

THE ALABAMIAN

A PUBLICATION OF THE ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION • FALL 2017



Benefits of Parks and Recreation

plus... **The Economic Benefit of Downtown Parks**



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Published by: B Creative Designs, LLC
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Published October 2017



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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
Drew Peterson

Wow, this year has flown by.

Many changes have happened in ARPA this year; we will make it through to the other side. I want to thank Natalie Norman, the Executive Committee, and the Board of Directors for stepping up and being there for ARPA during this time of change.

As we look forward to the upcoming months, there is a lot of work to be done. The LEAD program is gearing up for another successful event in Mentone, Robin Brothers, Mike Sullivan, and Laura Lee Chesser for creating another great program.

The State Conference, in Tuscaloosa this coming January is coming together thanks to the hard work of Tina Kitchens, Gary Minor and all of the Staff at Tuscaloosa County Parks and Recreation,

and Natalie Norman. We are looking forward to a great 2018 Conference, hope to see all of you there.

I would like to say thanks for all of the thoughts and prayers that ARPA has blessed me with during these last few months of the many health issues that my family has been put through, all of the thoughts and prayers have been felt and helped out tremendously.

Here is to everybody having a safe Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year no matter what your plans are during this busy time of year.

Sincerely,

Drew Peterson
2017 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 mcoleman@arpaonline.org.

The theme for the next issue is “Looking Back.”

What was your best activity or award you received in 2017?

The deadline for consideration in the Winter 2018 issue is Jan 5th.
Please call 334-279-9160 with any questions.



From the
Interim Executive Director
Natalie Norman

“**H**ow wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment to improve the world.”

Anne Frank

As Fall approaches and we look toward seasonal change, how is that we, as professionals, will change? What is our story? Where are we going? What doors are we knocking on in order to get there? As park and recreational professionals, we are “utility ambassadors.” Our story began in 1943, bringing to fruition our state professional association and setting the organizational foundation to inspire and serve. So, a partnership was formed with what is now known as the Alabama Recreation and Parks Association and our park and recreation professionals throughout the state.

We move forward with those that we serve, enhancing the individual, economy, environment, and community. We continue to grow as ambassadors of our field through education and putting more and more boots on the ground. We remain perpetually focused on the participant and user, so as our communities’ needs change, we are right there with them. We go in the direction of their needs.

Partnerships fortify futures, so we will knock on the doors of those that will partner with us in achieving our goals.

Here are a few fun facts, just for a quick moment of rejuvenation.....

- Based on NRPA’s Americans Engagement with Parks Study, “85% of Americans consider high-quality park and recreation amenities as an important factor when they are choosing a community in which to live.”
- “92 % of Americans agree that Parks and Recreation are important local government services. (compared to police, fire, schools, transportation)
- “Parks, trails and playgrounds are 3 of the top 5 most important community amenities requested by people seeking or building new homes. (National Association of Realtors and National Association of Home Builders)

We are a part of the whole! As we strive to impact the health of our communities in a positive way, we continue to make our story one of success and provide people an ALL ACCESS PASS to the benefits of parks and recreation. As you all improve the health of your community each and every day, we as a whole can say that we do not wait to improve the world. We are not static, and it shows!

Until next time,

Natalie Norman
Interim Executive Director

The Economic Benefit of Downtown Parks

by Cynthia A. Bowen

Parks come in all shapes and sizes. They can be strictly recreational, used to protect environmental and natural areas, or can simply be passive spaces. They can be located in urban or suburban areas and can be linear greenways, small pocket parks or large neighborhood parks. Whatever their constitution, today's parks need to be versatile and able to be used for multiple purposes.

For example, an open lawn in a park, such as White River State Park in Indianapolis, could be used for downtown concerts once a week, but also become a refuge for workers at lunchtime, an oasis of green for residents living nearby, and be used for group classes, like yoga or aerobics, increasing awareness of the benefits of physical exercise. A park can also be used for a local gathering place where business people conduct a meeting, friends and families meet for an outing together, or where residents happen to bump into each other during evening walks.

Successful parks usually have five elements associated with them. They are engaging, adaptable, authentic, connected and iconic. They should be designed to provide comfort, convenience and enjoyment, fostering social interactions and physical connectivity. And, that design should create an engaging space that attracts people every day and most hours of the day and should be adaptable to support a variety of programming. Parks located in a downtown area need to attract people 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year-round. They need to be authentic, celebrating the unique and individual identity, heritage and culture of a particular place and contribute to the quality of life of the neighborhood or city. They must be connected to a larger amenity infrastructure of sidewalks, bike paths, green spaces, streetscapes and mixed-use environments that connect neighborhoods, employment centers and cultural districts. And, finally, they should be iconic, creating a distinctive and transformative experience where they shift the paradigm and redefine their community.

Demographics are influencing the way we design and use parks. The “rebound wave” of Millennials, Baby Boomers and Generation Xers returning to cities from the suburbs are creating unprecedented demand for housing, jobs, educational options, healthy places, mobility options and amenity-rich downtown environments that demand bold, new action when it comes to the design of our parks, public spaces and streets. America's population is growing older and more diverse. We live in an increasingly connected and competitive world, where resource-intensive lifestyles are not sustainable and the need to get away from technology is increasingly present.

