



The Park People® Press

A newsletter for members of The Park People of Milwaukee County, Inc.

Spring/Summer 2021



Barry Waddell, Executive Director of The Park People. Photo by Kelly Grant Moore.

From the executive director

Greetings! I wished I could start out my article with “We have great plans for this year,” but instead, we have to be patient. As Friends groups meet to plan their year, they understand that plans may be canceled or modified. Friends groups have been meeting, mostly virtual, and continue to be as active as they can. Friends of Honey Creek Parkway submitted their application for fiscal sponsorship and hopefully will be approved soon. I continue to meet with a small group interested in forming a Friends group at Sherman Park as well.

One of our board members, Steve Silverstein, developed a new program called PARKticipation that encourages people to experience their Milwaukee County Parks in unique ways. The winter session was rolled out in January and ended March 1; the spring session began on March 25. Read more about PARKticipation on page two of this newsletter. Thanks Steve! And thank you to our sponsors [REI](#) and [Gift of Wings!](#)

Once again, we will be sponsoring the Oak Leaf Discovery Tour (OLDT) passport program. Passports should be available for purchase May 1 at <https://parkpeoplemke.org/product/oak-leaf-passport/>. The program will be a little different this year, as the focus shifts from finding keywords to locating points of interest instead. Proceeds from OLDT passport sales support Milwaukee County Trails.

Our 2021 membership drive is coming to an end. While membership numbers are down from last year, the amount of money given has been surprising. As of March 15, we have 102 renewed memberships totaling \$8,375! If you have not renewed your membership yet, please consider doing so. While we have been diligent in reducing our operating expenses, we still have fixed costs that need to be satisfied.

Our member annual meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 24, at 6:30 pm and will most likely be virtual. Watch for an invitation by email or postal mail in the near future.

Thank you to all who renewed their memberships and continue to support the mission of The Park People! Without your support we could not exist. 🌱

Barry Waddell, Executive Director
The Park People of Milwaukee County, Inc.

PARKticipation: A program for park engagement during the pandemic

by Steve Silverstein, Board of Directors Member, The Park People of Milwaukee County, Inc.



With Milwaukee County winters, it is difficult enough to get out in the cold and snowy weather. Add the scourge of COVID-19 and staying in the safe confines of your home becomes even more inviting. For me, it was a battle to get off the couch and get out for a daily walk.

As I bundled up to take on those solo sojourns, I wandered out toward Back Bay Park, up to the Water Tower, over the bridge to Bradford Beach and then trekked through Lake Park for the return trip. These walks opened my eyes to the beauty of the city right outside my door: the trees, wildlife, beaches (with surfers!), historical landmarks and more. I was having fun even bundled and masked!

I'm not sure how the word popped up. It might have started by hearing the Carly Simon song, "Anticipation," in my head. That song served as a conduit to PARKticipation – first the word and then the concept. This, combined with what I was experiencing, became the inspiration to create a program that would encourage others to use our parks during this difficult time.

The Park People, dedicated to park engagement, saw the PARKticipation program as a way to encourage others to experience everything our Milwaukee County Parks offer. The concept was simple. A simple card, like a bingo card, would display a variety of park activities and give people a way to track the activities they completed. Completing a set number of activities would give people the opportunity to earn PARKticipant incentives. The idea took form when the PARKS activity card was created.

The PARKS card is completely free. And, with support through generous sponsors, you can earn prizes. For the winter program, [REI](#), the inaugural sponsor, provided a two-day rental of snowshoes for four people.

Since its launch in January, more than 2,000 people have learned about the program through The Park People's website and social media platforms. The spring version of the program is now underway, and [Gift of Wings](#) has generously pledged a number of beautiful kites, windsocks and other items for this season's prizewinners.

