



Howard
County

RECREATION & PARKS

Annual Report

July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021



A. Raul Delerme, Director
Department of Recreation and Parks

3/9/2022

Date

From The Director



Ribbon Cutting for Renovated Caboose

As the Howard County Department of Recreation & Parks continues to work towards ensuring the safety of its residents and program participants during the COVID-19 pandemic, the department's hardworking staff continues to go above and beyond.

In the pages of this report, innovation and long-term goals are demonstrated. Teams had to reorganize, review their programs, and revise communication strategies to ensure COVID-19 precautions were taken.

Park use and services increased during the pandemic and thus the opening of Blandair Park's third phase could not have been timed better. This newest phase includes an inclusive play-for-all playground named "Laura's Place," bocce courts, croquet lawn, pavilions, restrooms, walking paths, parking lots, and a new park facility with offices.

The department was honored with many awards, most notably being the four National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Awards, which recognized the department's efforts to support Howard County community members facing stress and hardship caused by the pandemic.

While I am proud of our accomplishments, we are also looking ahead to the future as we prepare to pursue goals both long term and short term. I hope you'll join us as we rise to new challenges, develop exciting new programming and strive to ensure an equitable community.

Sincerely,

A. Raul Delerme

Director, Howard County Recreation & Parks

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Thomas Isaac Log Cabin

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Howard County Recreation & Parks
7120 Oakland Mills Road
Columbia, Maryland 21046

County Executive: Calvin Ball

Director: A. Raul Delerme

Bureau Chief of Recreation: Nicola Morgal

Bureau Chief of Parks: John S. Marshall

**Acting Bureau Chief of Capital Projects,
Park Planning & Construction:** Robert E. Linz

Bureau Chief of Administrative Services:
Michael H. Milani

FY2021 Advisory Board:

David Grabowski (Chair)

Edward Coleman (Vice Chair)

A. Raul Delerme (Recording Secretary)

Antonia Watts (Board of Education)

Thomas M. Franklin

Sylvia Ramsey

Herman Charity

Chloe McGeehan (Student Member)

Mission, Vision & Core Values



Middle Patuxent Environmental Area

MISSION

To responsibly manage natural resources; provide excellent parks, facilities, and recreation opportunities for the community; and ensure the highest quality of life for current and future generations.

VISION

The Department of Recreation and Parks strives to deliver recreation and leisure opportunities that will improve the health and well-being of the community and to serve as model stewards of the environment by managing, protecting, and conserving our resources for a sustainable future.

CORE VALUES

- Exceptional Customer Service
- Professionalism
- Accountability
- Knowledgeable, Well-trained Staff
- Teamwork
- Integrity
- Trend-Setting



CAPRA AGENCY ACCREDITATION

The Howard County Recreation & Parks Department is accredited through the Commission for Accreditation of Park & Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). To achieve accreditation, the Department was required to meet 151 standards encompassing 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.

The department achieved accreditation in 2001 and re-accreditation in 2006, 2012 and 2017. It is one of only 174 accredited agencies in the United States.

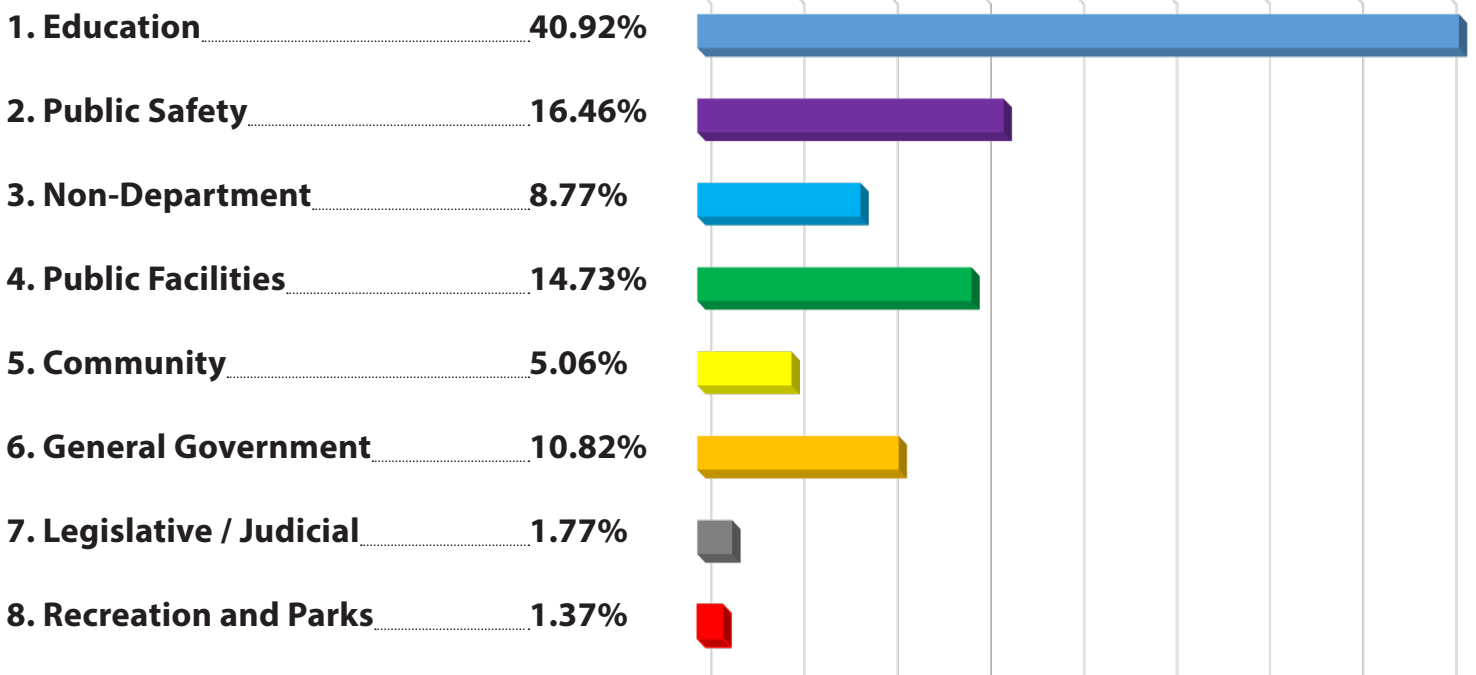
CAPRA recognizes park and recreation agencies for excellence in operation and service. Charged with providing high quality services and experiences, park and recreation agencies across the United States turn to CAPRA Accreditation as a credible and efficient means of achieving these goals, while providing assurance to the public that the agency meets national standards for best practice.



