

The Alabamian

A PUBLICATION OF THE ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

THE GREAT OUTDOORS






Natalie Norman, CPRP

Executive Director
Alabama Recreation and
Parks Association

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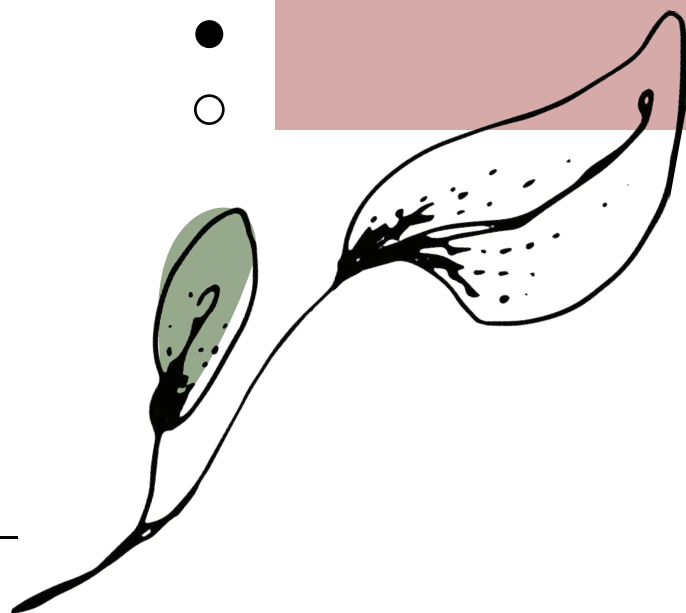
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from the
President
Laura Leigh Chesser
2023 ARPA President

Hello, fellow ARPA members!

I hope this letter finds you well as we transition into the vibrant colors and cooler temperatures of the fall season. As I reflect on this past summer and look ahead to the exciting and fun opportunities that await us this Fall, I am reminded on the incredible dedication that our members display each and every day in our field of work. The challenges that we have faced and will continue to face do not deter us from our commitment to enhancing the quality of life for all Alabamians through recreation and park services. Instead, they solidify our resolve to adapt, innovate and find new ways to serve our communities.

In this issue you will find examples, stories and anecdotes about how communities across our great state are utilizing outdoor recreation to foster active community members, promote tourism, spur economic growth, advance conservation efforts, and foster community connection. The enclosed submissions exemplify the beauty of our state and the dedication of our parks and recreation professionals.

As we look forward to the fall season, I encourage each of you to take advantage of the opportunities to enjoy the beauty of our state's parks and recreational facilities. Whether you're hiking through our picturesque forests, attending community events in our local parks, or simply taking a leisurely stroll through your neighborhood park, remember that these spaces are here for your enjoyment and well-being.

I would like to extend heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated members. Your passion and commitment are the driving force behind our association's success, and I am continually inspired by the positive impact you make in the lives of those you serve.

I hope to see you at some of the events we have coming up.

NRPA Conference, Oct. 10-12 in Dallas, TX.

LEAD, Nov. 1-3 at Camp Skyline in Mentone, AL

State Flag Football Tournament, Nov. 4-5
in Vestavia Hills, AL

State Volleyball Tournament, Nov. 10-12
in Jacksonville, AL

State Soccer Tournament, Nov. 18-19
in Dothan, AL

2024 State Conference, Feb. 4-6
in Orange Beach, AL



from the
Executive Director

Natalie Norman
2023 ARPA Executive Director

Greetings ARPA members,

Welcome Fall! We have kicked it off with our Fall Workshop, and will continue with our COPP Golf Tournament, recreational sports events, LEAD, and planning for our 2024 ARPA Annual State Conference. Registration information will be posted on our state website, as well as the educational sessions, trade show and social event schedule. Please join in as we unmask our potential in Orange Beach!

Our 2024 membership campaign will get under way in mid-October, and we look forward to welcoming back those that are renewing, as well as those that will be joining for the first time.

As we celebrate the great outdoors, congratulations to this year's upcoming LEAD participants! This is such an awesome opportunity to learn about ARPA, yourselves as professionals, and how to insert yourself as a leader into ARPA. And it is set in the beautiful surroundings of Camp Skyline in Mentone, Alabama.

