



# Annual Report FY10

## Moving Forward



**Howard County**  
RECREATION & PARKS



**“ We keep moving forward, opening new doors,  
and doing new things, because we’re curious and  
curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.”**

—Walt Disney



**James & Anne Robinson Nature Center, Concept**



**James & Anne Robinson Nature Center, 85% Complete**

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## From the County Executive



**Ken Ulman**

I'm pleased to present the Department of Recreation & Parks' Annual Report for 2010. This has been another busy year with the installation of a state-of-the-art lighting system at Rockburn Park, a groundbreaking for Western Regional Park's Phase IV and construction underway on the North Laurel Community Center and Park and the Robinson Nature Center, both scheduled to open in Spring 2011.

The North Laurel Community Center and Park will be shared by the Departments of Recreation & Parks, Citizen Services, Health and Police and will be similar in capabilities and functions to the popular Gary J. Arthur Community Center at Glenwood. The Center will be situated in the 46-acre North Laurel Park and include a senior center, Police community office, and an entire Health Department wing.

The Robinson Nature Center will be a modern, 3-story building situated on 18 acres of land adjacent to the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area. Designed to bring people together with nature, the center will focus on experience-based learning and include indoor interactive exhibits and displays, outdoor trails, and even the NatureSphere – a state-of-the-art digital planetarium that really is out of this world!

While overseeing these two projects, the Recreation & Parks' staff also maintained nearly 9,000 acres of parkland and open space and offered 5,600 leisure programs and activities. They also hosted Howard County's 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration, Wine in the Woods, the Holiday Mart, summer concerts, runs, walks, tournaments and countless other community events.

It was also a difficult year for the Department as we lost our longtime friend and leader Gary J. Arthur following his brief battle with cancer. Gary had a tremendous impact on the development of our parks, park facilities and the quality recreation and leisure programs and services we have in Howard County – we miss Gary terribly.

I want to thank recently appointed Director John Byrd and his amazing staff for rising to meet such an enormous challenge and making 2010 another great year for Howard County's Department of Recreation & Parks.

## From the Department Director



**John R. Byrd**

I am pleased to present the FY 2010 Department of Recreation and Parks Annual Report to the County Executive, County Council and the residents of Howard County. This report reflects that we are "Moving Forward" in spite of a continuing economic stall. With hard work, ingenuity, and a back-to-basics approach, our staff and thousands of volunteers have forged ahead to provide the best service possible to the residents of Howard County.

Over the last year, we have embedded the concept of sustainability into all functional areas of the department in order to reduce waste and stretch resources. We have initiated succession planning so staff can become familiar with department functions outside their regular work area. We saved money and reduced waste by changing our brochure distribution process and substantially increased electronic communications; we reduced mowing operations by allowing 30 acres to revert back to natural habitat; we moved a summer camp program to Roger Carter Recreation Center and saved over \$7,000 in rental costs; we salvaged trees that would have been cut down by transplanting them to another park that needed screening and we even installed self-stock "mutt-mitt" stations at several parks to reduce spending and encourage park users to recycle plastic bags for pet waste.

I think you will agree as you read this report that we continue to be creative and we are committed to providing the best there is to offer in Recreation and Parks opportunities.

## Our Mission

Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks (HCRP) uses a TEAM approach to provide a high quality recreation and parks system that promotes opportunities for all Howard County residents to pursue safe and enjoyable leisure activities in balance with the protection and conservation of natural resources.

## Our Vision

As a nationally accredited Department of Recreation & Parks, we strive to promote the health and well being of the community by providing recreation and leisure programs and services for residents of all ages and abilities and to serve as model stewards of the environment by wisely managing, protecting and conserving our natural resources.



Early Childhood Learning Program



55+ Programs

## Accreditation

HCRP is accredited through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). To achieve accreditation, the Department was required to meet over 150 standards covering all operations contained in leisure services. These professional standards serve as an aid for improving performance and maintaining quality. They provide park and recreation agencies with an ability to evaluate their operation, while achieving and maintaining a level of efficiency and effectiveness. Howard County Recreation & Parks achieved accreditation in 2001 and re-accreditation in 2006, and preparations are underway to attain re-accreditation in 2011.



## 2010 Goals

These goals were announced and achieved in FY10:

- Complete an inventory of park operations equipment zone by zone. This inventory will help us plan more successfully for future changes in operational needs while providing greater accountability.
- Direct and manage consultants in concert with the Department of Public Works (DPW), to begin construction on Blandair Regional Park Phase I and to achieve 100% construction documentation.
- Continue the battle against inactivity and obesity by building even greater participation in sports, health, and fitness programs.
- Train all Recreational Licensed Child Care staff in nonviolent crisis intervention and verbal de-escalation intervention.
- Research the potential of developing two middle school therapeutic recreation summer camp programs.



**Jump Rope Camp**



**Softball Tournament**

## 2011 Goals

These goals were announced for FY11:

- Open and establish the James and Anne Robinson Nature Center and the North Laurel Community Center.
- Coordinate the County's new Technology Programs: SAP accounting system and ActiveNet registration system.
- Direct and manage the consultant and Advisory Committee to complete the Troy Regional Park Master Plan.
- Create a Department depreciation/renovation maintenance schedule for all park sites, recreation facilities and maintenance items.
- Complete construction on Blandair Regional Park Phase I.
- Plan for final submittal of the self-assessment document to the National Recreation & Parks Association's Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) for 10-year re-accreditation.

## Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Members



From l. to r.