As the demographics change, planning for an inclusionary and diverse community should be a priority so that all people have access to parks that will increase their overall quality of life. Therefore, the design of our cities must evolve to take advantage of these trends and meet the needs of the changing population.

We used to design parks to be largely green and to be a pastoral setting for the primary purpose of providing an oasis, or respite, from our life. But parks are the essential places for play in the live/work/



play environment that cities across the country are striving to provide. As a result, people expect more from our parks. They must now be green and provide relaxation, as well as offer entertainment, social interaction, communication and unique experiences. They must incorporate all the elements previously mentioned for a highly diverse population of users.

Quantifiable Benefits

While the intangible benefits of parks are wonderful for people's quality of life, there are quantifiable economic benefits in the return on investment and a city's tax base that urban planners and designers are seeing. As CityLab noted in its "Why We Pay More for Walkable Neighborhoods," if your home is located within a walkable area and near a park, the value will likely go up by \$81.54 per square foot. According to Americans for the Arts' "Arts & Economic Prosperity III" report, parks that incorporate local heritage and artists attract more tourists, and residents feel a strong connection to that place. So, for every dollar invested, there is generally a \$7 return on the investment. This is why we are seeing communities around the county invest in their amenity infrastructure, which, in turn, spurs private investment.

Amenity infrastructure is so critical that it helps potentially undesirable areas transform into hubs of activity and redevelopment. In many cases, the creation of any type of park space on a vacant or under-utilized parcel can lead to new residential, mixed-use or retail area around these parks, all of which increase the quality of life for residents and visitors to that community.

As cities compete to attract new businesses and residents, parks increasingly have been utilized by

business and marketing strategies for towns and cities. Businesses are attracted to amenities and activities often found in the public realm. These businesses realize that many of the professionals they wish to employ are looking for communities that have well-managed and maintained parks and public spaces.

So, how do communities justify the use and investment in parks, public spaces and the associated programming? They use quantitative elements, such as increased tourism, increased resident and visitor spending, the increase in property values adjacent to parks and public spaces, the increase in jobs to meet tourism demands and the increase in occupancy rates around these parks and public spaces.

Campus Martius Park

Campus Martius Park in Detroit, Michigan, is located at the intersection of five major streets: Michigan Avenue, Cadillac Square, Fort Street, Monroe Street and Woodward Avenue. It was designed to anchor a two-square-block district that is the commercial center and heart of downtown Detroit. The park was redesigned to communicate the history, spirit and identity of Detroit and is the reason this area of the downtown has seen reinvestment and redevelopment. A public-private partnership between the city and the nonprofit Detroit 300, which invested \$50 million, helped finance the re-routing of several downtown streets to make the area more pedestrian friendly. And, since the construction in 2004, the area has seen more than \$500 million in redevelopment in the area adjacent to the park.

The Campus Martius District is a 24-hour neighborhood, composed of 20,000 office employees, 750 residents living in loft apartments and condos, more than 35 dining options and 50 retail outlets, and plays host to more than 2 million visitors annually. It is now surrounded by more than 6.5 million square feet of mixed-use space, from the stunning historic architecture of the nearby Westin Book Cadillac Hotel, built in 1924, to the contemporary Compuware and Quicken Loans headquarters.

Campus Martius has become a regional destination. The park's amenities include a unique performance area with a retractable stage to provide flexibility and adaptability of the space, a European-style bistro café that's open year-round, an ice skating rink in the winter, a sand beach with beach chairs and volleyball nets in the summer, and the Woodward Fountain splash pad that has 100



water jets. In 2010, Campus Martius Park received APA's designation of Great Places in America: Public Spaces.

The Indianapolis Cultural Trail

The Indianapolis Cultural Trail (ICT) in Indianapolis, Indiana, is a world-class linear park that is an urban bike and pedestrian path, connecting neighborhoods, cultural districts and entertainment amenities, and serving as the downtown hub for the entire greenway trail system. Indianapolis, an auto-dominated city traditionally known as the "Crossroads of America," has transformed itself with a beautiful and safe linear park that has helped to spur a renaissance in downtown living and development along its path. The project has had a transformative impact on the environmental, physical, economic and social health of the Indianapolis community and has served as a catalyst for the city's rebirth.

The ICT began as an innovative, public-private partnership that sought to create a multimodal, interconnected, and safe bicycle and pedestrian system, featuring a distinctive urban design, public art, history and landscape elements, and providing a connective, linear-park experience. The hope was that this system would be a catalyst for economic development, neighborhood redevelopment and talent attraction in an enhanced atmosphere of culture, art, history, sports and tourism — all without using local public funds. The city donated right-of-way for the ICT to be constructed on city property. The design challenge was how to reduce the roadway width of major downtown streets to create space within the public right-of-way for this enhanced urban pedestrian and bicycle system.

Although public and private sources funded the project, no city tax dollars were used. A \$63-million investment has yielded an unprecedented amount of private investment and key developments along its trail. Neighborhoods have been revitalized and entire downtown districts have been transformed from vacant, under utilized areas to thriving, vibrant, activated mixed-use communities. The project's remarkable ability to connect all areas of downtown in an electrifying new way has created a powerful "economic development circuit," which private investors have raced to plug into. And, the growth in the assessed value from these projects has been astronomical.