As the end of 2023 approaches, I cannot say thank you enough to our current ARPA Leadership for your service and vision. Thank you for your dedication to the profession and our Association and for being present and engaged.

I always find myself excited about what our profession brings and what it is capable of bringing. As we move forward, 2024 will not disappoint and will be one more exciting year added, as each have been, since 1943! We have such a strong foundation on which we are building, allowing us to do what we are here to do, enhance the quality of life for those that we serve, reach those communities that are in need, and make a difference as we move forward.

Thank you for providing such outstanding outdoor recreational programs and facilities, enhancing the outdoor experience for our communities. and continuing to create healthy environments. To quote President Chesser – such incredible dedication!

Thanks for all that you do each day!



Updates in Arab

Arab Parks and Recreation is excited to announce that we were able to open our new outdoor Pickleball Courts this week. This will give our community an outdoor space to participate in a game that is both fun and great for their health.



National Demonstration Sites from Struthers Recreation & GameTime

National Demonstration Sites (NDS) exemplify evidence-based best practices in design and implementation, support health-related initiatives, and provide meaningful ways for community stakeholders to gather data about the sites' impact on the community. There are five NDS programs that help communities turn research into practice in local park destinations. Choose to utilize one or a combination of NDS designations to thoughtfully support **playful pathways**, **nature play**, **adult fitness**, **youth physical activity**, and **inclusion** in outdoor play and recreation settings.

Contact **Struthers Recreation** to learn more about NDS Sites and how they can benefit your park or visit gametime.com/research/nds.



This **INCLUSIVE PLAYGROUND** has been designated as a project of excellence for meeting best practices that promote inclusive play and recreation.



TELL US ABOUT YOUR VISIT!

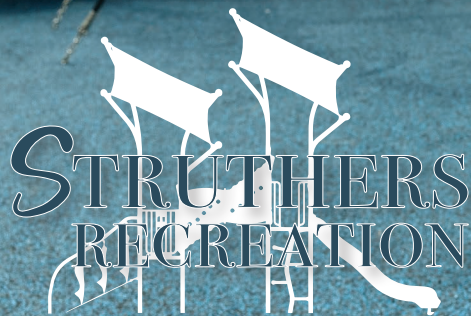
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Florence Parks & Recreation

Outdoor Where Community Grows

This summer during the month of June the Florence Parks and Recreation Department hosted a concert series called "Friday Night Stars and Guitars". These concerts featured local bands at our downtown Wilson Park and attendance was amazing. The park is walking distance from downtown restaurants, shopping and night life. The best part of the concerts was the opportunity for Parks and Recreation to form partnerships with banks, restaurants, merchants, our downtown alliance and our community to be able to offer these free concerts. The Friday Night Stars and Guitars concerts supported a diverse audience allowing music to reach a wide range of age, cultural, social, and economic differences. The beauty of the concerts is that music has a way of breaking down barriers and allows a community to come together on common ground to support music artist and enjoy the outdoor park. There was even some outdoor exercise in the form of dancing that took place in front of the stage and scattered around the park.

In addition to one of the concerts, we had a unique opportunity with the community to plan a celebration for one of our citizens for winning a Gold Medal in golf at the Special Olympics. Parks and Recreation along with the community organized a parade into Wilson Park, the Mayor presented Bryce Holcombe a Key to the City and declared July 1st-3rd Bryce Holcombe Weekend. The Parks and Recreation Department was privileged to be a part of this

special event.

The "Friday Night Stars and Guitars" this summer was the perfect picture of the definition of community.... a group of people interacting with common interest living together within a larger society.



Tuscaloosa Parks and Recreation

By Mark Harrison

PARA Outdoor Adventures program is currently offering many new and exciting opportunities in Outdoor Recreation that includes classes set in beautiful greenspaces, eco-tourism, and international eco-travel. Here are some of PARA's Outdoor Classes, Day Trips, and Epic Outdoor Trips to look forward to.