**Gary J. Arthur** (Executive Secretary, at time of photo), **Lowell Adams**, **Michael Sikorski** (Student member), **David Grabowski** (Chair), **Herman Charity**, **Janet Siddiqui**, **Chuck Parvis** (Ex Officio), **Joel Goodman** (at right); **Tony Brudis** (Vice Chair) and **Tammy J. CitaraManis** (not shown)



Joel Goodman tours the North Laurel Community Center

**“ We invite you to become an active partner as we strive to improve the quality of life through the pursuit of quality leisure services.”**

## Staff

Our full-time staff numbers 163. In addition, we have 122 part-time, benefitted staff and 450 contingent staff members.

# Volunteers

As we move forward, we appreciate all of the volunteers who shared their time and talents with the Department and with the citizens of Howard County over the past year. Each volunteer is an integral part of our success and their participation in our operations uniquely supports the programs and activities that we offer. For their commitment, they were recognized this year with a thank-you letter from the County Executive and the Director, along with a small gift. Their benefit to the County translates into expanded programs, quality programming, and cost savings to the community.

Volunteers participated in a variety of programs and activities including youth coaching, Earth Day celebration, Middle Patuxent Environmental Area activities, the knitting and crocheting group, Junior Counselor Corps, Family Volunteer Day, Wine in the Woods, Heritage programs, FrogWatch USA, Nest-Watch, Stream & Pond Clean-up, Annual Butterfly Count, and GreenFest. We are grateful for their expertise and contribution to our organization.

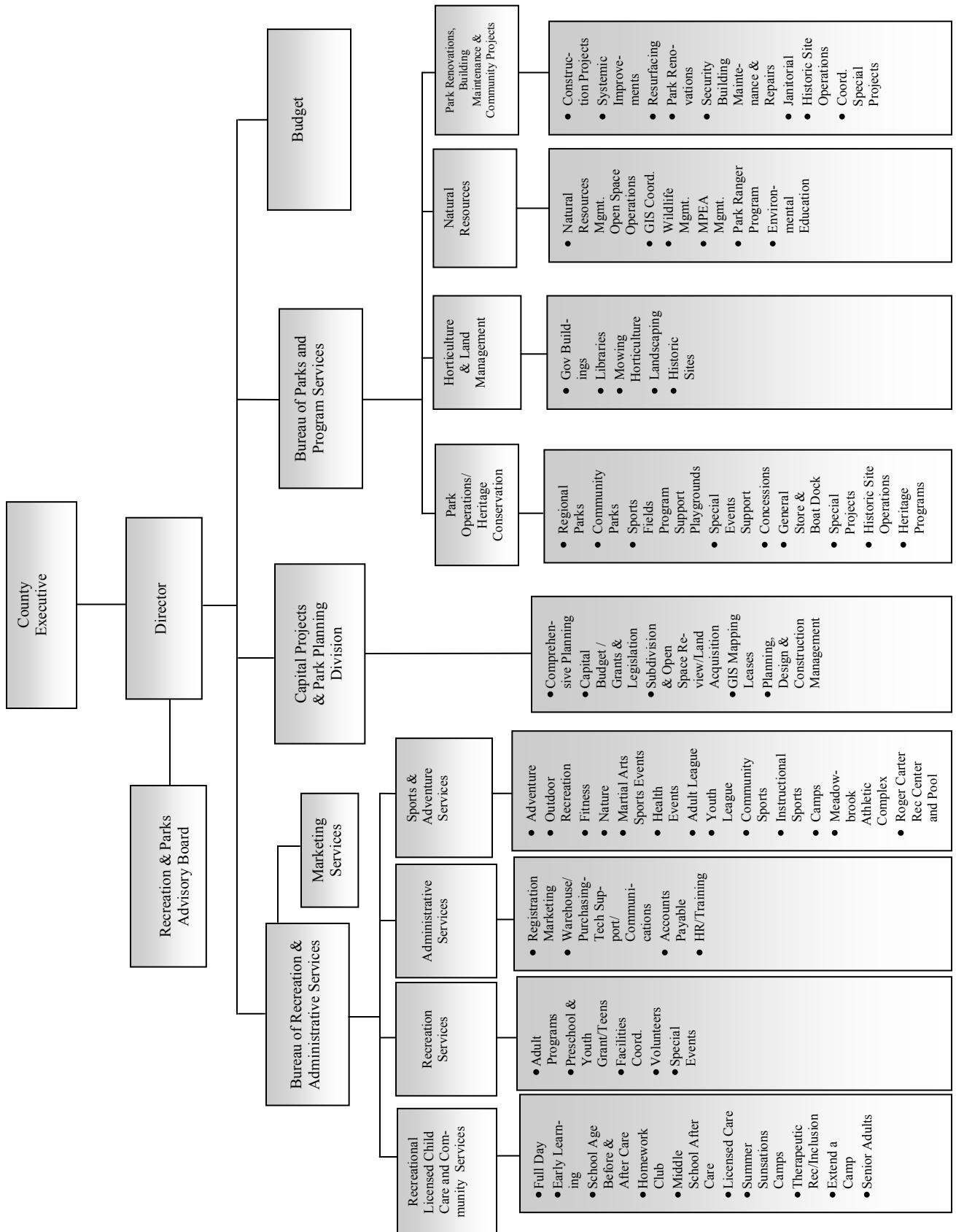
Season	Volunteers	Volunteer Hours
Summer	1,225	37,161
Fall	1,003	46,715
Winter	183	3,756
Spring	2,120	57,787
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,531</b>	<b>145,419</b>



