



**URPA+SEMA
AWARDS LUNCHEON**

MARCH 12, 2025

DIXIE CONVENTION CENTER - ST GEORGE



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ABOUT THE AWARDS



The URPA Awards Program was designed to recognize Utah Recreation and Parks Association (URPA) members for their exceptional effort and contribution in the field of Parks, Recreation, Community Services and Academics. All current and honorary URPA members may submit one or more nominations for consideration prior to each annual conference.

A committee comprised of URPA Past Presidents meets annually, just prior to conference, to select the award winners. The current Past President of the association is responsible for the award nomination process, scheduling the Past Presidents meeting, conducting the selection process during that meeting and presiding over the awards presentation program as part of the annual conference business meeting.

Nominations are received in several categories to recognize individuals, facilities, programs and departments.

New this year, as we partner with SFMA, we will be recognizing professionals and facilities specific to Sports Field Management. SFMA Awards were evaluated and selected by the SFMA Board of Directors.

URPA AWARD CATEGORIES

Lifetime Achievement

Outstanding Citizen Volunteer

Partner of the Year

Conservation & Sustainability

Innovation of the Year

Outstanding Adaptive Program

Outstanding Program

Outstanding Special Event

Outstanding Facility

Outstanding Professional:

Active Aging

Aquatics

Executive

Administrative

Parks

Recreation

Special Events

Young Professional (under 35)

Department of the Year:

Class I (Under 15,000 pop.)

Class II (15,000 - 50,000 pop.)

Class III (Over 50,000 pop.)

PROFESSIONAL & STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS:

Student Scholarships

Steve & Georgia Carpenter Scholarship

Fred & Judy Tamagawa Scholarship

Nancy & Joe Day Scholarship

Great Western Recreation Scholarship

Michael J Peterson Learn & Lead Scholarship

SFMA AWARD CATEGORIES

Groundskeeper of the Year
Sporting Grounds of the Year
Field of the Year





URPA & SFMA LEADERSHIP

2024-2025 URPA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Parks Representative	Trent Dyer
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Region 1 (NURPA) Representative	Haley Turner
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Region 4 (SURPA) Representative	Michelle Cumming
Special Events Representative	Natalie Domino
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Young Professional Representative	Logan Miner

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Parks & Rec Chair	Benji Frye

PAST PRESIDENTS AWARD SELECTION COMMITTEE

- Bronco Hunter
- Tyler Wilkins
- Dan Harrison
- Paul Jamison
- Derric Rykert
- Jamie Young
- Karl Teemant
- Curtis Dickson
- Russ Akina
- Wayne Oberg
- Rhett Ogden
- LeeAnn Powell
- Kevin Bybee
- John Bradley
- Jay Dee Nielsen
- Megan Zollinger
- Fred Tamagawa
- Tracy Heun
- Nancy Day
- Patti Hansen



**PAST PRESIDENTS MEETING
WEST VALLEY CITY
FEBRUARY 6TH, 2025**



INCOMING LEADERSHIP ACADEMY PARTICIPANTS 2025-2026

Gabriela Bridges

Jeanna Camp

Trason Dixon

Hailey Fenn

Ben King

Tasha LaRocco

Vanessa McMillan

Laura Lee Olsen

Liz Schwab

April Webb

Serena Werner

Ali Wilcox

Jacqueline Wilson

STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY



Ashlee DeSpain
Emma McDaniel

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY



Taylor Bradbury
Laura Lee Olsen
Jonah Sharp
Ben Sorensen
Mckenzie Story

UTAH TECH UNIVERSITY



Trey Rose
Adri Summerhays

WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY



Khadija Abdinasir
Anne Davis
Jack Graves
Tyler Tanner

UNIVERSITY OF UTAH



Sasha Mader
Amie Miyagi



LEADERSHIP ACADEMY GRADUATES

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY GRADUATING CLASS 2024-2025

Brittany Adams
Janica Bohrer
Cydnee Clarke
Jennifer Deaton
Preston Jones
Tara Kinser
Megan Levin
Staci Moho
Jordan Redd
Asa Sieger
Melissa Vincent
Brayden Young



Barry Blake

Washington City

Barry will reach an incredible milestone of 35 years of full-time service to Washington City on August 6, 2025. As the Leisure Services Director, Barry has been the driving force behind creating one of the strongest Parks & Recreation Divisions in Utah.

When Barry was hired in 1990, Washington City had just one park (Veterans Park), a small cemetery and a single baseball/softball field. Under his visionary leadership, the city has since developed 16 additional parks, a regional soccer complex with four soccer fields, and a robust trail system that now spans 30+ miles within the community. Barry also played a pivotal role in the development and ongoing success of the Green Spring Golf Course. Furthermore, he was instrumental in acquiring land and overseeing the construction of the 110,000-square-foot Community Center, a cornerstone for community activities and events.

In Barry's 35 years he has seen the City of Washington grow from 4,000 residents to 40,000 residents. Under his supervision he has seen the Leisure Service Department grow from its creation with 3 employees to its current size of 350 employees. Barry's dedication, innovation, and commitment to enhancing recreational opportunities have left an indelible mark on Washington City, making him a true asset and deserving of recognition for his outstanding service.





OUTSTANDING CITIZEN

Donalda Day & Valerie Jueschke

St George Parks & Community Services

Since their involvement with the City of St. George, Donalda and Valerie have significantly enriched the outreach education field trips at the Tonaquint Nature Center, sharing their knowledge of local birds and their adaptations with over a thousand elementary-aged students each year. Their interactive lessons, including demonstrations of how birds use their beaks for survival, provide students with a hands-on understanding of the natural world.

Through their teamwork and countless hours, they've made field trips both educational and engaging, fostering a deeper connection to nature among the youth of St. George. Their efforts have also expanded the outreach capacity of the Tonaquint Nature Center, allowing more students and schools to participate in these valuable programs. Their commitment to education and love for the outdoors have left a lasting impact on the children and the community.



Ty Empey

St George Parks & Community Services

Ty Empey has been an advocate for recovering addicts by establishing a softball league in St. George, called Clean and Sober, a program that fosters connection, support, and belonging for people in recovery. During his personal recovery journey, Ty participated in a similar softball league in northern Utah, which helped him rebuild relationships with his family. When Ty moved to St. George 7 years ago and discovered there was no softball league to help recovering addicts, he decided to create one to provide other recovering individuals the same opportunity to build relationships and be part of a team.

Ty started the league in Hurricane, but as the league grew, the need for more fields became clear. Ty approached the City with a unique proposal to keep the league going: exchanging league members' service for field rental fees. The city embraced the idea, and for the past four years, Ty and the league members have volunteered at events like the

St. George Marathon, 4th of July celebrations, park and city cleanups, and various races and community events, keeping the league alive and supporting the community of St. George.

Bart Hopkin

Cottonwood Heights Parks & Recreation Service Area

Bart Hopkin has been with Cottonwood Heights Parks & Recreation Service Area for over 42 years, holding key leadership roles. From 1983 to 2005, he served on the Board of Trustees, shaping the community's recreational offerings. In 2005, he became the Assistant Director and Fiscal Manager, overseeing financial operations until 2013. After a brief break, he returned to the Board in 2014 and continues to serve. Mr. Hopkin was instrumental in several major projects, including the outdoor pool remodeling, the addition of water features, and collaboration during the 2002 Winter Olympics. Recently, he contributed to the master planning of Antczak Park, upgraded in 2024. He also served on the National Recreation and Parks Association Board and received the Meritorious Service Award from the American Parks and Recreation Society.



VOLUNTEER NOMINEES



Dheeraj Jonnalagadda

LiveDAYBREAK

Dheeraj Jonnalagadda, a dedicated Daybreak resident, began volunteering for our events a few years ago and has since become an integral part of our community. Originally from India, Dheeraj quickly found a sense of belonging in Daybreak and embraced opportunities to get involved, embodying the spirit of service and community.

Dheeraj's unwavering commitment to volunteering has elevated the quality of our events, inspiring our team and fellow residents. He eagerly takes on any role needed, bringing enthusiasm and reliability to every task. This year alone, Dheeraj has contributed over 150 volunteer hours and served on 12 event committees. His efforts include selling t-shirts, transporting event supplies, operating t-shirt cannons, setting up tents and tables, checking in attendees, moving barricades for concerts, and warmly welcoming new residents.



Troy Kunz

Salem Parks & Recreation

Troy Kunz has been a volunteer and leader in the Salem community since his family moved to the area in 2008. His dedication to youth sports is far above and beyond the average parent volunteer. He has coached teams year after year in football, baseball, and basketball, often without his own children being involved, purely out of love for the game. Beyond coaching, Troy has committed countless hours as an official for both youth and adult sports, ensuring games run smoothly and fairly. His officiating experience spans across football, basketball, baseball, and adult coed softball, where his knowledge of the rules & efficiency in controlling games makes him a respected figure throughout many different leagues. Troy's contributions extend beyond the field as well. He has assisted in maintaining fields and even mowing lawns. Not only has Troy taught young men & young women how to become better athletes but also better human beings. You will often find Troy's teams cleaning up garbage and doing other acts of service to improve facilities. His selfless service has helped countless youth and families engage in recreational activities, fostering a positive environment for sports in the community. Salem is fortunate to have had Troy's leadership for so many years, and his impact will continue to be felt for generations to come.

Dan Stone

Lindon Parks & Recreation

Dan Stone exemplifies what it means to be a community volunteer in Lindon City. For a community that prides themselves on being a Little Bit of Country, Dan's unwavering dedication touches nearly every aspect of the community and really makes Lindon feel special. From volunteering at every city event and function to starting a citywide Thanksgiving dinner, Dan's contributions foster a sense of togetherness and support for all of our residents.

Each year, Dan lends his creativity and craftsmanship to building the Little Miss Lindon royalty float, with guiding direction from the royalty director (his wife) and is a critical force behind the week-long Lindon Days Celebration. His knack for fixing things on the fly, coupled with his ever-positive attitude, makes him an indispensable problem-solver and team player. Whether coaching youth sports, stepping in to fill gaps, or helping run swim meets at the Lindon Aquatics Center, Dan is always ready to give his time and energy wherever it's needed.





PARTNER OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

Athletify

James & Jared Moore

In the last few years, Athletify has become a part of our industry by taking the time to truly connect with industry professionals, diving deep into understanding our challenges and finding innovative ways to address them. They don't just stay behind a desk—they meet us at our sites, ask thoughtful questions, and get into the nitty-gritty of our work. This hands-on approach shows their dedication to being part of the solution, not just selling one.



More than a company, Athletify has become a valued partner. They actively engage with professionals across the state, contributing to meaningful change in our communities. Their support extends to our trainings and annual conference, where their enthusiasm and expertise make a tangible impact. And let's not forget—they bring an energy that's unmatched. Beyond creating exceptional products tailored to our industry, Athletify lights up the room and truly becomes the life of the party, making them a joy to work with and celebrate.



Chanshare
— F A R M S —
www.chanshare.com
435-854-3627

Chanshare Farms

Eric Marble

Chanshare Farms is consistently looking for ways to promote water conservation in Utah's arid climate. They are always researching seed blends and looking for ways to decrease the amount of water required in a landscape, especially in lawn areas. To this end Chanshare is active with the Northern Utah Coalition of Chambers (NUCC), Salt Lake Chamber, and other organizations, to monitor and influence legislation centered on conservation, which could potentially have negative unintended consequences on the landscape industry and professional groundskeepers. As a partner with URPA Chanshare has spent the last 3 years working with educators and industry professionals to delist Bermudagrass from the Noxious Weeds List in Utah. Chanshare has also been sponsors to several URPA Seminars this year and consistently works with professional groundskeepers to provide conservation minded maintenance best practice suggestions.

Chanshare spent the last 3 years working with educators from BYU and USU and other industry professionals to get Triploid Hybrid Bermudagrass delisted from the Noxious Weeds list. This has the potential to change Parks and Playing Fields in Utah, allowing them to flourish while using 50% less water than the traditional bluegrass playing surface.

St. George Running Center

Steve Hooper

Steve Hooper's contributions as a partner, sponsor, and advocate for recreation have been truly exceptional. Through his unwavering commitment to the St. George Marathon, St. George Races, and the local running community, Steve has consistently demonstrated remarkable dedication, generosity, and leadership. His efforts have not only elevated the events he supports but also positively impacted countless lives across Southern Utah.



As a long-time sponsor of the St. George Marathon, Steve has been instrumental in maintaining its reputation as one of the premier marathons in the region. Through his business, the St. George Running Center, he ensures that runners have access to the proper equipment, training, and encouragement they need to succeed. His passion for running shines through in his tireless support of these events and the participants involved.





Grapevine Trailhead

Washington Leisure Services

The Grapevine Trailhead serves as a gateway to an extensive trail network within the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve and National Conservation Area. As the largest trailhead in Washington City it features designated parking areas for horse trailers and vehicles, along with various amenities. Spanning 9 acres, the multi-use trailhead includes 92 asphalt parking spaces, 57 unpaved overflow parking spaces, and 10 stalls for trucks with horse trailers, complete with a horse tie-up area. The site also boasts a spacious, enclosed restroom facility with four individual restrooms, a large sink for handwashing, and a detailed wall map of the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve trails. Additional features include a large covered seating area designed to lower temperatures to give hikers and bikers a break from the heat, bicycle repair stations, and water filling stations for both people and horses.

