



ParkPeopleNews

Creating Citizen Connections to Our Parks

Winter 2017 Park People Newsletter

President's Perspective - Kate Ciurlik

Happy New Year! As we start 2017, I reflect upon the accomplishments of the past year and the opportunities that lie ahead of us. 2016 brought multiple changes to our organization, including our decision to shed advocacy and to revamp our vision and mission. The ground work of 2016 helped pave a revived path forward. Our goal is for our community to cherish our parks for the enrichment they provide to our neighborhoods and our lives ... to embrace, recognize and support our parks as a precious treasure.



2016 included building and nourishing our relationship with the Milwaukee County Parks Department, Friends Groups and members. We continued the tradition of the Oak Leaf Discovery Tour® and Weed-Out® programs and supported the inaugural year of China Lights. In September we held a joint Friends Group and Annual meeting at the Boerner Botanical Gardens with China Lights in the background. And, we ended the year by introducing Park Perks ... a new membership package for individuals which supports engagement in our Parks and in turn, the Park People.

Already in 2017, our Executive Director and Board members are working diligently to ensure our parks thrive. Work on the 2017 Oak Leaf Discovery Tour and Weed-Out® programs have started. Friends Groups engagement opportunities are being forged. Members are being sought. And of course, many of us are enjoying time in our Parks, despite the cold. I encourage you to join us in *Treasuring our Parks*.

The Park People – 40th Anniversary – Timeline



The Park People is preparing for the kickoff celebration of our 40th Anniversary. The Park People organization was first incorporated in November of 1977 and awarded its nonprofit status by the IRS in March of 1978. A timeline has been compiled by Past-President Sue Spoerk. Sue reached out to several Past-Presidents and Executive Directors for their review and input. There will be two versions of the timeline. One will be more inclusive and used by the Board of Directors to help guide decision making to serve the Mission of The Park People. The other version will be shorter and posted to The Park People website to educate the community on what we do and also provide information to potential donors and members to assure them we are worthy of investment to help support our treasured Milwaukee County Parks. If you would like to participate in the review and editing process please reach out to Jim Goulee, Executive Director at jim@parkpeoplemke.org by

April 1st.

China Lights - a Resounding Success!

China Lights, Boerner in a New Light, the event that Park People sponsored last fall at the Boerner Botanical Gardens, greatly surpassed our expectations. During the five weeks the event ran, more than one hundred thousand people from all over the midwest marvelled at the beautifully crafted Chinese creations. From the 3 story pagoda to the 200 foot dragon, people were amazed by grandiose specter of these lighted displays. The event started out slowly due to the many days of rain leading up to and including the opening weekend but as soon as the weather turned and the word spread, the attendance grew exponentially every succeeding week. Numerous attendees took pictures and posted them on Facebook and Instagram which spread the word about this unique event like wildfire.

From the beginning the Park People recognized that this would be a great event to be aligned with. Even better, it seemed there was great potential to raise significant dollars to further support our mission and assist the Parks Department. As it turned out, the event netted over three hundred thousand dollars that now resides in a Park People account restricted for use only by the Parks Department for improvements or additions to the Boerner Gardens.

We are now planning the return of China Lights for later this year. It will offer completely new creations and an additional food court. Set your calendar for mid-September through mid-October 2017!

Welcome to Milwaukee County Parks Department Volunteer Services Coordinator

On September 26, Milwaukee County Parks welcomed August Marie (née Wagner-Richardson) Ball to fill the newly created role of Volunteer Services Coordinator. With 8 years of program management experience (and 10 years of Weed Outs under her belt) through the Student Conservation Association, August has connected hundreds of Milwaukee youth and young adults to hands-on service to our county parks and surrounding public lands. August believes in taking an intergenerational approach to changing the face of conservation by engaging those historically underrepresented in what is often their first outdoor work or volunteer experience. (She finds bribing volunteers with chocolate or coffee is always a good start.) Over the past 13 years, her work in the non-profit sector has furthered community engagement and education-based initiatives by creating equitable public and private partnerships. The Park People "met" and welcomed August at our Annual Meeting and we look forward to working with her to assist and engage Friends Groups.



Another warm welcome - Milwaukee County Parks Development Officer



The Park People welcomes Jay Burseth to the Milwaukee County Parks Department in the newly created position of Milwaukee County Parks Development Officer. We look forward to supporting and assisting Mr. Burseth in any way we can.