Centennial Park Boat Dock

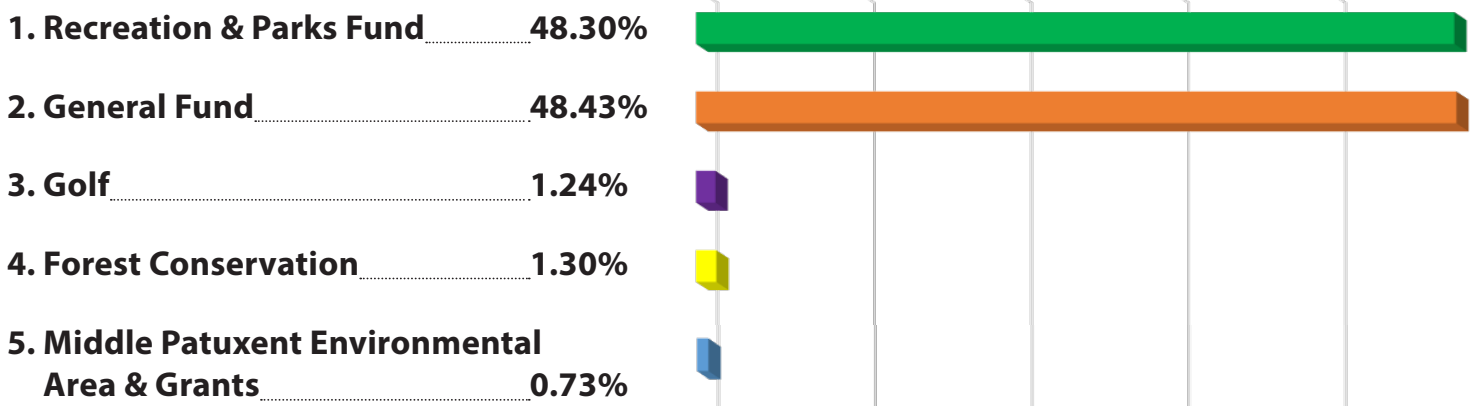
COUNTY'S GENERAL FUND BUDGET:

\$1,873,538,521



RECREATION AND PARKS BUDGET:

\$52,944,904



Completed Objectives



Font Hill Park Bridge

1

Planned and started renovations for the Schooley Mill Park & Warfield's Pond Park playgrounds.

4

Researched and implemented ways that virtual e-Gaming can be tied to physical activity and enhance virtual programming.

2

Replaced the synthetic turf fields at Hammond High School, Atholton High School and Blandair Field #1.

5

Replaced the bridges at Font Hill Park, Belmont Station and Tamar Path.

3

Continued renovations of the Harriet Tubman Cultural Community Center.

6

Developed a Department Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee.

Completed Objectives



New Water Fountain at Centennial Park

7

Completed the stream bank stabilization at Font Hill Park.

10

Added second cricket pitch and completed the expansion of the multi-use field at Schooley Mill Park.

8

Completed construction of Blandair Park Phase 3.

11

Opened Troy Park at Elkridge's fourth field.

9

Continued to install sustainable bottle-filler water fountains.

12

Completed South Branch Park improvements.

2022 Department Goals



Therapeutic Recreation Celebrates Autism Day

1

Replace Schooley Mill Park, Warfield's Pond Park, Centennial Park West, and Rockburn Branch Park playgrounds.

5

Develop and offer programs with a focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).

2

Replace artificial fields at Howard High School, Oakland Mills High School and Blandair Park Field #2.

6

Develop and offer community outreach programs.

3

Develop and implement an annual Recreation and Parks' Trends Report.

7

Create a database with local editors and television stations to enhance our public information office and marketing efforts.

4

Expand the Department's "Park Watch" program to county-owned parks and trails.

8

Update the Department Trend Report.

REGISTRATION & SCHOLARSHIPS



Registrants in Classes,
Programs & Camps

Fall 2020 - Summer 2021

48,793

.....

2021 Summer Camp &
Program Registrants

20,011

Financial Assistance
Provided

Fall 2020 - Summer 2021

\$118,722

.....

2021 Summer
Camp Sections

1,350

PARKS



(8) Regional Parks
(in acres)

2,614

(10) Community Parks
(in acres)

788

(12) Neighborhood Parks
(in acres)

350

Other Land Holdings
(in acres)

20

(4) Natural Resources Areas
(in acres)

1,890

(26) Historic Places
(in acres)

114

Open Space
(in acres)

3,887

Total Recreation & Parks
Land Holdings
(in acres)

9,666

FACILITIES



Belmont Manor & Historic
Park Visitors

500

.....

Baltimore & Ohio
Ellicott City Station
Museum Annual Visitors

15,603

Robinson Nature Center
Annual Visitors

12,229

.....

Pavilion Permits

1,436
(\$357,811)

FACILITIES



Facility	Rentals/Reservations	Visitors
Gary J. Arthur Community Center	762	113,458
Kiwanis-Wallas Hall	Closed due to COVID-19	Closed due to COVID-19
Meadowbrook Athletic Complex	No rentals due to COVID-19	50,000
North Laurel Community Center	1,073	38,562
Roger Carter Community Center	318	118,752

COVID-19 restrictions began in March 2020 and thus affected these July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021 numbers

SOCIAL MEDIA



Recreation and Parks
Facebook Main Page Followers

+ 13.2%
(19,771 followers)

@HoCoRec Instagram
Followers

+ 17.8%
(3,452 followers)

@HoCoRec Pinterest
Followers

+ 0.5%
(221 followers)

@HoCoRec Twitter
Followers

+ 17.1%
(5,323 followers)

@BelmontManorHouse
Instagram Followers

+ 9.4%
(3,091 followers)

Robinson Nature Center
Facebook Followers

+ 5.9%
(10,445 followers)

Recreation and Parks
YouTube Main Page Followers

+ 226.6%
(49 followers)

Created on May 27, 2020

@HoCoRec Flickr
Followers

+ 3.9%
(80 followers)

@WineInTheWoods
Followers

+ 2.9%
(8,356 followers)

Belmont Manor & Historic Park
Facebook Followers

+ 4.3%
(1,946 followers)

B&O Ellicott City Station
Museum Facebook Followers

+ 9.4%
(3,091 followers)

Capital Projects



Laura's Place Playground

BLANDAIR PARK

Located off MD 175, Blandair Park is one of the county's premier destinations for sports events. The 298-acre park will be completed over seven phases. All areas include interconnected paved pathways with outlets to the county's bike-path system.