The conservation features include spacious shade areas designed to provide comfort and reduce heat exposure. Bathrooms are partially built underground to naturally regulate temperatures, maintaining usability during both high and low extremes. A drinking water station ensures safe hydration for visitors. The landscaping is designed with drought-tolerant plants and intentionally excludes turf grass, promoting sustainable water use and reducing maintenance needs. These features reflect a commitment to environmentally conscious design and resource conservation.

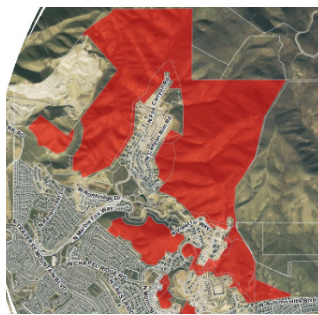
Rock Canyon Trailhead Improvements

Provo Parks & Recreation

The Rock Canyon Trailhead Improvement project stands as a beacon of conservation and sustainability in Provo, Utah. A collaborative effort between Provo City, the Rock Canyon Preservation Alliance, and the US Forest Service, has significantly enhanced the local community's access to outdoor recreation while preserving the natural beauty of Rock Canyon. The project included the improvements of existing trails, the creation of new interpretive trails, a new rock-climbing wall with fall protection, and a new amphitheater.



The Rock Canyon Trailhead now serves as a vital hub for hiking, rock climbing, base jumping, and nature programs, promoting the value of outdoor recreation. The enhancements have addressed critical issues of overcrowding and parking shortages, providing expanded parking facilities, new year-round restrooms, and trail wayfinding signage. This has not only improved visitor experience but also reduced the strain on local infrastructure.



Traverse Mountain Open Space

Lehi City Parks

As Lehi continues to grow, open space is being swallowed by ever increasing sprawl. Communities are being built anywhere land is available. The Traverse Mountain Conservation Easement was an effort to preserve 902 acres of prime open space. Land donated to Lehi City by development enabled city leaders the opportunity to pass a resolution placing a conservation easement on the land above the Traverse Mountain planned community in perpetuity. Lehi worked with Draper City, to preserve this special place. The permanent protection and preservation of natural habitat, wildlife, endangered species, scenic values, historic preservation, water quality and prime outdoor recreation highlight the easement.

With access to the nearby Flight Park and Draper's Corner Canyon, the Traverse Mountain Conservation Easement met a significant community need. Residents of Lehi, along with members of the Utah community, and visitors from outside Utah all can enjoy the benefits of this easement. As Lehi City, and Utah continue to grow, our ability to enjoy the natural value of the Wasatch Front needs to be preserved whenever, and wherever possible. The Traverse Mountain Conservation easement represents this need. Forward thinking elected officials along with city staff and community members rallied to make this easement possible. As a result, generations will enjoy the value and beauty of this beautiful open space. A legacy well preserved!



“The Dirt Yard” Wiffle Ball Fields at Memorial Park

Springville Parks & Recreation

“The Dirt Yard” Wiffle Ball Fields at Memorial Park are a fantastic example of how a simple out of the box idea can have a huge impact! We took an underused acquired piece of land and created our own Field of Dreams.

The Dirt Yard was crafted in house by our Parks & Recreation Department. We did all the landscaping, sprinkler work, and even designed our own custom backstop and home run fencing, complete with yellow powder coated foul poles. These fields were made specifically for Wiffle Ball, and as far as we know, are the first of their kind in the state.



**CAN YOU FIND THE
LOST ELVES?**



Take a picture of all 8 to get a prize at the
Ephraim Rec Office

FIND THEM BY CHRISTMAS

Ephraim City Elf Hunt

Ephraim Recreation

During the winter months, Ephraim City Recreation often experiences a lull, with cold weather keeping children indoors and local restaurants seeing a decline in sales. To address both challenges, Ephraim City launched its first-ever Elf Hunt—a creative and engaging program designed to bring joy to families while supporting local businesses.

The event featured eight elves hidden in participating local businesses. Families were encouraged to visit these establishments, hunt for the elves, and snap photos. This dual-purpose initiative provided a fun and interactive winter activity for Ephraim’s youth while driving foot traffic to local businesses that would have otherwise seen reduced patronage during the season.

Heritage Park Splash Pad

South Jordan City

The Heritage Park Splash Pad is a vibrant, inclusive recreation space that has become a cornerstone of the community, offering a refreshing outdoor experience for families and individuals of all ages. Located in the heart of Heritage Park, the splash pad provides a safe, interactive environment for children to play, cool off, and enjoy water features, fostering both physical activity and social engagement. Its innovative design incorporates sustainable water management features, enhancing environmental awareness while reducing water waste.



Rosili's Playground at Bicentennial Park

Clearfield Community Services

Rosili Olsen demonstrated remarkable initiative and community spirit when she noticed that the proposed design for Thornock Park's playground, near her home, did not accommodate her younger sister's needs. Instead of voicing complaints, Rosili took action by creating multiple drawings of a more inclusive playground. Recognizing the potential impact of her designs, she convinced her mother to meet with Eric Howes, the Director of Community Services for Clearfield City, to discuss her ideas. Eric was deeply impressed by the thoughtfulness and effort Rosili put into her designs, and he knew her contributions deserved recognition.



To honor Rosili's dedication, Clearfield Community Services involved her in the design process for the next playground the city planned to install. Rosili played a crucial role in selecting the elements she liked most, and her recommendations were incorporated into the final design, including the color scheme. Her proactive approach and positive attitude are a shining example of community engagement that Clearfield City strives to exemplify and reflect to represent residents like Rosili.



SoJo Coloring Caravan

South Jordan City

The SoJo Coloring Caravan is a creative and interactive mobile recreation experience that brings art, engagement, and community pride directly to residents. This department vehicle, wrapped in dry-erase material featuring a custom-designed line drawing of South Jordan's own Dowdle puzzle artwork, transforms into a giant, reusable coloring page. Community members of all ages can color, erase, and create together, fostering a sense of connection and local identity.

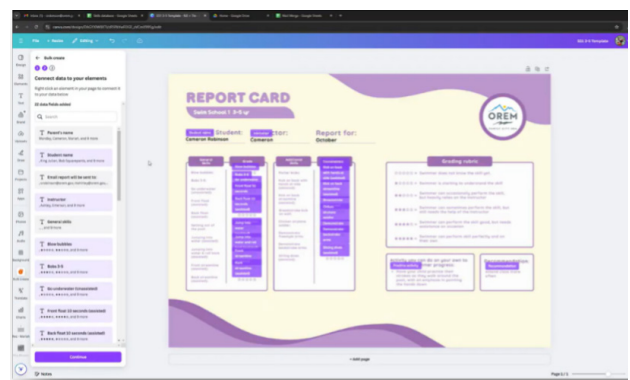
By incorporating hands-on art into city events, the SoJo Coloring Caravan enhances participation and raises awareness of South Jordan's arts and

recreation initiatives. This innovative approach to mobile engagement strengthens community spirit while promoting the importance of creative expression in recreation. It has become a highly anticipated feature at events, drawing families, sparking conversations, and increasing visibility for recreation programs.

Swim Lessons Curriculum - Automation

Orem Recreation

Cameron's dedication to innovation is obvious when looking at his recent work in the swim lesson curriculum and process. His goal is clearly defined in ensuring the patrons have the best experience possible, from registration to the last day of class. A few things he's implemented in the short few months he's been with Orem Recreation include but are not limited to: restructuring some skills and required steps to a scale to communicate progress to parents without a pass/fail system, involving brilliant design to create an eye-catching progress report, and most importantly automating the entire system so each parent and child feel that their experience is individually important to our facility. Next phases include additional automation for our swim teams, private swim lessons, and adorable child friendly swag that will contribute to their experience and guarantee their return.





INNOVATION OF THE YEAR &

Innovative Uintah Recreation Center Revitalization

Uintah Special Service District 1

Uintah Special Service District 1 (USSD1) is proud to nominate our Recreation Hall Revitalization for the 2025 Utah Recreation and Parks Association (URPA) Innovation of the Year Award. This transformative project breathed new life into a once-underutilized hallway, turning it into a vibrant, energetic hub for families and community members to gather, play, and connect.

The goal was to reimagine a space that had a few outdated ping pong and pool tables into a modern, engaging recreational area that inspires fun and social connection. The Recreation Hall Revitalization exemplifies the mission of parks and recreation by creating meaningful opportunities for connection, recreation, and community building. The project demonstrates how innovation and thoughtful design can enhance operations and deliver substantial benefits to the community.



Adapting Together: Strengthening Community Through City Collaboration

Pleasant Grove Recreation

Adding adaptive programming can be challenging due to resource constraints and specialized training involved. After a mother with a child with disabilities emailed, hoping to find a Junior Jazz program her son could participate in, we recognized the need to address this gap. The first of many meetings was held, bringing together recreation professionals from Pleasant Grove, Cedar Hills, Lehi, and American Fork. From this meeting, we developed a regional approach to adaptive programming. The idea was simple but powerful: each city would focus on offering one adaptive program, ensuring that collectively we could provide a diverse range of adaptive sports and activities.

To streamline access, we implemented collective marketing efforts and created a centralized website where parents could easily find information about adaptive programs regionally. This unified approach not only maximized resources but also expanded opportunities for families.

ASL Swim Lessons

Salt Lake County Parks & Recreation

Continuing to improve access and inclusivity in recreation services, the Adaptive Rec team at Salt Lake County (SLCO) added ASL-LTS—that's learn-to-swim for people with hearing impairments who speak American Sign Language (ASL).

Providing swim lessons to people with hearing impairments is vital to safety and provides meaningful recreation to improve physical health. Participants with hearing loss often don't have access to swim lessons or aren't aware they can request an interpreter for this service. This leaves individuals vulnerable to drowning and also leave them feeling isolated from their swimming peers. Thanks to a partnership with the Utah School for the Deaf and Blind, SLCO Adaptive Rec is now offering ASL swim lessons with plans to grow. By partnering with USDB, the SLCO Adaptive team provided swimming lesson instruction and USDB provided ASL certified interpreters. Utah School for the Deaf and Blind advertised these lessons to their students and their guardians, and covered registration costs. The partnership provided four swim lesson sessions to 17 kids ages 3-7. Salt Lake County Adaptive Rec continued lessons by employing the interpretive services of 5-Star Interpreting. Instructors currently offer ASL lessons 2-3 times a month for 4-6 students with plans to grow. Parents of current students are enthusiastic about spreading the word for these ASL swim lessons.





Adaptive Aquatics

South Davis Recreation District

Our Adaptive Aquatics program addresses a critical gap in many communities, offering individuals with special needs the opportunity to safely engage in aquatic activities. This population often faces significant barriers to participation, and our program provides a solution through individualized, one-on-one swimming lessons tailored to meet the specific needs of each participant. By doing so, we enable individuals who may struggle in traditional group lessons to gain essential water safety skills and confidence in and around water.

Empower Fitness

Uintah Special Service District 1

The Empower Fitness Class is an inclusive program designed for individuals with diverse abilities, offering a safe, supportive environment for physical activity. The program promotes strength, independence, and well-being while fostering community and social connection.

Key Highlights Include; **Accessibility:** Adaptive exercises accommodate various physical and cognitive abilities. **Impact:** Increased participation and success stories demonstrate improved strength, confidence, and health outcomes. **Collaborations:**

Partnerships with local organizations and healthcare providers enhance program offerings. **Qualified Instructors:** Certified instructors provide personalized, adaptive support. **Community:** Builds camaraderie and inclusion among participants. The Empower Fitness Class was envisioned as an inclusive, transformative program to serve individuals with diverse physical and cognitive abilities. Its mission is to provide a safe, supportive space where participants can build strength, independence, and confidence while fostering a sense of community and belonging.



Thunder Junction Spook-track-ular

St George Parks & Community Services

The Thunder Junction Spook-track-ular is a premier annual Halloween activity held at Thunder Junction All Abilities Park in St. George, Utah. Designed to serve families, individuals of all abilities, and visitors from the surrounding region, the event has become a cherished community tradition. With engaging activities, and festive decorations, the Spook-track-ular delivers a magical experience for attendees of all ages. Highlights include trick-or-treating stations, a haunted train ride, costume contest, and adaptive activities, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for everyone.

The event is made possible through strong community partnerships, including the active involvement of the St. George Youth City Council, whose members provide free face painting for attendees. Their participation adds an interactive and personal touch to the event, showcasing the spirit of youth engagement and volunteerism. Local businesses, have donated delicious treats for our “Dessert Walk” held at the event, helping keep costs low. City departments also collaborate to enhance the event and foster a sense of community pride.

By prioritizing accessibility and creating a welcoming environment, the Thunder Junction Spook-track-ular has addressed a need for inclusive activities in the community. By being held at an all-abilities park, the event offers individuals with disabilities and their families a space where they can fully participate in holiday festivities. The event’s thoughtful design, strong partnerships, and commitment to inclusivity have ensured that the Thunder Junction Spook-track-ular remains a beloved tradition in southern Utah.



