

# THE ALABAMIAN

A PUBLICATION OF THE ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION • FALL 2018



## Inclusive Play

Exploring Contemporary Therapeutic Recreation Services

# 2019 ARPA State Conference

## January 27-29

### Birmingham Sheraton Hotel

At the largest annual gathering of park and recreation professionals from across the state of Alabama, you will find a number of different decision makers attending the ARPA Conference. Whether it is Agency Directors, Park Board Representatives, Divisional Superintendents, Athletic and Program staff, or Facility and Maintenance staff, you will find a broad cross-section of park and recreation specialists in attendance. With an average attendance in excess of 200, you have the opportunity to meet the customers who use your products and the decision makers who make the purchase decision.



## Lodging

The Sheraton Birmingham Hotel will be serving as the host facility for conference lodging. The contracted room rate for the ARPA Conference is \$120.00 plus tax. Please visit: <https://www.starwoodmeeting.com/Book/arps2019> for online registration or call direct 205.324.5000.

The Cut Off date for accepting Room Block Reservations will be January 18, 2019 at 5:00pm. Reservation requests received after 5:00pm on this date will be accepted on a space and rate availability basis. Due to contractual requirements, the room block is limited and you are encouraged to reserve your rooms early.

## Preliminary Trade Show Schedule

### Sunday, 1/27

9:00am – 3:00pm	Exhibitor Setup
4:30pm – 7:30pm	Exhibit Hall Reception
8:00pm – 11:00pm	Opening Social

### Monday, 1/28

9:00am – 1:30pm	Exhibit Hall Open
12:00pm – 1:00pm	Dedicated Exhibit Hall Visitation (this includes lunch)
1:30pm – 3:30pm	Exhibit Tear-down





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*The Alabamian* is the official publication of the Alabama Recreation and Parks Association (ARPA), an affiliate of the National Recreation and Park Association. The magazine is published by the Alabama Recreation and Parks Association, Inc. as a service to its membership. Submissions of parks and recreation-related articles are welcomed. Opinions expressed in signed articles are those of the authors and not necessarily those of ARPA. Comments/responses should be sent to:

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*From the*  
**President**  
Summer Ammons

**H**ello ARPA!

With ‘inclusive play’ being the focus of this issue, it was great timing that the presentation, at the ARPF Fall Workshop, was covering Inclusive playgrounds. Inclusive playgrounds are designed to provide a safe place where children of all abilities can play together. These playgrounds take away all barriers of exclusion, both physical and social, by providing a sensory rich experience for all. I encourage any city to include an inclusive park to your city’s benefits.

Thank you for everything you do for your community and ARPA!

Summer Ammons  
2018 ARPA President



## Call for Articles!

If you would like to be published in a future issue of The Alabamian Magazine, please send your article and any graphics to the State Office at [nnorman@arpaonline.org](mailto:nnorman@arpaonline.org).

### **The theme for the next issue is “Parks and Recreation Superheroes”**

Recognize the everyday heroes who make your department great.

The deadline for consideration in the Winter 2019 issue is January 5th.  
Please call 334-279-9160 with any questions.

*From the*  
**Executive Director**  
Natalie Norman



**W**ell, I am happy to report that the ARPF Workshop in Orange Beach was good all around! Thanks to all that were able to attend, and we look forward to more joining us next year. The 2019 Membership campaign is under way, as well as 2019 Conference registration. We look forward to record numbers in both, as we grow and learn together. LEAD is right around the corner, and lookout for our new website and exciting options coming with it!

In this issue of the *Alabamian* we recognize the importance of inclusive play.

According to Webster, the kids' definition of inclusion is "an act of taking in as part of a whole."

At the core we are here to ensure that everyone has access to the benefits of parks and recreation. We impact our communities and those that live in them, and we strengthen those communities for all, not some. What an awesome job it is to see that parks and recreation remains a right and not a privilege.

Fall is here! Enjoy with ALL!

Natalie Norman, CPRP  
ARPA Executive Director

# Exploring Contemporary Therapeutic Recreation Services

by Shari Roberts and Tim Passmore, Ph.D.

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## Challenges, successes and where to go from here

According to the American Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA), recreational therapy, also known as therapeutic recreation, is a systematic process that uses recreation and other activity-based interventions to address the assessed needs and goals of individuals dealing with illnesses and/or disabling conditions. It is a means to achieve psychological and physical health, recovery and well-being.

In our society, "recreation" implies an activity you do in your free time. Its association with recreational therapy often causes confusion about what recreational therapists do. In healthcare and community settings, they use recreation-based, leisure-based and activity-based interventions, among others, to change and improve an individual's abilities and quality of life.