A 2015 study by the Indiana University Public Policy Institute found that the value of all properties within one block of the trail have collectively increased by more than \$1 billion since its construction in

2007. There has also been increased spending in businesses located along the trail. On Virginia Avenue, there was more than \$30 million in private development in a four-block area in Fountain Square, which brought 245 apartments and more than 27,000 square feet in retail space to the neighborhood. It has also spurred many other developments along other segments of the trail.

Circus Square Park

Circus Square Park in Bowling Green, Kentucky, is a 4.6-acre park with a central gathering space that integrates the construction of a multipurpose civic park with the adaptive reuse of a historic structure in celebration of the community's heritage and its future. In 2008, an under utilized 3.5-acre block in downtown Bowling Green was constructed as a key downtown recreation activity hub as part of the Bowling Green Revitalization Strategy. The block was designed as a community gathering space that serves as the heart of a revitalized entertainment district. Organized into four quadrants, the site contains an outdoor marketplace; an interactive foundation; a performance plaza and green, civic gardens; a "Heritage Walk"; and concessions and bathroom facilities, in a restored 1921 Standard Oil Station. The park serves as a venue for events, from weddings and private gatherings to festivals, as well as the annual concerts in the park series. A renovated, historic auto dealership building on the site was redeveloped and became home to the Downtown Redevelopment Authority and the Bowling Green Area Convention and Visitors Bureau.

While the park was under construction, The Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce opened a new \$4-million building just one block from the park site. In 2009, the \$28-million Bowling Green Ball Park, home of the Bowling Green Hot Rods, also opened a short distance from the park. The Southern



Kentucky Performing Arts Center, which offers arts and education opportunities for South Central Kentucky, is the newest addition to downtown Bowling Green. Occupying more than 69,000 square feet with a 1,600-seat theater, the facility's total construction costs were \$28 million. A planned, private redevelopment project, a mixed-use building estimated to cost \$25 million, will be located across from the park and will feature shops, restaurants, office space and condominiums.

Strategies to Minimize Gentrification

While there is tremendous economic benefit to having a park located nearby, there are some things that must be considered when planning for improvements or for the creation of a new park. Parks can be an economic development engine for a community. However, the design must create a more sustainable, walkable, vibrant, active and connected neighborhood and city. The neighborhood, the public and business owners all need to adopt the park for the benefits to continue to be transformational and provide the necessary support and programming for it to be an active space, including taking part in maintenance and cleanup. There must be a funding strategy for construction, long-term maintenance and programming.

Finally, besides design and construction, planning and designers must take special caution and work with local leaders to develop strategies to address gentrification around new parks. For most transformational parks, economic development generally starts to occur on under used and vacant sites. Often, as property values rise, businesses and people who currently live adjacent

to the site get relocated because they cannot afford to continue to operate or live there.

Strategies to minimize gentrification could include working with community development corporations or other non profits to purchase land to build affordable mixed-use buildings. A government jurisdiction could purchase land through a land bank to sell lots to developers who would build low-to-middle income housing and senior housing. In Boston, the city council voted to reduce or freeze property taxes to protect longtime businesses and residents. However, it does require approval of the state legislature.

Cities or non profits can also provide maintenance grants to low-to-moderate income families and seniors for upkeep of their property. In some areas, non profits are linking neighbors to help those less fortunate maintain their property by cutting grass, painting, fixing siding and porches, etc. Cities can also consider limiting or prohibiting large, luxury developments in areas that are at-risk for gentrification. Finally, changing in zoning regulations that make development easier and more affordable will allow the supply to increase, meeting the demand and, thereby, limiting the effects of gentrification.

Cynthia A. Bowen, AICP, LEED AP, is President of the American Planning Association and the Director of Planning for Rundell Ernstberger.

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NRPA Conference Photos

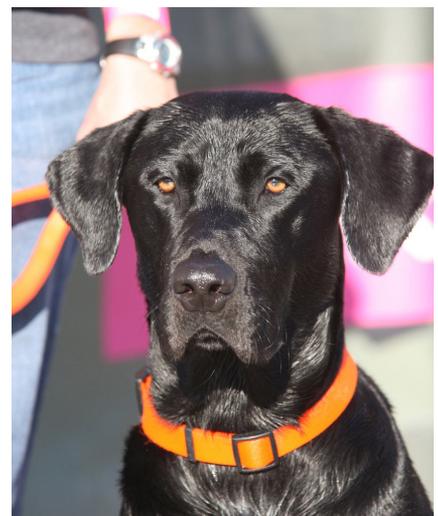


Benefits of Parks and Recreation

District 2

Huntsville - Super Retriever Series

The Huntsville Sports Commission will host the Super Retriever Series Crown Championship October 26-November 1, 2017. This event will bring the top dogs and their handlers to the City to compete in a strenuous series of field trials as well as the top jumping dogs that will compete for height and distance.



Huntsville - Kicking It Into High Gear: Exciting News for Huntsville Bike Enthusiasts

By Mark McCarter

Huntsville's cycling community is finding things kicked into a higher gear on two different fronts.



The Downtown Huntsville BlueBikes program, in which residents and visitors may rent bicycles at various locations, has met with great success in its first four months, already exceeding the national

use average. And the overall cycling community is being presented the plan for improvements and expansion of a downtown bike plan.