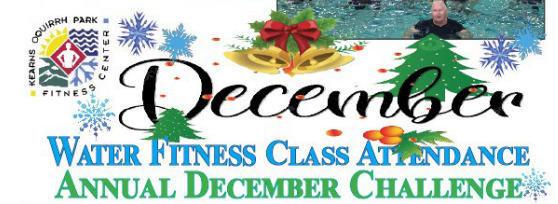
OUTSTANDING PROGRAM

Water Fitness Program

Oquirrh Recreation & Parks District

The Water Fitness program at KOPFC has provided water exercise and social interactions for the community for decades. 2024 was the best year in program history with 14,073 patron visits and an average of 18.7 patrons per class. Certain classes are consistently over 30 participants with highs in the 40's!

Much of the success of the program can be attributed to our ten experienced and energetic instructors, as well as their ability to have the freedom to develop workouts that they enjoy teaching. The instructors are encouraged to name their own class to focus on their area of expertise or simply on a topic they enjoy teaching. KOPFC offers a variety of teaching styles and class themes. From Aqua Dance with choreographed exercises and awesome music, to Wave Warriors for a high intensity workout, to our specialized Easy Does It 45-minute class suitable for seniors, those recovering from surgery, and even moms-to-be.



J.E.T.S.

Clearfield Community Services

The Clearfield Aquatic and Fitness Center employs over 160 employees. These employees include: lifeguards, swim instructors, fitness instructors, welcome desk attendants, coaches and day care attendants. We wanted to develop a program to help motivate and recognize these amazing employees and their accomplishments. We developed J.E.T.S. (Joyful, Example, Teamwork, Safety) to help us in that mission. Embracing the city's mission and vision of being a "military city" and utilizing our 8 core values we incorporated these into the J.E.T.S. Program. We created stickers and beads to help us award "On-the-Spot" awards and then criteria to motivate all employees to be able to receive a CAFC

"Letterman's Jacket". The program "took off" and we will be implementing this going forward to help grow our team in providing a place where people want to be!

Each supervisor helped develop the criteria for their teams with the goal to be to push people, but making the award "obtainable" to all staff. Of our 160 employees, 55 achieved the recognition. We also awarded 8 staff members "Core Value Awards". This came with their own personalized "Funko Pop" and monetary awards. We presented these awards at an award banquet at a local movie theater.

NeuroPong

St. George Parks & Community Services

In 2016, Colorado-based OB/GYN Dr. Anthony Barbera was diagnosed with muscular sclerosis, ending his three-decade surgical career. But after his discovery that playing table tennis greatly relieved his symptoms, Dr. Barbera launched an international nonprofit called Table Tennis Connections (TTC), whose main focus is NeuroPong, a table tennis program tailored to those with MS, Parkinson's, and other neurodegenerative diseases.

The City of St. George has partnered with Dr. Barbera to bring NeuroPong to those in our community who are dealing with similar physical issues. Now, each Monday and Wednesday from noon to 2 p.m., six tables in our Recreation Center (as well as balls and paddles) are devoted to NeuroPong, accommodating 24 excited, engaged players, many of whom are never otherwise involved in physical activity or exercise (the City of St. George generously donated space and two tables to the program). For those afflicted with balance, memory, muscle and other limitations, the impact has been enormous: Finding a community of people who share the same challenges – and finding unconditional support and acceptance – has sparked profound improvements in participants' physical and mental well-being. The tables are consistently full, and enthusiastic "word of mouth" continues to grow the program.



SoJo Ranger & Outdoor Camps

South Jordan City



The SoJo Ranger and Outdoor Camp program is an outstanding initiative that connects youth to nature through hands-on learning in fishing, archery, and environmental education. Serving children ages 7-18, this program fosters outdoor skills, confidence, and environmental stewardship. Recognized for its impact, the program was recently awarded a UCORE grant to expand participation, ensuring more youth can engage with the outdoors.

This program directly responds to a growing community need for accessible outdoor recreation. By offering low-cost, beginner-friendly activities, it provides suburban youth with meaningful nature experiences close to home. The program's popularity is evident, with registration filling within hours and demand consistently exceeding capacity.

With support from UCORE, SoJo Recreation will increase participation from 144 to 270 youth, enhancing accessibility and sustainability. By equipping future generations with outdoor skills and conservation awareness, the SoJo Ranger and Outdoor Camp program exemplifies innovation and commitment to community well-being.

The vision of the SoJo Ranger and Outdoor Camp program is to provide South Jordan youth with accessible, hands-on outdoor experiences that foster recreation skills, confidence, and environmental stewardship. Serving children ages 7-18, this program introduces fishing, archery, and conservation education in a safe and supportive environment.

7 on 7 High School Flag Football

Spanish Fork Parks & Recreation

Our High School Flag Football league is unlike any other Flag Football league. We have combined the rules from UHSAA High School Regulation 7 on 7 Football, that is played by the High School teams in the summer time, and traditional Flag Football rules to create a league that our High School participants love.

These rules include fun niches to the game like interceptions counting for three points, a four second sack clock, no blocking, and a heavy emphasis on the passing game. This was done in part to reduce the amount of physical contact in the league. The league promotes a fast passed, high energy game that keeps the participants entertained and engaged through the entirety of the contest. In the league we also have decided to let the participants create their own teams. Teams submit a roster form with the contact information of each participant, each participant then signs up and pays for their registrations individually. We also include participants that don't have a group of friends to register for the league, but still have the desire to play by having a free agent list that we create teams from or add these free agents to teams without a full roster.



The league was founded as we have seen a decrease in participation from our youth in High School sanctioned sports. Many kids in our community of this age still have a love for sports and want the opportunities to participate in the sports that they love. This being the case we decided to create this 7 on 7 league to provide more opportunities for High School students to participate in sports no matter their ability level.



OUTSTANDING SPECIAL

Daddy Daughter Dance

Uintah Special Service District 1

The Daddy Daughter Dance, themed “Diamonds & Denim” 2024 was a hallmark event that celebrated the cherished bond between fathers and daughters. This annual special event has grown immensely in popularity, making a significant impact on the community and creating lifelong memories for participants.

Over the past two years, the event has sold out completely, reaching maximum capacity and demonstrating its importance to the community. This year, with a move to a larger venue, demand remains exceptionally high, with over 100 tickets reserved on the very first day of availability.



Dino Fossil Fest

North Logan Recreation

The Dino Fossil Fest was incredible. The entrance into the field made it feel like you were heading back in time by making the entrance into a tunnel. There were activities made for everyone; Dani thought of things for those who struggle with loud sounds, who are super active, those who are shy, etc. Kids were crawling around in a maze to find things, using a mallet to break up eggs to get a dinosaur out, climbing into a truck to use binoculars and find the dinosaurs. This event promoted our recreation motto of “family fun recreation” by

providing an opportunity for parents to do an activity with their child. Parents don’t get an opportunity often where they can just focus on playing and creating with their child.

The intended target of this event was for ages 3-9 years old, however, the parents were welcome to stay, and the majority stayed and did the activities with their child. Families had a great time and were so excited to be involved. This also was a test activity to see whether parents and kids would be interested in more stem-oriented activities in the future. Since it was a success, we will be doing more activities like this in our community.



Christmas Celebration

Ephraim City Recreation

Ephraim City’s annual Light Parade has been a beloved tradition, but this year, it reached new heights, becoming a true spectacle for the community. Thanks to Amanda Hansen, our visionary event coordinator, and the dedicated Power Department, the event transformed into a holiday destination. With the acquisition of nearly Temple Square-level string lights from a retiring vendor, Pioneer Park was reimagined into a magical winter wonderland. Families from Ephraim and neighboring counties flocked to experience the park’s first Christmas lighting ceremony, creating lasting holiday memories. Following the parade, Ephraim City debuted its

first-ever drone show, drawing hundreds to Main Street. The drones danced in the sky, forming captivating shapes and culminating in logos of local businesses that generously sponsored the event. This unforgettable evening showcased the power of community collaboration, highlighting local generosity and Ephraim’s commitment to creating unique experiences that bring people together.

Halloween Spooktacular & Haunted Heritage Trail

Lindon Parks & Recreation

This unforgettable community celebration showcased Alan’s incredible vision, planning, and dedication, attracting over 2,000 attendees to enjoy a safe, thrilling Halloween experience outdoors. One of the event’s highlights was the transformation of the 1,300-foot Lindon Heritage Trail into a haunted walk, filled with homemade, electric, and air-pressurized props. Alan and his staff did an amazing job designing and setting up these creative decorations, which captivated participants and added an authentic, spooky touch to the evening. The haunted trail became a must-see attraction, drawing families and individuals eager to experience the Halloween spirit in a safe and immersive environment.

Beyond the Haunted Trail, the park hosted a 50-vehicle trunk-or-treat organized by local businesses and citizens, allowing children to collect candy and interact with the community safely. The addition of a live band provided a lively soundtrack to the evening, keeping energy levels high and ensuring that the fun continued throughout the event. For children and families, a flashlight candy scramble added yet another layer of excitement, bringing smiles to kids of all ages.



Mapleton Burn Bright

Mapleton Parks & Recreation

Have you ever set New Year's goals that went nowhere because there was no meaning, purpose or drive behind them? More importantly, there was nothing to signify the change in your life. What initially started as a random idea in the office of burning all the Christmas trees. We decided to put meaning behind why we would burn Christmas trees. The Mapleton Burn Bright event is where the community gathers together, sets New Year's goals, and burns old habits. People get to set goals and write these on a customized branded plaque that they get to take with them and have a memorable experience that will leave an impact.

After people have had time to go to the burn box and set their goals, we prepare the fire by stacking any leftover trees to cover the tunnel and then light the fire. This event is one anyone can attend—remembering for the rest of their lives and keeping a burning desire to grow as an individual, family, and community.



The Death Race

Uintah Special Service District 1

The Death Race is an extraordinary endurance event that pushes participants to their physical and mental limits while fostering community engagement and camaraderie. This unique race takes place in the middle of July, beginning at 6:00 AM, and challenges runners to complete a 4-mile trail loop within an hour to qualify for the next lap. The race continues until participants can no longer meet the demanding time cutoff. Their endurance is put to the ultimate test, with runners braving scorching temperatures, often exceeding 90 degrees and peaking at 102 degrees. Last year, participants ran

continuously for up to 24 hours, navigating the rugged trail through the night with only headlamps to guide their way. To ensure safety, EMS is present throughout the event, ready to assist with any medical needs.

What makes The Death Race truly special is the unwavering support from the race crew and the local community. Crew members remain awake all night, cheering on the runners and creating an electrifying atmosphere that motivates participants to keep going.

Lindon 100th Anniversary

Lindon Parks & Recreation

Lindon City Parks and Recreation is proud to celebrate our city's 100th anniversary with a series of engaging monthly events, honoring our rich history since 1924. Highlights included the Roaring '20s Throwback Party, where residents dressed in vintage attire, enjoyed music, treats, and learned the Charleston with BYU dancers, along with an official centennial proclamation. A custom Dowdle puzzle unveiling and special Arbor Day Celebration honored our community spirit. The Summer Kickoff Party and Picnic in the Park brought families together, while an online Historic Centennial Adventure celebrated Lindon's story. Our Turkey Trot Race added seasonal fun, followed by a historic tree lighting ceremony. The Historical Museum Unveiling highlighted Lindon's legacy, leading into a festive Centennial Light Parade and grand Lindon Birthday Bash to close the year. Each event strengthened community bonds and celebrated Lindon's legacy.



Boo-A-Palooza

Vineyard Parks & Recreation

Vineyard City's 2024 Boo-A-Palooza was a noteworthy event that reached thousands of individuals! With approximately 3,500 attendees and approximately 51 booths, this equated to an approximate 16% increase in attendees and an approximate 34% increase in booths, compared to the 2023 event.

The booths represented consisted of a Vineyard City Council member, 7 Sponsors, the Vineyard Youth Council, Community Garden offerings, various City commissions and committees, Vineyard Cares, B.A.C.A., Huntsman Cancer Institute, local Vineyard City businesses, various Vineyard City staff departments, and more. The composition of booth offerings consisted of games, candy, coupons, etc.



OUTSTANDING SPECIAL

9/11 Day of Service

Saratoga Springs City Civic Events

The Saratoga Springs 9/11 Day of Service brought together over 1500 people serving at multiple locations in our city. We worked with a volunteer committee to identify needs in our area and to plan meaningful projects to meet these needs. Partnering with JustServe.org, we recruited volunteers for each specific project. We held most of the projects on a Wednesday night to encourage existing youth groups to spend their activity night at one of the projects. We partnered with Wyatt's Comfort Bundles and the Westlake Pantry. The final phase of our 9/11 Day of Service was hands-on work improving our local parks. We commemorated the spirit of unity and volunteerism that flooded the United States in the days and weeks following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Thousands of hours of service were given in one day, uplifting and inspiring our community to reach out to others and see what we can do to make it a better place.