Family/Community Group Volunteer Day



# Howard County Department of Recreation & Parks Organization Chart



## Tribute to Our Friends

### Gary J. Arthur



**Gary J. Arthur at the Wine in the Woods festival**

Gary J. Arthur, Director of Howard County Recreation and Parks, died of cancer on May 27, 2010 in his Ellicott City home. Gary was a devoted and loving husband, father and grandfather, who valued family above all else. He was a dedicated professional and leader whose vision, humor, work ethic, and respect for others earned the respect of his coworkers, friends, and partners in the community for 31 years. He was passionate about the preservation of open space and held positions as President of the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association and President of the Maryland Association of Counties, Recreation and Parks Affiliate. He received the Citation Award of Recreation and Parks Excellence from the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association, the highest award in the field. Under his leadership, Howard County's Department of Recreation and Parks earned accreditation by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies, National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA). Gary's passion and vision to improve the quality of life for the residents of Howard County is evidenced through his involvement in the planning and implementation of services, facilities, parks, and programs that include: Gary J. Arthur Community Center at Glenwood and Western Regional Park, Meadowbrook Park and Athletic Complex, the Skate Park, High Ridge Park, the

Timbers at Troy Golf Course, Wine in the Woods, the Robinson Nature Center, the North Laurel Community Center and Blandair Park. He was a man who always focused on others, never himself. He loved life and always found a way to bring people together to have a good time. He will be missed.

### Bernice Rutledge

Bernice began employment with the Department of Recreation & Parks and, later, the Department of Citizen Services Office on Aging. She was an integral part of the team at the Gary J. Arthur Community Center at Glenwood. Her ability to establish a rapport with members and staff was truly a gift. Working at the front desk, Bernice was dedicated to her job, and despite her illness, she would juggle doctor appointments and orchestrate coverage to make sure things went on as scheduled. Her warmth and caring spirit was an inspiration to fellow staff and members. Bernice lost her long battle with cancer on Sunday, July 25, 2010 surrounded by family and friends. To honor her memory, a tree was planted and a painting entitled "Blossoms of Hope" was hung at the Gary J. Arthur Community Center in October.

### Phyllis Morris

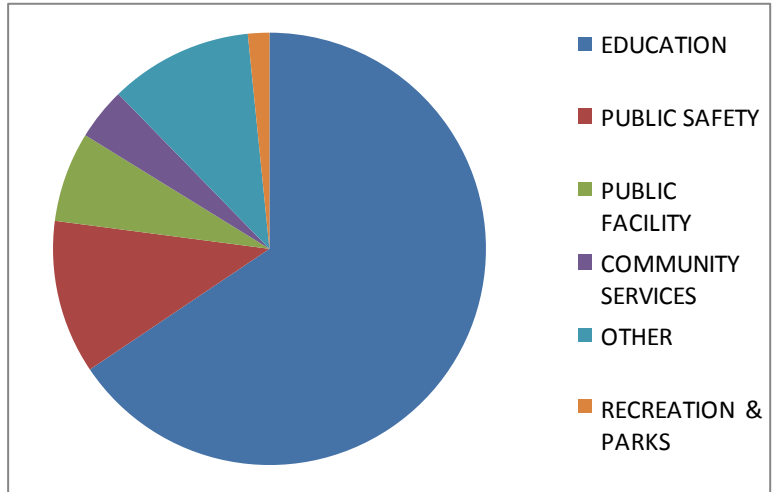
Phyllis was born in Philadelphia and later moved to Columbia. She worked at Recreation & Parks as an Administrative Support Technician assigned to managing part-time payroll from 1979 until 2001 when she had a stroke and was admitted to a nursing home. Phyllis was an accomplished artist whose talents included painting, tailoring (she designed and sewed much of her own clothing) and knitting. She died on August 16, 2010 and is survived by a son.

# Budget

**Recreation & Parks received 1.6% of the total County budget in FY2010:**

Total GF Budget:  
**\$820,224,970**

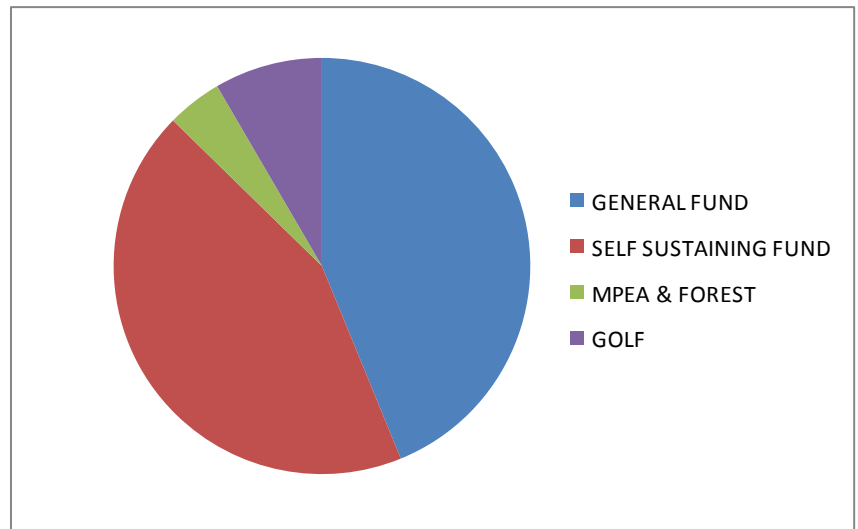
Education	65.6%
Public Safety	11.5%
Public Facilities	6.7%
Community Services	3.9%
Other	10.7%
Recreation & Parks	1.6%



**Our Operating Budget is multi-funded. Program fees, special events and grants are the majority sources and are not tax supported:**

