

# THE PACT:

THE PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL TRIBUTE NEWSLETTER



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## MCKINLEY PAC: WHERE CULTURE & NATURE MEET



Photo credit: www.midnightcircus.net

**McKinley Park, 2210 W. Pershing.** As one of Chicago's oldest parks, McKinley Park has seen many faces and facelifts. In the 1920's, park goers could row small boats in the lagoon. Today, a small pier — still the favorite fishing spot of park lovers — is the only way to get deep into the water. Fishing derbies and walk-a-thons have been replaced with events held in the new soccer fields. On Sundays the park is still filled with families playing, cooking and cheering with each other.

Last August the McKinley Park Advisory Council (MPAC) helped set a record for the highest attendance at Midnight Circus in the Parks with 1300 attendees. This included 200 free tickets they distributed to area residents.

Taking care of the residents is a main priority for MPAC. A

**Above:** McKinley Park Midnight Circus audience in 2015. **Right:** Participants from Young Chicago Authors creative writing class with Alderman Cardenas.

special goal is to create events and programs for teens and tweens during the very dangerous gang recruitment years. MPAC wants to offer these 11-15 year olds outlets to express their creativity and be safe.

In November a "Painting in the Park" event attracted students trying their hand at free form art. In January they hosted Young Chicago Authors and included two screenings of the "Louder Than A Bomb" documentary. It was followed with a creative writing class with National Fellow Black Rose. It was a great success with a permanent creative writing class to follow weekly.

In between teen and tween programming, great events for all ages are a constant. A special screening of

Halloween movies to welcoming the Easter Bunny are all part of their agenda.

The small, all-female council is a great mixture of MPAC founders with an independent arts advisor, two local professors and a compassionate teacher. These women create incredible cultural events at McKinley Park that take into account nature, seasons and play. It's a beautiful park with a beautiful future; a future of culture meets nature thanks to the dedication of McKinley Park staff and the McKinley Park Advisory Council.

**For more information on the McKinley PAC visit their Facebook page.**

### Want your PAC featured in the PAC Highlights section?

Please give us a little history about your PAC and the great work your PAC has done. Why did you start? Was there a hurdle that you overcame? Is there a great project you'd like to share? Please include 1-2 pictures and no more than 300 words. Send submissions to Nicole at machucan@fotp.org.



**NOTEWORTHY DATES**

**March 5th:** Park Advisory Council Conference

**March 10th:** FOTP's Netsch Lecture Series: "Shifting Sands" & the Indiana Dunes

**April 16th:** City of Chicago's Clean & Green, contact your ward for more info.

**April 23rd:** FOTP's Earth Day Cleanup, in partnership with Park District, Forest Preserve District & Openlands

**April 26th:** FOTP's Quarterly PAC Networking Meeting, FOTP offices @ 5:30

**Keep your eyes out for the Chicago Park Foundation's Day in the Park city-wide event in June!**

**PAC RESOURCES: BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

The Chicago Park District's Board of Commissioners' monthly meeting allots time for community members to speak on behalf of their parks in the "People in the Parks" section. This 2-minute platform is used by some to tell the Board what is important to them about their parks, what are current challenges or needs, their positions and thoughts on current projects, or statements on behalf of their community group or PAC.

**All requests to speak during the Board's People in the Parks section must be made by 4pm the day before. The following link lists information on how to sign-up to speak at the monthly Board meetings: [www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/departments/board-of-commissioners/speaking-at-meetings](http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/departments/board-of-commissioners/speaking-at-meetings) or call (312) 742-4299.**

This space can be used as vehicle to advocate for the park your group represents. There are many other ways that you can advocate for your park, even if done in tandem: speak with and build relationships with your alderman, your park's Area and Region managers, your State Representative, local/community based non-profits and groups, and staff at Friends of the Parks.

**FOTP ARCHIVES: PARK ADVISORY COUNCILS IN THE 1980s**

Friends of the Parks has a long history supporting park advisory councils in Chicago. In the early 1980s, local park advisory councils were set up by FOTP to involve the public in the spending of federal dollars under the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program (UPARR). Additionally, when the 1983 federal Consent Decree suggested a community participation in the implementation of the decree — a



Park District President Walter Netsch & Vice-President Margaret Burroughs speak with Abbott Park Advisory Council representatives at FOTP's Park Council Network meeting in 1988.

settlement of the racial discrimination lawsuit filed by the US Justice Department against the park district — Friends of the Parks stepped up as the lead entity to carry out the decree mandate to obtain community views and recommendations. At the impetus of communities or Friends of the Parks, PACs were formed. In 1986, FOTP hired our first Community Project Director to work with neighborhood park advisory councils and established the Neighborhood Park Council Network, a city wide group of representatives from PACs. In 1987, FOTP released the first version of the Park Advisory Council Guidelines Manual, a document of suggested guidelines for establishment and functioning of PACs. Please contact Friends of the Parks for our most recent version.

**THE FOTP TREE SAYS...**



Spring is just around the corner and many of you are thinking about what events lie ahead for your group. Not only events, but what dough, moolah, ca-ching ca-ching can your group bring in to contribute to your local park. Each of you is at a different stage in your group's development: some are new and still figuring out the ropes, and some are well established and have a long history with sponsors and event planning. My advice is for your group to know itself best and commit to projects that are feasible with your current resources and capacity, which doesn't mean to not dream big.... DREAM BIG! Here are some ideas to get your brain noodles cooking:

**Competitions:** This is one of our favorite ways to get your community engaged. Nothing brings the best out of people like some healthy competition. Chili cook-offs, derby races, Rube Goldberg machines, best costume, whatever you can think of that suits your PAC and community best. **Who's a PAC leader in this category?** Gately PAC's annual Men's Grill Off. Men from the community come to the park, bring grills and relax in the June sun while mingling with neighbors.

**Holiday Celebrations:** Whether the cold, spooky or festive, spreading the holiday cheer can never go wrong. **Who's a PAC leader in this category?** Wicker PAC's annual Boo-a-poolza, an event presented by multiple partners: [www.wickerpark.org/events/boo-palooza](http://www.wickerpark.org/events/boo-palooza).

**Concessions:** Setting up a concession stand at your park for sports events, or really any event, can bring in some money to your PAC. Ask a local or chain grocery store for water, chip and fruit donations. **Who's a PAC leader in this category?** The Humboldt and McGuane Park Advisory Councils.

You can seek sponsors for any of these categories and seek donations to offset the costs of food or drinks. You can also consider entry fees or suggested donations, based on what you think is best for your park's community. Other ideas, community sales (Kelly Park - garage sale in the park) and dances (Kells Park - Senior Prom).