Canoeing 101 is the class to take to learn guidelines for open-water environments while using small watercraft like canoes, kayaks and paddleboards. It covers everything from trip planning to deep water t-rescues. This class takes place in September at the beautiful Lake Nicol in Tuscaloosa, AL. NASP Archery Classes are available for October and November at the Tuscaloosa Community Archery Range. This class offers instructions on the eleven steps to archery success and opens the door to a recreational skill you can enjoy for a lifetime. Climbing Clinics are offered if you are interested in entering the world of rock climbing, bouldering and belaying. This three-day class starts out with the basics visiting two different indoor climbing gyms and ends with an outdoor bouldering trip to the beautiful and majestic Bama Rock Gardens. Bama Rock Gardens, also known as BRG, is a wealth of greenspace that is not currently accessible through eco-tourism but is available for exclusive use through PARA Outdoor Classes. BRG offers the unique Boyles Limestone cliffs and canyons that are ideal for bouldering and rock climbing.

If you are ready for a little more excitement there is nothing like kayaking down the Coosa River in DeKalb County, GA. This trip is planned for October and features Moccasin Gap which

has Class II rapids on the left and for the thrill seekers, a Class III rapid on the right that, if you survive without turning over, is sure to get the adrenaline pumping. If you happen to be running a little short on your steps, PARA has an Appalachian Trail section hike from Forney Ridge to Clingman's Dome in North Carolina Smokey Mountains. This 11.2 mile hike will offer challenging terrain and add in the element of overnight camping in the backcountry shelters.

There are many extremists and enthusiast that have a global love of nature. That is why PARA is offering the Kenai & Denali Trekking Tour over the great Harding Icefields, rugged forest hikes, and a mountain tour of Denali, Alaska. If the icefields are not your thing, jump on the Incan Trail Express to Machu Picchu, Peru. This trip will include a train ride to the majestic ruins of Machu Picchu and a hike up the Quarry Trail. Finally, PARA is offering a Galapagos Island Hopping trip to Ecuador. Enjoy the wildlife highlight of the Galapagos while traveling by boat to various islands and hiking on rocky volcanic terrain that is sure to be an event of a lifetime.

With this much wonder in the world of nature, don't miss out on any opportunity to learn, explore, and participate in the beauty of the outdoors.



Auburn Parks & Recreation

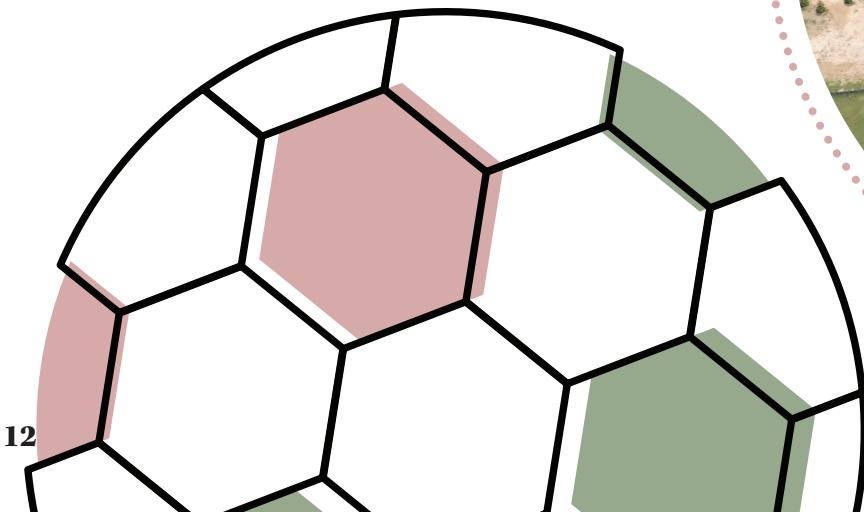
Auburn Parks and Recreation has long been celebrated for its commitment to providing top-notch recreational facilities for its residents. With a recent wave of renovations and exciting additions, Auburn Parks and Recreation facilities are now better than ever, catering to a diverse range of interests and abilities.

One of the new standout features is the upgraded soccer complex. With \$11 million in renovations, these new additions are not only impressive but also highly functional, making them ideal for hosting tournaments and events. The most notable of these improvements is the new indoor building where soccer, basketball, and futsal can be played. There is also three new turf fields, ensuring year-round play regardless of the weather. Playability Auburn Parks and Recreation is committed to creating spaces that are inclusive and fun for everyone. The recent addition of the Town Creek Inclusive Playground is a testament to this dedication. Designed to accommodate individuals of all abilities, this playground offers a welcoming

and joyful experience for families and friends to enjoy together.

