



VIRGINIA PARKS AND RECREATION

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE VIRGINIA RECREATION & PARK SOCIETY ■ SPECIAL EDITION 2024

SPECIAL EDITION



A State of Excellence

As we take time and pages to celebrate our annual VRPS award recipients, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on the deeper meaning behind these honors. Beyond individual recognition, these awards are a driving force in our profession here in Virginia. They inspire us to aim higher, strengthen our sense of unity, and highlight the positive influence parks and recreation have across the Commonwealth.

The commitment and creativity of our parks and recreation professionals in Virginia are truly inspiring. Whether it's preserving our state's natural treasures or creating inclusive spaces for all, we are making a meaningful impact every day. Our facilities go beyond recreation; they are essential hubs for community life, where Virginians come together to connect, learn, and grow.

Let's take pride in what we've achieved and continue to push the boundaries of our work. By sharing knowledge, collaborating with colleagues, and welcoming new ideas, we can create even more vibrant and impactful experiences for our communities.

I encourage you to explore the award-winning projects featured in this issue. If you're inspired by their success, don't hesitate to reach out to the recognized departments. Learn more about their initiatives and how you might implement similar programs in your own communities. Let's make our organization a true learning community—one where ideas, best practices, and support are shared freely.

For those who joined us at the awards ceremony during our annual conference on September 16th, I hope it was a



Bailey Kasten, CAE, ICE-CPP
Executive Director

memorable evening of celebrating the outstanding work of our members. If you weren't able to attend, please know that your contributions are equally valued, and we look forward to celebrating your future achievements.

Let's continue to recognize and uplift the incredible work VRPS members do throughout the year. Together, we are shaping a brighter future for parks and recreation in Virginia.

Sincerely,
Bailey Kasten, CAE, ICE-CPP
Executive Director, VRPS

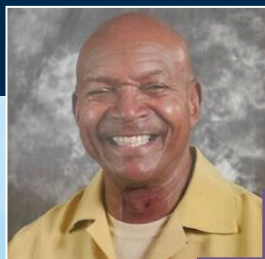
2023 VRPS AWARDS AND CITATIONS



DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

TARIQ WAAJID

Richmond Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities



Population Above 200,000

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

MATT SPRUILL

Colonial Heights Recreation & Parks



Population Above 200,000 (nominated by Henrico)

2023 VRPS AWARDS AND CITATIONS



DISTINGUISHED VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD

RASHEQ RAHMAN
McLean Community Center



Population 25,001 – 50,000

DISTINGUISHED VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD

ROBERT ARGABRIGHT
Richmond Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities



Population Above 200,000

OUTSTANDING NEW PROFESSIONAL AWARD

EMMY RICHARDS
Town of Ashland Parks and Recreation



Population Under 25,000

OUTSTANDING NEW PROFESSIONAL AWARD

NILAY PATEL
Henrico County Recreation and Parks



Population Above 200,000

DISTINGUISHED PRIVATE SECTOR SERVICE AWARD

SUNSHINE BALLPARK FOUNDATION
Fredericksburg Parks, Recreation and Events



Population 25,001 – 50,000

DISTINGUISHED PRIVATE SECTOR SERVICE AWARD

COX COMMUNICATIONS
Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services



Population Above 200,000

BEST NEW PROGRAM

WIGGLE WORMS
Colonial Heights Recreation & Parks



Population Under 25,000

BEST NEW PROGRAM

RISE PROGRAM
Isle of Wight County Parks and Recreation Department



Population 25,001 – 50,000

2023 VRPS AWARDS AND CITATIONS



BEST NEW PROGRAM

FREEDOM: THE HANDS THAT BUILT HISTORY TOURS

James City County Parks & Recreation



Population 50,001 – 100,000

BEST NEW PROGRAM

ARTIST RESIDENCY PROGRAM FOR THE OFFICE OF THE ARTS

City of Alexandria Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities



Population 100,001 – 200,000

BEST NEW PROGRAM

PARKS AFTER DARK

Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation



Population Above 200,000

BEST NEW SPECIAL EVENT

CROC GALA

Charles City County Parks and Recreation



Population Under 25,000

BEST NEW SPECIAL EVENT

SPOOKY TRAIL WALK

Powhatan County Parks and Recreation



Population 25,001 – 50,000

BEST NEW SPECIAL EVENT

HOLIDAY NIGHTS AT THE PARK

Portsmouth Parks and Recreation



Population 50,001 – 100,000

BEST NEW SPECIAL EVENT

WINTER ON THE GREEN

Hanover County Parks and Recreation



Population 100,001 – 200,000

BEST NEW SPECIAL EVENT

AUTUMN IN THE AIR FESTIVAL

Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation




Population Above 200,000

2023 VRPS AWARDS AND CITATIONS




**BEST NEW FACILITY
(BRICKS AND MORTAR)**

BENNETT'S CREEK RECREATION CENTER
Suffolk Parks and Recreation



Population 100,001 – 200,000



**BEST NEW FACILITY
(BRICKS AND MORTAR)**

THE LODGE AT HANSON PARK
Loudoun County Parks, Recreation and Community Services



Population Above 200,000



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

CHRISTIANSBURG HUCKLEBERRY PARK
Christiansburg Parks and Recreation



Population Under 25,000



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

HAND-IN-HAND PLAYGROUND
Blacksburg Parks and Recreation



Population 25,001 – 50,000



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

FREEDOM PARK OUTDOOR CLASSROOM
James City County Parks & Recreation



Population 50,001 – 100,000



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

WATERFRONT PARK
City of Alexandria Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities



Population 100,001 – 200,000



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

COMMUNITY CENTER PLAYGROUND
Loudoun County Parks, Recreation and Community Services



Population Above 200,000



**BEST NEW RENOVATION/ADDITION
(BRICKS AND MORTAR)**

HENRY COUNTY RECREATION CENTER
Henry County Parks and Recreation



Population 25,001 – 50,000



2023 VRPS AWARDS AND CITATIONS



BEST NEW RENOVATION/ADDITION (BRICKS AND MORTAR)

NEIGHBORHOOD FACILITY RECREATION CENTER

Portsmouth Parks and Recreation



Population 50,001 – 100,000

BEST NEW RENOVATION/ADDITION (BRICKS AND MORTAR)

POWHATAN COMMUNITY CENTER

Richmond Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities



Population Above 200,000

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

FAIRFAX CITY SMART RESTROOM PILOT PROJECT

City of Fairfax Parks and Recreation



Population Under 25,000

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

THE COURTS AT LOCUST GROVE

Orange County Parks and Recreation



Population 25,001 – 50,000

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

ROANOKE COUNTY OAK GROVE PARK

Roanoke County Parks, Recreation and Tourism



Population 50,001 – 100,000

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

CYPRESS PARK POOL RENOVATION

Suffolk Parks and Recreation



Population 100,001 – 200,000

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

ALCOVA HEIGHTS PARK

Arlington County Parks and Recreation



Population Above 200,000

BEST NEW ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

SUGARLAND RUN STREAM RESTORATION PROJECT

Town of Herndon Parks and Recreation



Population Under 25,000

2023 VRPS AWARDS AND CITATIONS



BEST NEW ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

PARTNERS IN PARK SUSTAINABILITY

New Kent County Parks and Recreation



Population 25,001 – 50,000

BEST NEW ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

INVASIVE PLANT CONTROL/CONTAINMENT INITIATIVE

Charlottesville Parks and Recreation



Population 50,001 – 100,000

BEST NEW ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

VB TREES DIGITAL TREE INVENTORY

Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation



Population Above 200,000

MOST CREATIVE MARKETING STRATEGY

RUN THE VALLEY RACE SERIES MEDAL COLLECTION

Waynesboro Parks and Recreation



Population Under 25,000

MOST CREATIVE MARKETING STRATEGY

GARRETT THE CARROT

Fredericksburg Parks, Recreation and Events



Population 25,001 – 50,000

MOST CREATIVE MARKETING STRATEGY

OUR DOGGONE FENCE

Orange County Parks and Recreation



Population 25,001 – 50,000

MOST CREATIVE MARKETING STRATEGY

“GRINCHY” INTENTIONS

James City County Parks & Recreation



Population 50,001 – 100,000

MOST CREATIVE MARKETING STRATEGY

ELF IN THE PARK

Suffolk Parks and Recreation



Population 100,001 – 200,000

2023 VRPS AWARDS AND CITATIONS



MOST CREATIVE MARKETING STRATEGY

LEGENDARY VALUE MARKETING CAMPAIGN
Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation



Population Above 200,000

MOST CREATIVE MARKETING STRATEGY

SKATE THE WAKE
Fairfax County Park Authority



Population Above 200,000

MOST CREATIVE MARKETING PIECE

SNEAKER STICKERS
City of Fairfax Parks and Recreation



Population Under 25,000

MOST CREATIVE MARKETING PIECE

WHO LIVES IN OUR RIVER AND PARKS? OUTDOOR EDUCATION SIGNAGE
Danville Parks and Recreation