The City of Huntsville's Urban Planning Department held a public meeting at U.G. White on August 2 to discuss designs from other communities and how they might be implemented in Huntsville.

There is a proposed 5K path, called an "on-street greenway" by Downtown Huntsville, Inc. President Chad Emerson, meandering through downtown that could be utilized by cyclists, walkers, joggers and even competitions.

A key stretch of the path would be the Spragins Connector, reaching from Depot Park to Big Spring Park East. The Downtown Master Plan would have a block of Spragins closed from Clinton Avenue to Big Spring Park and would have mixed-use development on the north side of Clinton.

The entire path would stretch from Bud Cramer Park on Pratt Avenue, across Meridian Street and past the A.M. Booth Lumberyard. It would continue through Depot Park alongside the Roundhouse to Spragins. The "connector" would continue on to Big Spring Park East, across to Big Spring Park West and end at the Rotary Fountain.

The magic of an urban greenway, as opposed to the more traditional, recreational greenways, is the

abundance of locations for cyclists to stop, to grab a drink or a snack or even shop.

According to statistics recently provided by Emerson, there should be no shortage of interested cyclists. The BlueBikes program was started in March. Operated by Zagster and presented by BlueCross BlueShield, it is a ride-share program that uses "cruiser" bikes that may be rented at different locations across downtown. They include:

- Five Points, at the public park where Pratt, Holmes and California converge
- Washington and Clinton Streets
- 200 Westside Square 200, across from the courthouse above the entrance to Big Spring Park East
- Big Spring East, at the Downtown YMCA
- Twickenham Square, across from the entrance to Publix
- Butler Green, on the south side of the park at Campus No. 805

The bikes are rented through the Zagster app. A one-hour ride is \$3 and an annual membership, with which the first hour's ride is free each time, is \$24. "It's a great amenity not only for downtown but it's a pilot for other places around the city that are bikeable," says Dennis Madsen, Director of Long Range Planning for the City of Huntsville.

Zagster has just released its performance report from the first five months of the program. Some 1,640 members have joined and there have been 3,483 trips taken. Zagster breaks it down to members joined per 1,000 residents, which puts Huntsville at 8.49 members, compared to a national average of 6.16.

In terms of trips taken, it's been 81.88 trips per bike, compared to a national average of 34.84. Trips per 1,000 residents is 17.81, compared to the national average of 12.81. Forty percent of the riders have been between the ages of 18 and 24, and 67 percent of the riders have been between 18 and 30.

Emerson said as more data is collected, future BlueBikes stations will be added.

Albertville - Homerun Jose

At the beginning of this baseball season, Alma Ramirez went to the Albertville Rec Center hopeful to sign her son up for baseball. Alma explained to the Rec Center that Jose was a special child. Jose Williams is autistic, and at times can be socially difficult and hard to handle. Alma told the Rec Center that she, and Jose, would be fine to just be on a team and do some practices for fun. Lisa Hansford, an employee of the Rec Center, told Jose's mother that if he wanted to play, then they would make it happen. Alma didn't want Jose to get in the way of other players, and possibly interrupt games. Lisa talked Alma into letting Jose join a team, and at that point Jose was placed into the draft.

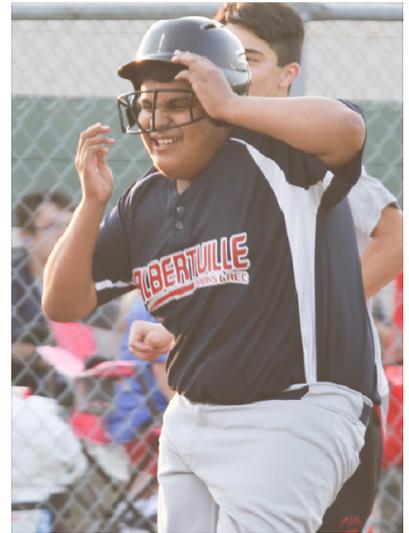
Jose was selected to join the Red Sox for the 2017 season. The first day of practice arrived and Jose showed up. Even though you think you know how kids are going to handle a situation, there is always a fear for that initial meeting in the pit of your stomach. After working with kindergartners and middle school students for many years, I think it is safe for me to say that kids can and will say and do the darnedest things. Somehow, somehow, the Red Sox were comprised of the perfect set of kids that would help Jose flourish. The patience that they exhibited while waiting for Jose to complete a drill was second to none. The ability to help Jose and provide pointers to make him a better player was evident at every practice and game. Needless to say, Jose loved practice. He loved his teammates, being on the Red Sox, and most importantly, Jose loved baseball.

Jose is a hulk of a kid and very strong. If he has an inclination to do something he has the ability to physically go through you and do it, whether it be good or bad. Imagine, if you will, corralling a bull inside a dugout, with him seeking a way onto the field. However, Jose had a gentleness that caused him to fall into line and do what he was supposed to do at baseball. We were fortunate that that was the case. With bats and baseballs flying all around he could have placed himself, and anyone helping him, into danger in a split second. Jose was welcomed into every drill and improved as a baseball player as the season progressed. He participated in all of the hitting drills at practice, and got to where he swung the bat pretty well.