The Frank Brown Boykin Fitness Membership has a one-time fee of \$20, exclusively available to Auburn residents, as well as those employed by Auburn or attending Auburn schools, you gain access to amazing fitness opportunities.

Auburn Parks and Recreation continues to prove its commitment to enriching the lives of its residents through its outstanding facilities and programs. Auburn's Parks and Recreation facilities always have something exceptional to offer.





Sylacauga Parks & Recreation

The Sylacauga Parks & Recreation is actively working to grow our outdoor recreation and tourism economy through the implementation of several activities at our Lake Howard park. Nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains at the southern tip of the Talladega National Forest rests Lake Howard, our local watershed. A 134 acre recreational fishing lake that was constructed in 1954 to not only supply water to the city of Sylacauga but also help with flood control and provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to the area. Sylacauga Parks and Recreation manages the facility which offers opportunities for fishing, hiking, mountain biking, kayak/canoeing and will soon open its new 18 hole Disc Golf course. Amenities at the park include picnic pavilions, restrooms, a boat ramp, kayak/canoe launch, multiple fishing piers and covered boat storage slips that are available for rent. Lake Howard is also home to the Sylaward Trail, a 14-mile stacked loop trail system offering

opportunities for hiking, trail running and mountain biking. With scenic views of both Lake Howard, Little Wills Lake, and miles of buff single track, it is a favorite "hidden gem" for outdoor enthusiasts. Being only a stones throw from the Pinhoti Trail and the vast miles of gravel forest service roads, it has become the home for many cycling and cross country endurance events that bring participants from all over the country to test their metal against the course. With the rise in popularity of disc golf, Lake Howard is currently constructing an eighteen hole Disc Golf course that is promised to challenge the player on many levels. Offering short and long tee boxes and opportunities for multiple basket placement, this course is destined to be a favorite with its varying terrain and scenic views of the lake. (Tentative opening date in the fall of 2023.) Most recently, we hosted a mountain bike race with 100 contestants and the Rebecca Mountain 50-mile Trail Run with 100 contestants at Sylaward Trail.

Dothan Leisure Services

Dothan Leisure Services (DLS) Youth Tackle Football participants will be taking the field this season in brand new, state of the art, Xenith football equipment and Augusta uniforms. What's even better is the equipment and uniforms were donated free of charge to DLS by Xenith and Augusta via their partnership with RCX Sports and Izell Reese. Since the beginning of its Youth Tackle Football program, DLS has purchased and provided football equipment and uniforms to all participants at great cost while keeping registration fees for the program low. DLS staff had been having internal discussions for several years about finding the best way to move out of the role of equipment rental and storage due to liability concerns, storage constraints, and escalating costs. These concerns were mentioned to Izell Reese by staff, and he went to work immediately to put this tremendous opportunity together. And, as an added bonus to eliminating the expense of equipment and uniforms, Dothan Leisure Services was able to offer a 7- & 8-year-old age division and register enough players to field two 7- & 8-year-old teams. Dothan plays in the Wiregrass Youth Football Association,

along with Troy, Enterprise, Ozark, Brundidge, and Luverne, and fields two teams in the 12U, 10U and 8U divisions.





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Dothan Leisure Services

Dothan Leisure Services (DLS) has increasingly put an emphasis on events, which is a great way for the community to gather, have a great time, and raise awareness and funds for local charities. A swell of popularity that DLS has been able to build on is the central role that pets, especially dogs, increasingly play in people's lives. Our goal has been to host one outdoor, dog-themed event each quarter to give our citizens and their pups a variety of activities to participate in throughout the year.

The fall dog event this year is the 3rd Annual Doggie Dip, which will take place September 16th at Water World Water Park. Just before the pools are drained and cleaned for the season, staff will set up the park for dogs to take the last splash. The biggest and bravest amongst our furry friends get the chance to swim and fetch in the wave pool, while our shy or smaller companions can quietly splash in the secluded Kid's Cove area. There are dog-themed vendor booths to walk through, coffee trucks for the humans, and PUPsicles for the dogs! All dog entrance fees are donated to local pet-related charities.