## Why Does This Matter?

People are living longer, which has caused a shift in the demand on healthcare. As the population ages, individuals look for cost-effective ways to maintain their mental, physical and social abilities. While there is an increased demand for the service recreational therapists offer, the number of facilities prepared to offer this type of therapy is limited, often due to budgetary constraints and a lack of understanding about the benefits to individuals within the community. This shift in healthcare demand combined with the fact that inpatient stays are getting shorter, highlights the need for community-based discharge sites where patients can continue their recovery and successfully reintegrate into the community. When individuals have a strong community-based setting to use after



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their discharge from the inpatient setting, the rate of rehospitalization dramatically decreases and their overall health, recovery and quality of life improves. Their ability to actively contribute or give back to the community also improves.

These developments demonstrate why it is important for community members — including those who could benefit from recreational therapy — to advocate for access through parks and recreation and nonprofit organizations, such as the Center for Individuals with Physical Challenges in Tulsa, Oklahoma and a new facility being planned by the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) in Washington, D.C.

NRPA has implemented Parks for Inclusion, an inclusion initiative to ensure all people have equal access to great parks. Seventy-four percent of park and recreation agencies in the United States have developed programs that serve community members who have a physical disability, while 62 percent do the same to serve individuals with a cognitive disability. Programs with a focus on inclusion have made it possible for individuals with disabilities to participate in community-based activities; yet, not all programs currently can offer specific adaptive sports or other inclusive opportunities.



Although parks and public spaces must meet ADA requirements, they struggle to deliver quality facility and program offerings to the 21+ million Americans with disabilities. Within Washington, D.C., for example, there is a DPR center within 2 miles of all D.C. residents, but only one of these centers specializes in therapeutic recreation. Ella Faulkner, chief operating officer of DPR, is helping to plan the District of Columbia's new therapeutic recreation center. Regarding next steps, she states: "The vision for the new TR Center is a premier, all-inclusive facility, incorporating a comprehensive approach to health and wellness programs and amenities that can accommodate Washington, D.C.'s large population of individuals with special needs, while still catering to non-disabled users and the immediate community." DPR's endeavor is formidable, but also incredibly important. Park and recreation agencies, as well as concerned residents, can help form similar visions and solutions in their communities.

Those solutions may include partnerships with nonprofit organizations focused on providing sports and recreation activities; service organizations, such as hospitals and universities that work directly with park and recreation centers; and donors and sponsors that provide monetary contributions and marketing opportunities. To understand how this might look, consider the several centers nationwide that successfully provide therapeutic recreation services to individuals by leveraging partnerships with governmental and private entities. The Phoenix, Arizona-based nonprofit Ability360 Sport & Fitness



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Center is an example of a U.S. Paralympic facility, offering programs to empower people with disabilities. These programs are made possible through grants, fee-for-service contracts and individual and corporate contributions.

## What Can We Do Next?

Begin by engaging with community members and establishing a community outreach plan that showcases awareness of the community's desires and allows community members to provide feedback on the type of programming they would like. It is also important to open the lines of communication between local hospitals, universities and other organizations to gauge the types of potential partnership opportunities available. For example, hospitals could use park and recreation facilities for discharge planning for their patients, recreational therapy students could volunteer at community-based organizations, and park and recreation centers could offer inclusive and adaptive opportunities to the citizens of their area.

To learn more about recreational therapy and the program offerings that can be made available to communities, start by visiting NRPA's website and the websites of associations such as ATRA. They share perspectives and trends that are impacting the industry. There is much more that can be done to foster inclusion and adaptation in all park and recreation programming, and it can start with taking this modest step.

Shari Roberts is a Project Manager for Brailsford & Dunlavey, Inc. Tim Passmore, Ph.D., is President-Elect for the American Therapeutic Recreation Association and an Associate Professor for Oklahoma State University.





Photo courtesy of District 2 - Cullman.

# Inclusive Play

## District 2

## Cullman - Celebrates New Connected Playground

At Cullman Parks, Recreation, & Sports Tourism, we're incredibly proud of the ways that we find to include people of all ability levels throughout our area. One of our recent additions to the community to accommodate a range of ability levels is the brand-new Connected Playground at Ingle Park!

After years of planning and fundraising, the Connected Playground at Ingle Park finally opened to the public in June of 2018. It is a fully accessible, ADA-compliant park that is perfect for everyone! The playground features equipment that can be used by the entire family, and no child is left out of the fun. It features swings, climbing structures, slides, sensory play,



# Cullman - Celebrates New Connected Playground

spinning, and a variety of other play features that ensure the fun never stops. The playground is a great place for residents of our community and surrounding areas to visit with their neighbors and make new friends outdoors.