In June 2021, Phase 3 opened, including the Play-For-All Playground (known as "Laura's Place" in honor of former Recreation Bureau Chief Laura Wetherald, who passed away in February of 2021). The playground includes six activity pods, a shelter, benches, paths, and a surrounding fence. Each pod is themed (barnyard, dinosaurs, space, climbing, music) and geared towards infants, toddlers or children 5-12 years.

Laura was an inspiring person, especially in her advocacy for people with special needs. She was instrumental in the design of this "play-for-all" playground. This wonderful playground is a testament to her hard work and dedication to the disability community and her ability to bring people together through the joy of discovering all that our Recreation & Park have to offer.

- Howard County Executive Calvin Ball

PLANNING FOR THE NEXT PHASE

Adjacent to the West Area along Oakland Mills Road, this newest project will feature:

- A multi-use building with indoor sports courts
- Activity rooms and park offices
- An outdoor skate park
- An outdoor basketball court
- Additional parking

PHASE 3 (JUNE 2021)

- Laura's Place, a "play-for-all" playground
- Two croquet courts with synthetic turf and benches
- Three bocce courts and benches
- Three horseshoe pitches and benches
- A pavilion with electricity and water
- Two concrete ping-pong tables and game tables for chess and checkers
- A comfort station, including a family restroom and a storage room
- A parking lot with 124 spaces
- Pathways connecting with the county bike-path system
- Bio-retention areas for storm water management
- Landscaping with shade-trees and other plants
- Maintenance building with workshop and offices
- Storage for equipment and materials
- Parking and fenced yard

Capital Projects



Blandair Park Phase 3's Croquet Lawn, Pavilion & Bocce Ball Courts

BLANDAIR PARK (CONTINUED)

EAST AREA/PHASE 2 (MARCH 2018)

- Challenge course with an electronic timer, specifically designed for teens and adults
- Five tennis courts
- Pavilion/shade structure
- Two synthetic turf baseball fields with shaded bleacher seating
- Restroom facilities
- Open green space
- Parking lot with 144 spaces
- Car charging station

WEST AREA/PHASE 1 (MARCH 2012)

- Three lighted, synthetic turf multi-purpose fields with bleachers
- Playground with shade structure above part of play area
- Large pavilion/shade structure
- Restroom facilities
- Parking lot with 398 spaces

ROBINSON NATURE CENTER

The center was recertified a "Maryland Green Center" by the Maryland Association of Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE). The center is one of only 42 certified Green Centers in Maryland, and one of only two in Howard County. The Maryland Green Center Award recognizes and honors a facility's efforts in implementation of environmental education, best management practices and community engagement.

Valid for four years, the center was certified in 2013 and first recertified in 2017. To achieve recertification once more, the center provided documentation and evidence of work completed during the last four years that showed: (1) assistance to local schools becoming Green Schools; (2) environmental education-based professional development for teachers; and (3) the center being a model of sustainable practices for schools and the community.

NEW LIGHTNING ALERT SYSTEM FOR PARKS

A new outdoor lightning alert system was installed within six of the county's eight regional parks: Blandair Park, Cedar Lane Park, Rockburn Branch Park, Schooley Mill Park, Troy Park and Western Regional Park. Additional alert systems are expected to be operational at Savage Park and Centennial Park by the next fiscal year.



Vivian C. "Millie" Bailey Park

VIVIAN C. "MILLIE" BAILEY PARK

This 26,000-square-foot and multi-use park named for a WWII veteran, officially opened on October 22, 2020.

On the day of the ribbon cutting, 102-year-old Vivian C. "Millie" Bailey stated, "Naming the park for me is indeed a high honor and I would never have dreamed of receiving such incredible recognition."

She rose to the ranks of first lieutenant in the Army during WWII and led her Women's Army Corps detachment. Following her time in the service, she became an active community volunteer and leader.

The Howard Hughes Corporation developed the park and then signed the property over to the Department of Recreation & Parks. A Howard County Veterans' Monument is also being planned.

THOMAS ISAAC LOG CABIN

On October 8, 2020, the Thomas Isaac Log Cabin officially reopened. Constructed around 1780 on nearby Merryman Street, the Thomas Isaac Log Cabin commemorates the early stages of European development in the Patapsco River Valley. In the 1870s, it served as an important resource for Ellicott City's African American community. In the 1980s, the cabin was dismantled and rebuilt on the historic Barnard Fort House property, where it stood until the summer of 2018.

Following the 2018 flood, the cabin was temporarily moved to Parking Lot F while Ellicott Mills Drive was reconstructed. In spring 2020, the cabin moved back to its previous location atop a new foundation. The proposed drainage improvements in Ellicott City as part of the EC Safe and Sound plan and the new foundation sitting one foot above Ellicott City's 100-year flood elevation should keep the cabin safe from future floods.

Capital Projects



BALTIMORE & OHIO ELLICOTT CITY STATION MUSEUM

On October 8, 2020, the caboose officially reopened.

Built in 1831, the Baltimore & Ohio Ellicott City Station once operated inside the oldest surviving railroad station in America. Initially a freight depot, the Station was remodeled in 1857 to accommodate passengers and was later designated as a museum in 1972 after it ceased operations. In 2017, Recreation & Parks took over management and operations of the Baltimore & Ohio Ellicott City Station Museum and in 2018, received two grants from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority. Totaling more than \$80,000, the grants allowed for the restoration of the museum's iconic C-2149 caboose and Freight Room diorama.

