



VIRGINIA RECREATION AND PARK SOCIETY

AWARDS & CITATIONS: CALL FOR ENTRIES

The Virginia Recreation and Park Society is a private, non-profit professional organization. Its purpose is to unify all professionals, students, and interested lay persons engaged in the field of recreation, parks and other leisure services in Virginia. The Annual Awards Presentation takes place at the VRPS Annual Conference. This event honors exemplary members, volunteers, and agencies of the Parks and Recreation community for achievements during the previous calendar year. All nominations are given careful consideration; however, the committee reserves the right to choose not to make an award in all categories.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: May 13, 2026

NOMINATION INFORMATION

- **AWARDS TO BE CONSIDERED ARE FOR THE PERIOD OF JANUARY 1 - DECEMBER 31, 2025 ONLY.**
- Nominees must be VRPS members at the time of the award application submission as well as the Awards Ceremony.
- Nomination fees must be paid via credit card when completing the online nomination process.
- Each award nomination is \$50 through 4/13/2026. Nominations received 4/14-5/13/2026 will be \$60 each.
- VRPS Awards Committee reserves the right to re-direct entries into appropriate categories. Incorrect submissions for population divisions will not be redirected or awarded. Decisions are final.
- Nominations for joint projects must be submitted separately by each agency and combine populations from each submitting agency. Each agency must upload the supporting document and pay the nomination fee.

NOMINATION PREPARATION

- There is a 25 MB file upload maximum per submission – to include census and nomination documentation.
- Official nomination should be attached as a single PDF file and **address all criteria**. Supporting materials such as buttons, shirts, signs, banners, etc. should be photographed and also uploaded in a separate, single PDF file.
- Please prepare 100 words or less that concisely state as to why the nominee should be considered. This verbiage will be entered in the online awards submission form under “Brief Description”. **NOTE: this description will be read during the Awards Ceremony should your nomination win. Please compose this message with that in mind.**
- When submitting your official nomination, under “Full Description” include a single PDF write-up of 1000 words or less, clearly identifying each selection criteria. Under “Supporting Materials”, you will upload any supporting photos or video links in one PDF.
- Please embed high-quality pdf photos (300 dpi minimum).
- Nominations for individual awards must include one photo of the nominee.
- For all other awards please include at least one (two preferably) with each entry. Include at least one before and one after photo in the renovation categories
- To enter a video as part of your nomination, please provide a complete URL on the nomination form where requested; this URL is where the video resides and is viewable by the public. Please remember that the video must remain publicly viewable at this URL address through December 1, 2026.



AWARDS & CITATIONS: LISTING & CRITERIA

- Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service Virginia Population Estimates must be obtained from <https://demographics.coopercenter.org/virginia-population-estimates>. VRPS Awards & Citations Committee recommends using the Data Table option on the population homepage; be sure to upload the most current estimates. Once you generate your population information for your city or county, please save it as a PDF. You will upload this information only once as part of the Official Nomination Form online. Should Weldon Cooper update estimates after you have submitted the nomination, the Awards and Citations Committee reserves the right to move your nomination to the proper population category.

DISQUALIFICATION

- Any submission received without the appropriate required documentation, number of photos, census data, will be disqualified.
- Incomplete or late entries will be disqualified without refund.
- Nominations submitted without credit card payment will be disqualified.

FELLOWS AWARD

The premiere award, VRPS recognition of an individual who has demonstrated consistent and/or outstanding commitment by furthering the goals of VRPS, contributing to the profession and serving the community. The VRPS Board of Directors will review and approve applications and as appropriate approve candidate to receive award. One (1) award per year may be given.

Eligibility:

- Nominee must be a current member of VRPS.
- Nominee must have held a VRPS membership for a minimum of ten (10) years.
- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the professional.
- Nominee must have at least ten (10) years of work experience in the Parks and Recreation field not to include internships, education or part time work.
- Nominee must not have received this award previously.