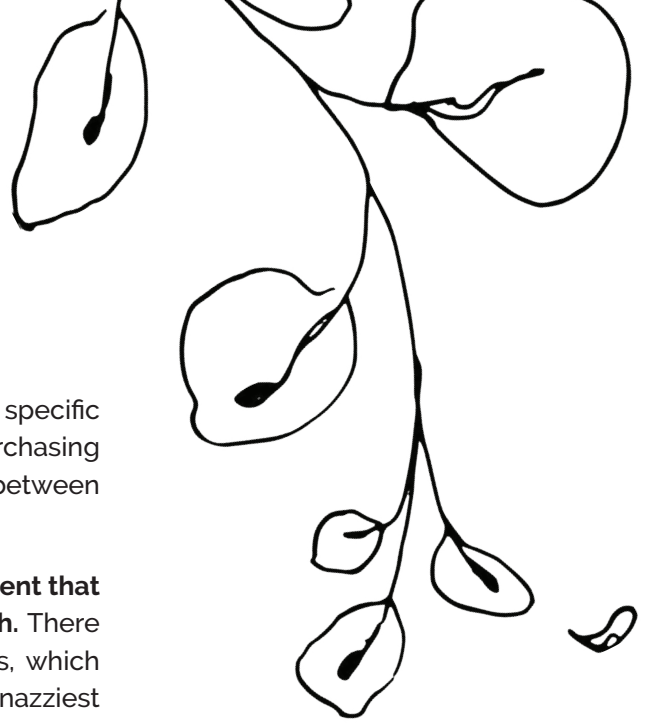
The winter dog event will be the 3rd Annual Paws & Claus. This Christmas-themed event will take place at Eastgate Park on December 9th. Paws & Claus is the paw-fect opportunity for our furriest of friends to come take pictures with Santa and/or the Grinch for those Christmas cards! Giveaways and music help set the festive mood for this event. The event is free; however, a monetary donation of any amount is encouraged. There will be dog-themed vendors at the event to either have wares to browse or products to showcase. All donations taken at the event will be given to a local charity.

The Shamrock Scamper will be the first spring dog-themed event, and it will take place March 9th. This event will be sponsored by a local veterinarian, and it is designed to promote social connections with animals and their owners while creating a healthy lifestyle through exercise. The event will



Water World Water Park in Dothan hosts the annual Doggie Dip after the park closes for the regular season. The Doggie Dip is a time for Max, Spot, and Fido to swim and frolic in two pools – the wave pool (sans waves) and the Kids Cove pool (for the little shy pups).

This event also includes local pet vendors with giveaways, Pupsicles for the doggos, a photo contest, free balls for fetching, and a coffee truck for the humans. The cost to participate is \$12 per dog, and 100% of the proceeds benefit the Dothan Animal Shelter, the Wiregrass Spay and Neuter Alliance, and Angel Paws. For more information about the Doggie Dip, please give us a call at 334-615-3755.



feature both 5k and 1-mile races with age and gender specific categories. The sponsorship money left over after purchasing prizes and medals for the category winners will be split between local dog charities.

The 3rd Annual Dog Daze is our summer dog-focused event that will take place adjacent to Eastgate's Dog Park on June 8th. There will be upwards of twenty various dog industry vendors, which include anything from on-the-spot massages to the snazziest bandanas a pup could ever want. Apart from live music, the main event is the dog fashion show that has a rotating theme; there is an entrance fee to enter the fashion show. The event is free to participants, and the money collected from the fashion show is given over to local dog charities.



Enterprise Parks & Recreation

The Enterprise Parks and Recreation department offers pickleball and tennis. Recently, we added a practice area for tennis, and construction has started for new pickleball courts. Tennis is a good sport for maintaining health, fitness, strength and agility. Pickleball is the fastest growing sport in America. As this sport grows, players have discovered that not only does it improve their health, but it also improves their social lives. The sport allows you to burn calories, improve balance, and build lasting friendships.





