



# *2012 - 2013 Annual Report*



*Laurel Hill County Park,  
Mount Pleasant*

## *Message from the Executive Director*



*Tom O'Rourke*

Dear Charleston County Park Resident:

In 2012 and 2013, Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission (CCPRC) truly demonstrated the 11 core values we established as an agency nearly a decade ago. These values focus on community enrichment, leadership, fun, exceptional customer service, health and wellness, quality, diversity, safety, accessibility, stewardship, and building a legacy. This is the foundation from which all that we do grows. Our 10,000 acre park system has served over 2,000,000 visitors this year and through our exceptional programs and events, we have brought people together to interact and experience the beauty of our natural, historical, and cultural settings.

CCPRC is known for solidifying strong partnerships with other organizations in the community to reach citizens we may not otherwise reach. Our Parklands Foundation generates funding to support the vision that all members of the community have access to our park system. Through the Charleston County School District, Community Services of Edisto, and Lowcountry Aquatic Project Swimming, CCPRC launched the Portable Pool Program. During the summer of 2013, a portable pool was transported to rural areas in our community and brought swimming lessons to hundreds of students from Jane Edwards Elementary, Schroder Middle School, and Angel Oak Elementary. We are proud to be able to enhance the health and safety of children in the Lowcountry.

Financially, CCPRC holds a AAA Bond Rating by Moody's Investor Services, which represents the highest score possible. Our finances are structured into two parts: a General Fund, which is the main operating fund for administrative tasks; and the Enterprise Fund, which is designed to cover daily operational and maintenance expenses through the use of user fees. It is from this financial structure that we continue to operate in a solid and secure financial state.

This annual report highlights many of the great things that occurred in 2012-2013. Thank you for your continued support and the opportunity to shape your park system in a way that preserves all that we value and cherish. I look forward to seeing you at your parks.

The mission of CCPRC is to improve the quality of life in Charleston County by offering a diverse system of park facilities, programs and services. The large park system features over 10,000 acres of property and includes three land parks, three beach parks, four seasonally-lifeguarded beach areas, three dog parks, two landmark fishing piers, three waterparks, 19 boat landings, a climbing wall, a challenge course, an interpretive center, an equestrian center, cottages, a campground, a marina, as well as wedding, meeting and event facilities. The park system also offers a wide variety of recreational services - festivals, camps, classes, programs, and much more.

## Mission Statement

The Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission will improve the quality of life in Charleston County by offering a diverse system of park facilities, programs, and services.