Selection Criteria: *Nomination should demonstrate consistent and/or outstanding commitment by furthering the goals of VRPS, contributing to the profession and serving the community in addition to contributions to the profession made in at least four (4) of the following areas:*

- Outstanding leadership in a specific field within the Parks and Recreation profession (example: landscaping, new program innovation, equipment design or development).
- Nominee must have served at least one term on the VRPS Board of Directors or another similar statewide or national board that demonstrates commitment to the field of Parks and Recreation
- Committee work in VRPS or other related state organization.

- Eight or more public addresses related to Parks and Recreation presented at conferences, assemblies, media presentations, legislative testimony or other similar professional gatherings.
- Writer or co-writer of recreation-related articles for handbooks, newspapers, magazines, or monographs.
- Conduct research projects that help promote the profession.
- Volunteer projects within the local community and state not related to national and state associations that support the field of parks and recreation.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Awarded in recognition of professionals who have displayed continuous outstanding service to the profession and community. Up to two (2) awards per year may be given.

Eligibility:

- Nominee must be a current member of VRPS and held VRPS membership for a minimum of the past two (2) years.
- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the professional.
- At least eight (8) years of professional work experience required in the field of Parks and Recreation, not to include internships, education or part-time work.
- Support to professional Parks and Recreation related organizations such as consulting, programming, instructing, or as a resource.

Selection Criteria: *Nomination should demonstrate continuous outstanding service to the profession and community and contributions made in at least three (3) of the following areas:*

- Research contributions which advance the field of parks and recreation.
- Effective interpretation of parks and recreation through media and promotional avenues.
- Creative contributions to the development of outstanding parks and recreation facilities.
- Success in affecting important parks and recreation legislation.
- Demonstrated leadership and contributions on a community level.
- Active support to and involvement in VRPS, included but not limited to committee membership, event volunteer, legislative or fundraising activities.

DISTINGUISHED VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD

Awarded in recognition of an individual's dedication and contributions to the parks and/or recreation field. Up to two (2) awards per year may be given. Only one (1) award winner per agency per year.

Eligibility:

- Nominee must be a volunteer and not a paid employee of the nominating agency.
- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the program.
- Nominee must have at least two (2) years of applicable service.

Selection Criteria: *Nomination should demonstrate contribution and/or service made in at least three (3) of the following areas:*

- Benefit of volunteer service (such as impact on department, community, etc.)
- Length of volunteer service.
- Estimated cost savings related to the volunteer's services.
- Personal service in parks and recreation or leisure service areas.
- Research contribution, which advances the field of parks, recreation or leisure services.
- Effective interpretation of parks and recreation through the media.
- Success in affecting important parks and recreation legislation.

OUTSTANDING NEW PROFESSIONAL AWARD

Awarded in recognition of new professionals for outstanding commitment and achievements in the parks and recreation field. Up to two (2) awards per year may be given.

Eligibility:

- Nominee must be a current member of VRPS.
- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the professional.
- Nominee must have more than one year and less than eight (8) years as a full-time Parks and Recreation professional as of December 31 of award year.
- Nominee must not have previously received this award.

Selection Criteria: *Nomination should demonstrate all of the following:*

- Commitment to the parks and recreation field;
- Leadership and contributions made on a community level;
- Active support to and involvement in VRPS, including but not limited committee membership, event volunteer, legislative or fundraising activities.

DISTINGUISHED PRIVATE SECTOR SERVICE AWARD

Given in recognition of demonstrated support for the parks and recreation profession, VRPS or a specific parks or recreation organization by a civic/volunteer organization, private sector entity or business; service can be monetary, sweat equity, event organization/operation, etc. Up to two (2) awards per year may be given.

Eligibility:

- Nominee must not have received this award within the past five (5) years.
- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the program.
- Nominee must be a business, corporation or a private organization (including civic/volunteer organizations).
- Contributions must have begun or partially occurred in award year to be eligible.