Total Operating Budget:  
**\$29,738,104**

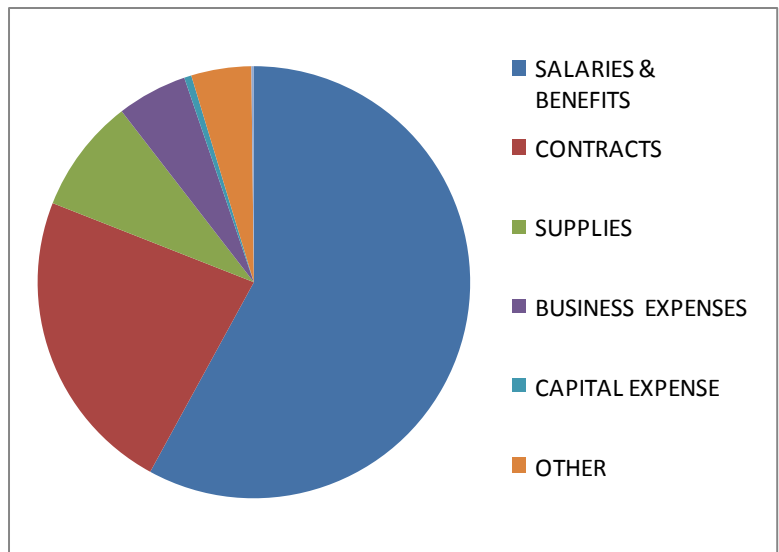
General Fund	43.8%
Self Sustaining Fund	43.5%
MPEA/Forest	
Mitigation	4.3%
Golf	8.4%



## FY2010 EXPENSES :

Total Expenses:  
**\$29,738,104**

Salaries & Benefits	57.9%
Contracts	23.0%
Supplies	8.6%
Business Expenses	5.3%
Capital Expense	0.5%
Other	4.5%
Depreciation	0.2%



## By the Numbers



### Pooches' Pool Party

- Recreational Licensed Child Care (RLC) services were provided to 2,450 participants.
  - 1,475 staff attended 39 trainings provided by the RLC Division.
  - 17 child care staff attended 150 hours of training at Howard Community College to obtain their school-age child care certifications. The training included Child Care Administration, School-Age Child Care Curriculum, and Child Care Certification I: Growth and Development.
  - Inclusion Companions were provided for 295 individuals with disabilities totaling 24,167 hours of service.
  - 892 coaches volunteered 126,070 hours to athletic programs.
  - Private sector organizations provided services valued at \$1,368,000 – this includes private leisure service providers, officiating organizations, private facilities, and admissions to bowling, theme parks, movies, etc.
  - We managed 88 playing fields, including 20 lighted fields and 57 ball diamonds.
- We contributed 6,776 staff hours towards snow removal and emergency blizzard transportation assistance.
  - 3,169 amusement park tickets were sold, a 17% decrease in sales from last year.
  - Over 1,500 Scholarships were processed, a 42% increase over last year. The increased scholarship contribution was achieved through increased Wine in the Woods revenue.
  - \$412,145 in financial assistance was provided to program participants, a 27% increase over last year.
  - 788 dog park tags were sold, a 12% increase over last year; \$20,223 in revenue was received for dog tags, daily admissions and lost tags.
  - We maintained or managed 5,537 acres of parkland and 3,357 acres of natural resource land (open space), for a total of over 8,894 acres.
  - 110 additional acres of land were acquired and will be forever protected as County parkland.
  - GreenFest was held at Howard Community College in April; over 100 vendors and 2,000 people attended.



GreenFest

## By the Numbers (cont'd)



Deer Management Training

- The deer population was reduced by 420 through deer management programs administered in nine parks. Deer management improves forest habitat by reducing excessive vegetation browsing.
- 1,194 pavilion permits were processed.
- \$283,877 was collected from pavilion and indoor permits.
- 12,246 program registrations were processed.
- 7,143 advance ticket sales for Wine in Woods, an increase of 57% over advance tickets sales in 2009.
- 203 permits were processed for the use of indoor facilities at the Meadowbrook Athletic Complex, the Roger Carter Recreation Center, and the Gary J. Arthur Community Center at Glenwood.
- 5,608 programs offered in adult and children classes in the sections of dance, arts, crafts, cooking, lifestyle enrichment, music, and sports, which was a 6% increase over last year.
- Chesapeake Shakespeare Company performed *Julius Caesar* in the fall for 1,219 patrons and *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Hamlet* in the summer for 4,412 attendees. All plays were performed at the Patapsco Female Institute Historic Park.
- 19,000 people attended a program, concert, play or visited one or more of the heritage program sites in Ellicott City from September 2009 through August 2010. These numbers represent a 30% increase in attendance over last year.
- A cooperative program with the Department of Corrections yielded the completion of 120 volunteer hours. Workers cleaned up almost 4,000 lbs. of trash from the parks, spread 21 yards of mulch on playgrounds, and assisted with trail maintenance and various other park projects.
- An agreement was arranged through Centennial Management and Kona Ice Vendor to operate in Centennial Park, bringing in \$1,000 in revenue to the park without any contractual expenses or staff costs.
- Park Construction staff teamed with the Department of Planning and Zoning and Department of Public Works Central Zone Highways along with the Western Zone Traffic Division in renovating the Oakland Mills Village Center to save approximately \$120,000.
- 4 major triathlons were hosted at Centennial Park: the Columbia Triathlon, the Celebration Triathlon, the Iron Girl Triathlon, and the Ulman ½ Full Triathlon.
- 14 Booster club concessionaires achieved Safe-Serv certification.
- 19 years for the “Haunted Experience” at Rockburn Park, an event presented by the Elkridge Adult Athletic Association.
- The Department managed approximately 88 miles of natural and paved trails.