The C-2149 caboose was restored using historically accurate materials and interpretive signage, while the restoration of the Freight House diorama involved a comprehensive update showing the first 13 miles of railroad in the United States. An augmented reality component (not part of the grants) was also added to the diorama to give visitors more information about neighboring train stations and other points of interest, such as mills and historic buildings. Both restoration projects were overseen by Recreation & Parks' Natural and Historic Resources Division's Living History and Heritage Program.

HAVILAND PARK

Starting Monday, June 7, improvements to the loop trail began at the edge of the parking lot. Once completed, the area will include sections of elevated board walk, natural surface trail and crib wall. The trail will provide visitors a universally-accessible route to view the Patuxent River from an observational platform. Weather permitting, the project is expected to be completed in winter 2022.

HC PATAPSCO REGIONAL GREENWAY

The state delegation awarded \$1.5 million in state funding for the Savage Mill Trail and the Patapsco Regional Greenway spur connecting Elkridge to the Guinness Brewery in Baltimore County. The money includes a \$250,000 grant to support critical repairs to the Savage Mill Trail.

This funding builds on County efforts to expand green infrastructure in the Savage area, after a \$1.725 million investment to secure the Savage remainder parcel last year, blocking the development of 4.8 acres of land in Howard County's Green Infrastructure Network and preserving it as open space.

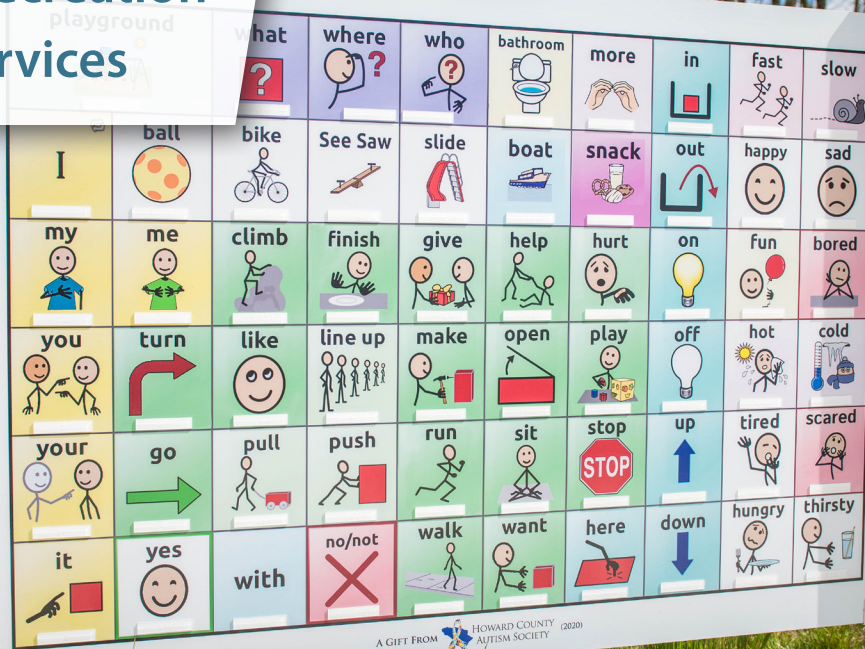
MORE INVESTMENTS IN PARKS COMING

On August 5, 2021, Howard County Executive Calvin Ball announced \$8 million to improve local parks and playground infrastructure. The improvements are made possible by a Local Parks and Playground Infrastructure Funding (LPPIF) grant from the State of Maryland, with a majority of the grant supporting renovations to Centennial Park – West Area. Improvements include athletic lighting replacements, turf baseball diamonds, one or two turf fields, and pathways. The grant will also support new playground equipment and safety surfacing for Schooley Mill and Warfield's Pond parks.

Ball's proposed FY 2022 Capital Budget invests \$8.3 million in renovations to existing facility infrastructure and park improvement projects. Prior appropriation for Blandair Park will allow the County to proceed with the design of Phase 6, which includes ongoing design for site grading, utilities, a skatepark, outdoor basketball courts and a parking lot. Prior appropriation for Troy Park will allow for the revised design and partial construction of ancillary facilities for Field #1, which includes restrooms, a storage space, grandstand bleachers, and other site enhancements.

In FY 2022, the County anticipates approximately \$1.3 million in State Program Open Space funding eligible for park development projects. This funding will support the completion of Field #1 improvements at Troy Park and the replacement of aging park infrastructure at multiple sites. Additionally, the proposed budget includes an estimated \$995,000 in Program Open Space land acquisition funding, which increases our capabilities to pursue parkland acquisition opportunities as they arise.

Therapeutic Recreation & Inclusion Services



A GIFT FROM HOWARD COUNTY AUTISM SOCIETY (2020)

Communication Board

INNOVATIVE, NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION BOARDS PLACED IN BLANDAIR PARK

On April 16, 2021, Howard County Executive Calvin Ball joined the Department of Recreation & Parks to unveil two innovative nonverbal communication boards at Blandair Regional Park's new "Play for All" playground. The boards, which were partially funded by the Howard County Autism Society (HCAS), allow nonverbal children to easily communicate without the use of personal augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices. The park's Play for All playground, part of the park's Phase Three, officially opened on May 21, 2021. Over 1,000 people visited the park the first weekend of its opening in May.

OUTDOOR EXTRAVAGANZA FOR AUTISM AWARENESS

The Outdoor Extravaganza was a department-wide collaboration that included Robinson Nature Center, Therapeutic Recreation, Heritage, and Park Rangers. Held at the Robinson Nature Center, this new event offered an outdoor event for those on the spectrum in April 2021 for Autism Awareness month.