40th Annual Thanksgiving Day 5k

Cottonwood Heights Parks & Recreation Service Area



The 40th Annual Cottonwood Heights Parks and Recreation Thanksgiving Day 5K in 2024 was a fun event that brought the community together. To mark the milestone, we added a fun twist to the "Beat the Mayor" contest by awarding all participants a commemorative medal reading, "I was so fast I didn't even see the mayor." We also gave back to local businesses by offering five free booths to showcase their products, turning the event into a true community celebration. For the second consecutive year, the race sold out in advance, and with the city's support, we were able to add 100

more spots, all of which quickly filled. This brought the total number of participants to 2,100, making this year's 5K the largest and most successful in event history. We are grateful to the participants, volunteers, and local businesses who made this event possible. The Thanksgiving Day 5K has become a cherished tradition in our community, and we are proud to organize it every year. Run first, gobble later!

40th Street Skatepark Grand Opening Celebration

South Ogden City

The highly anticipated 40th Street Skatepark is now complete. The official Grand Opening Celebration was held on October 3rd with Mayor Russ Porter, Weber County Commissioners, and the Ogden Weber Chamber of Commerce Spikers. In addition to the formal ribbon cutting, activities included a demo and open skate with Skateboarding and Streetboarding pros, giveaways, booth engagement from Crossroads Skateshop, Draganboards, Utah Skate Park Advocacy Group, 801 Fingerboarding and Spohn Ranch. Lucky Slice handed out 200 complimentary pizza slices and a DJ was on site providing atmosphere. Advocates who contributed to the project were honored and collectively signed skate decks as keepsakes for their involvement. Small but mighty, the event was successful in presenting our achieved goal of providing a community gathering place with built-in entertainment and activity options for all ages, contributing to our mission of enhancing quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors.



Dia de los Muertos

Oquirrh Recreation & Parks District



On 11/1/24, Kearns Oquirrh Park Fitness Center hosted a Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebration, uniting approximately 600 attendees to honor and experience the traditions of this significant Hispanic holiday. With 42% of our community identifying as Hispanic, the event showcased our district's rich diversity. The celebration included a community "ofrenda," where participants submitted photos of loved ones for a heartfelt tribute. Activities such as decorating sugar skulls, creating marigold flowers, and enjoying traditional crafts immersed attendees in the holiday's cultural significance. Guests also explored craft and food vendors and enjoyed live music and dance performances. Four exceptional groups performed: Kearns High School's Latinos in Action, Kings Music Studios, Danza Y Color Utah, and Mariachi Fuego, enriching the event with traditional Mexican music and dance. Granite Credit Union's sponsorship made this memorable celebration possible, along with contributions from our vendors, volunteers, and community partners. The success of this event was a testament to the power of community collaboration and the importance of cultural exchange. Attendees expressed gratitude, with some offering future support. We hope to continue growing this celebration and to provide even more opportunities for our community to engage with and appreciate Hispanic traditions.





Soap Box Derby

LiveDAYBREAK

The 2024 Daybreak Soap Box Derby brought together families, friends, and car enthusiasts for a thrilling day of fun and community connection.

In 2024, the Soap Box Derby featured a blend of beloved traditions and exciting new elements, drawing on partnerships with local organizations like Chip Cookie in Daybreak, The Food Truck League, Boy Scouts of America, Granger Baseball Team, The Salt Lake Bees, and

Daybreak Motor Club. Captured by prominent media outlets including ABC4, MSN, Fox13, Deseret News, and KUTV, the event reached a wide audience and elevated community pride.

Event elements included food trucks, a Pinewood Derby race, Bumble the Bee, the classic downhill race bracket, a video game truck featuring racing games, an inflatable racing-themed obstacle course, and a Little Tikes area complete with a car wash and gas pumps for younger participants. The Tiny Tim's Foundation for Kids car-building service project brought a heartfelt "giving back" element, while The Salt Lake Bees' booth added a touch of local athletic spirit and anticipation for the new Downtown Daybreak.



Orchard Days Lil Buck A Roo Rodeo

Santaquin Community Services

Get ready to saddle up for one of the wildest, rootin' tootin' events you'll find in Utah—Santaquin City's legendary Little Buck-a-Roo Rodeo! For years, this heart-pounding rodeo has brought together little cowboys and cowgirls from all corners of Utah, and beyond, to show off their skills, from tiny tots to high school heroes.

Held every year in late July, this event is a true rodeo extravaganza! Watch as the youngest cowpokes, as young as 3 or 4 years old, show their grit and determination in events like ribbon pulls, dummy roping, and the always-crazy Mutton Bustin'. But the excitement doesn't stop there! Kids 8 and up take it to the next level with fast-paced barrel racing, breakaway roping, bull riding, goat tying, pole bending, and

team roping. With over 75 courageous kids competing in the Mutton Bustin' alone, the energy is electric as these brave little riders show off their skills. This rodeo is all about celebrating the next generation of rodeo stars, and you'll be on the edge of your seat cheering them on every step of the way!

Steel Days- Mario Kart Tournament

American Fork Community Services

In 2023 the American Fork Rec department was challenged to expand our offerings for our city Steel Days celebration, and the Mario Kart Tournament was born. The first year we only offered 32 spots and it filled up faster than any of our other events offered that year, with lots of people trying to get on a waitlist or into the tournament last minute. This last year we had 64 spots offered for the double elimination tournament and had similar results to the first year. The tournament is hosted in our senior center on 6 separate screens, with Nintendo switches donated for the duration of the tournament by participants. The central location creates a fun atmosphere for the community to gather, cheer, and bond. It also has allowed us to reach people of the community we have not been able to with the offerings we have had prior to this event.



Texas Roadhouse & SDRC Meat Cutting Event

South Davis Recreation District



Texas Roadhouse, a renowned chain of steakhouses celebrated for its vibrant atmosphere, commitment to quality, and its wide selection of hand-cut steaks, has continuously sought ways to differentiate itself in the competitive restaurant industry. Among their products is the meat cutting competition, which has garnered attention for its uniqueness. The competition involves precise meat cutting under freezing conditions, with seventeen contestants participating. The victor advances to regional in Las Vegas, with a chance to win \$25,000.

The South Davis Recreation Center ice rink keeps a consistent cold temperature to replicate the rooms the meat cutters use in their home restaurants. Keeping the meat fresh and enough space to house the seventeen competitors. There are not many ice rinks that can say they host a meat cutting competition on their sheet of ice. This is truly a unique rental that meets the needs of both companies.



OUTSTANDING SPECIAL



Day of the Dead

St George Parks & Community Services

The St. George Day of the Dead celebration emerged as a vibrant cultural touchstone, drawing together diverse community members for an authentic celebration of Mexican heritage and traditions. This free community event, hosted by the St. George Art Museum and Community Arts team, transformed the museum space into a dynamic cultural hub featuring traditional elements including an ofrenda, Hispanic art gallery, and live performances of Mexican dance. This event addressed a crucial community need by creating an inclusive space for cultural celebration and exchange, particularly serving St. George's growing Hispanic

population while welcoming all community members interested in cultural exploration. The partnership between the Art Museum, local Hispanic cultural organizations, and community artists demonstrated the power of collaborative programming in building cultural bridges. The attendance and enthusiastic community response highlighted the demand for diverse cultural programming in St. George.

Herriman Howl

Herriman City

The Herriman Howl is an annual event that marks the beginning of the Halloween season for our growing and vibrant community. Attendance has grown significantly, with over 8,500 attendees in 2024, up from 5,000 in the previous. This celebration offers a wide range of free activities for all ages, bringing the community together in the spirit of the season.

Participants can enjoy interactive features such as a pirate ship, animal rides, a pumpkin walk, local business games with trick-or-treating, a skeleton scenes contest for community members, a DJ dance party, a dog costume contest, cemetery theater showcasing movie shorts, Scales & Tails exhibits, a rock wall, frightful window scenes, and photo booths.

By maintaining a no-cost admission policy, the Herriman Howl ensures inclusivity, allowing all community members to partake in the festivities. This approach fosters community spirit and engagement, making the Herriman Howl a cherished tradition that continues to grow and evolve each year.



Millcreek Magic Ice Show

Millcreek Life

The Millcreek Magic Ice Show brings a Disney-on-Ice-style experience to our community at an affordable price. Each year, the Community Life Events Team and local partners create a fresh theme focused on magic, science, and storytelling. This vision comes to life with local talent—acrobats, pyrotechnicians, ice skaters, and creative teams—resulting in a dazzling display of creativity and athleticism. Now a beloved tradition, the show is held the first weekend of December with two daily performances, each attracting around 750 attendees. Tickets cost just \$5, with proceeds supporting the talented performers.

More than entertainment, the show inspires. Partnering with the Starlit Blades, young skaters learn routines, perform live, and engage with production elements like lighting and effects. Experienced acrobats and dancers help shape the show. Jamie Wilner, Ice Skating Recreation Manager, leads auditions and collaborates with choreographers to refine the concept. Months of rehearsals and weekly planning meetings perfect the script, choreography, and production. A full dress rehearsal the day before opening integrates all elements—lighting, pyrotechnics, and music—for a magical preview. Blending arts with outdoor recreation, the Millcreek Magic Ice Show unites families and creates shared experiences. It exemplifies how creativity, community spirit, and passion can create something truly special.



Olympic Excellence

Orem Senior Friendship Center

In honor of the 2024 Olympics we hosted our own Olympic Excellence event at Orem Senior Friendship Center competing in Equestrian Flair, Shot Put and Olympic Trivia. A representative from each of 20 tables drew a flag from a covered container to find out which country they would be representing. Patrons nominated 3 of our friends to light the Olympic Torch. It was a wonderful way to honor them.

A big scoreboard was updated during the event, bringing competition to a fever pitch. In the end, Peru won the gold. France was the silver winner and Panama won bronze. All winners received medals and stood on the podium for pictures. Lunch included Olympic colored donut rings for dessert. Four of our community partners helped make this event happen. They not only supported us on that day by entertaining us with the synchronized swimming, they provided the table décor, a spectacular Olympic balloon backdrop and cheered our seniors to victory!

Root Beer Garden at SoJo Summerfest

South Jordan Parks & Recreation

SoJo Summerfest is growing in attendance every year and we are always looking for new and exciting things to bring to the event. Increased numbers mean a need for increased amenities, including shade and places for people to sit and rest. I love to make things cute whenever I can, so when one of our lawyers suggested we do a “Root Beer Garden” I jumped on the idea.

We decided to bring the atmosphere of the traditional Bavarian-style Beer Garden to our event, knowing it would need to be family-friendly in nature, and comply with the laws of our City by not selling alcohol. We created a custom logo with leaves of the sassafras tree, used Bavarian-style font for the title, and our SoJo Recreation logo. We designed and printed walls to cover two sides of a 40’ x 40’ tent. The walls give the appearance of wood grain with our new ‘Root Beer Garden’ logo burned into them, and blue and white fabric draped across the top. The tent is set with rustic-wooden benches and tables, a wooden bar, and is lit with bistro lights. Servers are dressed in traditional Bavarian style dresses/lederhosen. A Root beer is \$3, an includes a commemorative, color-changing plastic stein, and a flavor shot of their choice. Steins can be re-filled throughout the event for \$1.50, and ice cream can be added for \$1. Located near our main stage, people can sit in the shade and enjoy the SoJo Summerfest Music Festival in the Root Beer Garden.



Healing Field & Utah Fallen

Sandy City Community Events

The Utah Healing Field in Sandy City is held annually to honor and remember those lost on September 11, 2001. Established in 2002 as the first healing field in the nation, the event transforms the Sandy City Promenade Park into a sea of over 3,000 American flags, each representing a life lost in the tragic events of that day.

Visitors are invited to walk among the flags, which include names and brief biographies, creating a profound reminder of the human impact and resilience following the attacks. The event fosters unity and reflection, drawing families and community members to pay their respects.

In addition to the 9/11 tribute, the Utah Fallen field displays 300+ flags to honor Utah officers, first responders, and K9s who sacrificed their lives in service. This powerful addition emphasizes the continued dedication of our heroes. Installing over 3,350 flags requires skilled Parks & Rec employees and hundreds of enthusiastic volunteers, including high school clubs, church groups, and families. The flags remain on display for 5–7 days, during which employees handle maintenance and upkeep.





OUTSTANDING SPECIAL EVENT

Sensory Santa

West Valley City Parks & Recreation

Our community loves our annual Christmas events but for some the crowds and bustling atmosphere can be tricky to navigate. Bolstered by the observed need and impact of our adaptive fitness classes, we decided to hold yet another Christmas special event. Our Sensory Santa event offered ‘a sensory friendly experience for children and adults within every spectrum of special needs.’ Goals were to eliminate or reduce wait times, crowds, noise, and provide a truly personalized, flexible, and magical experience. We did this by having participants register for a 15-minute window within which they had 5 uninterrupted minutes with the Clauses. This meant those ready could go right in and those that needed more time to ‘warm up’ also had time. We called each party ahead of time for information such as triggers, cognition, and hobbies/interests. The information gathered was used to prepare staff for each arrival and allowed Mrs. C to present each visitor a low-cost personalized gift based on their interests. This gift proved to be quite useful in creating engagement and certainly added some magic. There were two staging rooms, one larger more active (gymnastics equipment etc) and one smaller & calmer (coloring/books). The Clauses were able to get on the floor, move around, and generally let the visitor set the direction of the visit. We received resounding gratitude from the event and we look forward to expanding to include more of Santa’s favorite believers next year.