## Challenges & Solutions

**“ By building bridges with the community, businesses, and nonprofits, our challenges are diminished.”**

Economic conditions continue to have the largest impact on department operations. Our creative and professional staff forges onward to maintain the best quality products for the community and to deliver activities and programming that are meaningful, educational, life-changing, and fun. By building bridges with the community, businesses, and nonprofits, our challenges are diminished. These are some of the solutions we have found to rise to the challenge:

- The Department consolidated job duties while budget cuts prevent filling 24 vacant positions.
- Family nights and open houses were held during normal hours of operation at our 36 child care centers, thus eliminating staff overtime salary cost.
- The Department continues to access sponsorships, grants and partnerships (see Partnerships, pg. 20).
- The New Robinson Nature Center will use volunteers to handle front desk duties.
- Moved Therapeutic Recreation and Inclusion Staff as well as Age 55 Plus staff over to self-sustaining funding and the Recreational Licensed Childcare section, which is our highest revenue center. This saved \$300,000 in the General Fund.
- We partnered with the Departments of Housing and Community Development; they assumed the cost of a camp created for at-risk youth instead of using Department funds.

- Created program e-newsletters instead of producing monthly calendars for children to take home.
- Placed updated rental and park information online instead of printing new booklets; the annual report has not been printed in 4 years.
- Switched from postal to residential delivery of seasonal Activity Guides, saving \$100,000.
- Created marketing templates for staff to use to create their own publications but maintain quality publications.
- Designed marketing brochures that combined program information from several divisions and bureaus to be more efficient.
- Offered early bird registration and account credit instead of refunds for our registration process.
- Swimming schedules were restructured at the RCRC to expand program swimming hours.



**Swim schedules were restructured**

## Challenges & Solutions (cont'd)



Patuxent River at Savage

- Savage Mill Trail experienced a dramatic increase in visitors. In order to restore the trail and Little Patuxent River area to a healthier natural state, provide a safe sustainable recreation experience for park users, and address residents concerns, the following steps have been or are scheduled to be implemented:
  - √ Hired four Seasonal Park Rangers to supplement Ranger staffing and provide a contact presence at the Mill Trail entrance. Rangers educated users regarding Park Rules and Regulations and inspected coolers for alcohol before entering.
  - √ Re-established the no-swimming policy.
  - √ Removed and replaced all existing signs with new coordinated signs using international symbols.
  - √ Re-landscaped the trail entrance to establish it as a trail rather than a recreational area.
  - √ Assigned park operations staff to the site to keep trash and litter under control.
  - √ Continued policy of no grills or fires.
  - √ Continued policy of no food vendors.
  - √ Continued partnership with Dept. of Corrections work program to assist with container trash and litter removal.
  - √ Reduced number of portable restrooms and increased frequency of cleaning.
  - √ Directed users to Savage Park if they wish to picnic or use grills.
- New sports camps with an aquatic component were offered at the Roger Carter Recreation Center (RCRC).
- We used a team approach to manage the Meadowbrook Athletic Complex (MAC) until funds became available to hire a director.
- We utilized several partnerships during the initial opening of the MAC to determine upcoming seasonal court allocations.
- We examined landscape operations to reduce maintenance, yielding \$15,891 in contract savings.
- We created “No Mow” zones, eliminating areas from routine mowing and site manicure.
- Used free, high-quality topsoil from the landfill instead of purchasing topsoil.
- Used flextime much more than ever as opposed to overtime and comp time. Scrutinizing leave requests and time requested to make sure schedules are covered.

# Succession Planning



Department Supervisory Training

Through succession planning measures and long-term strategic planning, we are preparing for operational challenges when employees retire.

Three subcommittees were formed to facilitate the impending transition of staff. The subcommittees include Staff Development, Mentorship Program, and Transformational Leadership. Each team performed tasks independently and conducted analyses to identify enhancement strategies aimed at a comprehensive evaluation of the department's projected future needs.

The focus of the committees was to identify, define, research, and address objectives more fully in small groups, and then share ideas and processes necessary to implement a plan for the future. Some of the highlights of the subcommittees include:

## The Staff Development Subcommittee:

- Compiled and evaluated our training programs and staff certificates. This will provide staff with information for future Department needs.
- Developed career development workshops to expand Department knowledge and awareness of leadership skills available for career development.

- Analyzed job specifications to determine the best match for skill sets, qualifications and education requirements.

## The Mentorship Program Subcommittee:

- Assisted in developing new training programs, improving existing training, and cross-training.
- Began an orientation for a mentoring pilot program.
- Developed mentor and mentee job descriptions, expectations, and responsibilities.

## The Transformational Leadership Subcommittee:

- Created and provided a survey to those employees eligible to retire within five years.
- Conducted an analysis of the survey results and shared the results with senior staff.

**“ Through succession planning measures and long-term strategic planning, we are preparing for operational challenges when employees retire.”**



## Enhancing Existing Parks & Facilities

We have met the challenges of preserving and maintaining parkland and facilities, while implementing technological advances, in the following ways:

- Renovated the recreation activity room at ElkrIDGE Elementary school to enhance the learning environment for the Early Learning Center Program.
- Installed a sound system at two Cedar Lane Park ball fields.
- Replaced damaged pool-side furniture, replastered the pool to repair leaks, upgraded lights, installed Sport Court flooring, and expanded fitness space at the Roger Carter Recreation Center.
- Retrofitted three indoor field hockey playing areas complete with 4'x4' boundaries and specialized indoor goals at the Meadowbrook Athletic Complex.
- Replaced the Robert Oliver Place bus stop pavilion in conjunction with the Departments of Public Works and Planning & Zoning.
- Installed MUSCO no spill lights at two ballfields, as well as remote access outdoor basketball and tennis courts, at Rockburn Branch Park.
- Installed a press box at Western Regional Park with donations from the Western Howard County Football and Howard County Lacrosse Leagues.
- Added gates and tables/benches at the Middle Patuxent Branch Trail.
- Early Child Care Learning Center participants painted several community murals.
- Ramps were improved and fencing was installed at the Skate Spot in Centennial Park North.
- Nearing completion on Phase III at Western Regional Park: pathways, maintenance building, and hiking trails.
- Expanded the garden plots at the Long Reach and Elkhorn Garden Plot site by 104 gardens.
- Five bridges and two nature study boardwalks were constructed in the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) to increase access to the site.
- New indoor field hockey borders were fabricated and constructed along with the installation of playing lines in the Meadowbrook Athletic Complex (MAC).
- Two wooden truss bridges were fabricated with recycled composite lumber and installed along the Western Regional Park pathways.
- To illuminate the park entrance and make the area safer, new street lighting was installed along the front of Cedar Villa Park and along the pathway.
- Six pond aeration systems were designed and installed at the following park sites: Warfield's Pond, Font Hill, and Sewell's Orchard. Natural Resources and Park Construction staff teamed with the Bureau of Facilities staff to accomplish this project.