Population 25,001 – 50,000

MOST CREATIVE MARKETING PIECE

FXBG PARK PICKS
Fredericksburg Parks, Recreation and Events



Population 25,001 – 50,000

MOST CREATIVE MARKETING PIECE

“VALUE OF A TREE” TAGS
Roanoke Parks and Recreation



Population 50,001 – 100,000

MOST CREATIVE MARKETING PIECE

LOVE SIGN SWAG PACK
James City County Parks & Recreation



Population 50,001 – 100,000

MOST CREATIVE MARKETING PIECE

HISTORY AND HOPS PROMOTIONAL VIDEO
Hanover County Parks and Recreation



Population 100,001 – 200,000

2023 VRPS AWARDS AND CITATIONS



MOST CREATIVE MARKETING PIECE

VIRGINIA BEACH PARKS POCKET MAP

Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation

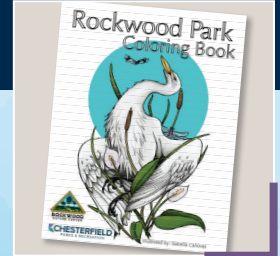


Population Above 200,000

MOST CREATIVE MARKETING PIECE

ROCKWOOD PARK COLORING PAGES

Chesterfield County Parks and Recreation



Population Above 200,000

SNAPSHOT MOMENT

360 DEGREES OF FAIRFAX CITY INDEPENDENCE DAY PRIDE

City of Fairfax Parks and Recreation



Population Under 25,000

SNAPSHOT MOMENT

SLIPPIN 'N SLIDIN INTO SUMMER

Powhatan County Parks and Recreation

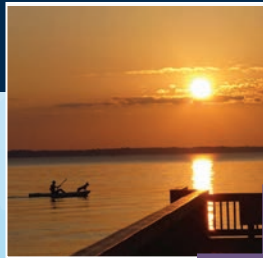


Population 25,001 – 50,000

SNAPSHOT MOMENT

“DOGGIE PADDLING” ON THE JAMES RIVER

James City County Parks & Recreation



Population 50,001 – 100,000

SNAPSHOT MOMENT

HAL AND BERNI HANSON REGIONAL PARK SPLASH PAD

Loudoun County Parks, Recreation and Community Services



Population Above 200,000

SNAPSHOT MOMENT

TEAM NORFOLK BOXING

Norfolk Parks and Recreation



Population Above 200,000

BEST HEALTH AND WELLNESS INITIATIVE

FARMERS MARKET SPROUTS PROGRAM

Fredericksburg Parks, Recreation and Events



Population 25,001 – 50,000


2023 VRPS AWARDS AND CITATIONS



BEST HEALTH AND WELLNESS INITIATIVE

RHYTHM REVOLUTION – SILENT FITNESS DRUMMING: A PARADIGM SHIFT IN COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS

James City County Parks & Recreation



VRPS
VIRGINIA RECREATION & PARK SOCIETY

Population 50,001 – 100,000

BEST NEW DEI INITIATIVE

FREE THERAPEUTIC RECREATION PROGRAM

Colonial Heights Recreation & Parks



VRPS
VIRGINIA RECREATION & PARK SOCIETY

Population Under 25,000

BEST NEW DEI INITIATIVE

OUR AMERICAN LIBERTY STORIES

Town of Vienna Parks and Recreation



VRPS
VIRGINIA RECREATION & PARK SOCIETY

Population Under 25,000

BEST NEW DEI INITIATIVE

SENSING FOR INCLUSION

James City County Parks & Recreation



VRPS
VIRGINIA RECREATION & PARK SOCIETY

Population 50,001 – 100,000

BEST NEW DEI INITIATIVE

ADAPTIVE BASKETBALL PROGRAM

Bedford County Parks and Recreation



VRPS
VIRGINIA RECREATION & PARK SOCIETY

Population 50,001 – 100,000

BEST NEW DEI INITIATIVE

FAIRFAX COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES ROOM AT TYSONS

Fairfax County Neighborhood and Community Services



VRPS
VIRGINIA RECREATION & PARK SOCIETY

Population Above 200,000

BEST NEW DEI INITIATIVE

PARKS ON ICE

Fairfax County Park Authority



VRPS
VIRGINIA RECREATION & PARK SOCIETY

Population Above 200,000

Congratulations!

VRPS
VIRGINIA RECREATION & PARK SOCIETY

Be Intentional in Charting the Course

BY TABITHA MARTINEZ, M. ED, CPRE
2024 VRPS ANNUAL CONFERENCE
SEPTEMBER 17, 2024



I am honored and humbled to stand before you as your next VRPS president.

