

OUR MISSION

In partnership with the community, we enrich lives by providing meaningful experiences through programs, parks and facilities.

OUR VISION

We strive for excellence in serving the well-being and recreational needs to our diverse community through a collaborative, innovative, and sustainable approach.

2024 BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

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PARK DISTRICT
of OAK PARK

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Awards

February
2024



PARK DISTRICT of OAK PARK

Celebrating our partnership with citizens who have made a significant impact in our community and the quality of life for our residents.

Congratulations!

**To the 2023 recipients of the IAPD/IPRA
Community Service Awards**

Don Harmon

LaShawn Ford

Camille Lilly

Camille Wilson White

The Illinois Association of Park Districts and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association annually present Community Service Awards to individuals and organizations in recognition and appreciation of their outstanding contribution and unselfish devotion for the advancement of parks, recreation and leisure in the community and the state of Illinois.

Senate President **Don Harmon** is a native of Oak Park and a huge supporter of parks and recreation throughout the State of Illinois. Senator Harmon has been an active user and supporter of the Park District of Oak Park for many years. Whether enrolling one of his children in our programs, or spending time with his family in one of our wonderful parks, he has a strong connection to the Park District of Oak Park.



Don Harmon

In **2018**, the fundraising team for the *Community Recreation Center (CRC)* reached out to Senator Harmon to share the concept of bringing a community center to Oak Park. He was very supportive of the concept and the approach the District was taking by using fundraising rather than increasing taxes for its construction. Furthermore, he appreciated the focus on providing safe spaces for teens after school, an affordable space for Oak Parkers to exercise, a space for the community to gather, and much more.

Over the next four years, Senator Harmon's support did not waver. With his generosity as well as the other donors, the *Community Recreation Center* opened its doors on **May 21, 2023** with no new taxes. The CRC has served almost **10,000** residents within its first six months of operation. This new addition provides space in our community where every resident feels a sense of belonging and support.

The Park District is thrilled to have the opportunity to thank Senator Harmon for everything he has done to further parks and recreation in our community. Senator Harmon has helped to make a lasting impact in our parks, our facilities, and in the community of Oak Park.

Representative **LaShawn Ford** has been an active supporter of the Park District of Oak Park for many years and is a strong supporter of parks and recreation throughout the State of Illinois.

In **2018**, Representative Ford attended one of the first meetings by the Co-Chair for the *Community Recreation Center (CRC)* project. Representative Ford was very enthusiastic and supportive of the concept. He understood the importance of adding this type of facility to Oak Park and how it could make a difference in the lives of so many young people. As an avid basketball player himself, he understood that having a safe and welcoming space in Oak Park after-school could help to provide opportunities for youth to build relationships and a sense of belonging. The CRC is proving to be that space for over **1,000** youth who participate in our free after-school program for 6th-12th grade Oak Park students.

Representative Ford identified funds within the State's capital funding to help us achieve the fundraising goal. His support and enthusiasm towards the *Community Recreation Center* was evident when he helped open the doors at the ribbon cutting on **May 21, 2023**. The Park District is thrilled to have so many users of the CRC ranging from **3 months** to over **90 years** young.

The Park District is delighted to have the opportunity to thank Representative Ford for everything he has done to further parks and recreation in our community.



LaShawn Ford



Camille Lilly

Representative **Camille Lilly** grew up in Oak Park and has been a strong supporter of parks and recreation throughout the State of Illinois. Representative Lilly is huge supporter of the *Park District of Oak Park* and providing access to all of our youth and families.

In **2018**, the Co-Chair for the *Community Recreation Center (CRC)* had a meeting to discuss the concept of bringing a community center to Oak Park. The focus was on providing access to safe spaces for youth after school, offering affordable fitness options, a space for the community to gather, and much more. The ability to offer indoor basketball courts was also an amenity that the Park District was excited to offer since we did not have any indoor courts in our portfolio.

As an early supporter of the facility, Representative Lilly identified funds within the State's capital funding. Her ongoing support has been evident from the groundbreaking on **March 19, 2022**, to the ribbon cutting on **May 21, 2023**. The Center has far surpassed the number of users within the first six months with approximately **18%** of Oak Parkers using this space. The after-school program has over **1,000** students with approximately **300** in attendance each day engaging in sports, crafts, e-sports, and just hanging out in a safe space with caring adults.

The Park District is ecstatic to have the opportunity to thank Representative Lilly for everything that she has done to further parks and recreation in our community.

Camille Wilson White, Executive Director of the Oak Park Area Arts Council, has been instrumental in strengthening our art community, programs, and formulating opportunities for displaying artwork in many of our civic and commercial properties throughout Oak Park. *The Oak Park Area Arts Council and the Park District of Oak Park* have enjoyed a partnership for many years.

I would like to highlight one example of Camille's commitment to artists of all ages. In **2020**, Camille called and presented the Park District with an opportunity to consider a series of mosaics that were created by Longfellow School students in the early **2000's**. She remembered that these pieces were never displayed. She worked hand in hand with the District to secure the pieces from the Longfellow PTO and engaged her resident artist and students from "Off the Wall" to bring these never-seen treasures to life for the community. They are now proudly displayed on the east wall of the *Community Recreation Center* with a dedication plaque that highlights the history of these beautiful murals that depicts our community.

If it wasn't for Camille's vision and dedication, these amazing creations would still be in a basement. Thanks to Camille, we all get to appreciate the beauty of these pieces and the community gets to celebrate with more community art.



Camille Wilson White

Recent Community Award Winners

2022

Wiley Samuels
George Bailey
Carl Spight
Lee Pulliam
Laura Stamp

2021

Mary Jo Schuler
Dr. David Ansell
Edward Kerros
Laura Thompson
Nancy Waichler
Jill Allread
Cate Reading
Marcia Lehman

2020

Isabel Romero Calvo
Ann Courter
Kathie Gillies
Donna Makow
Mary Ellen Murphy
Mary O' Kiersey
Martha Yount

2019

Donald "Don" Nekrousious
OPRF Senior Citizens Center Board

2018

Frank Heitzman
Gary Cuneen
Margaret Scully
Maria Kunigk
Renne Davis