## Core Values

### Community Enrichment

Enriching lives through education and programs

### Leadership

Providing professional staff development

### Fun

Delivering fun to customers

### Exceptional Customer Service

Always focusing on you

### Health and Wellness

Providing and promoting healthy lifestyle opportunities

### Quality

Striving for quality throughout the park system

### Diversity

Fostering diverse populations of vendors, employees, and customers

### Safety

Ensuring safe and secure environments

### Accessibility

Providing accessibility through affordable options and a variety of offerings

### Stewardship

Preserving and conserving cultural, natural, and historical resources

### Building a Legacy

Maintaining a vision for the future while sustaining a healthy park system



Crabbing Dock,  
James Island County Park



Cooper River Marina

# CHARLESTON COUNTY PARK & RECREATION COMMISSIONERS



**Ravi Sanyal**  
Chair



**Benjy Cooke**  
Vice-Chair



**J. Michael Surles**  
Secretary-Treasurer



**Lisa S. King**



**Mattese Lecque**



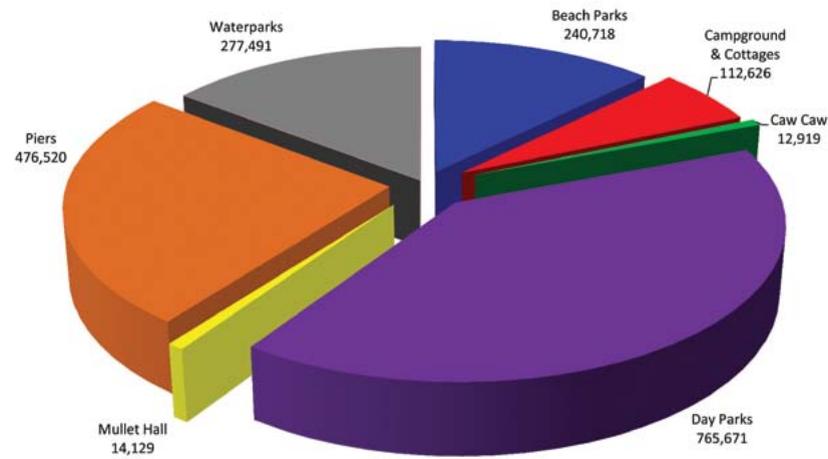
**Andrew Thomas**



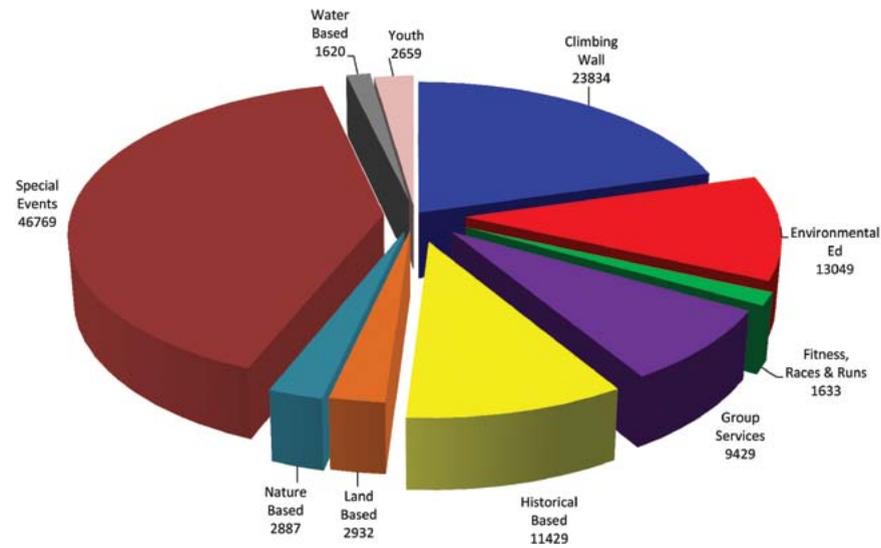
**Jeff Gladwell**

# Patrons at Play

Park & Facilities Attendance

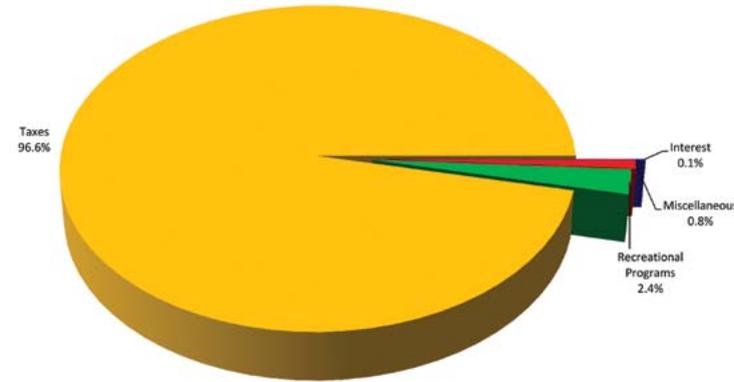


Special Events & Program Attendance

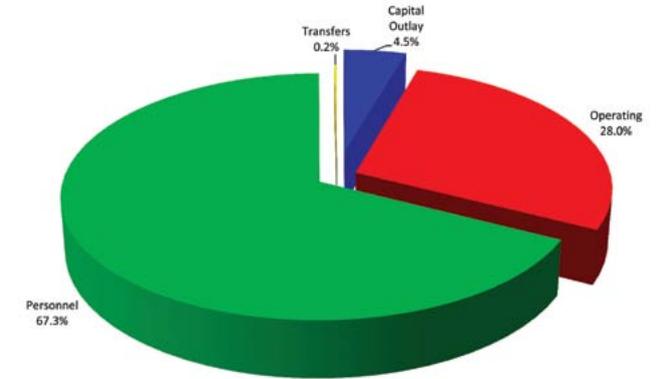


