



PARK DISTRICT of OAK PARK

Ann Marie Buczek
Communication and Community Engagement Manager
Park District of Oak Park
(708) 725-2121
AnnMarie.Buczek@pdop.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 8, 2022

The Park District of Oak Park Announced as Finalist for the 2022 National Gold Medal Award in Parks and Recreation Management

For the second year in a row, the Park District of Oak Park is one of four finalists named for the National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management by the American Academy for Park and Recreation (AAPR), in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).

The National Gold Medal Awards program recognizes and honors park and recreation agencies across the U.S. that demonstrate excellence in parks and recreation through long-range planning, resource management, volunteerism, environmental stewardship, program development, professional development, and community engagement. Applications are separated into six classes, with five classes based on population and one class for armed forces.

At the beginning of each calendar year, agencies are invited to submit applications for consideration. A panel of five park and recreation professionals reviews and judges all application materials. Judges are chosen for their considerable experience and knowledge in parks and recreation on both the local and national levels. Four finalists are chosen from the applications submitted and one will be awarded the Grand Plaque at the NRPA annual conference this September.

The Park District won the prestigious Grand Plaque twice since the program was founded in 1965. In 1966 and 2015, the Park District of Oak Park was awarded the Grand Plaque in the Class IV category, which includes those agencies serving populations of 30,001 to 75,000. Grand Plaque winners are eligible to reapply following a five-year waiting period.

The District's winning application highlighted how the District meets the recreation needs of its 55,000 residents by leveraging every square foot of its 84 acres of parkland through strategic partnerships, community input, and careful planning.

Jan R. Arnold, the Executive Director of the Park District of Oak Park, said "We are thrilled to be recognized as one of the best in the nation. Many thanks to our leadership, staff, and volunteers for their commitment and dedication to serving the needs of our community each and every day."

Park Board President, Kassie Porreca, agrees, "We are truly honored to be recognized for the outstanding work of our staff, volunteers, and community members who each play a vital role in the ability of the Park District to successfully serve the residents of Oak Park."

#

The Park District of Oak Park, established in 1912, serves the recreational needs of the 55,000 residents of Oak Park, providing over 3,000 recreation programs and special events annually. Overseen by a Board of five elected officials, the District owns and operates 24 facilities that occupy 85 acres of parkland within the Village including, seven neighborhood recreation centers, 18 parks, three historic properties (Cheney Mansion, Pleasant Home, and the Oak Park Conservatory), two outdoor swimming pools, one indoor, year-round ice rink, one Gymnastics and Recreation Center, one Environmental Education Center and six special facilities including a skate park, Pickleball courts, Cubhouse preschool play area and Hedges Administration Center. For more information, visit www.pdop.org.

The American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA) is a nonprofit organization founded to advance knowledge related to the administration of recreation and parks; to encourage scholarly efforts by both practitioners and educators that would enhance the practice of park and recreation administration; to promote broader public understanding of the importance of parks and recreation to the public good; and, to conduct research, publish scholarly papers and sponsor seminars related to the advancement of park and recreation administration. For more information, visit www.aapra.org.

Partner: The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)

The National Recreation and Park Association is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to ensuring that all people have access to parks and recreation for health, conservation and social equity. Through its network of 60,000 recreation and park professionals and advocates, NRPA encourages the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles, conservation initiatives and equitable access to parks and public space. For more information, visit www.nrpa.org. For digital access to NRPA's flagship publication, Parks & Recreation, visit www.parksandrecreation.org.