The first game arrived. We discussed with the other coach and other team that Jose would bat last in the line-up and he would run the bases to have fun. I had the pleasure of pitching to Jose. The first time he came up I got to be a part of something I had never been a part of before. It was

like time stopped. The heat of the game was set aside for a moment. It was amazing how one special player had the ability to bring the entire park together. The crowd forgot who they were pulling for, yelling at, or angry with, and focused on the big batter stepping into the box. His helmet was way too small for his head, the bat looked like a small stick in his hands, and sometimes he wore hiking boots instead of cleats. But the crowd cared nothing about any of that, and they would offer encouragement to a stranger to hit the ball.

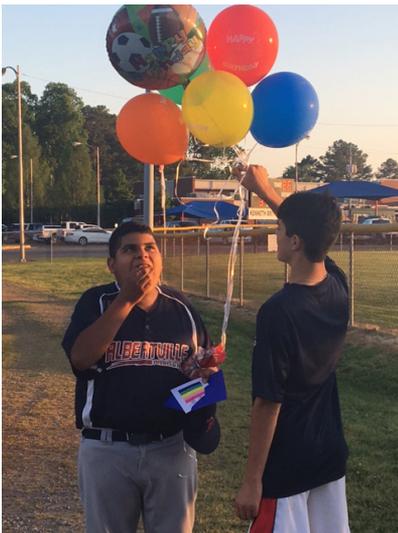
Jose would hit the ball and then he was off. He would hit first base, head to second, move to third, and then run for home. The smile on his face was visible from anywhere in the park. Other people from other fields would come watch Jose step into the box, dig in, and get ready to hit. Several people mentioned to me how awesome it was to watch Jose hit the ball and run the bases; but often times they didn't get to see and hear the very best part. After he



Albertville - Homerun Jose

rounded third all of his Red Sox teammates would be at the plate to greet him as he came home. When he reached the plate he would run to the middle of them, and every single time without fail, he would stretch out his arms and attempt to touch all of the guys and sincerely say, "Thank you guys!! Thank you guys!!" He was so thankful to his teammates for letting him be a part of the game. As a matter of fact, after games and before games, Jose would volunteer to pray. It was so simple, yet so needed for our boys to hear. "Thank you God for baseball, my teammates, and my coaches. Amen."

As a coach you wonder how players will take to players like Jose. Will they act right? Will they be patient and accepting? My wife and I have a special needs child, Jackson, who has Down's Syndrome. I have witnessed his peers be sensitive to his situation, and include him and respect him over the years. These boys accepted Jose, and more importantly, Jose accepted them. I have decided that all kids have a special place in their heart for people like Jackson and Jose. Acceptance is built into them, and if it is practiced it becomes a part of their character for life.



Earlier in the season Jose had mentioned that he had never owned a trophy. At the conclusion of the season the Red Sox met at the pavilion at the Rec Center to say goodbye and collect medals. The boys made their way over to an unused field to play whiffle ball. A few of the boys had the game

going, and had already split into shirts and skins. A few boys had stopped by the snack table and began to meander over to the field. Before you knew it, there stood Jose, at third base, minus his jersey. Jose fit in, and was welcomed by a bunch of boys that opened themselves up to be a small part of someone's life.

Someone they might have considered different in other circumstances. The season was full of learning opportunities for our team, and baseball skills and strategies were among the least important. What a great lesson, taught by an unsuspecting young man, just looking to have fun playing a sport he loved to play. After all of the medals were handed out, a presentation was made to our M.V.P. He was given his very own trophy, with "Homerun Jose" on the nameplate. Jose's statistics on the year were amazing: 24 for 24, 24 homeruns and 24 runs batted in. The look of adoration in his eyes when he figured out the trophy was for him brought a smile to everyone that was present. Jose held that trophy like a newborn for the rest of the evening. His sweet mother tried to say thank you, but the tears choked her. God knew what he was doing when he selected her to raise Jose. I hope when Jose looks at that trophy he doesn't just remember the hitting and the running and the scoring. I hope he remembers a team that he was a part of, and what he meant to all of us.

Jose taught the boys many lessons this season that were bigger than baseball. First of all, compassion is always more important than competition. Also, love for people is more important than a loss. Finally, enjoyment is much more important than the end result. I wanted to end the season officially with a prayer for our team:



"Thank you God for baseball, the teammates, the coaches, and the chance to meet Jose. Amen."

Tuscaloosa - Community Creates Tribute to Will May with Will May Dog Park

In January 2013, Will May, a 13-year-old son, nephew and grandson of veterinarians, an animal lover, and avid runner was accidentally killed on a hunting trip. The Will May 5K began to raise significant funding for the development of Tuscaloosa's first dog park to be named in Will's honor and the Will May Foundation was born. PARA, along with Fresh St-Art, a not-for-profit group created to design and build public community spaces, began plans for the Will May Dog Park shortly thereafter. This support, combined with \$120,000 in funding from the City of Tuscaloosa led to a ground breaking and work day in October of 2013.