# Your Dollars at Work

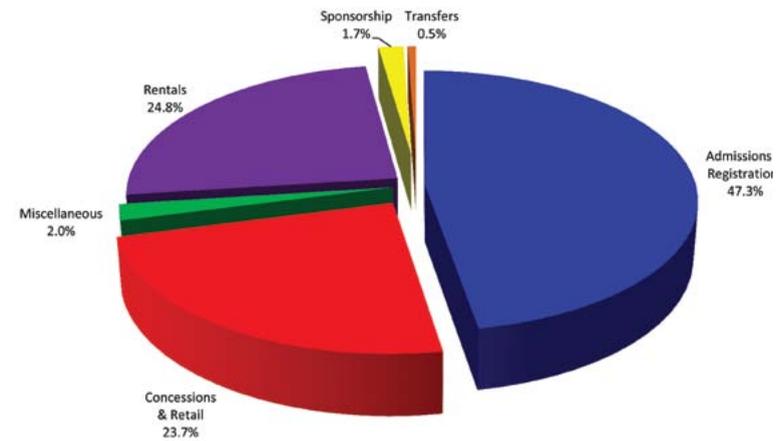
Operating Receipts - General Agency



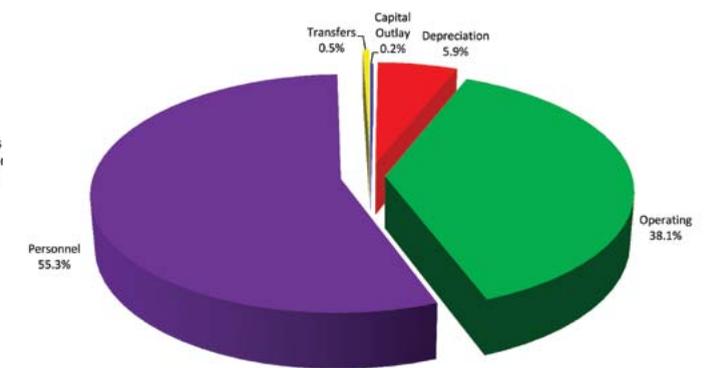
Operating Expenditures - General Agency



Operating Receipts - Enterprise Funds



Operating Expenditures - Enterprise Funds



# Health and Wellness

## *Camp Rise Above*

In summer 2013, CCPRC proudly partnered with non-profit organization Camp Rise Above to offer camp experiences for children with serious illnesses, life challenges, and disabilities at James Island County Park. Camp Rise Above strives to deliver the magic of childhood to kids ages 6-17 regardless of their medical status or daily struggles. In 2013, these camps allowed children the opportunity to enjoy crafts, archery, challenge course activities, climbing, boating, and visits to Splash Zone Waterpark.

## *Where the Wild Things Run*

This 5K foot race on April 27 hosted an estimated 100 runners on a course traveling through Caw Caw Interpretive Center's swamps, bottomland, upland forest, maritime, and marshland habitats. According to park manager Thomas Thornton: "We count our success not only in the race but in the exposure generated to first-time visitors. It only takes one trip to Caw Caw to realize just how special it is. We likely have gained several new customers who will be making Caw Caw their destination as a result of the Where the Wild Things Run!"