In addition to the inclusive playground, the newly renovated Ingle Park now features four full pickleball courts, a new basketball court and two four square courts, with more improvements on the way! With all the renovations planned for Ingle Park and other neighborhood and community parks, we anticipate that the number of visitors will grow as new play opportunities emerge for children of all ability levels.



The next time you're in the Cullman area, take time to visit Connected Playground at Ingle Park!



# Decatur - Therapeutic Recreation Program is Thriving

The City of Decatur's Parks & Recreation Department has a very unique and exceptional opportunity for both children and adults with special needs. The Therapeutic Recreation Program offers a wide variety of experiences from Special Olympics sports teams that travel and compete in higher level competitions to seasonal parties to socialization and inclusion events. The program runs year-round and offers something for everyone four to five days a week.

Morgan County SHOWTIME, our basketball team, starts practicing in September for the ever exciting State Games competition in March held at various schools and colleges in the Montgomery area. This year, SHOWTIME has grown tremendously and hopes to take two teams to the Special Olympics State Games tournament in 2019.

Special Olympics Summer State Games is the biggest event each year. Last year, Decatur Parks & Recreation took 50 athletes to Troy

University to compete in five different sports (bocce, bowling, equestrian, golf, and swimming). Friday night Special Olympics holds the Opening Ceremonies in Trojan Arena where each delegation gets the chance



to enter in grand form sporting matching t-shirts and carrying team banners. The 2018 Summer Games included 1,100 athletes from 45 delegations all across the state of Alabama. Saturday was competition day and all the sports competed at various venues at Troy and across the Pike County Area. Saturday evening, after the competitions had ended and the medals were





# Decatur - Therapeutic Recreation Program is Thriving

handed out, Troy University invited us to attend their last home baseball game against the University of South Alabama and Special Olympics hosted a dance and pizza party. Closing Ceremonies were held on the baseball field Sunday morning and then the excitement for the 2019 Summer Games began.

In addition to the Special Olympics sports team's year-round practices and competitions, the Therapeutic Program also offers a wide variety of extracurricular and inclusion activities for individuals with special needs of all ages. In the fall there is a trip to a local Pumpkin Patch, a Halloween dance, and a community Thanksgiving Dinner. The winter brings a Christmas party hosted by Austinville Church of Christ and a Valentine's dance at a local recreation center. Spring and summer are full of competitions, but also tons of fun and excitement. The Morgan County Sheriff's Department hosts a Special Needs Rodeo Day, Austinville Church of Christ throws a Summer Carnival, there are trips to Point Mallard Water Park, putt-putt golf, and a huge community cookout in honor of the founder of Special Olympics.



Overall, Decatur Parks & Recreation's Therapeutic Program is a wonderful opportunity for all individuals with special needs. It offers the opportunity to be a part of life-changing sports teams, make lifelong friends, and to simply be included. So next time you are in Decatur be sure to find out what the Therapeutic Program has going on and come join in on the fun!





## Fort Payne - Outfield Angels

Fort Payne Sport Complex comes alive in September and October with the sights and sounds of our hometown Outfield Angels. We partner with the local ARC to host inclusive fun-filled softball games for all to enjoy.

In these photos, clients and their families enjoyed a game against Southern Legacy Wrestling - <http://www.slwpro.com/>



*Running the bases*



*"Ms. Annie, will you go on a date with me?"*



*STOP!*



*Running the bases with Ms. Annie.*

## Guntersville - Every Child's Playground at Civitan Park

The City of Guntersville is excited to start the addition of Every Child's Playground thanks to a partnership with the Guntersville Ladies Civitan Club and funds raised from the Parks and Recreation Department's annual Wild Irish Run.



# Hartselle - Our Parks and Recreation is Full of Shining Stars

The cheers from the crowd and the crack of the bats make it sound like any ordinary evening at the Grady and Margie Long Softball Complex in Hartselle, AL but on any given Tuesday or Thursday through September, it's far more than that. The Hartselle Shining Stars take the field with determination and excitement for the game ahead of them.



The Hartselle Shining Stars Program began in September 2017 with what was intended to be a fall softball league, but has turned

into an ongoing program that services almost one hundred individuals with special needs in Hartselle and surrounding communities. We have been able to offer a basketball league, bowling league, craft nights, a district wide fishing rodeo, movie nights, pageant and a private pool party. We are excited to announce our upcoming indoor soccer league that will begin in late October.

The Shining Star Program has accomplished more than simply having events. It has brought community acceptance and awareness to this population. Danielle Hayes, one of our coaches says, "I enjoy being part of special needs softball. I love watching their faces light up with complete joy as they hit the ball and take off to first base. Everyone's a winner! I encourage you to get involved and make a difference in someone's life. It's so much fun! I love each player and the friendships I have made along the way. Huge thank you to Hartselle Parks and Recreation for organizing and making this wonderful event happen."