**Middle Patuxent Environmental Area Boardwalk**

## Enhancing Existing Parks & Facilities (cont'd)



Long Reach Garden Plot Expansion

- Floating Wetland Islands Project – Installed islands in five community ponds with a \$30,000 grant from the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bay 2010 Trust Fund. This innovative project is designed to remove excess nutrients and pollutants from these water ecosystems.
- Park Operations Management and Recreation Staff presented Co-Op Day, a project to introduce staff to various Recreation and Parks facilities staff responsibilities.
- Designed the fitness room at the newly renovated George Howard Building and determined layout and fitness equipment for the North Laurel Community Center and Park.

## Building for the Future

The **Robinson Nature Center** is nearing completion and is expected to be a real showcase with many museum-quality, interactive exhibits and a state-of-the-art planetarium. This LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) platinum certified facility will draw people from around the region. Construction of the Nature Center began in Fall 2009 and continues through 2011. The three-story, 29,000-square-foot building is now under roof cover.

We are still on track to obtain our LEED Platinum Certification, which will make it one of only four Platinum Certified buildings in the State. We are utilizing many new and innovative techniques to obtain this certification, including geothermal heating/air conditioning, porous paving, photo-voltaic solar panels, and extensive use of recycled and renewal materials. Forrester Construction Company has made great progress despite record-breaking winter snows and heavy spring rains. Completion is scheduled for Spring 2011.

**“ The Robinson Nature Center is nearing completion and is expected to be a real showcase...drawing people from around the region.”**

Phase I of **Blandair Regional Park** located in Columbia began during Fall 2010. This 25-acre segment of the larger 300-acre park is located off Oakland Mills Road near Oakland Mills High School, and will connect with the County pathway system.

## Building for the Future

The features to be constructed are three multipurpose fields with synthetic turf, a playground, a picnic shelter, a restroom, pathways, and a parking lot with an entrance on Oakland Mills Road. Plans for constructing a new bridge to rejoin the north and south areas of the park, along with a complete interchange to provide access from Route 175, are being prepared. Completion is scheduled for Fall 2011.

The **North Laurel Community Center and Park** consists of 48 acres in the North Laurel community near U.S. Route 1 at the intersection of Whiskey Bottom Road and Glen Ridge Drive. Construction of the 60,000-square-foot North Laurel Community Center building is proceeding and is planned to be completed in Spring 2011.

Construction is scheduled to begin soon on the park's east side amenities, which include a comfort station (restroom facility), playground, picnic shelter, skate park and two tennis courts. Construction plans and specifications are being finalized for the park's west side amenities, which include a combination ball diamond/multi-purpose field, a ball diamond, a comfort station (restroom facility), parking lot and the rebuilding of two ball diamonds.

A master plan for **Troy Regional Park at Elkridge** has been completed. The plan includes a community center, three ball diamonds, three



Department personnel conduct hard-hat tours of new facilities

multipurpose fields, a combination ball diamond/multipurpose field, a BMX track, a skate spot, a spray/splash park, a playground, a community plaza, parking, the renovation of the Troy Mansion, and a tennis complex.

The County has agreed to lease 13.9 acres of parkland to the Howard County Tennis Patrons, a not-for-profit group whose goals are to promote tennis within Howard County, for the development of a tennis facility. The group has proceeded with the design of nine outdoor tennis courts, an indoor tennis building, a tennis stadium, a parking lot, and a park entrance road. Completion is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2012.



North Laurel Community Center—Concept

## Excelling in Customer Service

The two greatest impacts on customer service were the addition of the voice over internet phone system (VoIP) and the ActiveNet online registration system. These major upgrades improved communication and registration processes in the following ways:

### Benefits of the VoIP Phone System

- Improved phone features; caller ID, speakerphone capability, conference calling, etc.
- Increased communication flexibility; displays phone number and users.
- Improved control at the department level, the ability to create phone tree systems.
- Monitoring capability for supervisors.
- Decreased cost to the taxpayer. VoIP is much more cost effective than the previous phone lines.
- Improved reliability when contacting Recreation & Parks.

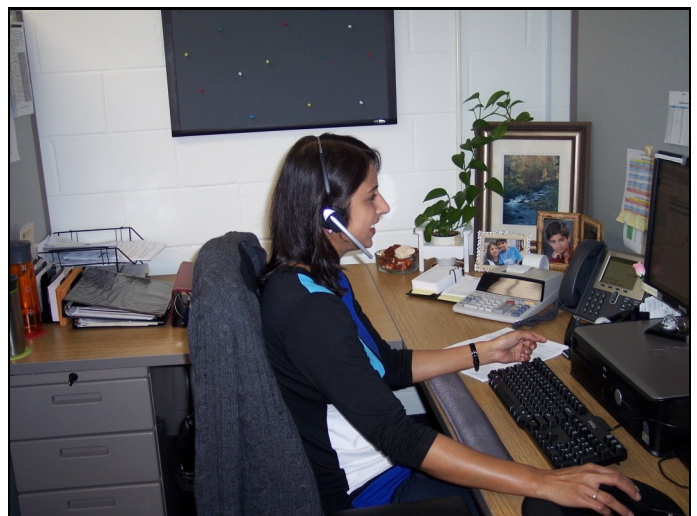
### Benefits of the ActiveNet Registration System

- No security liability for the county.
- Marketing component to enhance communication with customers.
- Emails and letters can be created from rosters and sent out to customers within minutes.
- Web-based program completes “real time” website updates so information is always the most accurate.
- Email receipts/permits directly to the customers.
- Automatic Payments are true auto-pays processed through the system.
- Able to accept major charge cards: Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover.

