



THE PACT:

THE PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL TRIBUTE NEWSLETTER

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WILLYE WHITE PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL: THE FIRST ORCHARD IN PARKS

Article submitted by Eva McCann,
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The Willye White Park Advisory Council watches over three parks all within a three block area: Triangle Park, Willye B. White Park and the Harold Washington Memorial Playlot. When another community entity came to the Willye White Park Advisory Council to tell of their plans of building a skateboarding park in Triangle Park, they wanted the Council's support to help promote the idea. However, we felt it was not the decision of a small group alone to push something on the community. Especially without first asking the people who live in the immediate



area about their feelings on removing green space to build a cement structure in what was meant to be a quiet space of sanctuary away from the hustle and bustle of the rest of the neighborhood. With that in mind, informal surveys were disbursed asking one question, "What do you think of a skateboarding park being built in Triangle Park?" The overwhelming answer was, "Not interested."

Residents were quick to offer other suggestions that would enhance the park, none of which were a skateboarding park.

Listening to their suggestions about the improvements they would prefer and after combining their suggestions, the idea was ignited to plant an orchard as the first phase of park enhancements with other plans of becoming a part of the Chicago Park District's rotating sculpture garden still in the works. Thus, the Triangle Park Community Orchard and Sculpture Garden was born.

The advisory council first approached the same entity that was going to fund building the skateboarding park. The Council was told they do not pay for fruit trees. They will pay for other trees but not fruit trees. Next, the Council approached the park district who also said that they do not plant fruit trees in the parks.

But the idea gained a lot of community support by 2017, after a four-year journey of seeking out the right park district staff who could bring this vision to fruition. Finally in year number five, 32 fruit trees were planted on June 4th, 2018 making Triangle Park the very first official orchard planted by the Chicago Park District.

The Triangle Park Community Orchard is an asset that will be a sustainable source of fruit that will be there for generations to come. The orchard will benefit the community in several ways and serve as an educational tool for teaching new skills. The Willye White Park Advisory Council will support the orchard by (continued on pg. 2)

(continued from pg. 1) reaching out to local schools and community organizations, and organizing educational “tree keeping” workshops that will: teach friends, students, and neighbors about the orchard and park; relay proper care and maintenance of the trees; teach what to look for as far as bugs and disease; show how to properly prune and mulch fruit trees; and bring in native bees to help pollinate the trees. The fruit harvested from the trees will be done by the community, for the community and will be free for all.

The Willye White Park Advisory Council refused to take “no” for an answer. The Council was determined to put the community’s suggestions and ideas into play and created something positive that will be an asset to the community for generations, in an area that frequently gets a bad rap. Wanting more for our parks than what is normally accepted in an area that is often marginalized, we continued to seek Park District staff with a broader vision that went beyond the usual tree planting, to seeing the long-term impact and benefits fruit trees can have on a community. The tenacity paid off!

The Willye White Park Advisory Council meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm. Find us on Facebook or visit our website at www.willyebwhite.org.



Pictures from this article — Ribbon cutting celebrating the opening of the Triangle Orchard in September of 2018.

...don't let winter bring down your PAC or community organization. The cold weather and snow can seem like quite the barrier to engaging neighbors, but with so little winter events taking place around the city, folks are often stir-crazy for fun and unique things to do! Winter offers many opportunities to engage park neighbors and to keep the energy going around your park. Which of these ideas can you mix and match for a winter event or two at your park?

- Sledding races or contests — The winner gets a gym membership at the park! (As a possible prize perhaps.) Or if you have a dog park, a dogsledding contest too!
- Snowman contest or a snowman day — Let's fill the park with snow-people & have hot chocolate afterwards! If you want to further promote the creativity, make it a snow sculpture contest.
- Make pinecone bird feeders — Hunt for pinecones in your park and return to the craft table to make a bird feeder.
- Movie Night — If you have a white wall and are able to borrow someone's projector and have a laptop, then why not?
- Doggie Rudolph & Cider Party — Hold a winter gathering and invite owners to dress their pups as Santa or Rudolph, and provide cider for the hu-mans.
- Crockpot Recipe Contest & Ugly Sweater Competition— You can have a small entry fee and special panel of judges, or have neighbors be the judges by filling out vote cards for their favorites! Also have a prize for the “judge” with the ugliest sweater!
- Family story reading night — Pick a season-relevant children's book and set up crafts tables for a family-friendly night.
- Organize a winter hike or tour — Don't let the cold or snow scare you. There is something very special and magical about crunching through the snow and seeing your park with a rare lens.
- Winter Olympics or carnival — Snowball bullseyes, snow-hurdle jumping, Bozo bucket-style snowball tosses, and so many other options!
- Outdoor snow painting — Use food coloring as your paint and the snow as your canvas.
- Have a winter grill-off — Grilling competitions take place at a few parks over the summer time, but why not have them in the winter too? The added challenge of grilling in the cold might attract some adventurous competitors.
- Snow Shoveling Community Service — Make the park a meeting hub and go around the park neighborhood after a big snow, and celebrate with hot chocolate when everyone returns.
- Other ideas: Snow angel day, tree lighting and decorating, caroling, wreath decorating, gingerbread house making competition, hunt for animal tracks, winter walk-a-thon, clothing drive, candy cane hunt, gift-wrapping, and so much more!



Picture from November tour at the Dunning Read Conservation Area

THE
FOTP
TREE
SAYS...



Many of these ideas can be mixed and matched, and turned into a fundraiser as well. What's your great idea on how to get your community involved in your park and outside this winter?