



THE PACT:

THE PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL TRIBUTE NEWSLETTER

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PAC HIGHLIGHTS: 2017 IN REVIEW

21st Annual VIP Awards— Since 1995, Friends of the Parks has been honoring the outstanding volunteers, community groups, and city and county employees who have made significant contributions to their parks and forest preserves. The “Volunteer-in-the-Parks” Appreciation Reception, endearingly known as the VIP Awards Reception, helps Friends acknowledge and celebrate these volunteers and stewards who help make our parks and open spaces great. Below is the list of the 2017 VIPs who were honored at the 21st Annual VIP Awards Reception at Douglas Park Cultural Center on November 5, and a highlight of our Outstanding PAC VIP awardee.

STEWARDSHIP AWARDEES

David Kostelansky & Sedonia Phillips

ADVOCACY AWARDEE

Mercedes Alvarez & Jackson Park Watch

OUTSTANDING PARK DISTRICT EMPLOYEE AWARDEES

LaToya Scott & Perry Starks

OUTSTANDING PAC AWARDEE

Hamilton Park Advisory Council

INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEER AWARDEES

Jeffrey Rogers & Stanley Jones

COMMUNITY GROUP AWARDEE

R.A.G.E. & Logan Square Neighborhood Association



Spotlight: Hamilton Park Advisory Council — In only three years, this PAC has many accomplishments to boast about, including hosting its first fundraiser last year that raised over \$3000 to assist with programs and PAC activities at the park. More than 250 residents were in attendance and the PAC had an African Pop Up shop with authentic pieces from West Africa, and not only did this bring residents to the park who had never been, but it also allowed for cultural expression from local Englewood artists and art teachers who showcased their own art work. Last year, the PAC created a Summer Day Camp Scholarship to help families in need enroll their young people at Summer Day Camp. This helped more residents learn about the programs and activities at Hamilton Park Cultural Center. The Hamilton Park Advisory Council, for their outstanding impact on the Hamilton Park Cultural Center and surrounding community, was honored with a 2017 Park Advisory Council VIP Award. To learn more about the Hamilton PAC and about all our VIPs, visit our website.

2017 Seed Grants — *Spotlight: West Ridge Nature Preserve Advisory Council (WRNPAC)*. The WRNPAC was one of eleven recipients of a small grant from our 2017 Seed Grant program, and received \$500 to purchase materials for their Citizen Science Center activities. The materials included educational items for learning to identify a variety of wildlife and tools needed to observe them. These activities were designed to monitor animal species to determine the effect of human activity on wildlife in the preserve, and have more public clarity around the processes. 2018 Seed Grant applications are due soon! Visit our website to learn more at www.fotp.org.



Rethinking the Role of Chicago's Parks: Parks as Democracy? Conference. Thirty years ago, Friends of the Parks hosted a conference titled *Rethinking the Role of Chicago's Neighborhood Parks: Toward the 21st Century*. After talking with park partners and community members, Friends believed that this was a critical year to reengage residents in a conversation about parks as democratic spaces. The conference, held in June at Roosevelt University, had keynote speakers, expert panels, round table discussions, and small group working sessions, and kicked off with FOTP's Annual Luncheon. The two-day event brought together over a hundred park advisory council members and other park partner organizations, concerned residents, community activists and organizers, to explore and rethink the role of parks in Chicago. From "On the Table" discussions, to panel presentations and working sessions, many themes emerged around park advisory councils' needs and concerns while in this new era of PAC Guidelines and Codes, which were prescribed by the Chicago Park District in 2013. We look forward to continuing these conversations in 2018. To learn more about the conference, visit our website at www.fotp.org.



FOTP ARCHIVES: THE HISTORY OF THE PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL SYSTEM



In 1987, Friends of the Parks received the Beatrice Foundation Award of Excellence for organizing over 125 volunteer neighborhood park groups that monitored the activities of the Chicago Park District (photo from award)

Though there were a few park advisory councils before the 1980's, a series of events in the late 1970's and early 1980's led Friends of the Parks to initiate the development of the local park advisory council system. In 1978, the Chicago Sun-Times released a series on the terrible condition of Chicago's parks. The following year, the Midwest Community Council sued the Chicago Park District for discrimination: more tax dollars spent in white parks than in African American and Hispanic parks. The lawsuit went to trial and the Park District was acquitted. At this time, the U.S. Justice Department began to investigate the allegations of discrimination against the Chicago Park District.

Under an umbrella of accusations of institutional discrimination in minority communities and parks, the City of Chicago applied to the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery grant program — which made millions of dollars available for the restoration of urban parks and required that residents must have a voice in how federal dollars were spent — and passed grant funds to Friends of the Parks in 1980 to start organizing park advisory councils in the parks where federal dollars were assigned. By the end of the year, Friends of the Parks had helped communities establish over 30 park advisory councils across the city.

In 1982, the U.S. Justice Department filed a lawsuit against the District for pursuing policies that discriminated against residents of Chicago's black and Hispanic communities. The Justice Department charged that less money was spent on personnel, maintenance, and capital improvements in minority communities than in non-minority communities. In 1983, the Chicago Park District and U.S. Justice Department entered into a consent decree, stipulating that at least 65% of the \$60 million in District capital improvements slated be spent in minority communities over the next six years. The consent decree echoed the requirement of community participation and Friends of the Parks continued their work to organize park advisory councils.

THE
FOTP
TREE
SAYS...



As many grant opportunities present themselves in the new year, consider the following list of basic best-practices when completing grant applications for any funder: (1) **Make sure your project is feasible.** Propose a project that can be completed within the funder's timeframe. Be mindful of project approval needs when the project is happening on a space you do not own. (2) **Write in simple, clear, concise language.** Make sure that you are using language that the funder would understand; don't use jargon or acronyms they might not be familiar with. (3) **Make sure the budget is one that fits their guidelines.** Be sure to read the guidelines beforehand and do not include items in your budget that have been explicitly listed as ineligible by the funder. (4) **Demonstrate the commitment of your partners.** Partnerships can make your application stand out. Finally, (5) **Cultivate a relationship with the funder.** Take up an opportunity to speak with a funder if they have the option for one-on-one grant meetings or are available to answer questions. BUT, make sure you've read the grant requirements and guidelines BEFORE speaking with them.