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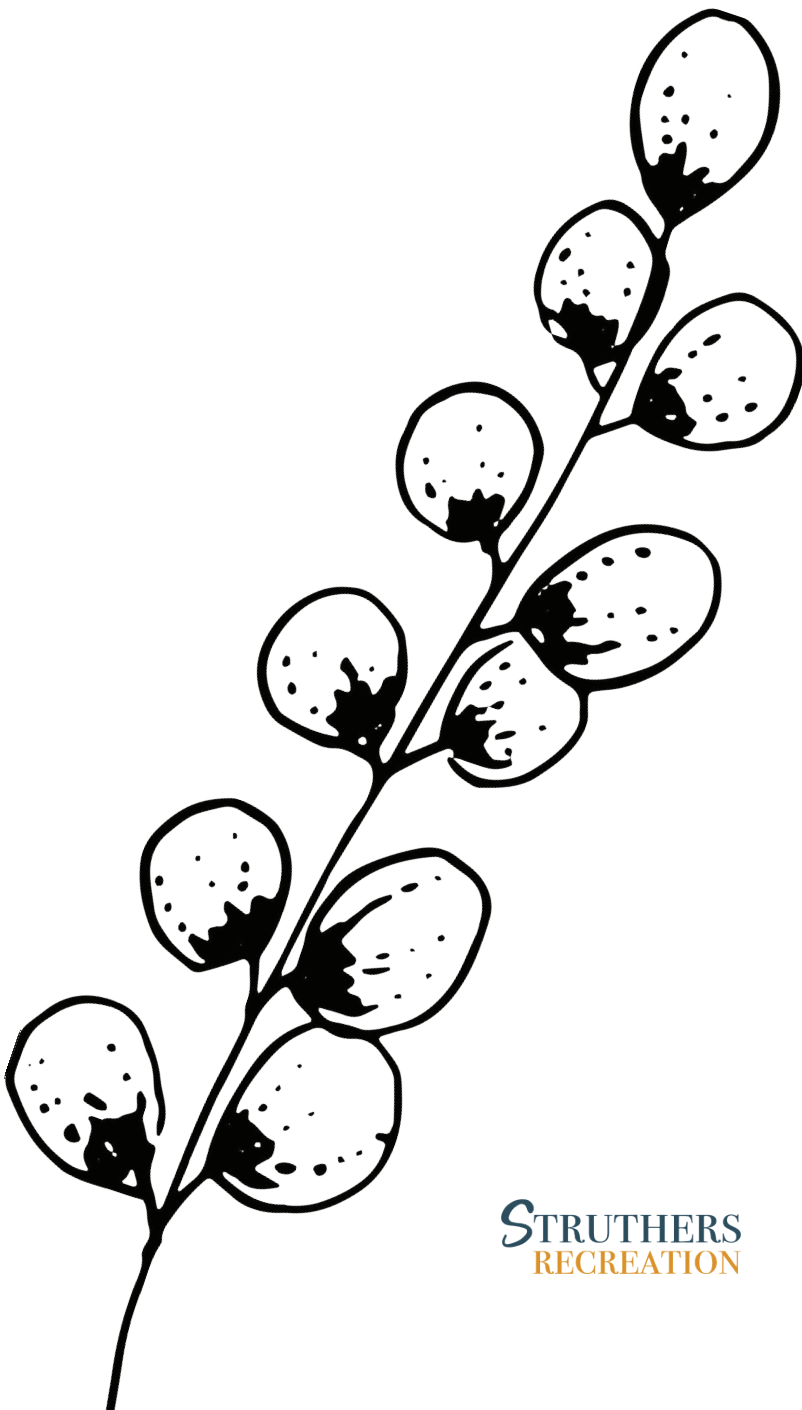
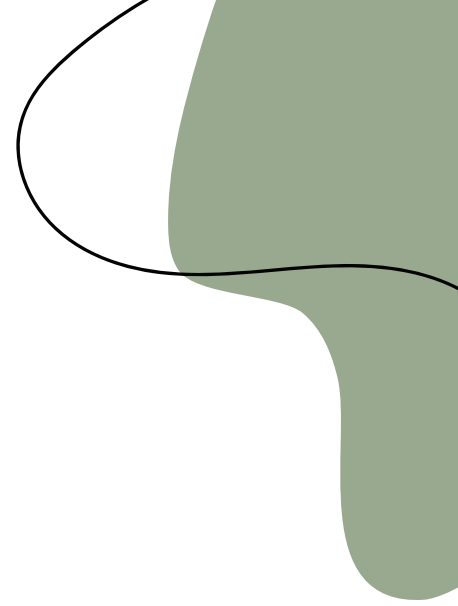


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