Selection Criteria: *Nomination should demonstrate contribution to VRPS or a specific agency in the form of, at minimum, one (1) of the following areas:*

- Significant organizational or business service within the area of Parks and Recreation.
- Research contribution which advances the field of Parks and Recreation.
- Effective interpretation of Parks and Recreation through media and/or publications.
- Creative contributions in the acquisition or development of park areas, facilities or equipment.
- Successful organization/operation of a special events or programs.
- Success in affecting important Parks and Recreation legislation.
- Significant one-time contribution during award year.

BEST NEW PROGRAM AWARD

Awarded in recognition of the development and launch of an **outstanding new Parks and Recreation program** by an organization during the award year. One (1) award per year may be presented in each population category (see nomination form for population categories).

For the purposes of this award, a **program** is defined as an organized and structured recreational offering that is instructional, educational, skill-based, or enrichment-focused in nature. Programs may be **one-time, short-term, or multi-week**, and may be offered through **registration, drop-in participation, or open attendance**.

Programs are intentionally designed with defined objectives, planned content or activities, and anticipated participant outcomes, regardless of duration or registration format.

Programs may occur once or span multiple weeks or months but must demonstrate **purposeful design and a clear recreational, educational, or developmental intent**, rather than functioning as a large-scale community event.

Eligibility:

- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the program.
- Program must have been initially put into operation during awards year.
- Eligible programs may include, but are not limited to: Youth or adult classes, camps or clinics, sports leagues or instructional programs, workshops, lessons, or enrichment experiences.

Selection Criteria: *Nomination should demonstrate significant elements of the following:*

- Innovation and Creativity in program design, delivery, or promotion
- Responsiveness to Community Needs and alignment with stated goals
- Effective Implementation and successful execution
- Efficient Use of Resources (staff, budget, facilities, partnerships)
- Service to the Intended Population
- Overall Program Excellence

BEST NEW SPECIAL EVENT AWARD

Awarded in recognition of the planning and execution of an **outstanding new Parks and Recreation special event** by an organization during the award year. One (1) award per year per population category may be given (see nomination form for population categories).

For the purposes of this award, a **special event** is defined as a one-time or occasional, high-impact activity that deviates from the normal daily use of a park or public facility. Special events are typically short-term in duration and may require a special event permit.

Special events **may include additional city services**, such as traffic control, public safety support, or

enhanced cleanup, depending on the size, scope, and impact of the event.

Special events typically occur once per year and last no more than seven (7) contiguous days.

Eligibility:

- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the event.
- Event must have been initially put into operation during awards year.
- Eligible special events may include, but are not limited to: Festivals and holiday celebrations, parades, community-wide concerts, races, fun runs, or walks, large-scale community gatherings

Selection Criteria: *Nomination should demonstrate significant elements of the following:*

- Innovation and Creativity in event design, funding, or promotion
- Effectiveness in Achieving Goals and responding to community needs
- Departmental and Community Involvement and support
- Efficient Use of Resources (staff, budget, facilities, partners, services)
- Service to the Intended Population
- Overall Event Excellence

BEST NEW FACILITY AWARD (BRICKS AND MORTAR)

Awarded in recognition of a new facility (ground up) which depicts innovative indoor facility design and construction. One (1) award per year per population category may be given (see nomination form for population categories).

Eligibility:

- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the facility.
- Facility must have initiated public operations during awards year.
- Requires ten (10) photographs, showing both interior and exterior of facility.

Selection Criteria: *Nomination should demonstrate that the facility contains the following significant elements:*

- Innovative nature of the facility design, funding, construction, handling of constraints, etc.
- Effectiveness in addressing the goals as defined in terms of community needs and demands, and successful completion.
- Efficiency in use of resources.
- Effectiveness of design factors such as: ADA accessibility, LEED Certification, maintenance consideration, aesthetics, security and safety, environmental concerns, etc.
- Meets the needs of the population served.
- General excellence of the facility.