- Upgraded security for the customer.
- Online account approvals within hours of the request rather than 48 hours later.

### Other improvements to customer service include:

- Inclusion and Therapeutic Recreation (TR) initiated program registration reminders via email.
- The transitioning of the TR and Inclusion services program section into the Recreational Licensed Child Care Division has enhanced the quality of service we were able to provide to our customers in child care that required accommodation services.
- We have made a major effort to increase program site visits to make sure activity implementation meets or exceeds our customers’ expectations.
- SAP (accounting software) is widely utilized by staff to manage accounting processes.
- Consistent 85% or better satisfaction ratings on program Evaluation Surveys.



VoIP improves customer service

## Wine in the Woods



Howard County's renowned wine festival celebrated its 18th year and enjoyed another record-breaking attendance of 33,500. The festival was honored again with the Best Festival in Howard County Award from the *Howard Magazine* Reader's Survey. The Howard County Tourism Board has listed this event as one of 10 Signature Events in Howard County. This has become an East Coast event not to be missed, bringing visitors from within the region and other states, and this year became the largest wine festival in Maryland!

The Wine in the Woods venue was expanded this year from eight to more than ten acres in order to accommodate 32 wineries. Partnerships with local restaurants and hotels proved to be successful and will be expanded in 2011 to help reduce expenditures. Our partnership with the marketing and event firm BMC Group provided a professional website, social media connections, and professional photography, saving the department over \$15,000. Symphony Woods, owned by the Columbia Association, will see extensive renovations over the next few years, presenting a challenge that will require us to extend the acreage in order to sustain this popular event.

The economic impact for Howard County this year was approximately \$2,211,000. Tax receipts are reinvested to maintain Howard County's quality of life.

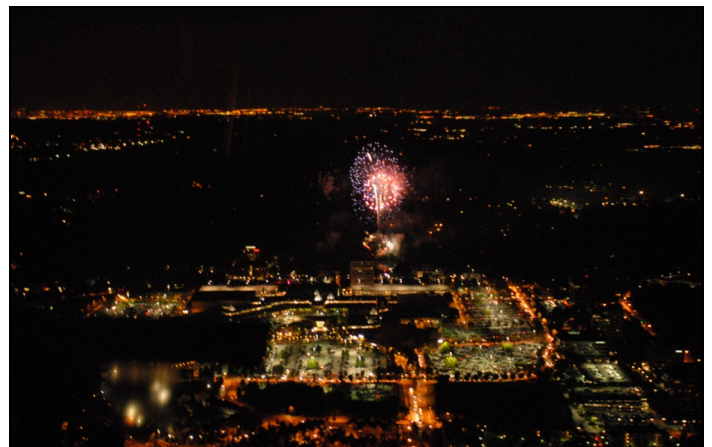
Revenue produced from Wine In The Woods exceeded projections by over \$400,000 and helped the Department

offer services for individuals with disabilities, seniors, and those in need of child care services and financial assistance.

## July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebration

Teamwork between Recreation & Parks and the Departments of Fire and Rescue, Police, and Emergency Operations and the Columbia Association made this fun-filled event possible. The event included food vendors, musical entertainment, children's entertainment and games, information and promotions booths and a VIP event for sponsors. A National Incident Management System was utilized to oversee the celebration. A variety of promotional materials announcing the event were distributed throughout the community.

The fireworks were synchronized to patriotic music, and despite rainy weather, the lakefront was packed with tens of thousands of people. An on-site radio simulcast was used to enhance the attendees' enjoyment of the event. Planning in preparation for the huge number of participants included port-a-johns, recycling, parking, site prep and rain plans.



## Partnerships



**Robert Oliver Place Bus Stop Pavilion**

We achieved many of our goals through partnerships with other agencies and organizations to implement programs for the community. Partnerships are key components to meeting our goals in a timely, efficient, and fiscally sound manner.

Though our financial resources are limited, our partnerships are strong and wide-ranging. Here are some of the organizations we have partnered with:

- Howard County Living Heritage Farm Museum – sponsored the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Wounded Veterans’ Managed Deer Hunt at West Friendship Park. We hosted this hunt for 10 wounded soldiers & Marines from Walter Reed Army Medical Center; Ft. Belvoir, VA; Ft. Bragg, NC; and Camp Lejeune, NC.
- Department of Planning and Zoning – landscaped and constructed a bus stop pavilion at Robert Oliver Place.
- Detention Center – developed a vegetable garden.
- Miller Library – served as a consultant for the creation of the Enchanted Gardens at the new library.
- Howard County Housing and Community development – provided a 6-week Summer Program at Guilford Elementary for children of Guilford Gardens (now Monarch Mills) residents displaced

by facility renovations.