As 2025 approaches, I will continue to work with our board, staff, and members to move our strategic plan forward. I aim to focus on achieving the following goals:

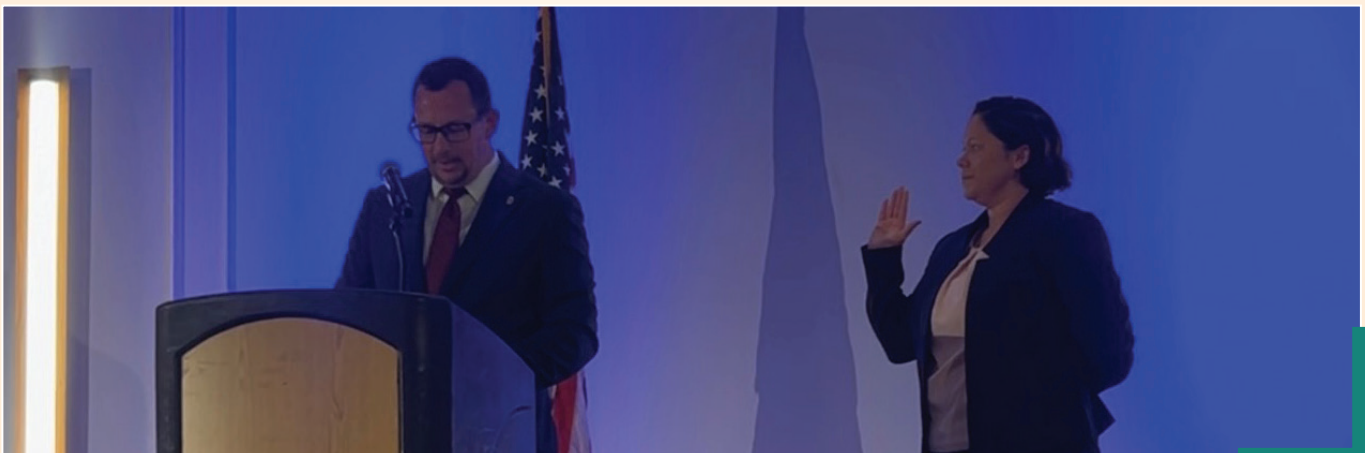
1. Financial Sustainability
 - a. Creating an inclusive and equitable membership model
 - i. Restructure membership fees
2. Empowering Connections and Meaningful Engagement
 - a. Attracting and retaining members
 - i. Develop external engagement strategies
3. Holistic Member Development
 - a. Create best practices on diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace, policies, and programs — Focusing on inclusion and belonging

I want to mention our mighty DEI Taskforce, who, on their behalf, I would like to thank those who completed the survey. Results will be shared soon, so stay tuned. As a side note, we also like to invite anyone who is enthusiastic and committed to assisting us in developing and implementing initiatives to reach out to Todd Brown, we will gladly put you to work. Ok, enough of the sales pitch.

I cannot express the love I have for our field; we are like no other. We have the power to positively influence countless lives and make a meaningful difference in our communities. Let us **be intentional in our actions**, shining our light to create a better world for all. **Be intentional in charting the course** for that future rec and park kid, that senior who comes to the center for socialization because they feel welcome and heard, or that community member who likes to complain about EVERYTHING, you know who I am talking

about, we all have a least one.

I would like to end by emphasizing that we are stronger when we work together. Look around this room and see that everyone here is willing to support you. By helping one another, we are positively impacting our communities and society as a whole. We are the guiding light in this world, and I want to thank each of you for your dedication to our communities and VRPS. Let's leave here with renewed energy and be the catalyst for change our communities desperately need.



2024 VRPS *James C. Stutts Fellows Award*



Katey Legg, Gloucester, VA

The James C. Stutts Fellows Award is VRPS' premiere award, in recognition of an individual who has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to furthering the goals of VRPS, contributing to the profession, and serving the greater community. At the 2024 Annual Conference Awards Ceremony, we were thrilled to announce this year's winner, Katey Legg.

Katey has dedicated endless hours to VRPS and the Parks and Recreation profession. She has volunteered on many VRPS committees, including as liaison to the LTI Board, and served on both the Society (President in 2013) and the Foundation Board of Directors.

After employment with the Parks and Recreation departments of James City County and the City of Hampton, Katey returned to school to earn a master's degree in the field. She started her career with Gloucester County in 2005 as a Recreation Supervisor and was later promoted to Recreation Superintendent before she was named PR&T Director in 2018. She recently was named Director of Public Utilities for the County.

While Director of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, Katey's appreciation of the importance of parks and recreation to the health and vitality of a community was evidenced by innovative programming, her continuously striving to improve park facilities, and providing a variety of services demanded by the community.