BEST NEW FACILITY AWARD (PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, BLUEWAYS, GREENWAYS, OR TRAILS)

Awarded in recognition of a new facility (ground up) which depicts innovative outdoor facility or property design and construction. One award per year per population category may be given (see nomination form for population categories).

Eligibility:

- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the facility.
- Facility must have initiated public operations during awards year.
- A total of ten (10) photos must be submitted showing before and after views.

Selection Criteria: *Nomination should demonstrate that the facility contains the following significant elements:*

- Innovative nature of the facility design, funding, construction, handling of constraints, etc.
- Effectiveness in addressing the goals as defined in terms of community needs and demands, and successful completion.
- Efficiency in use of resources.
- Effectiveness of design factors such as: ADA accessibility, LEED Certification, maintenance consideration, aesthetics, security and safety, environmental concerns, etc.
- Meets the needs of the population served.
- General excellence of the facility.

BEST NEW RENOVATION / ADDITION AWARD (BRICKS AND MORTAR)

Awarded in recognition of an existing facility's renovation and/or addition that demonstrates innovative park or recreation design. This award judges the renovated portion or addition only. If renovation or addition involves greater than 50% of the original structure (or increases the original structure by more than 50%), it should be submitted under Best New Facility category. One award per year per population category may be given (see nomination form for population categories).

Eligibility:

- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the facility.
- Facility must have initiated public operation during awards year.
- Requires ten (10) before and after photographs, including a minimum of three (3) "before" photos, and photos should show both interior and exterior of facility, if applicable.

Selection Criteria: *Nomination should demonstrate that the facility contains three (3) of the following significant elements:*

- Innovative nature of the facility-design, construction, handling of constraints, etc.
- Effectiveness in addressing the goals as defined in terms of community needs, demands, and successful completion.
- Efficiency in use of resources.
- Effectiveness of design factors: such as ADA accessibility, LEED Certification, maintenance consideration, aesthetics, security and safety, environmental concerns, etc.
- Meets the needs of the population served.
- General excellence of the facility.

BEST NEW RENOVATION/ADDITION AWARD (PARKS, PLAYGROUNDS, BLUEWAYS, GREENWAYS, OR TRAILS)

Awarded in recognition of an existing facility's renovation and/or addition that demonstrates innovative outdoor design. This award judges the renovated portion or addition only. If renovation or addition involves greater than 50% of the original property (or increases the original property by more than 50%), it should be submitted under Best New Facility category. One (1) award per year per population category may be given (see nomination form for population categories).

Eligibility:

- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the facility.
- Facility must have initiated public operation during awards year.
- Requires ten (10) before and after photographs, including a minimum of three (3) "before" photos.

Selection Criteria: *Nomination should demonstrate that the facility contains three (3) of the following significant elements:*

- Innovative nature of the facility-design, construction, handling of constraints, etc.
- Effectiveness in addressing the goals as defined in terms of community needs, demands, and successful completion.
- Efficiency in use of resources.
- Effectiveness of design factors: such as ADA accessibility, LEED Certification, maintenance consideration, aesthetics, security and safety, environmental concerns, etc.
- Meets the needs of the population served.
- General excellence of the facility.

BEST NEW ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AWARD

Awarded in recognition of a new program, environmental or educational initiative that demonstrates creative problem solving to address an environmental issue within your department or agency. Examples may include implementation of a recycling program, a landscaping project, a green roof addition or a program that utilizes recycled products within their agency. Note that this category does NOT address new or renovated facility improvements, although elements of a facility renovation could be eligible. One (1) award per year per population category may be given.

Eligibility:

- Requires current membership within VRPS by the organization or staff making the award nomination.
- Completion of the nominated program must have been implemented during awards year.
- Requires ten (10) photographs.