Participants from ages 6 to 86 are involved with our program. We reach out to local school systems, day placement programs and group homes to contact our shining stars. Many of our older athletes are residents of the Volunteers of America Group Homes and are having their first experiences with parks and recreation through this program. Britton Holmes,

Service Coordinator for Volunteers of America, said "It is very meaningful for us to be part of this program. It is truly a rewarding experience for us! We get to have fun with our friends and family and also get the opportunity to expand our system of support. It is a way to be included in the community in a meaningful way and for the community to get to know us. We all get to discover the common ground we stand on, and possibly break down some barriers that we may not have even been aware we had. We are all here to have fun and cheer on one another."



Hartselle Parks and Recreation could certainly not make this league succeed alone. We have been overwhelmed by the response of the more than fifty volunteers and generous donations of our community businesses and organizations. Because of these donations, these shining stars have been able to participate in each of our programs without cost.

This program continues to be a diamond in our park and rec crown. We enjoy being a small part of our star's lives. If you haven't ever observed any therapeutic recreation event, we highly encourage you to take the time to attend. It will surely bring a smile to your face and tug to your heart.





# Huntsville - Launched “Special Populations” Program

The Special Populations program was added to the Parks & Recreation department in July of 2018 to address the thousands of individuals in Huntsville with physical and mental disabilities. Tia Clayton, the Special Populations Supervisor, is an Alabama A&M graduate and has hit the ground running. Tia is excited to build a dynamic recreation environment that encourages people of all abilities to participate and thrive.

On August 24, 2018 Tia and crew hosted a kick-off event for the Special Populations program at Topgolf Huntsville. Topgolf Huntsville generously donated the entire lower level for a free night of golf for people with disabilities and their families. The lower level includes 24 bays that allow 8 guest and 6 players per lane for recreational golf games. The lower level also includes a lounge area with additional seating, board games, and billiard tables.



Parks & Recreation Staff from all over the city came to meet the participants and their families to help them enjoy the game of golf. The Topgolf staff also provided their golf pros to assist players with instructional golfing techniques. Over 240 people participated in the inaugural event from all over North Alabama. This event was a very successful reflection of the type of support system the recreation department plan to provide to this community.

The Special Populations program has also implemented fun activities for adults with disabilities that are currently in group homes. Different rec centers assist Tia in undertakings such as dancing, low weight training and bowling for those traveling from the group homes. The smiles and enthusiastic participation are great signs that the Huntsville Parks & Recreation department made the right choice in hiring Tia Clayton!





# Tuscaloosa - Therapeutic Recreation Program

PARA's Therapeutic Recreation program continues to be a hallmark of our organization. Offering recreational, athletic, and daily living programming, TR at PARA has something for all adults with developmental disabilities. The TR program is led by the 2017 recipient of ARPA's Merit in TR Award, Keith Jenkins, and the talented and dedicated LetTrice Prince-Koon. Their expertise along with cooperation with the University of Alabama Crossing Points program makes for a consistently high quality program. Participants regularly enjoy Dinner & a Movie, dances, cooking classes, and travel opportunities. Other yearly highlights include the trip to Gulf Shores, and the Special Olympics State Games in Troy. Athletic success is also enjoyed by the TR program's PARATroopers as they proudly make regular appearances at the top of the table in bowling, swimming, basketball, volleyball, flag football, and softball! We are extremely proud of our TR program and the meaningful and fulfilling opportunities it offers those in Tuscaloosa County!



# Tuscaloosa - All-Inclusive Playground Project

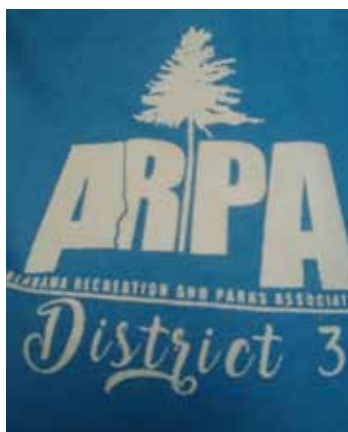
PARA is seeking to become a leader in inclusive play through the construction of an all-inclusive playground. The design for this playground was revealed to the public in March of 2016. The playground is designed for people of all ages and abilities to play together and specifically addresses physical, social, cognitive, communicative, and sensory needs. The design features a Tuscaloosa theme that speaks to the history and iconic elements of the Tuscaloosa area. The \$1 million design features four distinct pods and approximately 125 different activities. An approximately four acre site in Sokol Park has been approved by the PARA board of directors for the park. Fundraising efforts for the project are well underway. The next fundraiser will be an Oktoberfest to be held on October 6th at 301 Bistro in Tuscaloosa. This

Bavarian style festival will feature German food, beer, a dachshund dash, stein hoist competition, live music and more! You can learn more this project here: <http://tapp.tcpa.org/>.