It's not too late to get your free PARKS card! Visit <https://parkpeoplemke.org/get-involved/parkticipate/> to download your card or email director@parkpeoplemke.org to have a card sent to your home. 🍀

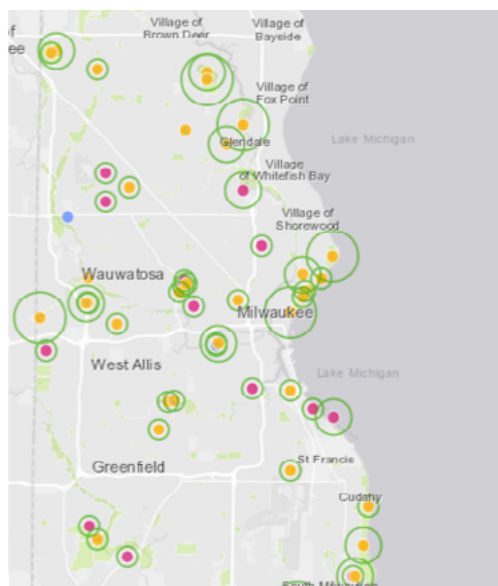
Parks offers several initiatives for community involvement

by Lindsay Frost, Friends Group Liaison and Engagement Manager, Milwaukee County Parks



Milwaukee Parks Explorer App

While still in development, our Parks Explorer app is a new tool to help park goers learn about and explore our parks. The app provides information about all 157 parks, shows locations of different amenities, includes maps for Forked Aster Trails and so much more. Users can “check-in” at different parks, earn digital badges, take 360 degree park tours, submit photos and use the “time machine” feature to see historical photos. Please note the app is not currently available in app stores. Visit <https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Parks/What-We-Do/Parks-Explorer-App> to learn more and for instructions on how to download the app to your phone or to use it in a web browser. 🍃



Capital Improvement Project Tracker

Explore Parks capital projects with a new interactive map! Each year, Milwaukee County Parks is assigned funding for capital projects. In 2021, \$8 million was allocated for projects ranging from new playgrounds to parkway and road repairs. Details of our current and upcoming projects are now available at <https://mclio.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=9ee80c853dcb499bba95851f9d660593>. Please note that many capital projects often take many months and even years to complete. Some project highlights include playground reconstructions at several parks, playground surfacing updates at four locations, reconstruction of the north entrance roadway and parking lots at Grant Park, and relocation of flooded segments of the Oak Leaf Trail along the Little Menomonee. 🍃



Volunteer Handbook

We know many of our Friends group members are some of our most active volunteers, and we are grateful for their efforts! To help spread the word about all of our volunteering options across the County, we developed a Parks Volunteer Handbook. Visit https://issuu.com/mkecoparks/docs/2021_volunteer_handbook_fv to check it out, and please share the information with your friends, too! 🍃

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Parks offers several initiatives

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We Care Crew

The We Care Crew is a coalition between Milwaukee County Parks, the Office on African American Affairs, several additional county and city agencies, and multiple nonprofit organizations that provides important resources to communities most affected by the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racism.

This year, we will ramp up resource delivery to residents using parks as distribution points, host more bike drives and support park volunteering efforts. If you would like to support the We Care Crew, you can donate resources (individual-sized hand sanitizers, individually wrapped snacks and more) or volunteer. To volunteer, complete the volunteer form at <https://www.cognitoforms.com/MilwaukeeCountyParks1/WeCareCrewVolunteerSignup>. Email parkpartnerships@milwaukeecountywi.gov to learn more about the We Care Crew. 🌱

Winter PARKticipation winners announced



Congratulations to Rebecca Mather-Smith (left) and Roman Meyer (right)! They were the grand prize winners of our winter PARKticipation program drawing! Rebecca won a two-day showshoe rental for four people from REI and Roman won a gift bag that included Park People t-shirts and a blanket. Enjoy your prizes! 🌱



Friends groups on social media

Over the last few months, we've been sharing stories on our Facebook (@Park.People) and Instagram (@parkpeopleofmke) pages about the great work our Friends groups have done. If you haven't done so already, check out these stories! You'll be inspired by our Friends groups' dedication to making our Milwaukee County Parks thrive! 🌱

Purchase a bench this spring

Spring brings Mother's and Father's Day, graduations and family gatherings. Recognize the special people or events in your life by purchasing a bench that can be placed at your favorite county park. Two bench styles are available and each comes with a personalized, commemorative plaque. Learn more: <https://parkpeoplemke.org/park-market/benches/>. 🌱

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