## *The Challenge Course at James Island County Park*

*"Overall, our middle/high school students thoroughly enjoyed the Challenge Course. It allowed them to step outside of their comfort zone and push themselves to try something new. Thank you!"*

*- Challenge Course Participant*



*Annual Conference for the Carriage Association of America,  
Mullet Hall Equestrian Center at Johns Island County Park*



CCPRC's Portable Planetarium

# Community Enrichment

## *The Portable Planetarium*

In December, the Interpretation Department educated and entertained over 250 students at Hursey Elementary School in North Charleston, offering a variety of astronomy programs inside the portable planetarium. Grades K-5 had an opportunity to spend a class period in outer space “flying” to the moon, “lassoing” nearby planets, wishing upon shooting stars and learning about Earth’s movement and the Moon.

## *Teaching Our Youth to Swim*

Through the Charleston County School District (CCSD), Community Services of Edisto, and Lowcountry Aquatic Project Swimming (LAPS), CCPRC launched a swimming lesson program targeting children in unincorporated rural areas of Charleston County. The program launched at Splash Zone Waterpark in May with Murray-LaSaine Elementary students. Under the eight-lesson LAPS format, 60 students progressed with increased confidence, enjoyment, and safety. Following the donation of a portable pool, it became possible for CCPRC to literally bring these lessons to area schools. Hundreds of students from Jane Edwards Elementary, Schroder Middle School, and Angel Oak Elementary learned to swim in the portable pool. CCPRC is proud to be able to enhance the health and welfare of area children through swimming instruction in a fun and safe environment.

*“I found this program to be valuable to the community. My child had the experience of a lifetime. Now that he has the foundation, we will be continuing with swim lessons. Thanks to all who made this possible.”*

*-Tonya Brown, parent of child at Angel Oak Elementary*

## *Nurturing Nature Lovers*

*“Erica Veal was absolutely terrific: Her enthusiasm was infectious, her use of hands-on artifacts and models helped all of us get a better understanding of the perspective she was sharing, and her knowledge of the cultural history was deeply appreciated.”*

*- Caw Caw DNR / Parks Collaboration Participant*

# Safety

## *Lifeguards*

Throughout the summer, CCPRC ocean rescue lifeguards made visitors' beach-going experience a safer and happier one. In summer 2012, CCPRC's ocean rescue lifeguard team rescued 19 patrons in distress in the water and helped 153 others who needed assistance. They prevented over 16,000 patrons from making unsafe actions, found 249 beach-goers who went missing, treated over 3,000 jellyfish stings, and made 45 EMS calls for those in need of more advanced medical care. Turning their hard work into fun, the CCPRC lifeguard team placed 5th in their division at the 2012 South Atlantic Lifesaving Association Championships.

## *South Carolina Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Training*

In January, Isle of Palms County Park served as the unlikely scene for an extensive military training exercise. Through a collaboration of The South Carolina Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team (SC-HART), the State Urban Search and Rescue Task Force (SC-TF1), and the Army National Guard Aviation Unit, the park was used as a landing zone and staging area for the helicopters, fire trucks, and other rescue personnel. Aiming to help hone their skills in the event their expertise is needed, this training session joined professional rescuers and highly-trained pilots and crew members to form a cohesive unit capable of performing rescues using the UH-60 Blackhawk Helicopter. Scenarios simulated boat, water, and natural disaster rescues.



*SC Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Training,  
Isle of Palms County Park*



*The Dog Park at  
James Island County Park*

# *Exceptional Customer Service*

*"People Notice! My name is Pauly Appleton and I live on James Island. I frequently visit James Island County Park with my dog, Kyla Sue. I just wanted to send an email of appreciation and thanks for the workers at the front gate. The older men are always so nice and one even goes as far as giving my dog treats on our way in. This simple gesture really makes me happy and shows how he cares about visitors, both two legged and four. The workers are all very nice and the park itself is so clean and beautiful. James Island is lucky to have such a park and such wonderful workers on staff. "*

*- James Island County Park Patron*

## *The "Holiday Who" Gift Program*

Last holiday season, CCPRC's Community Education staff led the charge to create magic with the agency's business partner, Murray-LaSaine Elementary School. Through its annual "Holiday Who" gift giving project, which uses the inspiration of Dr. Seuss's storybook Grinch, CCPRC staff members adopted 51 deserving students from the school. Staff members took on this challenge by providing much needed school uniforms, books, sports equipment, and toys for children identified by school guidance staff. On December 12, these wrapped gifts were delivered to the school for distribution to the children's parents or guardians, well in time for holiday celebrations.