The Will May Dog Park was completed in February of the following year and the park officially opened to the public shortly thereafter. The park is currently one of PARA's most heavily utilized parks and serves as tremendous tribute to Will May, whose love of animals was well documented. Support for the park's upkeep continues today through fund raisers such as the Will May 5K and the Tuscaloosa Association of REALTOR's "Bark in the Park" event. PARA is incredibly proud of Will May Dog Park as its story demonstrates the ability of our community to come together in support of one another and create a much needed space that all will enjoy.



Anniston - Commit to Health: Out-of-School time Healthy Food Access

Anniston Parks and Recreation in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), received a \$25,000 grant to support its out-of-school time healthy food access and nutritional literacy programs. The gift is part of a \$1.5 million grant NRPA received from the Walmart Foundation to support out-of-school time programs in 40 park and recreation agencies across the country

The grant will help us purchase food storage equipment, implement nutrition literacy programs and address food waste strategies at our 5 sites – Aquatic and Fitness Center, Hodges Community Center, Carver Community Center, Wiggins Community Center and South Highland Community Center. All community centers and the Aquatic and Fitness centers are now Commit To Health sites through NRPA. Each site promotes healthy living through healthy eating and physical activity.

June was Berries and Peppers month. Day Camps at Hodges Community Center and the Aquatic and Fitness Center enjoyed various activities from “Red Pepper Green Pepper” to Tasty Treats to try new foods.

The month of July featured tropical fruits and melons. The Aquatic and Fitness Center made pineapple masks and fruit salads featuring pineapples and orange juice. Sara and Sadie Abney did the July bulletin board for us that show cases some of our nutritional education activities, newsletters and information on the food of the month.



On Thursday July 27th, Norwood Hodges and Aquatic and Fitness Center's came together using the Healthy Out of School Time Grant for Watermelon Day at Washington Pool.

The campers learned some interesting watermelon facts:

- Watermelon is actually a vegetable- kin to the pumpkin- and a fruit
- There are over 300 varieties of watermelons- but only 5 for human consumption
- Watermelons are high in vitamin B6, vitamin A and potassium
- Watermelons originated in Africa

After learning the facts, we played several rounds of watermelon ball. All campers, counselors and lifeguards had a great day!

Our Commit to Health programs continue this fall in our after school programs. For more information or to sign your agency up as a Commit to Health Agency, visit <http://www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/commit-to-health> .



Auburn - Striving to Serve the Entire Community

Auburn Parks and Recreation's senior programs create a better life and healthy living environment for the 50 plus adults in the community. Parks and Recreation offer numerous, some free, fitness programs for the Adults 50+. Zumba Gold, Seated Zumba Gold, Gentle Vinyasa Yoga, Walk with Ease and Tai Chi just to name a few of the senior programs.

Gentle Vinyasa Yoga is a free class offered to adults 50 plus once a week. During the summer and fall months the class is offered in the beautiful outdoor setting of Town Creek Park. The class takes place from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. One participant emailed the instructor, "I really enjoyed the class. It was just what I needed. I am not flexible so I hope to improve that. My husband passed away in February and I am trying to "breath" again so I believe this will be helpful. "

These fitness classes not only help with keeping the body healthy, the classes build a great sense of wellbeing, friendship and comradery among the class participants.



Gil Penalosa with 8 80 cities said, "If we believe that if everything we do in our public spaces is great for an 8 year old and an 80 year old, then it will be great for all people." Parks and Recreation is for the entire community to thrive and help aid in a healthy lifestyle.

Opelika - AAC Provides Healing

When four members of our "recycled teenager" gang lost their husbands within 3 months, their lives became forever changed. Most had traveled the world with their partners. Together, they have found a way to help each other heal in the face of loss through friendship, fun, and travel. Being part of a group that enjoys activities together helped them to have a link to society that most grieving widows do not have.

When you create a safe place in your recreation programs for seniors to be together, they feel connected to your community. When times are darkest, they have somewhere that gives them hope for the future and a group to return to while they are healing. For one of these women, her recreation center is the place she and her husband felt the most connected since moving late in life. When planning his memorial service she found great joy and peace in having it where their friends were...at the recreation center, with all his favorites: Krystals, Krispy Kreme, and sweet tea. While creating a slide show of his adventures, it became evident that our recreation

center had given him such a great quality of life and fun adventures along the way. More than 50 members and former interns came "home" to pay their respects.



The coming months would lead to three other female members losing their spouses. They each began to call each other and reconnect with their friends and activities at the recreation center. They are now looking for adventures abroad and across the US to continue living, despite their loss.

Enterprise - Providing Health, Social, Environmental and Economical Benefits

The Enterprise Parks and Recreation Department (EPRD) provides many health, social, environmental and economical benefits for the residents in the City of Progress.

Personal health and wellness is more than physical health, exercise and nutrition. Participation in recreation, such as Family Recess Night and Wild Things Walk, recreational sports, such as Pickle ball and cultural activities, such as dance classes, improves physical, psychological and emotional health. It can reduce rates of some types of chronic diseases, including heart disease and type-2 diabetes. Recreation use foster social, intellectual, physical and emotional development. Participation in recreation can reduce self-destructive behavior and reduce a reliance on other social services. When you are moving around, feeling good and receiving good energy from others it combats negative feelings and we begin to feel good.

