In 2010, Laure Kosey, Oak Brook Park District's new executive director had a vision: To bring the value of parks and recreation to local organizations and gain financial support from those who believed in the park district's mission and goals. During the first year of this initiative, the Oak Brook Park District generated over $41,500 in alternative revenue including in-kind product donations, cash donations and advertising dollars—a $35,000 increase from the prior year. Initial goals were small and included offsetting the cost of special events and improving existing services. In just five short years, the Oak Brook Park District's corporate and community relations strategy has grown to generate approximately $130,000 in additional revenue per year and allowed our agency to accomplish significant capital improvements while increasing the services available to our community.
Bringing the value of parks and recreation to local organizations

The first step in Oak Brook Park District’s corporate and community relations strategy was to increase access to fitness and wellness opportunities for corporate residents instead of simply approaching companies with a sales pitch and asking them what they could do for the Oak Brook Park District. The staff and board worked with the Village of Oak Brook and the Oak Brook Chamber of Commerce to advertise discounted group memberships to local businesses. To further promote the services the Oak Brook Park District has available, our staff now regularly attends corporate wellness fairs to inform employees that because they work in Oak Brook, they are entitled to resident rates on all our programs, services and rentals. To encourage those who work in Oak Brook to participate in our wellness programs and events, we have also developed unique team registration opportunities for Choose to Lose and the Pink 5k.

Choose to Lose and the Pink 5k are sponsored by Evergreen Bank Group and Adventist Hinsdale and LaGrange Memorial Hospital’s and have had a huge impact on our community. In the past four years, Choose to Lose has helped our community lose over 2,968 pounds and the Pink 5k has raised over $27,000. The park district has donated the proceeds back to Open Arms-Adventist Hinsdale Hospital Foundation’s Breast Cancer Outreach Fund.

Gaining support from those who believed in the park district mission

Prior to 2010, the Oak Brook Park District had developed fledgling relationships with Evergreen Bank Group and Adventist Hinsdale Hospital through advertising and small event sponsorships. Both companies felt that their visions aligned well with Oak Brook Park District’s mission to provide the very best opportunities for our community. From there, our dedicated corporate and community relations staff, Mary Tansey, was able to create a customized partnership program with each company that helped fulfill their goals and expectations.

Keeping you Well. Keeping you Active. Adventist Hinsdale and LaGrange Memorial Hospitals and the Oak Brook Park District

This unique partnership has helped position the Oak Brook Park District as a leader in wellness initiatives in our community. Adventist Hinsdale and LaGrange Memorial Hospital’s annual agreement helps finance Choose to Lose, ABC Preschool, PeeWee Summer Camp, Playground Summer Camp and provides our residents with access to multiple free health and wellness seminars and screenings each year.

Keeping Oak Brook Green: Evergreen Bank Group and Oak Brook Park District

The Oak Brook Park District and Evergreen Bank Group work together to support green initiatives in Oak Brook. Each year, the park district provides support staff and marketing for the bank’s annual Electronic Recycling and Paper Shredding event. Evergreen Bank Group helps to finance Oak Brook Park District’s electronic newsletter in addition to providing sponsorship funding for our annual outdoor summer concert series and A Walk in the Park Wine Tour.

Offsetting the cost of special events

Smaller sponsorships, vendor agreements and in kind donations are solicited from local companies to help offset the cost of our special events and create added value for our participants. Multiple small agreements and donations save the Oak Brook Park District thousands of dollars each year in staff costs alone and provide smaller businesses with customized opportunities to place their name or product in front of a diverse audience.
Advocates of the positive benefits of physical activity have been working to encourage employers to promote their employees’ health and wellness. In an effort to continue to provide the very best in park and recreational opportunities for our community, the Oak Brook Park District always looks for ways to improve upon the programs and services that are already offered.

In 2012, the Oak Brook Park District took on the organization of Oak Brook’s Winterfest, a tradition that is almost as old as the city of Oak Brook itself. Residents had suggested that adding ice skating would greatly improve the appeal of the event. However, since admission to Winterfest was free, funding was incredibly limited. Park district staff solicited donations from Oak Brook Homeowner’s Association. As a result, the construction and maintenance of Oak Brook’s Outdoor Community Ice Rink has been fully funded through the generosity of these groups.

Each year, Asif Yusuf, a resident of Oak Brook, donates hay bales, cornstalks and hundreds of pumpkins from his family farm to support Haunted Forest. These donations improve the aesthetics of the event and allow the Oak Brook Park District to offer a pumpkin patch for younger participants to enjoy.