Selection Criteria: *Nomination should demonstrate that the submission contains three (3) of the following significant elements:*

- Creative and innovative nature of the program design
- Impact to the community: How will this reduce pollution, improve environmental conditions, raise usage of the location or otherwise positively affect the community?
- Effectiveness in addressing the goals identified and the successful completion of the project.
- Efficiency in use of resources.
- Effectiveness of program design related to: demonstrated reduction in solid waste, reduction of pollution, reestablishing native species of flora, or improving waterways and/or air quality.
- Overall excellence of the submission.

MOST CREATIVE MARKETING STRATEGY

Awarded in recognition of a department for **innovative and effective marketing strategy** used to promote an agency, Parks and Recreation facilities, programs, services, or events during the award year. Up to two (2) awards per year in each population category may be given.

Eligibility:

- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the piece.
- Must have been distributed during awards year.
- Without exception, an identical award-winning piece cannot be resubmitted unless there is a significant demonstration of a major format change in the piece.

Selection Criteria:

- Method of Distribution
- Use of Resources
- Strategic Design & Messaging
- Return on Investment (ROI)
- Uniqueness

MOST CREATIVE MARKETING PIECE

Awarded in recognition of a department and/or designer for **outstanding creativity and design of a single marketing piece** used to promote an agency, Parks and Recreation facilities, programs, services, or events during the award year. Up to two (2) awards per year in each population category may be given.

This award focuses on the **visual impact, originality, and execution** of an individual promotional item. Submissions may include, but are not limited to: electronic media (e-newsletters, websites, online advertisements, videos, etc.), print materials, banners, apparel, and promotional items. Pieces may be produced internally or externally.

Eligibility:

- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the piece.
- Must have been distributed during awards year.
- Without exception, an identical award-winning piece cannot be resubmitted unless there is significant demonstration of a major format change in the piece
- Supportive documentation must include cost of production.

Selection Criteria:

- Use of Resources
- Design Quality & Creativity
- Return on Investment (ROI)
- Uniqueness

SNAPSHOT MOMENT

Awarded in recognition of the department and designer for excellence in capturing the perfect image that

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highlights an event, services or facilities in the department. Two (2) awards per year in each population category may be given.

Eligibility:

- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the piece.
- Must have been taken during awards year.
- Without exception, an identical award-winning piece cannot be resubmitted unless there is significant demonstration of a major format change in the piece

Selection Criteria:

- Photo must be taken in-house without contracting or purchase of image
- Use of photo in department promotion
- Describes how photo exemplifies the departments services in a single image
- Uniqueness

BEST HEALTH AND WELLNESS INITIATIVE

Awarded in recognition of the department for excellence in influencing community health through initiatives, partnerships, delivery of services and/or access to physical activity and healthy foods. Two (2) awards per year in each population category may be given.

Eligibility:

- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the piece.
- Must have taken place during awards year.
- Without exception, an identical award-winning piece cannot be resubmitted unless there is significant demonstration of a major format change in the piece

Selection Criteria:

- Impact on community health
- Innovative and creative
- Effectiveness in addressing goals proposed as defined in terms of community needs, demands, and successful implementation.
- Efficient use of resources.
- Meets the needs of the population served.
- Impact on physical activity or nutrition

BEST NEW DEI (DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION) INITIATIVE

Awarded in recognition of the department for excellence in influencing diversity, equity and inclusion through initiatives, partnerships, programs, events, delivery of services and/or trainings. Two (2) awards per year in each population category may be given.

Eligibility:

- Requires current membership in VRPS by the organization or staff nominating the piece.
- Must have taken place during awards year.

- Without exception, an identical award-winning piece cannot be resubmitted unless there is significant demonstration of a major format change in the piece.

Selection Criteria:

- Degree of inclusion and accessibility to a quality parks and recreation experience for all people, inclusive of racial/ethnic minorities, the LGBTQ community, new Americans, individuals with disabilities and older adults, among others.
- Innovative and creative
- Efficient use of resources
- Uniqueness
- General excellence of the initiative