There has always been a feeling that strong people=strong families and strong families=strong communities. The programs provided by the Enterprise Parks and Recreation Department help to strengthen families and communities through social interaction, volunteerism and civic pride. Many relationships are built through EPRD. For example, when people discover they live in the same community or that their children go to the same school, it brings a family closer. Families want to see their children thrive so parents get out of their comfort zone in order to meet others through a common bond, like volunteering to be a Cheer Coach. Communities are safer because recreation programs and parks are shaped to reduce

criminal activity. Residents who recognize that the city cares about the community and nicely maintains facilities open to the public, they help to spread good vibes for hosting a personal event. Fair access to recreation for all citizens also encourages inclusive and lively communities. Regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity or ability the community is brought together through parks and

Continued on page 16.



Enterprise - Providing Health, Social, Environmental and Economical Benefits Continued

recreation. It increases cultural unity through events that encourage cultural understanding and celebrate diversity. Through participation, the community begins to produce leaders that help to solve community problems.

Economic development is another benefit of parks and recreation in the community. Partnering with local and corporate vendors within the Wiregrass area attracts a lot of organizations to get involved. It attracts and retains businesses and families, as well as attracts tourists and retirees, and increases property values. Recreation creates jobs and encourages the engagement of youth with opportunities for community service, employment and skill development. Jobs such as program assistants for EPRDs Adventure Camp and concession workers during the sports seasons are highly coveted positions, especially during the summer. Recreation also helps to produce income for the community and for neighborhood businesses.

Recreation supports environmental sustainability by obtaining, protecting and running valuable open spaces, trails, natural features and culturally important assets. Park trails and natural areas are factors to keeping the environment safe and sound. Johnny Henderson Park and other parks around the area make the city of Enterprise more beautiful. The upkeep by the grounds workers and maintenance men of EPRD make our community a pleasant one to be a part of. Having access to natural, undeveloped, spaces has a dramatic and positive impact on our

physical and mental well-being. To take a walk in the community of Enterprise or to take a cruise around the city makes for a peaceful and scenic view.



Mobile - Benefits of Connie Hudson Mobile Regional Senior Community Center

Kendra Butler joined the Connie Hudson Mobile Regional Senior Community Center in 2014 in order to have an outlet for exercising, and to meet new people. Kendra's desire was to make changes to her daily lifestyle. Since joining and being active in the Senior Center's exercise programs, Kendra has been able to eliminate 2 of her current medications, and her goal is to eliminate 2 more of her medications by the fall of this year. Kendra has lost around 15-20 pounds; she participates in the Body Sculpting classes held twice a week, and she speaks of the instructors as being caring and encouraging to all that take part in the class. The instructors encourage attendees to give their all, using hard work with safety as the number #1 goal. The instructors are also available for any advice on alternative exercises that focus on the same muscle groups in order to attain the desired fitness goals with a lower impact on the body. The benefits of exercise programs at Connie Hudson Mobile Regional Senior Community are endless.

Community through people is created by bringing together needs, influences, and connections. Our center combines these characteristics to form a well adjusted cohesive unit. The Connie Hudson Senior center brings together all walks of life under one roof and does it in a very friendly environment. This is accomplished through a wide variety of programs designed to meet the needs and wants of the senior community. The impact our organization has on the local community is far reaching. The programs established at our location have been life altering for many of our seniors. The day to day interactions and experiences they encounter build long lasting relationships that seniors rely on for a well balanced quality of life. There are many stories I could tell about various seniors that I have encountered over the years, but our success story shouldn't be based on a few individual stories it should be based on our community as a whole. I have seen so many lives changed through the programs provided through our center and in my opinion this is our success story.

My name is Carl Lewis and I am currently one of the Therapeutic Recreational Specialists for the Connie Hudson Mobile Regional Senior Community Center. My duties are to create our monthly data base, manage programs and transportation.

Communities grow stronger when senior citizens regularly and persistently do a variety of simple things together for their mind, body, and spirit. The Connie Hudson Mobile Regional Senior Community Center gives seniors a chance to connect with others seniors, build trust, and learn valuable information for a healthier quality of life. Our programs provide a wide variety of recreation and leisure activities for seniors, ages 55 years and older. We connect with our seniors through activities that include special events, arts and craft classes, fitness, field trips, and senior forums to discuss the needs of our senior center. Providing informative programs and activities for our seniors is the most important aspect of helping seniors adapt to the everyday changes they may be facing in their life. What matters most to our senior community is "Passion for Life". We believe that helping seniors enhances their longevity for life. I have watched this center play a very pivotal part in the lives of seniors who have lost their spouses, children and other family members. The center provides a place for a home environment with friends and an extended family. Connie Hudson Senior Center is not just a senior center but its where life can begin again and thrive! My name is LaNisha Penn, I am a Therapeutic Recreation Specialist at the Connie Hudson Mobile Regional Senior Community Center. I have been with the center since we opened in 1998, a total of 9 years.

I am in charge of the developing, initiating and maintaining therapeutic recreation programs, marketing the senior center to potential sponsors, vendors, and instructors, maintaining and oversee management of building when the Director is out. I enjoy what I do and love helping seniors.

Connie Hudson Mobile Regional Senior Community Center is operated by The City of Mobile Parks and Recreation Department and Supervised by Ashley-Nicole Flowers MS, CTRS. CHMRSCC is open Monday- Friday from 8 am - 6pm. For further information on this program please call 251-602-496 or check us out at [facebook.com/chmrsc](https://www.facebook.com/chmrsc).