Teen TechnaBLAST

Eagle Mountain City

Teen TechnaBLAST is an engaging and informative technology-focused event designed to inspire and educate tweens and teens in our community. Featuring a diverse range of businesses and career paths in STEM, trade careers, and government fields, the event aims to spark passion and imagination among youth while providing essential career exploration opportunities. Additionally, Teen TechnaBLAST promotes the importance of mental well-being, fostering resilience and community connection among participants.

The event has several key objectives: to provide a fun and stimulating environment where youth can explore potential career paths; to amplify youth voices by collaborating with local schools and addressing current challenges facing today’s young people; and to support at-risk youth, including youth with disabilities, by promoting inclusivity and reducing negative stereotypes and stigma. Teen TechnaBLAST features various career-driven booths with hands-on activities and demonstrations. Attendees can engage in virtual reality experiences, explore robotics, and learn about careers in technology, medicine, fire safety, law enforcement, and the skilled trades. Music and theater-related activities will also be available, offering creative outlets for youth interested in the arts. The event will conclude with a performance by a teen band from the School of Rock and an exciting drone show.

Wheels Park Grand Opening

West Jordan City

Kids of all ages, led by Mayor Burton, skated and biked through the banner to officially open our Wheels Park in October. The Wheels Park Grand Opening event welcomed our community to our newest park offering, creating a recreation hub for action sports, an area that was previously underrepresented in West Jordan City. Working with ten local skate partners, we offered lessons for “all wheels” from scooters to BMX riders and roller skaters engaging all the communities in our area and teaching many new skills they can then use in our park throughout the year. In addition to working with local partners, we had two corporate sponsors who offered free food and helmets to ensure that all those riding were safe. Keeping our attendees safe we partnered with our crossing guards to be at pivotal crosswalks to mitigate traffic and pedestrian interactions and had our bicycle police members throughout the park interacting with the skaters and handing out Wheels Park themed stickers. Having such a big opening for the park showed the community what our new park offered, and by teaching classes during the opening we provided them with the skills to use the park! We look forward to Wheels Park continuing to grow and be one of our highest used park spaces in West Jordan City.



Antczak Park

Cottonwood Heights Parks & Recreation Service Area

Originally established in 1977 and named in honor of board member Don Antczak, Antczak Park has long been a cornerstone of our community. By 2019, the park was showing its age, with deteriorating facilities in need of revitalization. To preserve its role as a hub for recreation, we launched the Antczak Park Project with a comprehensive master plan. Although delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project moved forward in 2022 with critical funding from the CARES Act and Coronavirus Relief Fund.

New post-tension tennis courts were installed, featuring upgraded fencing, pickleball lines, modern lighting, and a timed lighting system, alongside updated landscaping to enhance accessibility. A baseball field was reimagined into a versatile green space, creating more room for community programs. In 2023, the outdated playground was replaced with a larger, dynamic structure, and the pavilion, restrooms, and surrounding areas received fresh paint, drinking fountains, and thoughtful updates, giving the park a fresh, vibrant look. In 2024, the park embarked on a waterwise project, replacing sod with drip irrigation and low-water plants to reduce waste while improving aesthetics. Baseball and softball fields were also upgraded with new bases, plates, leveling, and conditioner to ensure optimal playability.



Clearfield Aquatic and Fitness Center

Clearfield Community Services

While new facilities are often recognized and celebrated, it's important not to overlook the efforts cities take to reinvest and to ensure that future generations can also enjoy these incredible amenities. This past year, Clearfield has invested in the Aquatic and Fitness Center through various, large, capital projects to help ensure its long-term viability. A completely new roof was installed throughout the center, The comp pool liner and laminate were replaced, as were all tiles around the pool. The city resurfaced the slide and oversaw a critical restoration of the slide stairs. Clearfield City continually supports not only investing in new items for its citizens, but also understands the importance of properly caring for the facilities in which the citizens have already invested. The center turns "20" this year and is well set for the next 20 years!

Cherry Ridge Bike Park

Springville City Parks & Recreation

Cherry Ridge Bike Park is the result of a vision from over 5 years ago of building a bike park on vacant city land next to existing public works water tanks. The location is on the foothills above Springville City, just below Spring Creek Canyon. The vision evolved into a 5-acre traditional bike park next to the tanks, with connections to a 20-acre mountain bike skills park in the canyon. This vision became reality in August of 2024, when with the support of grants from both UORG and Utah County the park opened to the public.



The Park is unique as it provides recreation opportunities for all kinds of riders, bikes, and hikers. The lower park has parking, public restrooms, pavilions, an asphalt bicycle playground, professional asphalt pump track, walking trails, and a trail to the canyon park. The canyon has three downhill trails, including the first public side-by-side dual slalom trail in Utah. Park users can enjoy BMX riding, mountain biking, and hiking all from one convenient starting point. In addition, the Bonneville Shoreline Trail crosses through the mountain bike park and riders can continue north or south to more trails in Provo or Hobble Creek Canyon. The park is providing our residents and visitors with a variety of excellent outdoor experiences.



OUTSTANDING FACILITY

Butterfield Canyon Trailhead Regional Park

Salt Lake County Parks & Recreation

Adding an additional 17 miles to the Southwest Canyons Trail Network, Butterfield Canyon Regional Park is a vital addition to Salt Lake County's recreational and open space offerings. This purpose-built, non-motorized trail system, along with a 150-space day-use parking area, caters to a diverse range of outdoor enthusiasts, including: hikers, bikers, runners, equestrians, skiers, and snowshoers. Located 40 minutes Southwest from downtown Salt Lake City, the trail network provides a critical recreational resource in a rapidly growing area.



Butterfield Canyon Trails showcase the power of partnerships between landowners to create cohesive, publicly accessible recreation amenities. The trails cross land owned by Salt Lake County, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Rio Tinto, establishing a unique collaboration among these landowners. One of the first partnerships of its kind in Salt Lake County, Rio Tinto opened previously inaccessible private lands to public trail access.

Now with over 50 miles of trails, the Southwest Canyons Trail Network promotes physical activity, mental well-being, and enjoyment of the region's natural beauty. Butterfield Trails will play a significant role in enhancing the health, well-being, and sense of community in the region, providing a long-lasting and unique amenity to both Salt Lake County and the broader area.



Electric Theater Center

St George Parks & Community Services

The Electric Theater Center stands as a vibrant cornerstone of St. George's cultural landscape, seamlessly blending historic preservation with modern artistic innovation. Established over a century ago, this beloved landmark was transformed by the City of St. George through extensive renovations from 2014 to 2016, emerging as a hub for the arts while preserving historic character.

This versatile facility houses a theater space, art gallery, artist studios, dance rooms, classrooms, and meeting spaces – all available for public rental. This accessibility has proven invaluable for the community's burgeoning arts scene, providing crucial infrastructure for emerging creative organizations. The Center has become home to numerous performing arts groups, hosting everything from dance and theater productions to musical ensembles. It serves as the venue for two growing film festivals – the Desertscape Film Festival and Horrorfest – while supporting visual arts through the Arrowhead Gallery, operated by the Southern Utah Art Guild.

Hillcrest Park Center

Orem Parks & Recreation

Building on the popular trend of indoor/outdoor living, Orem City Recreation created an indoor/outdoor recreation experience with the rehabilitation of Hillcrest Elementary and Hillcrest Park. Due to an aging facility and a reduction in students, Hillcrest Elementary was closed. A small city-owned park adjacent to the school was underused and had little to offer. With the plan to create a larger 9-acre park for the community, the City of Orem purchased the school property. Most of the school was torn down, and the gym/cafeteria, kitchen area and one class room (which was the most recent addition to the school) was turned into a community center and gym. Additionally, the new Hillcrest Park Center is in a PRIME LOCATION – located directly south of University Mall with major road and public transportation access.



Lehi Family Park

Lehi Parks

Lehi Family Park has redefined community recreation in the region, offering an unparalleled experience through its thoughtful design and commitment to inclusivity. Spanning 45 acres, with an additional 45 acres reserved for future development, the park serves as a hub for connection, recreation, and innovation, addressing critical needs in the surrounding community.

The park's centerpiece is one of the largest all-abilities playgrounds in Utah, a beacon of inclusivity that ensures children of all abilities can play, explore, and thrive together. Complementing the playground is a splash pad longer than a football field, offering a unique and engaging water play experience. Other key features include 20 acres of premier soccer fields, a sensory garden, and an amphitheater that supports cultural events and community gatherings.





Carol and Jim Laub Plaza

Logan Parks & Recreation

The Carol and Jim Laub Plaza, located in Logan, Utah, is a vibrant community hub that exemplifies excellence in the design and development of public spaces. Opened in November 2023, this innovative facility integrates thoughtful architecture with Logan's natural beauty to create a dynamic and inclusive space for residents and visitors. The plaza features beautifully landscaped flower beds and planters, offering a peaceful retreat, and a state-of-the-art outdoor performance venue that hosts concerts, theater productions, and community events. Its unique amenities include an interactive water fountain, a family favorite during summer, and a seasonal ice-skating rink that transforms the space into a festive destination in winter. Its versatile facility has become a cultural epicenter, fostering social interaction and community pride. By hosting free public events and showcasing both local and world-class talent, it enriches the cultural fabric of Logan. The plaza's accessibility and year-round activities make it a cornerstone for community engagement. In addition to its cultural impact, the Carol and Jim Laub Plaza supports Logan's economic vitality by drawing visitors and benefiting nearby businesses. Its thoughtful design and programming have made it a key driver of downtown revitalization.

Smith Ranch Park

Eagle Mountain Parks

Smith Ranch Park in Eagle Mountain City has transformed the local community by providing a vibrant, inclusive space for recreation, education, and connection. Featuring state-of-the-art amenities such as two multipurpose fields, a newly built skate park, a Ninja Warrior course, modern playgrounds, pavilions for gatherings, walking trails, and a small amphitheater dedicated to nature-based educational events, the park caters to individuals of all ages and interests. The skate park, a highlight of the facility, has become a hub for youth engagement, fostering skill development, creativity, and a sense of belonging.



Smith Ranch Park addresses critical needs by filling a gap in recreational opportunities for teens, young adults, and families, offering a safe, welcoming environment for healthy physical activity and social interaction. Its innovative design integrates sustainability through water-efficient landscaping, eco-friendly materials, and solar-powered LED lighting, showcasing a commitment to conservation and green building practices.



West Jordan Wheels Park

West Jordan City

The West Jordan Skate Park, a collaboration between the city and Rio Tinto, stands as a dynamic hub for recreation, creativity, and community engagement. The park features a state-of-the-art design with a variety of obstacles and ramps tailored to skaters of all skill levels. Its innovative layout fosters both novice and experienced skateboarders, BMX riders, and scooter enthusiasts. This facility has become a central gathering place, promoting healthy lifestyles, physical activity, and youth engagement in a safe, supervised environment.

The skate park directly addresses the community's need for recreational spaces that cater to action sports, which were previously underrepresented in the area. By offering a specialized venue for skateboarding and BMX riding, the park has reduced the incidence of riders using unsafe areas, such as parking lots and streets, ensuring greater safety and reduced conflicts with traffic. The park has also encouraged social cohesion by creating a space where people of all ages and backgrounds can connect, share experiences, and foster a sense of belonging.



OUTSTANDING PROFESSIONAL

Cindy Healey

*Outstanding Professional – Active Aging
American Fork Community Services*

Cindy Healey is passionate about caring for the active aging population in American Fork and beyond. She cares about them physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, financially and in any other way you can think of. As we look back at history, we all know COVID-19 changed the lives of individuals, families, communities, states, nations and the world. During this time American Fork City faced changes and significant challenges at our senior center. We were tasked to step in and do more to provide for and care for the seniors of not only our city, but surrounding communities as well. Enter Cindy Healey. She had been working at the fitness center, involved with day care, front desk, water aerobics and senior fitness. She was immediately identified and assigned to the senior center to oversee operations. In conjunction with Janet Marsden and our volunteer Senior Center Director Stan Street, she jumped in caring for our seniors. As services have grown and changed, Cindy has become the full time Senior Center Manager. She has been instrumental in growing daily attendance, programs and meal participation from 20 people to over 130 people on a regular basis.



Audrey Durfee

*Outstanding Professional - Aquatics
Cottonwood Heights Parks & Recreation Service Area*

Audrey Durfee is the Aquatics Manager at Cottonwood Heights Parks and Recreation. She has been instrumental in the success of community events such as the Ducky Drop and Water Safety Day, an annual family event that raises awareness about water safety through engaging, interactive stations for both children and parents.

Audrey also helped establish the Utah Drowning Prevention Coalition (UDPC) and served as its first chair. This nonprofit has raised funds to install life jacket stations around Utah's lakes, highlighting the importance of wearing life jackets to prevent drowning.

Audrey has been a passionate advocate for water safety and is dedicated to enhancing public education and making a lasting impact on the safety of Utah's communities.

Wendy Harris

*Outstanding Professional - Aquatics
Uintah Special Service District 1*

Wendy Harris has been in Aquatics for 36 years. She started her career as most in the field, as a lifeguard and swim instructor. She moved up to management at the age of 20. She has been with Uintah Recreation for 18 years.