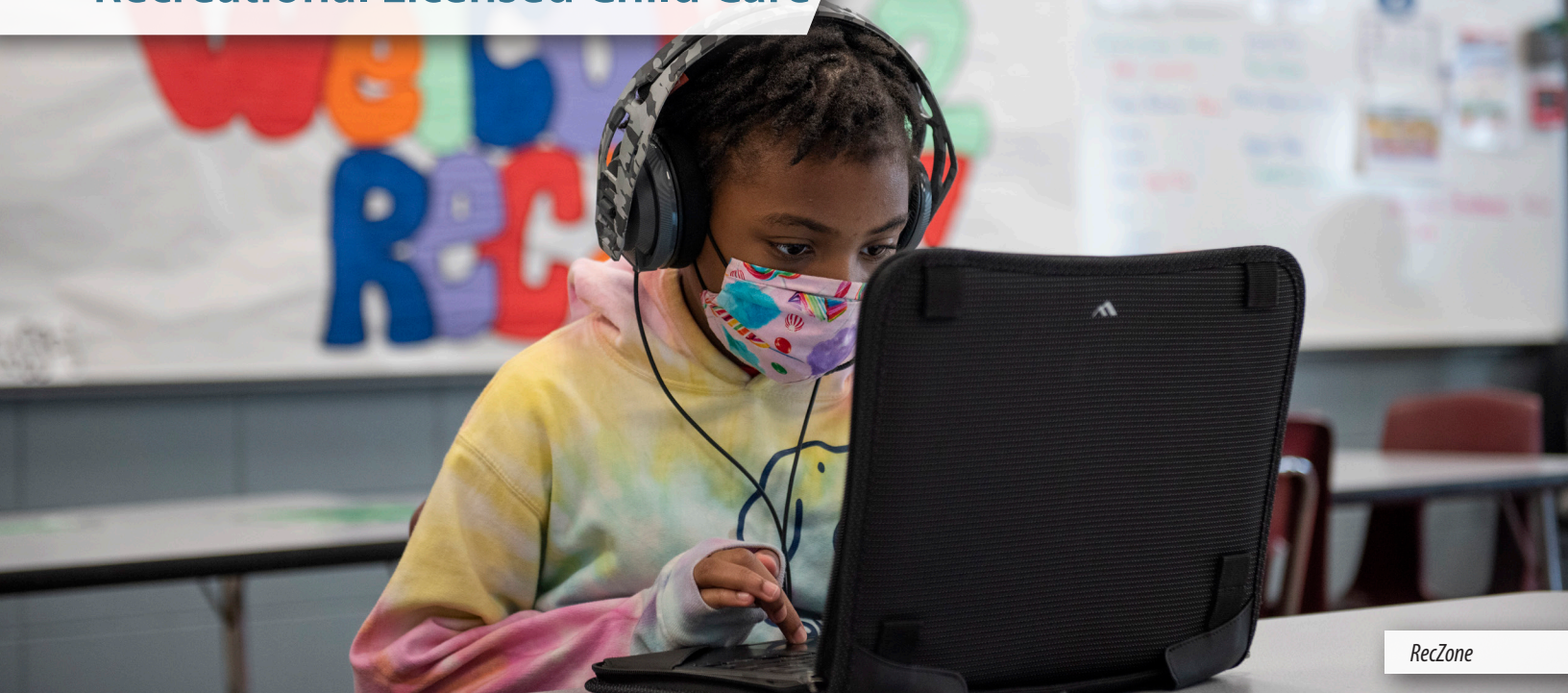
Both guided and self-guided activities provided families a great amount of options to enjoy.

Though participation needed to be limited due to social distancing guidelines, the Department was able to serve 23 families (72 individuals).

ONLINE PROGRAMMING SUCCESSES

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, vulnerable populations were hesitant to resume in-person programming. Thus, the department took its programming to them - virtually. Although the learning curve was steep for some, the programs quickly filled and became favorites. The Therapeutic Recreation section's online success has opened up new opportunities to those that are homebound and continues to help participants socialize with their peers. Due to its high enrollment, the programs continued to stay virtual in fiscal year 2021-2022. Successful programs have included (but are not limited to) book club, Bingo, and online dance parties.

Recreational Licensed Child Care



RecZone



Recreational Licensed Child Care (RLC) before and after care, normally held in 23 elementary schools, had a different look this year due to Howard County Public School System starting the year in a virtual format.

RECZONE

In 2020, Recreation and Parks launched the new RecZone child care program, designed to help families address child care needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Open to students in grades K-5, RecZone participants received support for virtual learning assignments and work sessions, and enjoyed crafts, physical activities, and games. The program began in September 2020 at eight schools throughout Howard County. The program was licensed through the Maryland State Department of Education's Office of Child Care. Thanks to CARES Act funding, the weekly fees for RecZone were offered at a reduced cost to parents for both the school day and extended day options through December 31, 2020. Additional funding was secured from the start of 2021 until the end of the school year. RecZone has now ended but provided an important blueprint for future child care programs.



SUMMER BLAST CAMPS

RLC offered their Summer Blast and Teen Blast Camps consistently at six schools. Registration was low due to COVID-19 but still had over 1,400 children attend. The camps offered a variety of sports, drama, arts & crafts, STEAM, and learning.

RLC Staff training moved to a virtual platform for both the 2020-2021 school year, summer camps and the upcoming 2021-2022 school year.

Adventure & Outdoors



Private Target Archery Instruction

NEW FRIENDS & FAMILY ADVENTURES PROGRAM

TARGET ARCHERY | ROCK CLIMBING | CANOEING | KAYAKING | GEOCACHING
FISHING | CAMPING | HIKING | ORIENTEERING | AND MORE!

Due to the pandemic, many classes and programs were cancelled. The Outdoor and Adventure team decided to try new, custom programs for families and friends. These small, intimate, custom-made programs quickly became highly successful. Families and friends felt safer (less concerned about contracting COVID-19) being with those they know. Well-trained staff planned and lead each unique adventure. The programs were customized for all levels - beginners through advanced. The initial registration fee covers the first three people. Then, for an additional fee, one to two more participants may join.

Due to the high success rate. The program is continuing into perpetuity.



Online Cooking Program

ENCORE PROGRAMS

Active adults programming excelled during COVID-19. Through the remainder of 2020 and into 2021, Active Aging programs largely remained as virtual classes. Participants were able to remain engaged with the friends they had made during their in-person classes while continuing to learn, create or be active. The most popular classes were art, fitness, dance, and speaker series classes. While some customers may have been hesitant to join these online programs at first, as we learned that life online was becoming the new norm, enrollment began to increase.

While starting with tried and true programs to offer virtually, the Active Aging team created new programs to offer online as well to include virtual trips, an online art show and the Twelve Days of Encore Recreation. These new programs created ways to engage and attract new customers while also providing an easy on-ramp for those who were hesitant to commit to a full-length class.