*"Even though we live in the north part of Mount Pleasant we drive to James Island several times a week so my daughter can participate in activities at the James Island Park! The staff, the park, and activities are great!!"*

*- Teen Venture Camp Parent*

# Stewardship

## *Composting Efforts at the Waterparks*

Throughout the summer 2012 season, Whirlin' Waters Adventure Waterpark diverted 10,026 pounds of compostable waste from the landfill. All serving ware at the park's main concessions area was changed out for compostable products. Then, throughout the season, waterpark patrons deposited all their waste into labeled bins instead of trash cans. This waste was turned into compost, which will one day return to Wannamaker County Park for use in park grounds landscaping. The composting program is expanding to Splash Zone and Splash Island in 2013.

## *Cajun Festival*

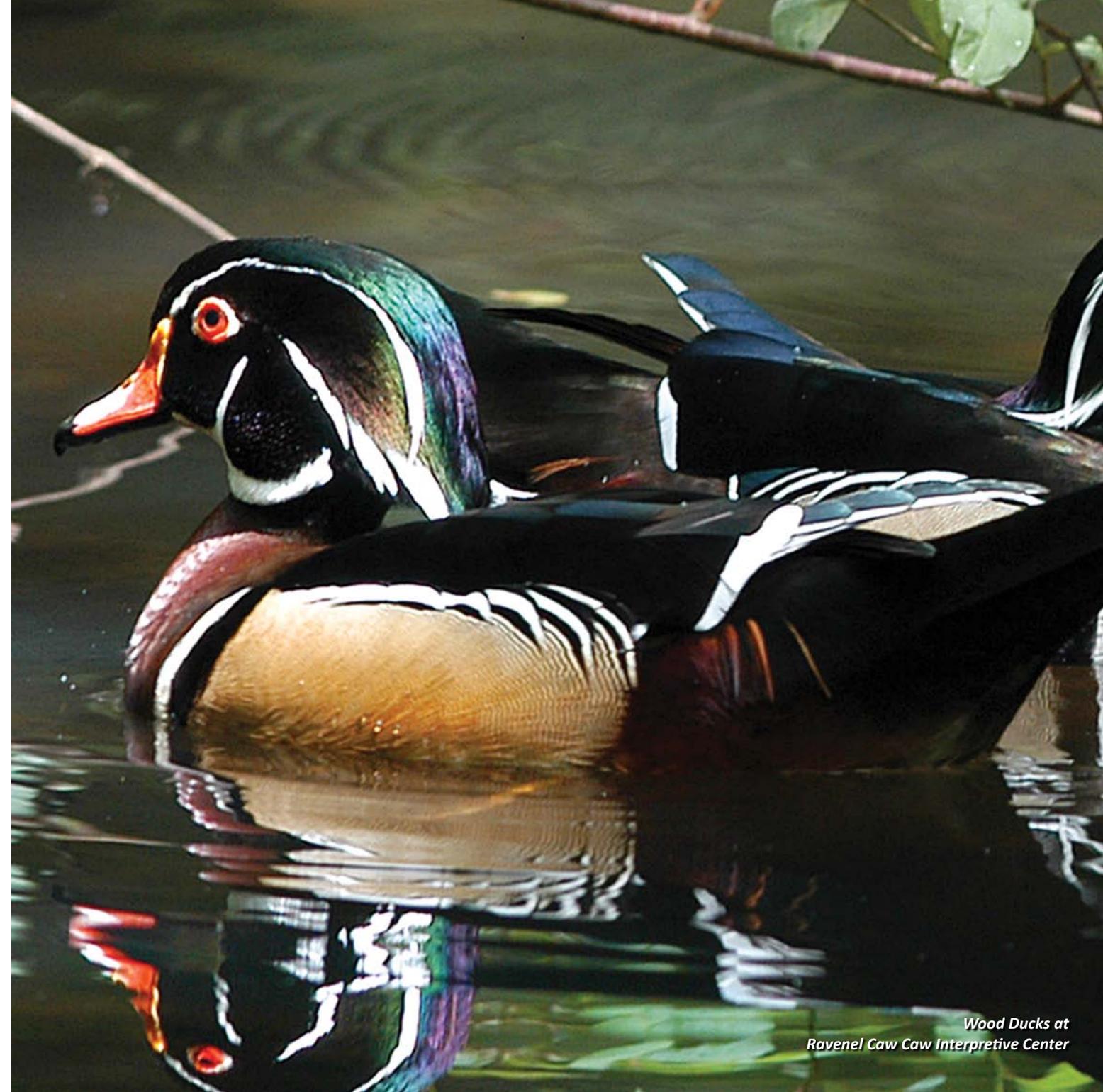
This record-setting festival hosted over 9,500 patrons at James Island County Park in April 2013. Even more impressive was the fact that the Lowcountry Cajun Festival is now classified as a waste-free event. An unbelievable 95% of the waste produced at the event is diverted from the landfill through stations set up for recycling and composting. Other CCPRC festivals are following in its footsteps to make our park system even greener.

