offset the energy it uses each year. Strategies to achieve this goal included orienting the building, reducing the percentage of windows, providing a highly-insulated envelope for the rooftop and precast exterior walls, installing an LED lighting system with daylight controls and occupancy sensors and choosing a high efficiency mechanical system. The Plainfield Park District is proud to provide this eco-friendly resource for the community.



# *Waukegan Park District*

The Waukegan Park District works to put green practices in place wherever it can, and it also provides green family and youth programming. The park district strives to be eco-friendly in its day-to-day operations, including: recycling and waste reduction, native plantings, no mow strips, rain gardens, permeable pavers and LED lighting in buildings and parking lots. The park district has also worked to make its public spaces more environmentally friendly, transforming Roosevelt Park's lagoon into a wetland and restoring an oak forest and ravine in Bowen Park. To boost public interest in green programs, the park district recently rehabbed its greenhouse to increase gardening programs. Nature and science programming are featured at a children's garden and at a newly-restored greenhouse named the "Urban Ag Lab."



# *Outstanding Citizen Volunteer of the Year*

*This award recognizes the efforts of citizen volunteers who are inspirations for park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies throughout Illinois. These volunteers put in countless hours, and their dedication has made a tremendous impact on the agencies they serve.*

# *Dr. Gordon Goodman Nominated by the Downers Grove Park District*

Throughout a quarter of a century, Dr. Gordon L. Goodman has worked to preserve the natural and cultural heritage of Downers Grove through his partnership with the Downers Grove Park District. Dr. Goodman has been a Downers Grove resident for nearly 60 years, and he worked in the field of chemical physics at Argonne National Laboratory. Dr. Goodman has served as a true champion of the park district's mission to 'enrich our community through natural area preservation and exceptional recreation, parks and facilities that inspire memorable experiences.' His knowledge, expertise and advocacy have helped to secure significant land acquisitions, ensure long-term land preservation and evolve educational opportunities at Lyman Woods Nature Preserve and the Downers Grove Museum. Dr. Goodman is a treasured friend of the Downers Grove Park District.



# *John Navin Nominated by the Forest Preserves of Cook County*

While the Forest Preserves of Cook County is grateful for all of its volunteers, there are some stewardship leaders who go above and beyond what is expected, and therefore warrant special recognition for their efforts. John is one of those leaders. John Navin is a founding member of the Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards, a group of dedicated volunteers working to restore native plant communities in Poplar Creek, a 600-acre forest preserve in northwest Cook County. Since 1989, he has volunteered more than 20,000 hours, rarely missing a stewardship workday, helping to improve habitat for grassland birds and rare plants. John's enduring service to natural areas conservation has helped to make Poplar Creek forest preserve the thriving ecosystem it is today.



**OUTSTANDING CITIZEN VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR**

# *Jay Womack*

## *Nominated by the Geneva Park District and the Forest Preserve District of Kane County*

Jay Womack is a dedicated volunteer who is passionate about nature, environmental education and conservation. Jay's enthusiasm is contagious, and he recruits numerous volunteers to perform thousands of hours of labor each year. Jay spearheads several events and fundraisers and leads efforts to clear brush in dense forests and clean the Fox River. His efforts continue to generously support and fund projects and collaborations that he champions. Jay's tireless volunteerism speaks volumes about the type of person that he is, and it demonstrates the quality of the world that he wants to live in and sustain for his children and grandchildren.

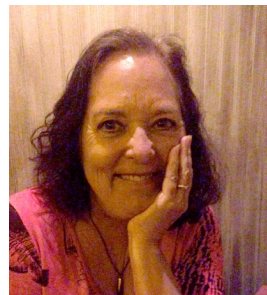


**Geneva**  
PARK DISTRICT



# *Tori Trauscht Nominated by the Mundelein Park & Recreation District*

Tori Trauscht's passion has always been restoration of waterways and improving natural areas with low impact restoration methods. She became concerned with the health of Diamond Lake and saw an opportunity to help improve her immediate surroundings. She installed two rain gardens when she renovated her home in 2007. With that success, she branched out and worked with residents to install nine other rain gardens around Diamond Lake in the Oak Terrace and West Shore Park neighborhoods. Tori also worked with the Mundelein Park & Recreation District, the Village of Mundelein, Fremont Township and volunteers from the Diamond Lake Preservation Alliance to improve the slopes of a retention pond that drained into Diamond Lake. Tori has worked hard to improve the community in which she has lived for 34 years, and the Mundelein Park & Recreation District is fortunate to have been touched by her tremendous volunteer spirit.



**MUNDELEIN PARK &  
RECREATION DISTRICT**  
*Connecting Our Community*

**OUTSTANDING CITIZEN VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR**

# *Suzanne & AJ Andersen*

## *Nominated by*

### *the Westmont Park District*

There is no way to accurately calculate the number of hours Suzanne and AJ Andersen have poured into shaping the Westmont Performing Arts program since they first became involved in 2012. In 2018, they stepped up and assumed responsibility for a program that was on the brink of collapse. They have worked hard to develop it into a diverse and well-rounded community theatre group. The Andersens organize and execute a minimum of four shows per year, including musicals and children's performances. Their dedicated efforts and unmatched expertise have been recognized by the surrounding communities, and they have become sought-after performers, producers and directors. The Westmont Park District is fortunate to have true friends and steadfast volunteers in Suzanne and AJ Andersen.





*Thank you  
for joining us this evening!*