- Howard Community College – conducted staff training.
- Howard County Department of Education’s Community Block Learning Center Program – offered academic education assistance to children in the Hilltop Community.
- Howard County Arts Council – offered the No Boundaries Drama Program.
- Howard County Autism Society – presented Parent Speaker Panel and Lose the Training Wheels Bike Camp.
- Camp Attaway, Inc. – provided a summer program for children with emotional and behavior disabilities.
- Fire Department – installed 30,000-gallon water tanks at Lisbon, Warfield Pond Parks, and Schooley Mill Parks.
- Kangaroo Kids world-renowned jump rope team – hosted AAU Maryland Invitational Jump Rope Tournament competition at the Meadowbrook Athletic Complex on March 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Columbia Volleyball Club – implemented a middle school club program geared towards preparing players for middle school. As a result, 140 players registered in 2009 and tournaments were held at the Meadowbrook Athletic Complex and Gary J. Arthur Community Center at Glenwood.

**“Partnerships are key components to meeting our goals in a timely, efficient, and fiscally sound manner.”**

## Partnerships (cont'd)

- Job Corps program – taught teenagers and young adults life and job skills, resulting in the landscaping and beautification of Martin Road Park.
- Department of Planning & Zoning and Department of Public Works – hosted GreenFest in April. The theme was “Greener Choices, Greener World.” Over 100 vendors and over 2,000 people attended this event whose purpose is to provide citizens with practical information about ways to live a more ecologically sound lifestyle in Howard County.
- The Columbia Badminton Club – increased participation in the badminton program at Meadowbrook Athletic Complex. As a result, the club has grown to 29 adult members and for the first time offered a youth program that had 20 participants. Partnership began in the Spring of 2009.
- USSSA Softball – ran tournaments and instructional clinics for girls ages 8-18. Tournaments doubled from last year.
- Healthy Howard – presented a health fair that attracted 6,500 participants in the spring.
- Union Jack’s – received a \$5,000 sponsorship of all adult leagues.
- State Farm Insurance, Road Runner Sports, Rita’s – received selected event sponsorships.
- Dick’s Sporting Goods – expanded sponsorship of youth and community sport leagues through coupons and equipment donations.
- USVBA Chesapeake Region Youth Volleyball – hosted volleyball events.
- AAU Youth Basketball – hosted Statewide and regional events.
- Fall College Showcase Soccer Classic – hosted prospective scholarship athletes. Attracted 90 teams from across the country.
- Maryland State Youth Football – hosted championships.
- HoCo2xCx – conducted two of the largest cyclocross events (700 racers) on a weekend in November.
- The Office of Emergency Management – completed installation and testing of equipment for the County-wide AM 1700 radio system at the Western Regional and Rockburn Branch Park Maintenance Facilities. Antennas had already been installed at Rockburn and Western Regional Park to supplement the existing antenna at the Clarksville Fire Station.



**Cyclocross**

# 2010 Recognition Awards

## *Department Award Winners*

### **Employee of the Year**



Karen Bradley

### **Internal Customer Service Award — Individual** Patricia Henry

### **Public Customer Service Award — Individual** Steve Schwarzman

### **Internal Customer Service Award — Team** Special Events Team

Gary Doyle

Stephen Hammond

Ron Vogelsang

### **Public Customer Service Award — Team** DOC Driving Team

Bobby Abrams  
David Benedictis  
Scott Bowen  
Gary Doyle  
Mike Dunwiddie

Dave Frush  
Patricia Henry  
Derek Ludlow  
James Meyer  
Mike Milani

John Miller  
Kevin Naecker  
John Peach  
Charie Peregoy  
Tony Tanner

Ron Vogelsang  
Eric Westervelt  
Al White  
Mike Wickham  
Adam Wienckowski



## 2010 Recognition Awards (cont'd)

### Leadership Award Nominees

Joann Frush

### Innovative Program Award

Lynne Young and Janell Coffman

### Mentoring Award

Stephanie Wise

### Part-Time Employee of the Year Award

Cindy Ochs

### Rookie of the Year Award

Andrew Coon

### Unsung Hero Award

Ann Combs

### Volunteer of the Year Award

Ken Clark

### *County Award Winners*

Customer Service, Patricia Henry



Customer Service Team, DOC Driving Team  
(shown with County officials )



## 2010 Recognitions

- Nicola Morgal served as County Employees Award Chair.
- Barbara Moore, Superintendent, RLC and Community Services Division, received recognition for 35 years of service and Purnell Hood, Park Maintenance Specialist, and Rick Femiano, Operations Supervisor III, were recognized for 30 years of service to the Department.
- The 2009 Guide to Sports, Adventure & Nature Camps, in conjunction with the corresponding distribution approach and implementation, was awarded the LERN International Award for Marketing (2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive year).
- Warhawks 10-12 football team won the Maryland State Youth Football Championships.
- Susan Potts, TR and Inclusion Services Manager, received Service Provider of the Year Award from the Howard County Autism Society.
- 2010 Community Sports Hall of Fame Inductees: Barbara Bellamy, Dick Burns, Doug and Jean Parker, Mary Jane Rudnicki.
- 42 GoodSports Awards were presented to youth players, adult players, officials, and youth coaches from 21 local sports organizations at the 2010 Celebration of Sports.
- Sierra Baker served as the Department's GoodSports Award representative to the Mid-Atlantic Parks & Recreation Sports Alliance (MARPSA).
- Ken Clark was recognized as the Department's Volunteer of the Year for his commitment and outstanding contributions to the Ellicott City Patriots youth football organization.
- Jean Jaecksch, Recreation Services Supervisor, retired with 26 years of service.
- Wine in the Woods received the 2010 Best Festival in Howard County Award from Howard Magazine

### *Professional Certifications*

Mary Ellen Baker    Allan Harden    Laura Wetherald  
Phil Bryan        Holly Harden  
John Byrd         Matt Madera

**Certified Park and Recreational Professional  
Certified Arborist**  
Timothy Overstreet

**Registered Landscape Architect**  
Clara Gouin, Paul Walsky

**Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist**  
Jennene Lausier, Susan Potts



**Susan Potts, Howard County Autism Society's Provider of the Year**