Oak Brook Park District members have communicated to staff that they would enjoy access to spa services as part of their membership. Having tried to offer these services in-house in years past, the Oak Brook Park District found them to be cost prohibitive and discontinued the program. In speaking with Le Meridian, a new hotel that opened in Oak Brook in 2014, the Oak Brook Park District is now able to offer high-end spa services to our members through an agreement with Le Meridian.

The Oak Brook Park District corporate and community relations strategy is not a one-size-fits-all program or a predetermined set of menu items potential partners can choose from. The continued success of the program is contributed largely to having a dedicated corporate community relations professional available to listen to the needs of potential partners, create unique and individualized programs, and ensure that the investments are beneficial for them. “We don’t dictate the terms of our partnerships,” says Laure Kosey. “We leverage the value of our mission and develop positive relationships with those who are inspired by it.”

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**Adventist Hinsdale and LaGrange Memorial Hospital**: Title sponsor of The Pink 5K and Choose to Lose
**Cori Sikich Foundation**: Title sponsor of Cori’s Triathlon
**Corner Bakery Café**: Donates product and small food items for the Underwater Egg Hunt and Pink 5K
**Crunchmasters**: Donates sample packs of product for the Pink 5K, Cori’s Triathlon, and Indoor Sprint Triathlon
**Evergreen Bank Group**: Title sponsor for The Pink 5K, Choose to Lose, Summer Concerts and A Walk in the Park Wine Tour
**Gibson’s Oak Brook**: Premiere sponsor of Oak Brook Park District’s Gold Leaf Gala (our sponsor recognition event)
**Giordano’s**: Sponsors Co-Ed 16” Summer Softball and Stars Swim Team
**Hagg Press**: Donates banners for Winterfest
**Kramer Foods**: Donates fruit for Indoor Sprint Triathlon
**Pinstripes Oak Brook**: Preferred caterer and supporter of staff appreciation events, The Pink 5K, Cori’s Triathlon and staff team building events
**Rosati’s Pizza**: Preferred pizza vendor for our pool and theme parties
**Sweet Baby Ray’s**: Oktoberfest Sponsor and premiere food vendor
**The Private Bank**: Oktoberfest Sponsor
**Two Brothers Brewing Co**: Sponsor and preferred beer vendor of Oak Brook Park District’s Oktoberfest
**Weber Grill**: Summer Concert Series & Walk in the Park Wine Tour preferred food vendor

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**Capital Improvements**
Funding from partnerships has helped the Oak Brook Park District complete several capital improvement projects over the last four years. The park district considers the value of naming rights, signage and usage when negotiating capital project sponsorship agreements.

**Evergreen Bank Group Athletic Field**
A $135,000 investment above and beyond their annual sponsorship by Evergreen Bank Group allowed the Oak Brook park district to open the Evergreen Bank Group Athletic field in 2012. The new synthetic turf field provides three times the playable hours and has greatly improved the appeal of the event. However, since admission to Winterfest was free, funding was incredibly limited. Park district staff solicited donations from Oak Brook Homeowner’s Association. As a result, the construction and maintenance of Oak Brook’s Outdoor Community Ice Rink has been fully funded through the generosity of these groups.

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**Cori’s Way**
In 2013, a $35,000 donation from the Cori Sikich Memorial Foundation allowed the Oak Brook Park District to add increased security and updated technology to the preschool wing of the Family Recreation Center. Our inclusive preschool program now provides state-of-the-art accessible programming in a safer environment. The preschool wing is now referred to as Cori’s Way and our early childhood curriculum includes focused wellness and well-being programming.

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**Oak Brook Disc Golf Course**
Multiple businesses and community organizations were integral to the redesign and development of Oak Brook Park District’s innovative disc golf course. Oak Brook Park District staff leveraged hundreds of volunteer hours from local disc golf enthusiasts to clear acres of Buckthorne from the new course layout and build tee pads. The following companies donated funding to offset the cost of signage and construction: Uni-Lock & 3D Design, Oak Brook Little League, Giordano’s in Oakbrook Terrace, Dr. Marcos Lopez, Oak Brook Disc Golf Doubles League, Oak Brook Park District Foundation, Pinstripes, PNC Capital Advisors, LLC, and Play It Again Sports in Westmont.

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**Improving and increasing existing services**
In an effort to continue to provide the very best in park and recreational opportunities for our community, the Oak Brook Park District always looks for ways to improve upon the programs and services that are already offered.

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“In 2013, a $35,000 donation from the Cori Sikich Memorial Foundation allowed the Oak Brook Park District to add increased security and updated technology to the preschool wing of the Family Recreation Center. Our inclusive preschool program now provides state-of-the-art accessible programming in a safer environment. The preschool wing is now referred to as Cori’s Way and our early childhood curriculum includes focused wellness and well-being programming.”