# District 3 - Back to School

District III hosted a Back to School Supply donation giveaway at Norwood Elem. School in Birmingham.





# Auburn - Parks and Recreation Builds Two New ADA Accessible Playgrounds

The playground renovations at New Duck Samford Park and Old Duck Samford Park are now complete and the new playgrounds are open to the public. Outdated playground equipment was removed in August at both ball field parks and replaced with new equipment, including a new turf surface placed under the playgrounds. The turf surface is ADA accessible for wheelchairs, walkers and canes. The playground equipment at the New Duck Park is partially covered, promotes more active play and is ideally suited for children 5 and older. The playground also has new benches. The playground equipment at Old Duck Samford Park is completely covered and caters to children 2 years and older. Both playgrounds have active components and are ADA accessible.





# Auburn - Special Events



*Auburn's Summer Therapeutic Camp spending the day with Aubie at the Davis Arboretum.*



*Lee County Special Olympics Flag Football Team celebrating their win against Tuscaloosa in the 2017 Special Olympics Iron Bowl.*



*Special Olympics National Team from Lee County being honored at Auburn City Council meeting following their success at National Games in Seattle, WA.*



# Opelika - Inaugural Shine Prom

Opelika Parks and Recreation held their inaugural Shine Prom on Saturday, October 14, 2017. More than 130 teens and adults with special needs came to the Opelika SportsPlex for a full prom experience. Guests arrived in stretch limos, entered through a red-carpet entrance and enjoyed a night of dancing and fun.

The event was inspired by the Tim Tebow Foundation "Night to Shine" Prom that happens each year in February. The event was co-sponsored by Chick-fil-A and the Hudson Family Foundation.

Several East Alabama personalities were in attendance, such as former Atlanta Braves pitcher and Auburn alum Tim Hudson and current Auburn Baseball coach Butch Thompson. Several local schools were also involved, as members of the Auburn University Baseball and Dance teams volunteered at the event, as well as members of the Opelika and Auburn high school football teams and students from Opelika High, Auburn High and Lee-Scott Academy.

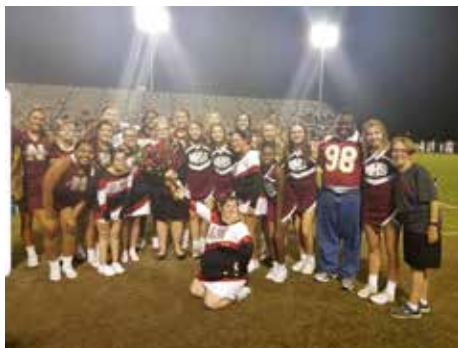
The second annual Shine Prom will be held on Saturday, November 17th from 6:00-9:00 p.m.



# Dothan - Dothan Leisure Services Therapeutics

Dothan Leisure Services Therapeutics, in Dothan, Alabama, is a Recreation Program that provides recreation and leisure activities for intellectually challenged individuals. Our program strives to provide activities that will enable our special citizen's opportunities to build personal self-confidence through fun, social, and educational experiences. The Therapeutics Recreation Program, offers a variety of activities, during the entire year, but in the Fall, we have athletic programs such as: Cheerleading, Volleyball, bowling, Swimming, and, Cycling along with social events and activities such as: Parent Night Out, Special Friends "Heart to Heart" club, Friends Choir, and Camp ASCCA.

for a chance to advance to state Special Olympics in Troy, AL. This past year Dothan Local Tournament hosted over 100 athletes from around Alabama.



This Fall the Dothan Blast Cheerleaders, were invited to practice along with a local high school varsity cheer team. They practiced dances

and cheers with the team. The Cheerleaders, participated in a Homecoming parade, and cheered at the homecoming game with the varsity team. The cheerleaders will also be practicing a dance and cheer routine when they compete in the upcoming cheer competition.

Therapeutics recently held volleyball tryouts, where athletes had to execute a skills test, players were then chosen for two teams. During the season the teams play a scrimmage game against the local police SWAT team, before competing against other teams from around Alabama, in Birmingham for Special Olympics State games.

A popular event for all ages in Therapeutic is bowling. Participant's sign-up for two days during the week and are provided transportation to a local bowling alley. Players attend practice one day a week for six weeks. In February, players compete in local Special Olympics

Dothan Therapeutics also offers a swim team, after performing a skills test, swimmers are eligible to practice and compete with the team. We currently have 18 swim team members. The team practices one day a week at the local indoor competition pool. The team will compete in the Special Olympics Birmingham and Opelika regional meets. Along with advancement to State Special Olympics. The team competes in freestyle, 50m, 100m, and 200m, along with backstroke-50m, 100m, and breaststroke 100m.