Wendy has always had a love of aquatics and has been able to promote that love through both managing and coaching. She has been very active with Special Olympics of Utah as a swim coach. She is also a Michael Phelps IM trainer. Due to this training, she was chosen to go to a review course in Indianapolis in 2024. She did her review and then was a part of a clinic held for some Special Olympics athletes there. She was able to go watch some of the Olympic time trials as well.

Wendy is always looking for ways to improve her own skills, as well as the skills of her staff. She is an excellent aquatics professional who seeks to always lift those around her. She is a wonderful resource to other professionals with her wealth of knowledge.





Heath Bateman

Outstanding Professional - Executive
Lindon Parks & Recreation

Heath Bateman is a remarkable leader, deserving of the Utah Parks and Recreation Executive of the Year Award. Throughout his career, Heath has dedicated himself to mentoring and coaching others, inspiring them to embrace greater responsibility, build self-confidence, and grow within the Parks and Recreation field. His thoughtful, hands-on approach has empowered countless individuals to achieve their goals, fostering a culture of collaboration and support. Heath's compassion and commitment to service make him an exemplary representative of every organization he serves. His focus on helping others succeed, combined with his humility and dedication, embodies the best qualities in leadership. Heath's influence resonates through his positive impact on people, communities, and the parks and recreation profession itself.

Cheryl Meier

Outstanding Professional - Executive
Uintah Special Service District 1

Cheryl has demonstrated leadership and dedication by transforming a struggling recreation district into a unified organization. Her tireless efforts and ability to inspire positive change has improved our district efficiency and culture dramatically.

When Cheryl accepted the position of Executive Director in 2023 the District faced significant challenges, including low morale, poor participation, and internal discord among employees. Through her visionary leadership and steadfast commitment, Cheryl not only revitalized the District but also fostered a sense of cohesion and purpose among the staff.



Dale Robinson

Outstanding Professional - Executive
Spanish Fork Parks & Recreation

Dale Robinson has been the Parks & Recreation Director for Spanish Fork City for 27+ years. He manages 13 different divisions including Parks, Recreation, Cemetery, Fairgrounds, The Oaks Golf Course, Arts Council, & Senior Center. Dale has seen Spanish Fork go from a small home town feel of less than 15,000 citizens to a vibrant and growing city of 50,000+ residents. He has always promoted and followed the motto of Spanish Fork - Pride and Progress. He has often been quoted as saying, "If you're going to do it, or build it, or maintain it, then do it RIGHT!" That type of leadership and high expectation has filtered down throughout the department of now over 47 full-time employees.

Brad Vaske

Outstanding Professional - Executive
South Jordan Recreation

Brad Vaske exemplifies excellence in parks and recreation leadership. With over 20 years of experience across public, private, and nonprofit sectors, he has made a lasting impact on community recreation. As South Jordan's Associate Director of Recreation for nearly two years and a dedicated Program Coordinator for eight years prior, Brad has played a pivotal role in expanding programs and enhancing recreational opportunities for residents of all ages. His leadership in growing soccer, volleyball, outdoor recreation, and race series programs has strengthened community engagement.

A visionary innovator, Brad launched virtual recreation programs at the onset of COVID-19, earning media recognition for his swift and creative response. His fiscal responsibility has ensured sustainable program growth while maintaining budget efficiency. His dedication extends beyond city limits, actively supporting URPA through professional development, collaboration, and mentorship.





OUTSTANDING PROFESSIONAL

Melissa Ruff

*Outstanding Professional - Human Resources
Cottonwood Heights Parks & Recreation Service Area*

Melissa Ruff, Human Resource Director at Cottonwood Heights Parks and Recreation, has 15 years of experience shaping the organization's growth and culture. She has significantly improved the employee experience, introducing software that streamlined communication and simplified onboarding. Recently, Melissa has focused on fostering a positive, inclusive culture, creating the Culture Crew, a team of employees who meet monthly to develop initiatives that make employees feel valued. Her leadership is centered on supporting employees and embracing change, ensuring CHRC's continuous improvement. Melissa's efforts have had a lasting impact on both employees and the organization.



Kaitlin Youd

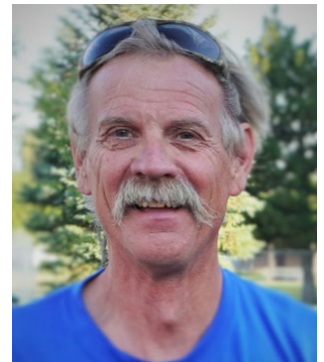
*Outstanding Professional - Customer Service
South Jordan Recreation*

Kaitlin Youd is the backbone of South Jordan's Recreation Department, providing critical support across all areas and divisions. With over a decade of experience in Parks and Recreation, she ensures seamless operations, fosters staff development, and delivers exceptional customer service. Having served both South Jordan City and Salt Lake County Parks and Recreation in multiple roles, including Administrative Assistant and Customer Service Supervisor, Kaitlin's leadership is indispensable.

Bill Candland

*Outstanding Professional - Parks & Maintenance
Pleasant Grove Parks*

Bill Candland serves as the Facility Manager for Pleasant Grove City and has been a dedicated member of the team for nearly 20 years, fulfilling this role throughout his tenure. Bill is responsible for the maintenance and repair of all city facilities, overseeing nine municipal buildings, public parks, ballparks, and the rodeo grounds. As a sole operator, he manages a wide range of tasks, including plumbing, electrical work, HVAC, and various construction projects, both large and small.



Andrew Davis

*Outstanding Professional - Parks & Maintenance
Cottonwood Heights Parks & Recreation Service Area*

Andrew Davis has over 13 years of experience with Cottonwood Heights Parks and Recreation, advancing from Recreation Coordinator to Parks Manager. He has led a seasonal team of up to 15 employees, managed 8 parks and expanded his expertise in parks management. He has been instrumental in the success of the URPA award-winning "VIPs in the Park" program, encouraging citizen involvement in park improvement projects. Andrew has also implemented water-saving strategies to maintain park sustainability. He contributed to the development of Antczak Park and is involved in the 2025 improvements to Bywater Park, shaping the future of CH Parks and Recreation's park systems with a focus on sustainability and community engagement.



Jason Miller

Outstanding Professional - Parks & Maintenance
South Jordan Parks

Jason Miller has built an exceptional career in Parks and Turf Maintenance, with nearly 20 years of experience dedicated to enhancing public spaces and green environments. Throughout his career, Jason has demonstrated a deep commitment to improving park facilities, implementing sustainable practices, and ensuring high-quality turf management. His expertise has directly contributed to the success of various park and recreation projects, optimizing both the aesthetic and functional aspects of the spaces under his care.



Nick Coleman

Outstanding Professional - Recreation
West Valley City Parks & Recreation

With 16+ years of leadership in Parks and Recreation, Nick Coleman is a transformative force in events and programming. A University of West Florida graduate with an M.P.A. from Strayer University, he holds a CPRP certification and is pursuing his CPRE. His “can-do” attitude, work ethic, and unwavering dedication make him an outstanding professional and an experienced leader both locally and nationally.

Brittany Crumback

Outstanding Professional - Recreation
Lehi Recreation

Brittany’s career is a testament to her dedication to the parks and recreation profession and her community. With 14 years of service to Lehi City, she has continuously gone above and beyond to support and positively impact the Utah Recreation & Parks Association (URPA) and the Central Utah Parks & Recreation Association (CURPA). Serving as CURPA Secretary for over eight years, she has been an integral part of its success, and her role as CURPA Golf Tournament Representative for two years showcased her commitment to fostering connections within the profession.



Shauna Jo Eves

Outstanding Professional - Recreation
Santaquin Community Services

Shauna Jo Eves has been in the Parks and Recreation profession for nearly 25 years. She graduated from Utah State University in Parks and Recreation, carried out an internship with Orem City and then spent 20 years working for the Uintah Basin Recreation District. In 2022, Shauna Jo joined the Santaquin Recreation department as a Recreation Supervisor.

Anyone that knows Shauna Jo understands her passion for the profession. She truly loves providing programs and events that improve the quality of life of residents she serves. Her experience is vast, focusing on enrichment, special events, sports, facility management, and childcare. Shauna Jo is the current CURPA Golf Tournament chairperson. She has also served on the URPA Conference Auction Committee. She loves being involved in URPA and CURPA. She is CPRP certified.



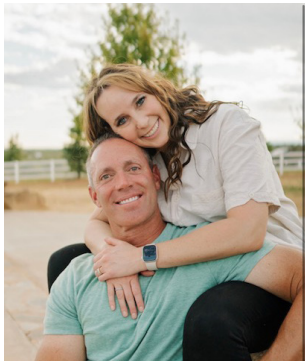
OUTSTANDING PROFESSIONAL

Kris High

*Outstanding Professional - Recreation
Kaysville Parks & Recreation*

Kris High is a pillar of passion and professionalism in parks and recreation in Kaysville City, and Northern Utah. For more than 25 years, Kris has dedicated her time, talents, and energy to providing cutting edge opportunities for youth and adults to experience life through sports, programs, and community events.

Kris is known for going above and beyond with her efforts in providing exceptional programs for her community. Her genuine and thoughtful care for others, whether participant, spectator, or colleague is easily seen by those who have the opportunity to interact with her.



David Palmer

*Outstanding Professional - Recreation
Blanding Recreation*

David Palmer is the longest running Parks & Rec Director for the City of Blanding. He oversees the largest department in the city, with over 50 employees during our peak season. That includes the pool at the Wellness Center and parks. He and the lifeguards have been recognized for the past 4 years for their outstanding service for Aquatics Safety from ULG Trust.

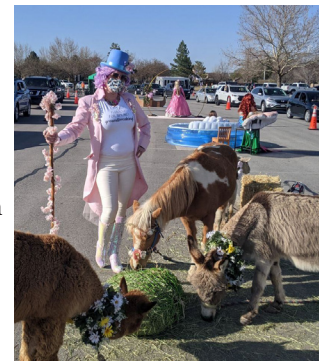
David has helped every youth program grow to all time highs with participation, when there has only been a 1% increase of population over the last 10 years.

David enjoys his job and is proud to be able to serve the youth, not just of Blanding, but of San Juan County. He is a firm believer and makes it one of his primary goals, to be able to give all the youth opportunities to learn and grow, on and off the field. He enjoys being able to support and watch youth in our community, that has previously done sports in our programs and see them succeed in the high school years.

Natalie Domino

*Outstanding Professional - Special Events
South Jordan Events*

Natalie Domino is an exceptional leader in special events, bringing creativity, organization, and passion to every project. Since joining South Jordan in 2018 as Special Event Coordinator, she has transformed community engagement through innovative and inclusive programming. Recently promoted to Special Events Supervisor, Natalie continues to elevate city events, ensuring they are dynamic, accessible, and reflective of the community's diverse needs.



Halle Allen

*Outstanding Professional - Young Professional
Mapleton City*

Halle has become an invaluable asset to our department, consistently demonstrating high dedication, professionalism, and a genuine passion for recreation and the community we serve. She has the great ability to communicate calmly and effectively with everyone she works with. Whether addressing challenges or providing guidance, her thoughtful and clear communication brings a collaborative approach and ensures every staff member feels heard and valued. One of Halle's most remarkable qualities is her positive attitude. She brings contagious energy and enthusiasm to the workplace, which uplifts those around her. Her smile and can-do spirit have a way of turning challenges into opportunities. Her dedication, positivity, innovation, and teamwork have impacted our department and the community we serve.



Natalie Garcia

Outstanding Professional - Young Professional
LiveDAYBREAK

Natalie joined our team while still studying at Brigham Young University and has been promoted twice in the past two years. She embraces Daybreak's values, including interpersonal connectivity, lifelong learning, embracing arts and diversity, healthy living, and giving back. Throughout 2024 she initiated a wildly successful Latin festival where she recruited and engaged Latin residents to help and volunteer to ensure an authentic experience for our residents. As Natalie pours her heart into each of her responsibilities and initiatives, she has elevated the experience and helped to make Daybreak more than a group of homes but rather a community.



Preston Jones

Outstanding Professional - Young Professional
Cottonwood Heights Parks & Recreation Service Area

Preston began his career in parks and recreation at 15, discovering a passion for community engagement and program development. Now, at 25, he serves as a full-time Recreation Coordinator at Cottonwood Heights Parks and Recreation, overseeing successful programs such as Flag Football, Parks and Recreation Camp, and pickleball leagues and clinics. He also plays a key role in organizing various community events throughout the year.

Known for his inspiring leadership, Preston excels in mentoring his staff and fostering a collaborative, motivated work environment. His calm demeanor and attention to detail ensure events are executed with precision, even under pressure. His program management expertise allows him to consistently improve existing offerings, driving them to greater success.

Peyton Lee

Outstanding Professional - Young Professional
St George Parks & Community Services

Peyton exemplifies excellence in arts administration through her leadership as Community Arts Manager in Southern Utah. Her innovative approach to arts programming has created lasting impact by making artistic expression accessible to all community members. Armed with a Master's degree in Arts Administration and an unwavering commitment to professional growth, she consistently works to elevate Southern Utah's creative and artistic landscape.