As gathering restrictions began to lift, some of our outdoor programs were able to resume. This included tennis, softball, yoga and bocce. The bocce and softball programs were especially popular as people were looking for more ways to gather with friends and be active.

NEW TRENDS & SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

1. Online Fitness
2. Online Art
3. Online Speaker Series
4. Online Dance

Special Events



Truck or Treat

TRUCK OR TREAT

October 26, 2020

Gary J. Arthur Community Center

Children and parents celebrated Halloween during this year's Truck or Treat, which incorporated timed tickets and physical distancing to ensure COVID-19 safety. Attendees were invited to dress in costume to trick-or-treat at the trucks, tractors, emergency vehicles, and more, while meeting hometown heroes. Each vehicle was represented by various County agencies, nonprofit groups, and local businesses.



48TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY MART

December 7, 2020

Gary J. Arthur Community Center

Shoppers know this is the place to find unique handcrafted items and home décor. Annually, the community is invited to shop for seasonal gifts and merchandise created by 130 juried artisans. For 2020, this event was held virtually.



July 14-15, 2020

Blandair Park

SENIOR SENDOFF GAMES

The Department held a Baseball Sendoff at Blandair Park in July 2020. Upon requests from local athletes and coaches for a similar event, the Department then held a Lacrosse Sendoff exhibition game at Troy Park.

Both events were in recognition of players who graduated from local high schools this year. It gave them a chance to play one last game with their teammates.



August 6, 2020

Troy Park



Weed Warriors

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Volunteers play an important and valuable role in the Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks. Volunteers devote their considerable skills, knowledge and time to benefit the Department in fulfilling its mission. Recreation and Parks engages citizens by providing volunteer opportunities for individuals and groups to make an impact in their local community. Volunteers of all ages and backgrounds collaborate and serve alongside employees to create an inspired experience for all.

The Volunteer Management Team continues to:

- Explore models to streamline the process of screening volunteers
- Explore studies, tools, and resources on the value of volunteering
- Provide support to the Department to create meaningful volunteer programs
- Promote and facilitate volunteer engagement
- Explore ways to enhance and increase the participation, quality and diversity of volunteer experiences

The Emergency Volunteer Management Team continues to work collaboratively with the Office of Emergency Management to develop and maintain emergency plans which encompass response and recovery.

Trainings and ongoing responsibilities include:

- Tour and familiarize staff with the Emergency Operation Center
- Review and update the Comprehensive Emergency Response and Recovery Plan (CERRP)
- Collaborate with Howard County Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD)
- Learn the new Web EOC platform

**Volunteers self-logged
approximately**

2,875

**hours through
HoCoVolunteer.org.**

**Total value of
volunteer hours
for FY21 is**

\$1,033,090.

Volunteers



Community Knitting & Crocheting Group

TRIPS AND TOURS

In 2020, Trips & Tours took a travel rest to ensure everyone's safety during COVID-19. In 2021, the program resumed with excursions to St. Michaels, Maryland, the Hillwood Museum and an upcoming visit to Cape Cod.

DROP-IN PROGRAMS

Howard County Recreation & Parks' Free Drop-In Programs are assisted by a small team of regular volunteers. These programs include Wii Bowling at the Bain 50+ Center, trivia, and toss across. The programs are valuable as many of the participants have limited expendable income. Drop-in programs allow them to be active, social, and enjoy leisure without an impact on their finances.

COMMUNITY KNITTING & CROCHETING GROUP

The Community Knitting & Crocheting Group was formed over 20 years ago. Over the years, the group has donated thousands of handmade items to organizations in and around Howard County. In addition to local requests, the group makes donations nation-wide. This group provides volunteers with a creative outlet, an opportunity for socialization, and a sense of contributing to their community. They are an extremely talented group that enjoys sharing new patterns, needlework advice, and giving back.

20 Trips & Tours trip leaders

4 Drop-in program volunteers

55 Volunteers contribute annually

208
Trips & Tours volunteer hours

150
Drop-In program volunteer hours

50 Average hours per month

1,384 Items donated to 20 projects & organizations

MPEA HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECTS

The Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) enlists the aid of volunteers to address the issue of invasive exotic plant species through group volunteer events (such as the Conservation Stewardship Projects and trained Independent Weed Warriors). Invasive exotic plants reduce native floral diversity by competing for sunlight, resources, and space, and offer poorer quality or insufficient food and habitat for native wildlife; they may also increase soil erosion and reduce water quality or present a nuisance to visitors. After removing these undesirable species, the areas are restored by planting native trees and shrubs and/or raking in seed of native grasses and forbs. Each group event also includes an educational component concerning the target species or area of the day.

For FY21, 62 volunteers worked 362 hours. Work included cutting, digging, or pulling nine different invasive plant species from 5.3 acres, planting and sheltering 72 new native trees and shrubs, installing 252 quarts of native wildflowers for a demonstrative pollinator garden, and spreading and raking in six pounds of native grass and forb seed into select areas cleared by volunteers of invasive plants.

MPEA BIRD NEST BOX MONITORING

The Natural and Historic Resource Division has coordinated the Bluebird Nest Box Program for over 25 years, resulting in the successful fledging of thousands of cavity nesting species throughout the County's park and open space lands. The Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) hosts 23 of these nest boxes, which are monitored each year from March – August by dedicated volunteers. In addition to maintaining predator exclusion devices and cleaning the boxes, breeding data is collected every 3-7 days and shared with the University of Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Birdhouse Network through Cornell's nationwide monitoring program, NestWatch.

For FY21, two volunteers worked 53 hours. They monitored and maintained 23 Bird Boxes every 3-7 days from March – August while observing 30 broods being raised.

MPEA NATIVE PLANT PROPAGATION PROJECT

Habitat restoration efforts often include removing non-native invasive plants and replanting areas with native plants, and a significant quantity of native plant material is needed for these efforts. Many species can be propagated from plants on site, providing local ecotypes as well as species not readily available for purchase. In March 2021, the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA) recruited several volunteers to assist with the collection, potting, and watering of local vegetative material for future use for habitat restoration projects.

Starting in March 2021, three volunteers worked 62 hours to aggregate plant propagation methods and timings for 52 native plant species. (They grew 172 plants from seed and raised 28 plant species from seed, cuttings, or transplants.)