Cycling is an event our participants practice year round. We offer two teams, trail riders practice one a week on a 5k trail that includes paved and dirt paths. The other team rides once a week, at a track that is all paved. We currently have 26 total cyclists. Dothan Police Department has several members that help coach the team as they practice. The teams will then compete in local Special Olympics with races that



# Dothan - Dothan Leisure Services Therapeutics

include: 500m, 1k, 2k, and 5k. Cyclist then have the opportunity to advance to higher level of competitions. Many members of the team ride custom made 3 wheeled bikes provided to cyclist by Ambucs. We are also proud to announce that we will have a participant traveling to the World Special Olympic Games in 2019, held in Abu Dhabi.

Besides the many athletic events as Therapeutics coaches, we also enjoy providing social activities to our participants,

Parent night Out, is a social event for participants to spend the evening with their old friends and a chance to meet new friends, it also provides caretakers and parents a "date night". Participants are provided transportation to fun events throughout the year, such as putt-putt, evening at the movies, touring Christmas lights and many more. Parent Night Out, encourages independence along with a chance for social activity.

Camp ASCCA, in Jackson Gap, Al, is a biannual event that participants and staff eagerly await. Camp ASCCA provides recreation for children and adults with both physical and intellectual disabilities. In September, we had the privilege of taking 20 campers for the weekend. Campers participated in several fun activities including: zip-line, waterslide, fishing, boat rides, along with a new event added this year a live concert. Campers learn independence by making their beds and assisting fellow camper that might need help with theirs, along with clearing the table after meals and encouraging their friends to try new events.



Special Friends "Heart to Heart" club is composed and run by members and their families. The club meets once a month, with a membership of approximately 25 participants and meets year round. Members help to provide services to their community. This past

year, members have painted inspiring rocks and delivered them to patients at a local hospital, in addition they provided a gift basket to a local teacher that is undergoing chemotherapy. The club collect can tab's to donate to Children's hospital in Birmingham, along with collecting winter jackets for those in need of one.



We are very proud of our Friends Choir, founded in the early 1980's by a local teacher Ms. Barbie Nelson who "wanted a choir that was open to everyone". The choir has never held tryouts, it is available to participants with the love of singing and performing. Ms. Nelson is currently still the choir leader. The members perform at a variety of events during the year, such as The Dothan Buddy Walk, the yearly Candlelight Vigil at the Wiregrass Angel of Hope, local and area Special Olympics, and graduations. The choir is currently practicing to perform with other local choir's in a Holiday program. The choir is 20 members strong and ranges in ages 16 and up.

Dothan Leisure Services, Therapeutics is proud of the achievements of our Special Needs participants. We have a busy schedule and encourage the community to come and support the local events. For more information, please contact Dothan Leisure Services Therapeutics, at 334- 615-4751



## Eufaula - Jaxon Life Senior Center

Summer mornings at the Jaxon Life Senior Center in Eufaula begin outside for several seniors who are tending to the raised-bed gardens. Tomatoes, lemon basil, and a variety of peppers are growing well under their diligent watering and fertilizing!

A community effort made the garden beds possible for the seniors: A grant through the Alabama Cooperative Extension System purchased the four raised beds to encourage seniors to grow healthy vegetables. Local businesses, Marvin's Building Materials and Tractor Supply, donated the potting soil. Moseley's Gin and Warehouse in Abbeville, AL, provided compost to enrich the soil. Eufaula High School (EHS) students grew the plants from seeds and then donated the tomato plants. The basil and pepper plants were purchased from EHS with funds raised during the Senior Center's annual Chili Cook-Off. Eufaula Parks and Recreation provided skilled workers to level the land, set the boxes on a stable foundation,

and fill them with soil. They have continued to help us by stringing up our plants to support the growing tomatoes and peppers.

The seniors planted in early April and reaped their first harvest in mid-June. The fresh air, sunshine, and teamwork are just as prized as the vegetables! When the summer plants begin withering away and the weather turns cooler, the seniors will prepare the beds for our first winter garden.

Our Senior Center participants are involved in other outdoor activities throughout the year. Our Chili Cook-Off is held each October at Lake Eufaula Campgrounds, and the seniors and other members of the community enjoy eating a variety of chilis and participating in fall activities such as the Pumpkin Smash and Dash. We also like to picnic and fish at parks in our area.

## Troy - Miracle League

Troy Parks and Recreation offers Miracle League softball, a Miracle League handicap accessible playground, and a Miracle Kickball League.