## *Stewardship Pledge*

This year, CCPRC invited the community to play an important role in preserving the natural and historical resources of county parks for present and future generations. Park-goers were encouraged to sign a Stewardship Pledge, and follow these six easy steps:

- Avoid harassing wildlife
- Stay on trails to protect yourself, wildlife, and sensitive areas
- Bag your pet's waste and dispose of it in the proper containers
- Place recyclables only in recycling bins or take them home to be recycled
- Avoid littering by using appropriate containers or pack your trash and take it home
- Protect the natural and cultural resources of your park system at every opportunity

It is CCPRC's goal that by encouraging the public to sign this pledge, together we can protect the stability, integrity, value, and beauty of natural and historical resources within Charleston County Parks.





*The Cottages at James Island County Park*

# Quality

Charleston County Parks was privileged to be the recipient of several awards and honors this year:

**Kiawah Beachwalker Park** was proudly honored as a top 10 beach in 2013 by Dr. Beach. Dr. Beach is Dr. Stephen Leatherman, director of the Laboratory for Coastal Research at Florida International University. He bases his findings on 50 criteria, such as water and sand quality, facilities available, and trash maintenance.

In May 2013, **Splash Zone Waterpark's** lifeguard staff received a perfect five-star rating by Starfish Aquatics. The score came from a combination of candid guard observations, skills evaluations, and an assessment of the physical safety and cleanliness of the park. This perfect rating reflects the hard work and dedication of CCPRC's lifeguard staff, Splash Zone maintenance and park staff, the lifeguard training team, and CCPRC's safety team.

CCPRC is a Certified Lifeguard Agency with the United States Lifeguarding Association (USLA). In 2012, the agency received the **USLA National Beach Safety Award** for the fourth consecutive year for its work on educating the public on the dangers of the ocean. National Beach Safety Week took place in May at all three lifeguarded beach areas.

The **Holiday Festival of Lights** at James Island County Park was honored by the American Bus Association as one of the Top 100 Events in North America, and by Coastal Living as one of the Top 10 Holiday Celebrations. The festival was also featured in the City of Moscow's Festival of Festivals celebration - the only event from the United States that was spotlighted.