HOWARD COUNTY BUTTERFLY SURVEY

In 2013, The Natural Resource Division partnered with the Howard County Bird Club to initiate an ongoing survey of Howard County butterflies. This included a single group July count within the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA), Font Hill Park, Centennial Park, and David Force Park. These butterfly surveys aided in developing butterfly species lists for those parks. In 2021, the MPEA expanded this count into an ongoing butterfly survey program occurring biweekly from April – October, performed independently by trained volunteers.

Starting in April 2021, six volunteers worked 75.5 hours to survey 29 acres for butterflies every two weeks.

1,265
volunteer hours were
donated to
MPEA projects.

Volunteers



Archaeology

PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY VOLUNTEERS

From July 2020 through June 2021, the Public Archaeology Program welcomed new and returning volunteers who assisted with various tasks in the field and during public programming (including summer camps).

Five dedicated volunteers and three one-time volunteers participated in fieldwork at the Howard County Living Farm Heritage Museum where they assisted with Scout, Homeschool, Public Dig Days and Summer Camps.

The Public Archaeology volunteers have been a great asset when establishing new programs.

Public Archaeology Volunteers
logged over

875 hours

ROBINSON NATURE CENTER VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

In FY21, Robinson ran its first hybrid-format Maryland Master Naturalist certification class with all lecture trainings for volunteers held virtually and off-site field trips held outdoors. Twenty-three new Master Naturalists were trained and donated a combined total of over 400 volunteer hours.

Additionally, Robinson processed and oriented 90 new volunteers during FY2021 and engaged 195 volunteers through a variety of outdoor-only, take-home, gardening and program-related opportunities.

2,143 hours

of Robinson volunteer hours equals

\$54,496.49

in salary costs.



Lil' Acorns My Maryland Camp at Robinson Nature Center

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

This fiscal year, Robinson Nature Center achieved recertification as a Maryland Green Center through the Maryland Association of Environmental & Outdoor Educators. The Maryland Green Center Award is a way to recognize and honor a facility's efforts in the implementation of environmental education, best management practices and community engagement.

The center also created three new outdoor programming spaces. An extension of the fenced area of the center's Children's Garden and an all-weather tent allowed for outdoor-only preschool programs to be offered for the duration of the fiscal year. The addition of eight picnic tables and an all-weather tent created the center's first outdoor-only birthday party rental space, Meadow Party Place, and also served multiple outdoor-only camps and programs. Finally, working with the Howard County Woodworker's Guild, a wooden, outdoor puppet theater was created that allowed weekend puppet shows to be held completely outdoors.

Indoors, the center added a new, interactive projector system in the mezzanine lobby area to engage visitors without the use of tactile. Thanks to donations by generous individual donors, the center added additional wildlife mounts including a bison, an elk and a bear to our permanent exhibits. We also welcomed an addition to our live animal residents – a terrapin.

The center continued to incorporate art into its campus and programming. Artist Elliott Hamilton, who installed the popular ArtSites piece "Insect House," donated the piece to the center where it will remain on display near the new outdoor puppet theater. And Robinson welcomed three local artists into the indoor gallery space (Jen Eidson, Jean Miele and Stephanie Przybylek).

PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

For the duration of FY21, the Robinson Nature Center offered in-person programs that adhered to shifting COVID-19 guidelines. Popular annual special events like Halloween Tricks, Treats and Trees and Deer Santa were modified to delight the community in a safe way through the use of timed-ticketing enrollment and a new giant, inflatable snow globe through which children could safely interact with Santa.

The center **won a National Association of Counties (NaCo) Award for its "Take Home Nature" and "Camp Came to Me" programs.** They are part of a new line of kit-based programs created during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide an alternative option to in-person programming for families in the community. Their popularity continues to increase.

Natural Resources



Emmanuel Do Linh San

TICK STUDY

More Steps in Evaluating Tick-Control Strategies

Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks (HCRP), in collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and University of Maryland (UMD), launched a study in January 2017 to evaluate integrated tick control strategies on single-family home sites located adjacent to large public lands in Howard County. A first in Maryland, the study as a whole is part of a larger, five-year, Area-wide Integrated Tick Management Project of the ARS.

The five-year, area-wide integrated tick management project is aimed at developing an effective package of minimal pesticide methods to reduce the number of black-legged ticks or at least the percent carrying Lyme disease-causing bacteria.

According to entomologist Andrew Li with the ARS's Invasive Insect Biocontrol & Behavior Laboratory, data from the study will help develop a science-based minimal pesticide control strategy for Lyme disease-carrying ticks.

"This project is exciting to me because it is a chance to look at the behavior of a species that is not heavily studied," stated Grace Hummell. "The results I find will hopefully give a better understanding of how we can better manage white-footed mice to reduce ticks and tick-borne diseases."

Seven Components to the Area-Wide Study

The below listed activities will continue for the life of the study ending in 2021.

- 1** **Deer Collaring:** Tracking movements of adult deer. This phase began in February 2017–April 2017 and then again in January 2018–April 2018. The goal was to collar 50 deer. The deer with collars will continue to be tracked for 24 months (the life span of the battery on the GPS collar). The plan is to track the deer collared in 2017 until February 2019. Deer collared in 2018 were tracked until January 2020.
- 2** **Tick Sampling:** This activity will occur on seven sites for the duration of the 5-year project. Sampling with drag nets occurs monthly March–November. Ticks collected are sampled to determine the number infected with the bacteria that causes Lyme disease.
- 3** **Mouse GPS Collars/Tracking of Mouse Movements:** This part of the process began in April 2018. In addition, mice captured are ear tagged, tissue samples collected, blood samples and ticks are collected. UMD graduate student Grace Hummell (under the direction of Assistant Professor Dr. Jennifer Murrow) and a team from the University and ARS deployed collars in the spring and tracked the mice. They then recaptured the mice to retrieve the collars and redeployed the collars again to track movements in the fall.
- 4** **Bait Boxes:** 309 of these were deployed in May 2018, then collected and replaced with fresh bait boxes in July 2018. The boxes then remained in the field until November 2018. They were then collected and weighed to determine how much bait had been consumed.
- 5** **Met52 Applications:** Tickicide spray applications to vegetation occurred in June and July 2018 at residences agreeing to participate in the study. Subsequent tick sampling will determine if there is a change in the amount of ticks and the percentage infected with the bacteria.
- 6** **4-Poster Deer Feeders:** 20 were deployed in October–December 2017. The feeders have been set up in four park sites and will continue to be deployed throughout the study period. They will be monitored with a camera to determine usage and will be tracking the amount of corn consumed and permethrin applied to rollers.
- 7** **Home Owner Solicitation:** The USDA crew is actively soliciting participation in the area-wide study in the neighborhoods surrounding the study site locations. Participation allows the researchers to sample for ticks at the edge of their properties 2 times per month, allow mouse trapping monthly, and allow bait boxes and/or Met52 spray applications to occur on their property.