## Mobile - Fun Friday

Most of us take little things, like going out to eat, for granted. It comes natural and we never think about it, just do it. For some, these things can be extremely difficult and oft times are not done. Our "Fun Friday" program gives our individuals with special needs the opportunity to have life altering experiences. The typical adult considers going to a restaurant and ordering a meal, a normal "American" activity. For many of our non typical individual, going out to a restaurant, ordering a meal, (especially when you're unable to read) can be very stressful. Every Friday, our TSAC (Therapeutic and Senior Activity Center) group goes to a different restaurant around the city. We encourage family members, friends, and volunteers to join



us. Our special needs individuals are encouraged to peruse the menu and order what they want to eat. Our goal is not only to provide them with an excellent meal but to help increase their socialization skills, while they become more familiar with popular restaurants and food choices within the city.



## Mobile - Chair Exercise Classes with Dee Dee

Our newest and most popular class at our TSAC center is "Exercise with Dee Dee". We were having a hard time with some of our special needs individuals gaining weight and becoming less active. They did not want to go walking, etc. We were brainstorming some ideas on things to do. When Dee Dee came up with this idea, we did not think that they would want to do it. However, they look forward to exercising every day. Three days a week, we offer chair exercise classes to our participants. The other two days, we do a low impact aerobics class. Because many of our participants have mental or physical limitations, chair exercises and low impact aerobics offer a safer and

easier way to stay fit and active. For 30 to 45 minutes a day, they shake maracas, march in place and sway along with the music. Some of our participants are not able to do the exercises exactly right. We just encourage them to do their best. We do not stress correctness as much as we stress to keep it moving!

## Mobile - Hillsdale Community Center

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities face many challenges. Hillsdale Community Center provides an atmosphere for all citizens of Mobile and surrounding communities. It is our desire to bring people with intellectual disability, their staff and the public together.

We take pride in providing events and programs for people with intellectual disability. Some require guidance, supervision and care. Our more popular programs are basketball, volleyball and bingo. We also offer volleyball and basketball tournament play.

Recreation and leisure activities are particularly important and it helps foster social bonds and friendships, which are critical to support a quality of life.



## Mobile - Special Activities Division

Individuals with developmental disabilities are often faced with many challenges, some of which may be physical, sensory, or intellectual. Therapeutic recreation, including adaptive and unified sports, consists of a variety of recreational activities and complete sports for individuals with developmental disabilities. The City of Mobile Special Activities Therapeutic Recreation Program has organized programs to help individuals with special needs turn

their disabilities into abilities. The Mobile Hurricanes is a unified basketball team that is organized by the City of Mobile Special Activities Therapeutic Recreation Program. In July 2018, the Mobile Hurricanes represented Alabama and competed in the Special Olympics USA Games in Seattle, Washington. The team roster includes 7 athletes, David Johnson, Edmund Patton, Victor Powell, Antonio Denson, Carlos Actkins, Darius Lett, Anthony Haig, and 3 unified





# Mobile - Special Activities Division

partners, Horace Withers, Orlando Ellis, and Jiles Anderson. These athletes have utilized therapeutic recreational activities and competitions to overcome physical obstacles, improve social skills, improve self-esteem, develop problem solving skills, and promote teamwork.

The Magnolia Breeze Youth Ensemble is a therapeutic all-inclusive marching band program that is also organized by the City of Mobile Special Activities Therapeutic Recreation Program. Magnolia Breeze Youth Ensemble embraces, involves, teaches, and gives all children the opportunity to participate in a marching band, regardless if they have a physical, mental, or sensory disability. Magnolia Breeze Youth Ensemble includes musicians, dancers, and color guard. Students in the Magnolia Breeze Youth Ensemble practice together after school and during summer breaks to create performances that entertain and encourage others to love music. Magnolia Breeze Youth Ensemble performs in many local parades, which include Mobile Mardi Gras parades, the Mobile Veteran's Day parade, the Gulf Coast Challenge parade, and the Dollar General Bowl parade. In April 2018, the Magnolia Breeze Youth Ensemble performed in and led the Pre Superstar Parade at

Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida. Marching band is a wonderful therapeutic recreation activity for youth and adults. The Magnolia Breeze Youth Ensemble therapeutic recreation band program helps students build character, develop leadership skills, improve music reading and performance, improve concentration, promote teamwork, and engage in physical exercise. The Magnolia Breeze Youth Ensemble and the Mobile Hurricanes also participate in community service activities to help build and strengthen Mobile communities.



# Mobile - TR Volleyball



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## DISABILITY INCLUSION IN PARKS AND RECREATION

NRPA defines inclusion as removing barriers, both physical and theoretical, so that all people, including those with physical and cognitive disabilities, have an equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits of parks and recreation. While the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life and sets standards for accessible features, there is still room to inspire change and create greater impacts. Park and recreation agencies are leading these efforts by providing quality programming and prioritizing innovative inclusive opportunities for community members of all abilities.