CCPRC's own **Love Ishie, youth athletics coordinator**, was awarded The South Carolina Recreation and Park Association Southern District Merit Award at the organization's annual fall conference. Love was honored for his contribution in the area of leadership, job performance, public relations, and education.

# Fun

## *Take a Kid Fishing Day*

The Folly Beach Fishing Pier had its biggest turnout ever for the 5th annual free “Take a Kid Fishing Day” on June 15. 197 kids fished the tournament, in addition to about 100 parents and volunteers. Organized by the Folly Beach Anglers Association, they provided free fishing rods and bait. Not only does the annual event provide fantastic business and exposure for the Folly Beach Fishing Pier, it also teaches young anglers good fishing manners and skills.

## *Slacklining*

CCPRC was proud to jump into the world of slacklining this year. James Island County Park’s new slackline park hosted a “soft” opening in February 2013, and was a solid hit with the majority of climbing wall patrons stepping onto a slackline in addition to climbing. A more formal grand opening took place on March 2, followed by the park hosting the Gibbon Slackline Team as they headlined at the inaugural East Coast Paddlesports & Outdoor Festival.

## *Community Events in CCPRC Parks*

Over the years, CCPRC parks and facilities have become very popular event destinations for other local businesses and non profits. Outside organizations host many types of events including races and runs, corporate parties, and fundraisers, based upon available resources. Once approved, the organization is typically required to pay a facility fee. All are expected to pay regular gate admission. As of April 2013, CCPRC had over 40 approved requests to host events within our park facilities over the next year.

*“Great stuff! Big fans of the CCPRC and all their efforts/events! The new venues and events have been simply top notch - rUNdead, Mullet Haul, Where the Wild Things Run, Folly Beach Challenge!”*

*- The Foot Store, comment from Facebook*

*“Had a wonderful time at Harvest Fest yesterday - great weather, great music, great craft booths and just plain great fun!!!”*

*- Barbara Ray Spence, comment from Facebook*



Mount Pleasant Pier



Playground at  
Haut Gap Middle School

# Accessibility

## *Parklands Foundation*

The Parklands Foundation generates funding and promotes initiatives to support the vision that all citizens will have access to and, therefore, benefit from CCPRC's facilities, programs, and services. In May, CCPRC, the Parklands Foundation, and MUSC partnered to introduce Adventure Out, a fitness campaign that offered over 25 activities at five county parks. Exercise programs like Zumba, Yoga, and water aerobics were taught in the parks by MUSC Wellness Center fitness instructors.

## *Rural Recreation Program*

In November 2012, CCPRC hosted over 100 community leaders, Charleston County School District staff, as well as students and faculty at the grand opening of the Haut Gap Middle School (HGMS) Recreation Complex. This innovative, outdoor facility includes a basketball court, multi-purpose sports fields, tennis courts, a volleyball court, a disc golf course, a paved walking trail, and picnic and playground areas. These areas will be shared by HGMS and CCPRC's community education program.

## *Steamboat Public Boat Landing*

In February, a new fishing pier opened at Steamboat Public Boat Landing. The new pier features sustainable aluminum decking, wood composite railings, concrete pilings, and is now ADA-compliant to allow for anglers in wheelchairs. The project was made possible by a grant from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Grant funds were provided through the sale of saltwater fishing licenses.

## *County Park Scholarship*

*"I just wanted to say thank you for all the opportunities the County Park Scholarship program provides my children and all the hard work performed by the camp staff and park employees. My children and I truly feel blessed for the help we receive by the County Parks. We try our best to follow the example being set for us by your generosity by helping those we come into contact with that are in need of our help. I guess I just want to say thank you for setting this example to my family. The experiences you provide help us all get through the difficult circumstances we are faced with in our lives at this time."*

*- Camp Scholarship Recipient*

# Building a Legacy

## *McLeod Plantation*

This year, the Interpretation Department arranged a tour of McLeod Plantation for the Smithsonian Institution Museum of African American History and Culture, the country's most important and influential African American museum. Museum representatives were impressed with how intact the site is and with the immaculate condition of the buildings due to CCPRC's careful preservation work. The groups shared ideas about interpretation possibilities and the loaning of collections. As planning continues for this property, experiences like these will contribute greatly to making McLeod an important and unique historical site.