Spencer Madanay

Outstanding Professional - Young Professional
Park City Parks & Recreation

Spencer Madanay has made a profound impact on Park City Recreation and the broader community through innovative programming, exceptional leadership, and a commitment to equity. Graduating with a Master of Public Administration in August 2024, Spencer has applied his expertise to expand capacity for the consistently sold-out summer day camp program, significantly increasing accessibility for LatinX participants by building relationships with local nonprofits and streamlining processes.

Spencer has introduced award-winning events such as the beloved Cardboard Sled Derby and continually champions creativity and inclusivity in recreation offerings. Through his innovative vision and dedication, Spencer has positively transformed recreation opportunities and built lasting connections within the Park City community.



URPA PROFESSIONAL



Steve & Georgia Carpenter

Professional Development Scholarship - \$1,000

Steve Carpenter dedicated 23 years to the Utah Department of Natural Resources, serving in the Parks and Recreation Division as a comprehensive planner, administrative assistant to the Director, and Park Manager. His contributions to the field earned him prestigious honors, including the 1996 URPA Service to the Profession Award and the 1999 Lifetime Achievement Award.

After retiring from state service, Steve took a one-year break before stepping into the role of URPA Executive Director, a position he held with dedication for 12 years until his retirement in July 2011. His tenure was defined by passionate advocacy for the profession, as he engaged with national organizations, collaborated with leaders at all levels of government, and built strong networks across the country. His impactful leadership continues to serve as a lasting model for

effecting positive change within our profession.

Always by his side, Steve's wife, Georgia, played an integral role in URPA, contributing to its growth and success. In recognition of their enduring impact, the URPA Board of Directors established the Steve and Georgia Carpenter Professional Development Scholarship in 2013, encouraging future generations to uphold their legacy of stewardship and leadership in the profession.



Fred & Judy Tamagawa

Professional Development Scholarship - \$1,000

With a career spanning decades in the parks and recreation industry, Fred Tamagawa emerged as a distinguished leader in our profession, leaving a lasting impact on the Utah Recreation and Parks Association (URPA). Throughout his tenure, he held multiple board positions, serving as URPA Executive Secretary from 1983 to 1991, followed by 12 years as Executive Treasurer from 1991 to 2003, and culminating in his term as URPA President from 2004 to 2005. Fred's vision, leadership, and dedication played a pivotal role in shaping the direction, sustainability, and success of our association.

In recognition of his outstanding contributions, Fred received the Service to URPA Award in 1994 and was honored with the URPA Lifetime Achievement Award in 2007. Understanding the value of continuous professional development, he championed access to training and education

for parks and recreation professionals. His commitment to this cause led to the establishment of the Fred and Judy Tamagawa Professional Development Scholarship in 2013. Funded through annual scholarship auctions, this scholarship is a testament to Fred and Judy's unwavering dedication to the profession.

Throughout Fred's 25+ years of service on the URPA Board of Directors, his wife, Judy, has been his steadfast supporter and "right-hand person." Her active involvement in conferences, volunteer efforts at check-ins, contributions to scholarship auctions, and genuine friendships with countless parks and recreation professionals have made her an invaluable member of our community.



Great Western Recreation

Professional Development Scholarship - \$1,000

Continuous learning is fundamental to personal growth and leadership in any organization. At Great Western Recreation, we believe professional development is essential and deeply embedded in our core values. Our founding member, Rich Boyce, a former professor at Utah State University, and his successor, Steve Kyriopoulos, a parks and recreation professional and

Utah State graduate, both championed the importance of education. We are proud to carry forward this commitment by supporting parks and recreation professionals in their pursuit of knowledge through the Great Western Recreation Professional Scholarship.





Nancy & Joe Day

Professional Development Scholarship - \$1,000

To honor Nancy Day's remarkable 37+ year career in parks and recreation, as well as the inspiration and support of her husband, Joe, a professional development scholarship was established in their names.

Nancy's career began in campus recreation at the University of Utah and expanded through leadership roles with Salt Lake County and Cottonwood Heights. She later became Director of the Family Fitness Center in West Valley City before rising to Director of Parks & Recreation. Throughout her career, she has been recognized for her collaborative leadership, dedication to community advocacy and commitment to mentoring countless professionals across the state. Her passion for inclusive programming, particularly for veterans, has left a lasting impact.

Nancy's service to URPA has been equally influential. She has held multiple positions on the URPA Board of Directors, including serving as President from 2013 to 2014. She was honored with the Outstanding Executive Professional Award in 2016 and a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2024. Nancy played a key role in founding URPA's Leadership Academy and remains a driving force behind the program, currently serving as the committee chair. This scholarship, established in 2024, is a tribute to Nancy's lasting contributions, ensuring that her legacy of leadership, mentorship and professional development continues to inspire future generations in the field of parks and recreation.

SCHOLARSHIP NOMINEES



River J. August



Zachary Campbell



Melisa Catten



Lucille Cole



Shauna Jo Eves



Joe Gourley



Cindy Harrison



Aubrie Ivie



Craig Oswald



Mariah Shirley



Jessica West



Tyler Wilkins



PROFESSIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS



Michael J Peterson Learn & Lead

Professional Development Scholarship - \$2,500

In 2021, the URPA Board of Directors established the Michael J. Peterson Learn and Lead Scholarship. This scholarship honors Mike Peterson's extraordinary contributions to the field of parks and recreation in Utah, recognizing over 50 years of dedicated service that has left a lasting impact on his colleagues and the profession as a whole.

Mike's influence extends far beyond his immediate community, county and state. He began his career as a young professional with the Salt Lake County Parks & Recreation Department and steadily rose through leadership positions, including Deputy Director of Salt Lake County Aging Services, Associate Division Director for Salt Lake County Parks and Recreation, Division Director for Hansen Planetarium, and Director of Salt Lake County Criminal Justice

Services. His commitment to public service also led him into politics, where he was elected to the Board of Trustees for the Cottonwood Heights Parks and Recreation Service Area while still serving Salt Lake County. Following his retirement, he continued his leadership journey as the Director of the Cottonwood Heights Parks and Recreation Service Area and later as Mayor of Cottonwood Heights.

Mike's leadership has had a profound impact on both regional and national levels, as well as within URPA. He has held various roles on the URPA Board of Directors, including serving as President from 1992 to 1993 and as NRPA Southwest Regional Representative. His dedication and influence have strengthened URPA's mission, and his contributions were recognized with the URPA Outstanding Executive Professional Award in 2013 and the URPA Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015.

A true leader, mentor, and advocate for lifelong learning, Mike Peterson has inspired countless professionals in the parks and recreation field. His passion for education and continuous improvement is reflected in the Michael J. Peterson Learn and Lead Scholarship, which provides financial support to professionals committed to making a lasting impact in Utah's parks and recreation sector. Scholarship recipients are expected to actively participate in training and meetings, using their acquired knowledge to further URPA's mission and enhance the profession.

SCHOLARSHIP NOMINEES



Dayna Blackburn



Robbie Gard



Candace Whitaker



Chad Wright





Jared Flatt

SFMA Groundskeeper of the Year
Lehi Parks

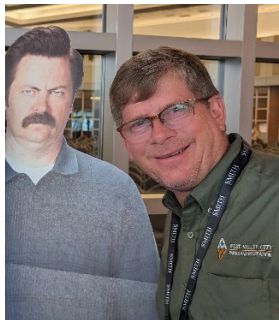
Jared has worked for the Lehi City Parks department for fourteen years. He is a vital part of the Parks team. He oversees the maintenance of all sports fields for Lehi City. In Lehi, the Parks and Recreation departments are not combined. We are separate entities. However, Jared has worked very hard to bridge the gap between the two departments. He is passionate about recreation and the benefits it brings to the community. He works tirelessly to make sure the parks are well maintained and presentable to the public.

Dustin Hinkle

SFMA Groundskeeper of the Year
Uintah Special Service District 1

Dustin has been a dedicated and skilled groundskeeper, elevating the standard of sports field and park maintenance in our community. With years of hands-on experience, Dustin has demonstrated exceptional expertise in turf management, irrigation systems, and sustainable landscaping practices. His commitment to professional growth is evident through his participation in multiple URPA field training sessions, including those held at BYU and USU, where he gained knowledge to implement innovative techniques in his work.

Dustin's impact extends beyond the fields he maintains—his efforts have enriched the lives of athletes, families, and visitors who enjoy safe, high-quality recreational spaces. By spearheading initiatives to improve water efficiency and field durability, he has directly supported the district's environmental and cost-saving goals. His proactive involvement in community events and youth sports programs has fostered a stronger connection between parks and the public, ensuring these spaces are welcoming and accessible for everyone.



Kent Jensen

SFMA Groundskeeper of the Year
West Valley City Parks & Recreation

With over 26 years of dedicated service, Kent has transformed West Valley City into a model of Sports Field and Parks excellence. His professionalism, innovation, and leadership are evident in every aspect of his work.

Through solid planning, strategic budgeting, and collaboration with local teams, Kent consistently achieves seasonal enhancements that elevate the quality of fields. Kent's leadership is reflected in the dedication and hard work of his crew. His team consistently thrives under his guidance, with many members advancing to leadership roles in other cities. This is a testament to Kent's ability to inspire and mentor his team, creating a lasting impact on the industry.

Buck Liddiard

SFMA Groundskeeper of the Year
Provo Parks & Recreation

Buck epitomizes dedication to his craft, taking immense pride in maintaining pristine ball fields and beautifully kept grounds. Over the past 25 years, he has focused his energy where it matters most: on his fields and his team. While he has not actively participated in organizations like URPA, his reputation shines through the excellence of his work.

For over a decade, Buck has transformed Provo's ball fields into some of the finest public baseball and softball diamonds in the state. When tasked with renovating seven neglected fields, he restored them to pristine condition in less than three seasons. These revitalized diamonds have attracted increased public use and tournament requests, a testament to his expertise and hard work.





Epic Sports Park

Provo Parks & Recreation

The Epic Sports Park is a 100-acre sports complex currently featuring 15 multi-purpose athletic fields. On 1 million square feet of Kentucky Bluegrass, the park accommodates a wide range of sports events, proving to be a vital hub for local and regional athletics.

Provo's 330+ local sports teams previously overcrowded its 11 fields and after the Epic was built it not only solved this bottleneck but also transformed Provo into a regional sports destination. In Fall 2024, two major tournaments generated over \$4 million in economic impact and filled over 5,300 hotel room nights locally. Multi-year contracts and 2025 bookings already exceeding expectations highlight its growing demand.

The park's sustainability initiatives are equally impressive. Sand-capped fields equipped with cloud-based irrigation systems use sensors to monitor soil moisture and ensure precise water conservation. Low impact drainage systems in parking areas capture storm water and reduce water needs, reinforcing its commitment to eco-friendly practices.



Beyond its infrastructure, the park enriches the community. Partnering with local youth leagues and regional sports organizations the Epic provides affordable access and hosts programs that inspire the next generation of athletes. In just the first 6 weeks of operations, the Epic has already served 300+ teams.

The Epic Sports Park exemplifies innovation, sustainability, and community enrichment, making it a deserving candidate for Field of the Year.

Lakeside Sports Park

Orem Parks & Recreation

Centrally located in Utah County with easy access from I-15, Lakeside Sports Park is the home of many local sports enthusiasts and is one of the biggest parks in Orem. This facility hosts leagues and tournaments for both youth and adults for softball, baseball, soccer, rugby, ultimate frisbee, kickball, and football as well as year-round training. Lakeside Park is also a favorite site for cross country meets, hosting 2 high school meets and 3 college meets in 2024, including the WAC cross country championships. A recent remodel of the park included replacing 5 softball/baseball fields (summer 2023) and 2 full-sized soccer fields (summer 2024) with artificial turf, replacing the scoreboards on the softball fields (summer 2023), and adding LED lights (fall 2023) to the new artificial soccer fields. Heaters were also installed in the bathrooms in fall of 2023. All of these upgrades were designed to accommodate year-round access as organized sports continue to grow.



In large part due to these upgrades, Lakeside Sports Park experienced a visitor increase of 56% in 2024, with more than 100,000 Orem residents enjoying the new facility – a direct benefit to our Orem community. Additionally, over 50,000 visitors came from 50+ miles away. Many of those who visited Lakeside Park, whether local or out of town, contributed to the economy with visits to Orem businesses either just prior to or immediately after the event totaling 66,57 visits. Other communities close by also received an economic boost. Lakeside Sports Park is one of the premier sports parks in the state, and a major player in the sports tourism industry in Utah County.



Nelson Field

Spanish Fork Parks & Recreation

Nelson Field is an iconic baseball field located at the Russell Swenson Memorial Park in Spanish Fork City. The field is owned and operated by the city and maintained by the Spanish Fork Parks Division. Nelson Field was built in the 1950's and has been used for many recreational leagues throughout the years. The field is also home to the 8 time state champion's Spanish Fork Don's. The field has undergone several changes over the years such as new dugouts, new lights, and a new outfield fence, but has always maintained it's iconic character.

Nelson Field is maintained to a high standard of excellence and in 2003 was named the "Turface National Field of the Year". The field is well known throughout the baseball community and many teams look forward to playing on it each year.