### WHY PARKS NEED TO PRIORITIZE DISABILITY INCLUSION

Park and recreation agencies already have the processes in place to create a welcoming and inclusive space. Support is especially crucial, as individuals with physical and cognitive disabilities have significantly higher prevalence rates for most chronic diseases than people without disabilities. These diseases include increased rates of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, asthma, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol, as well as had a higher association with stroke and arthritis<sup>1</sup>. People with disabilities consistently report higher rates of obesity and smoking, lack of physical activity and lack of engagement with the outdoors. Agencies support equity for those with disabilities by ensuring accessibility to parks, recreation centers, swimming pools, nature trails and other facilities; by offering resources and support not typically available to those with cognitive disabilities; and by designing inclusive programming for those with physical and cognitive disabilities.

Examples of programming for individuals with a physical or cognitive disability include:

- Physical activity programs, exercise classes, and/or fitness training (e.g., walking programs, yoga classes, personal training, sports leagues)
- Volunteer or employment activities (opportunities to volunteer or work in parks and recreation centers)
- Health and wellness programs (e.g., chronic disease prevention and treatment programs, cooking/nutrition classes)
- Social activities that support social-emotional learning opportunities (e.g., social clubs, arts and crafts, music, dancing, cultural classes)

<sup>1</sup> *Examining Health Disparities among Adults with Disabilities and What It Means for Public Health*, 2011. <https://www.nchpad.org/964/5155/Examining-Health-Disparities-among-Adults-with-Disabilities-and-What-it-Means-for-Public-Health>







## ADDITIONAL WAYS TO PROMOTE DISABILITY INCLUSION IN PARKS AND RECREATION

Creating a welcoming and accessible environment for those with physical and cognitive disabilities is a great first step to promoting inclusion. Parks and recreation can promote disability inclusion through:

- **Community Representation:** Ensuring that all community members voices are represented when it comes to decision-making about programmatic offerings or facility improvements/expansion.
- **Prioritizing Accessibility:** Park and recreation agencies need to consider all populations when planning events, installing park improvement projects or creating new programs. Ensuring that all park and recreation offerings

are accessible and inclusive should be a top priority to positively influence health outcomes of those with disabilities.

- **Messaging:** It's important to recognize that although spaces and programs may be open to all, those with physical or cognitive disabilities or their caregivers may feel more comfortable when that message is explicitly stated and supported. Consider adding messaging to promotional materials or on display in facilities that assures all community members that they are welcome. Aim to use people first language; for example, "a person with a disability" versus "a disabled person."

### Inclusive Efforts in Parks and Recreation:

In the fall of 2017, NRPA—with support from the Lakeshore Foundation—hosted an innovative inclusion microgrant challenge. Four local park and recreation agencies each received \$1,000 awards to implement innovative programs and enhancements so individuals with a physical or cognitive disability could participate in healthy living opportunities.

- "Learn to Ride Adaptive" bike program in Austin, Texas, provides community members with an adaptive bike to participate in cycling programs alongside their peers.
- "Prichard Pride: Growing a Garden Together" in Prichard, Alabama, added ramps and signage to an intergenerational garden, allowing all to garden together.
- "Grow Up Green Club" in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, enables children on the autism spectrum and typically developing children to explore sun, water, wind, dirt and backyard nature.
- "Sense Tents" in Minneapolis, Minnesota, brings mobile tent units to events to provide the appropriate to tools for people with disabilities to regulate their senses and calm their minds and bodies.

## TAKE ACTION NOW

- [Pledge your commitment](#) through Commit to Inclusion
- [Submit a success story](#) with your own Parks for Inclusion story to be featured on NRPA's Success Story database
- Share what your agency is working on through social media, using the hashtag **#ParksForInclusion**
- Check out more ways to get involved on the [Parks for Inclusion resource database](#)

**LEARN MORE AT [WWW.NRPA.ORG/PARKSFORINCLUSION](http://WWW.NRPA.ORG/PARKSFORINCLUSION)**

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# 2018

## Calendar of Events

### November

- 6-8** LEAD Workshop  
Mentone, AL
- 14** District I Meeting, Sheffield
- 15** District III Meeting, Tuscaloosa

### November

- 24** Skinny Turkey 5k/10k  
Boaz, AL
- 28** District II Meeting, Boaz  
District IV Meeting, Jacksonville  
District V Meeting, Opelika

### December

- 5** ARPA State Board Meeting  
Montgomery, AL

### January 2019

- 27-29** 2019 ARPA State Conference  
Sheraton Birmingham Hotel