He comes to the Parks Department after working in development for the Urban Ecology Center, then as Development Director for WMSE, 91.7 FM Radio, where he is particularly proud of their increased membership and outreach for funding while he was there. His grant writing experience is another welcome asset.

Having discovered that nonprofits, environment and community were his biggest passions, Burseth completed a Masters Degree at the Helen Bader Institute of Nonprofit Management at UW-Milwaukee. He is committed to nonprofit development as his chosen "life career". Burseth noted, "Being here with Milwaukee County Parks is great and exactly what I want to be doing."

Jay set about immediately in his new position to research and develop an internal data base of grant and individual donor opportunities which he will use as a springboard for generating new sources of funding to support Park Department initiatives. The Park People intends to be an integral partner in reaching out to Foundations. Jay has also been charged with creating funding opportunities through corporations and local businesses.

Friends Group Workshop Survey

In an effort to strengthen support and capacity building in Friends Groups as well as their ability to flourish and do good things for their park, the Milwaukee County Parks Department will be hosting a Friends Group Mini Training Series in collaboration with the Park People. Your help is needed in identifying what topics will be most useful and what timeframe will be most accessible to you, our valued park advocates. If you haven't already, please take a moment to complete the online survey and then share with your group members and neighbors. Once the date and location have been chosen we'll be sure to let you know!

Survey link: <https://www.cognitofrms.com/MilwaukeeCountyParks1/FriendsGroupMiniSeriesSurvey>

Why Not Join or Form a Friends Group?

A wise man once said, "From acorns oak trees grow." That has held true for the many Friends of the Parks groups that have taken hold in Milwaukee County.

At its 2016 annual meeting The Park People honored Barb Kaprelian for planting the seed that led to the Friends of Pulaski Park, a volunteer group that set its sights on restoring the best of Pulaski Park. The new Friends organized park events and fund raisers, promoting both enjoyment of the park and spurring the restoration of the 1940's-built park pavilion and the addition of new park

amenities. Barb started by reaching out to people on facebook, and within two years the new Friends had achievements that would never have happened without them.

The Milwaukee County parks system has over 140 parks and parkways totaling nearly 15,000 acres. Approximately one quarter of the parks have a group dedicated to making their park a better place, leaving plenty of opportunity for others. If your favorite park in Milwaukee County, big or small, does not have a friends group, this is where you can make a lasting positive impact.

The Park People prides itself in providing the know-how and technical resources to groups who want to focus their energy on the work of making their park a better place. For many, the mechanics of organizing, seeking tax-exempt status, and accounting throw a wet towel over any hot idea. If you have the passion, The Park People can help.

Call Jim Goulee at 414-273-7175 to get more information about starting or joining a Friends Group!



Parks Amenity Matching Fund

Attention Friends of Milwaukee County Parks: Parks Amenities Matching Funds will be available in 2017.

Here's your chance to double your money for an amenity that you want to improve or add to your favorite park. The 2017 budget includes up to \$250,000 in matching funds for the Parks Amenities Matching Fund (PAMF). See: <http://county.milwaukee.gov/DoingBusinesswiththe18950.htm> .

If you have further questions or need help with the PAMF application form, contact Jay Burseth, Milwaukee County Parks Development Officer at Jay.Burseth@milwaukeecountywi.gov or call 414-257-8043.

Park Perks

If you haven't renewed your membership or know someone who is an avid park user ---- consider becoming or referring a member.

In addition to supporting our mission to improve the Milwaukee County Parks, your \$40 membership entitles you to well over one hundred dollars worth of park coupons for popular park activities including free golf and a soda or beer at a traveling beer garden site. Full details at http://www.parkpeoplemke.org/become_a_member

Spring is just around the corner---but in the meantime don't forget to use your free skate rental coupon at Red Arrow Park and free admission to the Domes- both coupons are added benefits for being a Park People Member and our way of thanking you for your support!

The Park People Will Be Hiring an Executive Director Soon

Our wonderful, loyal, dedicated Executive Director Jim Goulee retires this Spring. The Park People will be posting soon for this position and qualified candidates should send their resume to the Park People office. Please be on the lookout for the position announcement.