Paul Harvey (longtime radio personality) once declare Spanish Fork as the baseball capital of the United States. More people per capita played baseball in Spanish Fork than anywhere else in the country. Nelson Field played a huge part in that declaration. The field has always been a gathering place for our community and will continue to be well into the future.



Oaklawn Football Field

North Ogden Parks & Recreation

Oaklawn Football Field serves as a multipurpose field used in spring and fall time. Back in 2020, the field was renovated to give us a blanket canvas to work with to improve the overall quality and playability. We were able to fraise mow the field to remove the unwanted grass but leave the good native soil. After the turf was removed, we laser graded the field and planted a high-quality Bluegrass/Rye Grass Mix. In 2021, the state suffered from the drought and that brought plenty of challenges to keep the field in tip top shape. During and after that year we were able to get on a great fertilizer program to help keep the turf green and healthy. Every year during the peak of the summer heat, we throw out a good water retention and infiltration agent that helps us cut down on water but keep the turf healthy. Given the level of maintenance that Oaklawn requires, the parks team has taken great strides to further their knowledge to put their best foot forward to give the community the best possible field for recreational activities. Oaklawn's field has impacted on the community by allowing more recreational activities and a beautiful green space for everyone to enjoy. Many times, when the team is at the park, visitors comment on the beauty of Oaklawn. During football season, our recreation



tells us every week that she gets many compliments on how nice the field is and how everyone always loves coming up to play at Oaklawn park. It is always such a great feeling to know that the residents of the North Ogden appreciate and see the hard work that goes into the job that we do. It encourages our team to strive to excellence every day we show up to work.

We have laser grades our field to give us the best possible chance to create a safe and playable field. We top dress the field multiple times a year to help turn the soil into a dirt/sand mix to help with drainage and playability. We have a great fertilizer program in place that contains a water retention agent to cut down on our water use.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE

Salem Parks & Recreation

Department of the Year - Under 15,000 pop.

Salem Parks have made significant strides in enhancing the community's infrastructure. Standout achievements this past year include the completion of 8 miles of paved trail as part of a large Master Trail Plan, offering residents and visitors more opportunities for outdoor recreation. Additional projects such as the completion of Cole Park, the start of Reflections Park, and preparations for a 16-acre Soccer Park highlight the department's commitment to providing recreational spaces to meet the growing needs of the community. The newly built Veterans Memorial honors local heroes and serves as a symbol of respect and remembrance.



Salem Recreation hosts vibrant events including Salem Days, which spans nine days featuring 34 events and creates strong community bonds. Newer events like a Treasure Hunt for families and Historical Tours of the city, along with perennial favorites like the Easter Egg Hunt, Summer Concert Series, and Goosebump Gala, promote family-friendly fun and strengthen community ties. Salem's unique Pond Town Christmas features floating trees on the water and displays that are offered free to the community, bringing holiday joy.

In 2024, Salem City committed to becoming a Certified City of Kindness. The recreation department has served as the organizational hub for the "Kindness Creates Peace" initiative. This program fosters a culture of kindness and peace, involving city departments, schools, and recreation programs truly showcasing Salem as The City of Peace and a welcoming and compassionate place for all. Salem has worked diligently to promote its community image and sense of place over the past year. In June 2024, city officials signed a Resolution for Kindness and committed to becoming a Certified City of Kindness through the One Kind Act a Day organization. This commitment led to the creation of the Kindness Creates Peace initiative, with the recreation department acting as the organizational hub. The initiative works to foster new, and promote existing kind acts in schools, city departments, and recreation programs, with strong support from elected officials.

Manti, Ephraim, Gunnison & Mount Pleasant Recreation

Department of the Year - Under 15,000 pop.



I am thrilled to nominate the Manti, Ephraim, Gunnison and Mount Pleasant Recreational Departments for the Department of the Year Award. While this is typically for one department, I felt it was important to submit them as a collaborative team because they truly function as one well-oiled machine, and their combined efforts are exceptional. Each department has become more than just a group of colleagues—they are friends who support one another in every way. They go out of their way to assist each other and other departments whenever needed, ensuring that no task is too big or too small. Their teamwork is seamless, and their collective spirit makes every challenge feel manageable.

On a personal level, they are my constant source of encouragement. On tough days, they lift me up, offer words of support, and always find a way to make me laugh. They check in regularly, making sure I'm doing okay and offering advice when I'm in a tough spot. Their positivity and genuine care for one another are infectious and help keep me motivated.

What stands out most is the way they come together as a unit. They don't just complete tasks—they create an environment where everyone feels valued and supported. It's never just about getting the job done; it's about making it fun and rewarding for everyone involved.

This team is the best I could ask for, and I feel incredibly lucky to work with them. The Manti, Ephraim, Gunnison, and Mount Pleasant Recreational Departments truly embody the spirit of teamwork and excellence, and I am proud to be a part of it. Thank you for considering them for this award.

YEAR 2025 NOMINEES



Wasatch County Senior Center

Department of the Year - 15,000-50,000 pop.

In 2024, we celebrated Wasatch County Senior Center's 50th year of service to our seniors. We are so lucky to have the history of when the center started. We displayed photos, newsletters and information about the trips taken and members from the 1980's and on. They had an amazing start up group of a couple dozen, now we have several hundred members.

Our center serves lunch twice a week at The Center as well as Meals on Wheels. Our food is prepared in our own kitchen by amazing people. The Wasatch County Council and management team are great supporters of our Center. Anything that we need they have been willing to help. Everything from helping serve meals, delivering meals or procuring new equipment we need. We have many classes and programs at the center, we offer grief counseling, tax help, crafts, dancing, ceramics and exercise classes. We have a fully equipped ceramics room, billiard room, music room etc. We are so lucky to have many volunteers to teach classes and the senior center staff that plans so many activities and trips. We have fun games like bingo, bunco, bridge. We also have puzzles to put together. For our county fair the seniors put together a 60,000 piece puzzle that was finished in 4 1/2 months and was 29 feet x 8 feet long when finished. It was very impressive to see. We also had our first seniors' farmers markets in the spring and summer that gives our seniors fresh vegetables and fruit. We also have cooking classes through USU.

The vision of our senior center is to provide opportunities to enjoy other people and have new experiences. Wasatch County has a population of over 37,000 our seniors are about 10% of that. Our meals on wheels delivery makes sure that each senior that is eligible receives at least one good meal a day. We also have buses that pick up our seniors and bring them to the center to enjoy a meal or activities with other seniors. This gives them the opportunity to visit with others, and enjoy time out of their home and make great friends.

American Fork Community Services Department

Department of the Year - 15,000-50,000 pop.

In 2022 American Fork City changed from American Fork Fitness and Recreation to American Fork Community Services (AF CSD). This entailed many logistical changes, but most impactfully it brought together (7) different divisions to provide services to our community under one department. Now equipped with the staffing, resources, and responsibilities the CSD of AF includes Parks, Recreation, Fitness Center, Senior Center, Library, Cemetery and City Maintenance. Fully embracing the notion of "Cradle to Grave" or "Beginning to End" the team members all feel a responsibility and opportunity to provide services, programs and facilities that improve the quality of life for all our residents, visitors, neighbors, and businesses. We strive to provide a community where people want to live, work and play. The department has been able to navigate changes and each of the divisions are providing more, doing more, impacting the community more. As our community continues to grow and change like most communities in Utah, we take our responsibility to find ways to provide facilities, programs, and services for everyone serious. In the American Fork Community Services Department, we have a committed, skilled, passionate, hungry, humble and smart team of employees that work towards tackling this challenge every day.

Primarily funded by the city general fund and taxpayers' dollars, AF CSD strives to be diligent and creative in obtaining and utilizing funding. The fitness center originally build in 1993 continues to age but staff are working to stay fresh and relevant, improve the city subsidy in the facility and looking forward to an expansion/rebuild. Each year for the past (9) years we have received about \$1 million dollars to invest in our parks, recreation, and trails system. This year we obtained over \$1 million dollars in grants from the city PARC program and State Recreation Grants. We have been able to add new playgrounds, restrooms at parks, rebuild or disc golf course, renovation of our oldest full size baseball field including new lights, new basketball court, new (6) court pickleball complex, and several other projects. This year we are working on a project to rebuild our boat harbor on Utah Lake by utilizing \$2 million from the State of Utah and \$1.5 million from Utah County in addition to city funding. Aside from the funding, our greatest asset, like all departments, is our team. We have a great mix of seasoned veterans that have been with the city close to 30 years working alongside some new recreation professionals that have joined our team in the past 2 years. We strive to be active participants in URPA and CURPA so that we can stay connected, network with the best professionals around and stay abreast of latest trends and happenings in the great world of Parks & Recreation.





DEPARTMENT OF THE



Draper Parks & Recreation

Department of the Year - Over 50,000 pop.

Draper Parks and Recreation is pleased to be nominated for “Department of the Year”. As a department, we feel Draper City is one of the premier places to live in the entire USA, and we commonly hear it is because of the large number of trails, parks, open space and recreation opportunities.

With over 50 parks and over 150 miles of trails within our city, we punch way above the national average. We have worked with volunteer committee, private residents and different foundations to raise funds for

some of these projects to save the tax paying residents. Draper has become a “go-to” for mountain biking in the USA. Our staff works hard every day to maintain these icons of our city.

With 50 parks, including specialty parks like a large arena for events, large amphitheaters for concerts and plays, a bike park, a new in 2024 18-hole disc golf course, we are very proud of our parks and our parks staff. This all goes to make Draper City a “high quality” life city.

We have taken steps to preserve over 4,000 acres and placed them recently in conservation easements to be preserved forever (Corner Canyon and Traverse Range Conservation Easements). Our staff is lean and we all have lots to do every day, but everyone in the department is dedicated to Parks and Recreation and “making life better”. Every city is great, but we feel here in Draper that the Parks and Recreation Department is second to none. The staff within the department cares and produce awesome trails and projects for the enjoyment of residents and beyond, all without costing the city additional funds. Very innovative!

Herriman Parks, Recreation & Events

Department of the Year - Over 50,000 pop.

Facing staffing shortages, turnover, and a budget decrease, Herriman City’s Parks, Recreation and Events Department made strides by enhancing programs, events, and facilities. The Fort Herriman Rodeo expanded to three days, bolstered by improved organization and cost tracking. A revamped reservation system simplified requests for parks, fields, arenas, and event permits. Trails benefited from new connectors, trailheads, and landscaping, while water usage was reduced through drought-resistant grass in open spaces.

Theme ice-skating nights doubled, showcasing musical and movie themes that attracted larger crowds during traditionally slower periods. A two-month fishing program taught 25 youth weekly about best practices, and Fort Herriman Towne Days grew into a seven-day celebration with additional activities, contests, and a more efficient parade pre-staging process. “Tree Time with Trent” workshops continued to inform residents about proper tree care.

The Yeti Run added a 5K ruck division, and senior programs rose from three to nine events. A rebranded “Health & Safetyalooza” and the expanded “Yeti in the Park” series—culminating in a foam party during NRPA Parks and Rec Month—brought fun to parks citywide. Eight large-scale events, 16 farmers’ markets, and 20 food truck roundups further united the community. Each advancement highlights how staff coordination, resource management, and creative programming enrich Herriman’s recreational experiences for all.

The department has implemented a series of strategic improvements and innovations to benefit both operations and the community. The annual rodeo expanded to 3 days allowing more community members to attend while strengthening partnerships with the rodeo committee and sponsors. A revamped reservation process for parks, fields, and arenas, along with a streamlined Special Event Permit procedure, has increased efficiency across multiple departments. Trail development efforts introduced asphalt links, additional mountain bike trails, and extended foot-and-hoof routes. The ice ribbon’s themed nights doubled, drawing larger crowds on traditionally slower evenings.



St. George Parks & Community Services

Department of the Year - Over 50,000 pop.

The St. George Parks and Community Services Department enhances quality of life through innovative projects, exceptional programs, and world-class events. The successful passage of the Trails, Parks, and Recreation G.O. Bond and the renewal of the RAP Tax, reflects the community's trust in the department's vision for enhancing recreational amenities.

The department has made significant strides in upgrading outdated parks by completing playground remodels at Mathis Park, Royal Oaks Park, and Middleton Park. The Pioneer Park Interpretive Trail highlights the department's dedication to preserving local heritage. The recently completed Virgin River South Trail and Halfway Wash Trail serve as essential connections between neighborhoods.

St. George is also home to nationally acclaimed events that showcase the department's ability to inspire and engage. The St. George Marathon, the largest municipal marathon and 14th largest in the U.S., along with the St. George Art Festival, a premier fine art event recognized nationwide, and the Snow Canyon Half Marathon, Utah's largest half marathon.

Through a variety of programs offered such as outdoor adventures, ceramics, neuro pong, and summer camps, the department provides year-round opportunities for residents of all ages and interests. The Parks and Community Services Department continues to set a standard of excellence, elevating St. George as a model city for recreation and community well-being.

The Parks and Community Services Department has introduced innovative and strategic changes that have significantly enhanced the St. George community. This year, the department has undertaken multiple transformative projects, including the construction of Curly Hollow, a Zion National Park-themed outdoor adventure park offering unique recreational opportunities. To promote connectivity and active lifestyles, the department is also expanding the city's trail system by adding miles of new pathways seamlessly integrated into the existing network.



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