## *Bringing Back Folly Beach*

In May 2013, Folly Beach County Park underwent a long-awaited restabilization project that consisted of renourishing the beach with sand from a shoal in the adjoining Folly River, followed by the construction of a terminal groin to hold the sand in place. Not only did the project allow the park to be reopened for the thousands of visitors who had missed the park since its 2011 closure after Hurricane Irene, it also re-established environments for shorebird and sea turtle nesting at that end of the island. Folly Beach County Park proudly re-opened to the public with a well attended ceremony on July 3, 2013.

## *Limehouse Point*

In January, CCPRC received the 87-acre Limehouse Point property. Located just west of the Limehouse Bridge and near the terminus of the West Ashley Greenway, the property includes approximately 50 acres of marsh, 25 acres of highland, and a 12-acre island. It provides stunning views of the Stono River and excellent opportunities for bird watching, kayaking, and other recreational activities. This latest addition to CCPRC's parkland holdings was made possible by Jenny and Mike Messner and Paul and Betsy Shiverick. The Messners' Speedwell Foundation supports conservation initiatives through a research effort called Red Fields to Green Fields.



*Gullah Storytelling at  
Ravenel Caw Caw Interpretive Center*



*African American Heritage Day at  
North Charleston Wannamaker County Park*

# *Diversity*

## *African American Heritage Day*

2013 was a record-setting year for the annual African American Heritage Day at Wannamaker County Park. 1,301 elementary and middle school students experienced performances including Sierra Leonean drumming, Gullah storytelling, Wo'se African dancing, and Capoeira martial arts. Children also learned about and tried their hand at Carolina Gold rice cultivation, visited with a 54th Massachusetts re-enactment group, and heard from award-winning sweetgrass basketmaker Vera Manigault.

## *Latin American Festival*

The 2012 Latin American Festival was a hit with over 3,300 attendees, vibrant live performances, and plenty of authentic foods and crafts for sale. Regional bands Bachaco and Orquesta Mayor put on great performances, along with demonstrations from local groups Buen Ache Dance Company and Capoeira Charleston. One of the biggest attractions was the food. Vendors featuring foods from South America, Central America, Europe, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the USA were extremely popular and delicious.

# Diversity (continued)

## *Shooting for Equality*

This year marked the start of a new archery group hosted by CCPRC – a physical disability-based archery team. Backed by Achieving Wheelchair Equality (AWE), the team was coached by CCPRC staff member Joe Moore, who sits on the AWE Board of Directors. Practice continued throughout the fall at Wannamaker County Park's Cypress Hall, and the team will train for the Southeastern Wheelchair Ambulatory Sports Games.

## *Adaptive Paddling Workshop*

As part of ongoing efforts to provide quality programming for participants with disabilities, CCPRC hosted the American Canoe Association's Adaptive Paddlers' Workshop at the East Coast Paddlesports & Outdoor Festival in April. The program brought students with disabilities, a very under-served population, together with instructors desiring training on best practices for adapting equipment and instruction for these students. The workshop provided invaluable training for CCPRC staff, better preparing the agency as it expands efforts to serve disabled participants.

*"Had an amazing time this weekend with the Adaptive Paddling Workshop. I learned SO much, and it has opened many opportunities and ideas. Thanks to everyone, I'm now completely bent on becoming a competitive kayaker!"*

– Charlotte Hanna, workshop participant



CCPRC Staff at Old Towne Creek County Park



[www.charlestoncountyparks.com](http://www.charlestoncountyparks.com) • 843-795-4386

*Mount Pleasant  
Palmetto Islands County Park*