Over the years, Katey developed close friendships and network relationships filled with laughter and fun times, as well as personal and professional development. VRPS congratulates Katey on this well-deserved recognition and for your years of dedication to parks and recreation!



James C. Stutts Fellows Award Recipients



1964	Myrtle Patterson Don Wingo Lucy Patterson Charles "Pappy" Nixon	City of Lynchburg City of Norfolk City of Norfolk City of Newport News	1991	Tom Blekicki	Henrico County
1965	Jesse Reynolds Howard Mast	City of Richmond City of Suffolk	1993	Eldon James, Jr.	King George County
1966	Nan Crow	City of Charlottesville	1995	Roger Pollard	City of Alexandria
1967	Cecil Gilkerson Bill Castleberry	City of Harrisonburg	1996	Ned Cheely, III	James City County
1968	Mary Schwartz	McGuire Veterans Hospital	1997	C. William Boyce	City of Virginia Beach
1969	Ralph Wilson		1999	Charles Hester	City of Petersburg
1971	Calvin Schilling	V.A. Hospital, Salem	2001	Annie Thornton	City of Richmond
1973	Leon Curtis	V.A. Hospital, Salem	2002	Robert Antozzi	City of Fredericksburg
1974	Marion Moody Hormachea	Virginia Commonwealth University	2003	Douglas Kennedy	Virginia Wesleyan College
1975	Ronald Reynolds Don Hull	Campbell County Accomack County	2007	Michael Poplawskii	Newport News
1976	James Greiner	City of Portsmouth	2008	Cindy Curtis	City of Virginia Beach
1977	William Garman	City of Chesapeake	2009	Darrell Crittendon	City of Norfolk
1979	Fred Williams	City of Richmond	2010	Tom Clarke	City of Roanoke
1981	Ellett McGeorge	Henrico County	2011	Beth Wood-Whitley	City of Virginia Beach
1982	Darrell Shell	Roanoke County	2012	Cindy Jo Daniel	County of Henrico
1983	Joe Hensley Michael Wise	City of Alexandria Virginia Commonwealth University	2013	Carol Steele	Gloucester County
1984	John Gilstrap	City of Danville	2014	Sean Gleason	City of Colonial Heights
1985	Lakey Logan	City of Harrisonburg	2015	Greg Sager	Hanover County
1986	Ned Cheely, Jr.	City of Virginia Beach	2016	Nancy Ellis	James City County
1988	Susan Walston	City of Virginia Beach	2017	Art Anselene	Town of Herndon
1989	Muriel Barbour	McGuire Veterans Hospital	2018	Margaret Thorne	City of Portsmouth
1990	Tish Lindsey	City of Danville	2019	Cindy Roeder	Town of Herndon
			2020	James C. Stutts	
			2022	Arlana Fautleroy	James City County
			2023	John H. Carnifax Jr.	James City County
			2024	Katey Legg	Gloucester, VA

2024 VRPS *President's Awards*

Joy Johnson, M.S. Ed, CPRP
Sarah O'Reilly, CPRP
Todd Brown, CPRP

Jason Bookheimer, CPRP
Rebecca Johnson, M.Ed.
Kari Diop, CPRE

Norfolk Hosts a Successful VRPS 2024 Annual Conference

BY KATIE KELLEY, MARKETING MANAGER, NORFOLK PARKS AND RECREATION

Wow, what an incredible three-day extravaganza! Norfolk Parks & Recreation was honored to host the 2024 Annual Conference for VRPS, September 14-17, at the Norfolk Marriott Hotel in downtown Norfolk. Over 500 passionate attendees from all across Virginia gathered for an action-packed event filled with enlightening educational sessions and a powerhouse Sunday keynote from Neelay Bhatt, the visionary Founder and CEO of Next Practice Partners, LLC, followed by an inspiring and dynamic Tuesday closing session with Dr. Gale Gorke of Kids Kan, Inc. Attendees also dove into amazing pre-conference adventures at the Norfolk Botanical Garden and Virginia Zoo, hit the greens at Sewells Point Golf Course, and soaked up knowledge at the Aquatics Facility Operators course. With electrifying socials at NashFest in Town Point Park, Circuit Social, and the Norva, plus fun “Morning Mojo” exercise sessions and a buzzing interactive exhibit hall, the vibe was absolutely contagious! Other outstanding events included student day activities, a fun resource group mixer, a live auction, and an awards ceremony. Huge shout out to all the attendees, as well as to Norfolk’s Conference Committee, our phenomenal sponsors, and all the dedicated volunteers who made this event a roaring success.

The 2025 Annual Conference is scheduled to take place in Roanoke, Virginia, October 25-29.