RecZone Child Care

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES (NaCo) AWARDS

This year, Howard County was the recipient of 27 National Association of Counties (NaCo) Achievement Awards. Howard County Recreation & Parks is proud to announce that we received four awards for the following programs.

ROBINSON NATURE CENTER TAKE-HOME PROGRAMS

Robinson Nature Center staff created a new line of “Take Nature Home” programs designed to provide alternatives for individuals and families who were not comfortable with in-person events and classes. These programs included home school content, holiday gift kits, “at home” special events and DIY workshops. In 2021, over 567 individuals/families benefited from these new offerings.

RECZONE CHILD CARE PROGRAM

This daily child care program was created by Recreation & Parks’ Recreational Licensed Child Care section in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and operated at eight locations throughout Howard County.

SCOUT ARCHAEOLOGY PROGRAM

Offered through the Living History & Heritage division, this program provides hands-on archaeology experiences for local boy and girl scouts. During the program, scouts learn archaeology theory, proper excavation techniques, care and handling of artifacts, and experimental archaeology while gaining an appreciation for historic preservation and interpretation.

COMMUNITY CENTER FAMILY FUN KITS

Recreation & Parks community center staff developed Family Fun Kits in response to COVID-19 in place of their popular winter dances. The kits provided safe and family-friendly activities for the community that were designed to be affordable and supported local small businesses.

Awards



Left to right: Medical Director Dr. Matthew Levy, Former Fire Chief Bill Anuszewski, Director A. Raul Delerme, Marcellus Barley, David Gostomski, Abdullah Tyler County Executive Calvin Ball

AMERICAN RED CROSS' NATIONAL LIFESAVING AWARD

Three Roger Carter Community Center (RCCC) employees were honored by the American Red Cross (ARC) with its National Lifesaving Awards for their heroic, quick actions last year that saved the life of a Howard County resident. Abdullah Tyler and David Gostomski were each presented with ARC's "Lifesaving Award for Professional Responders," which recognizes Red Cross trained professional responders acting while on duty. Marcellus Barley was recognized by ARC with its "Certificate of Extraordinary Personal Action," presented to those not Red Cross trained.

On the morning of September 28, 2020, a swimmer was found in distress by another swimmer in RCCC's pool. Once notified, pool manager Abdullah activated RCCC's Emergency Action Plan with the assistance of lifeguard David. Together, they performed CPR compressions, rescue breaths and used the on-site AED defibrillator twice. During this time, facility leader Marcellus called 911 and led emergency personnel through RCCC to the pool deck. By the time Department of Fire & Rescue Services (HCDFRS) personnel arrived on scene, the distressed swimmer was revived, and subsequently transported to Howard County General Hospital, where he made a full recovery.

LAURA WETHERALD, POSTHUMOUS RECOGNITIONS

Howard County Recreation & Parks' Bureau Chief of Recreation Laura Wetherald passed away on February 19, 2021. During her distinguished 34-year career, Laura helped shape the department. In recognition of her many contributions to the field of Recreation & Parks, she was awarded the below.

- The LERN Board of Directors voted unanimously to elect Laura posthumously to the Board of Directors.
- The LERN Board of Directors approved her Lifetime Achievement Award.
- NACPRO awarded Laura the 2021 Professional Lifetime Award "In Recognition of Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Parks & Recreation."
- MRPA established the Laura Wetherald Scholarship for Certification.

Volunteer of the Year



DAVE BAKER

Dave has gone above and beyond to offer a program that fosters and defines Howard County Recreation & Parks Encore 50+ Recreation.

Since 2018, Dave has hosted weekly group trivia sessions as a volunteer for Howard County's ENCORE 50+ Program, specifically supporting drop-in recreational activities. Over the past three years, he personally volunteered over 500 total hours that positively impacted 200+ community residents. Since Dave has a strong passion for trivia and keeping his mind sharp, he offered to volunteer his time hosting a program that would facilitate camaraderie, social inclusion, and positive cognitive health. This program hosted by Recreation and Parks is a very popular weekly installment at the Howard County Bain 50+ Center.

In March 2020, in-person social interaction came to a sudden halt with the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, within the first few months of the pandemic, social-wellness and mental health risks associated with isolation increased. Adding more need and concern was the new-found health protocols associated with COVID-19 forcing individuals to rely primarily upon technical means to virtually engage recreationally and socially. As a result, Dave selflessly volunteered again to offer trivia online. In a short period of time, Dave effectively transitioned his program online to provide the equivalent level of engagement and interaction for the 50+ community. This evolution was not an easy task, as it required learning new virtual software that included WebEx and Zoom. Dave patiently assisted and guided patrons as they learned this new software. With his tenacity and determination, the trivia program thrived from week to week and popularity of the program soared. He not only engaged routine participants but enrolled many new members each week.

With his selfless dedication to the trivia program and Howard County's Active Aging community, Dave Baker's volunteer career is truly impressive and beyond inspiring.

Employee of the Year



VICTOR KREIS

Congratulations to Victor Kreis for being named the Department's 2021 Employee of the Year. A motor equipment mechanic who has been with Recreation & Parks for 27 years, Victor takes care of all five Howard County park zones as well as Heritage, Construction, Land Management, and Natural Resources areas.

Never one to complain, Victor brings a positive and upbeat attitude to work and is always happy to help his fellow coworkers. He has saved the department countless dollars by recycling parts from broken equipment for repairs and maintenance.

The department commends Victor on his willingness to help and his commitment to excellence.