Mobile - Providing Multiple Benefits to Our Community

Springhill Recreation

By offering a variety of activities Springhill Recreation Center is creating a community within a community. One of our activities encourages fitness and healthy living, through line dance classes.



Classes are offered four times per week and with the help of our two volunteer line dance instructors, Gerald Stevens, (former city Recreation Facility Supervisor) and Mike Whitsett, participants are reaching weight loss goals, building endurance, reducing risk of osteoporosis, improving muscle tone and motor fitness, along with seeing improved heart and lung health.

We also help the community by posting job openings and trainings. Our computer lab affords citizens the opportunity to search for employment and complete online job applications. Assistance is also offered with resume writing.

Springhill recognizes the need for learning how to RELAX. We

now offer an Adult Coloring Class. Coloring definitely has therapeutic potential to reduce anxiety and create focus; sitting down to color a picture can be as effective as meditation in reducing stress. Sessions include soft music and on occasions herbal tea.

Rickarby Park

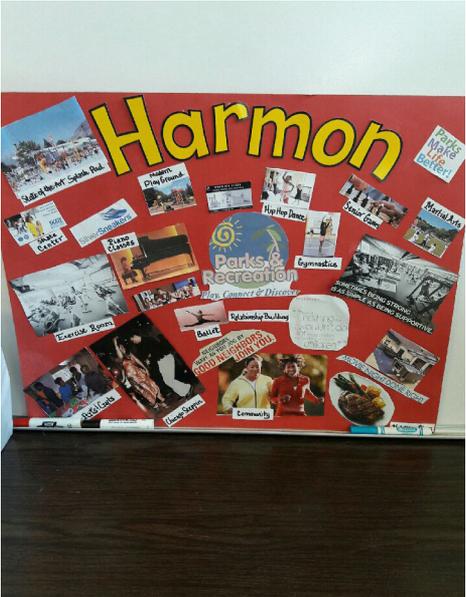
At Rickarby Park, where a small center does BIG THINGS, the benefit that has impacted our community is the new face lift Rickarby Park received. The citizens of this community are grateful and we thank, Levon C. Manzie, Councilman for District 2 and Sandy Stimpson, Mayor for the City of Mobile. Some of the renovations included an outdoor basketball court, painting the building inside and out, a new roof, along with a new mini COMPUTER LAB. The children and adults alike are enjoying fun activities at Rickarby Park with more to come.



Mobile - Providing Multiple Benefits to Our Community

HARMON: Bridging a Community Together in Unity

Unifying our community is a way of bringing all people together. What better way to unify people than to start at the local community center hosting programs in our neighborhood center. This involvement brings individuals closer together as they socialize and network amongst themselves.



Robert Hope Community Center

Rev. Hope Community Center would like to celebrate a young man who works endlessly to help the young men to become productive citizens through his

mentoring my way of coaching basketball. Coach Noonie Theris Howard has been a blessing for the children in the community.



Mobile - Dauphin Island Parkway SAIL Center

There are many stories that can be told, but we will start with love, kindness, fellowship, making new friends, and also a few (love Connections). The seniors at the D.I.P SAIL Center enjoy coming each day because without the center their options of activities would be limited, so instead of sitting at home in front of the television, they get up come to the center and enjoy activities, exercise, bible study, games, field trips, health classes, writing class, and last but not least a hot meal. This program allows our seniors to feel that life is worth living. Life is not intended to slow down because a person gets old,

but understanding that their Golden Years should be their best years. And this is how we create community through people.

Written by: Sandy Campbell a volunteer and care taker at the DIP SAIL Center.

Dauphin Island Parkway SAIL Center is operated by The City of Mobile Parks and Recreation Department and Supervised by Ashley-Nicole Flowers MS, CTRS and Managed by Freda Mitchell. For Further information on this program please call 251-471-2503.

Mobile - Trinity Gardens Tricksey Sail Center

At Tricksey SAIL center we build up the community by providing a safe place that allows seniors within the community to enjoy programs and activities. This program allows seniors that share some of the same or similar interest to come together and a safe environment. The senior program is a place where seniors come to build long-term relationships while enjoying daily activities that help them to remain

youthful. By engaging with our seniors, we also create bonds with other family members embracing value and trust within the community. Through devotion, physical education, and arts and crafts, our seniors share their lives with others within the community. With our programs, our families create bonds to build a stronger community.



Tricksey SAIL Center is operated by The City of Mobile Parks and Recreation Department and Supervised by Ashley-Nicole Flowers MS, CTRS and Managed by Jacqueline Green. For Further information on this program please call 251-456-6690.

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Calendar of Events

November

- 7-9** LEAD
Mentone, AL
- 15** District I Meeting- Athens, AL

November

- 16** District III Meeting
- 29** District II Meeting- Ft. Payne, AL
District IV Meeting- Gadsden, AL
District V Meeting- Opelika, AL
District VII Meeting

December

- 6** State Board Meeting
Montgomery, AL

January 2018

- 28-30** 2018 ARPA State Conference
Tuscaloosa, AL
Hotel Capstone