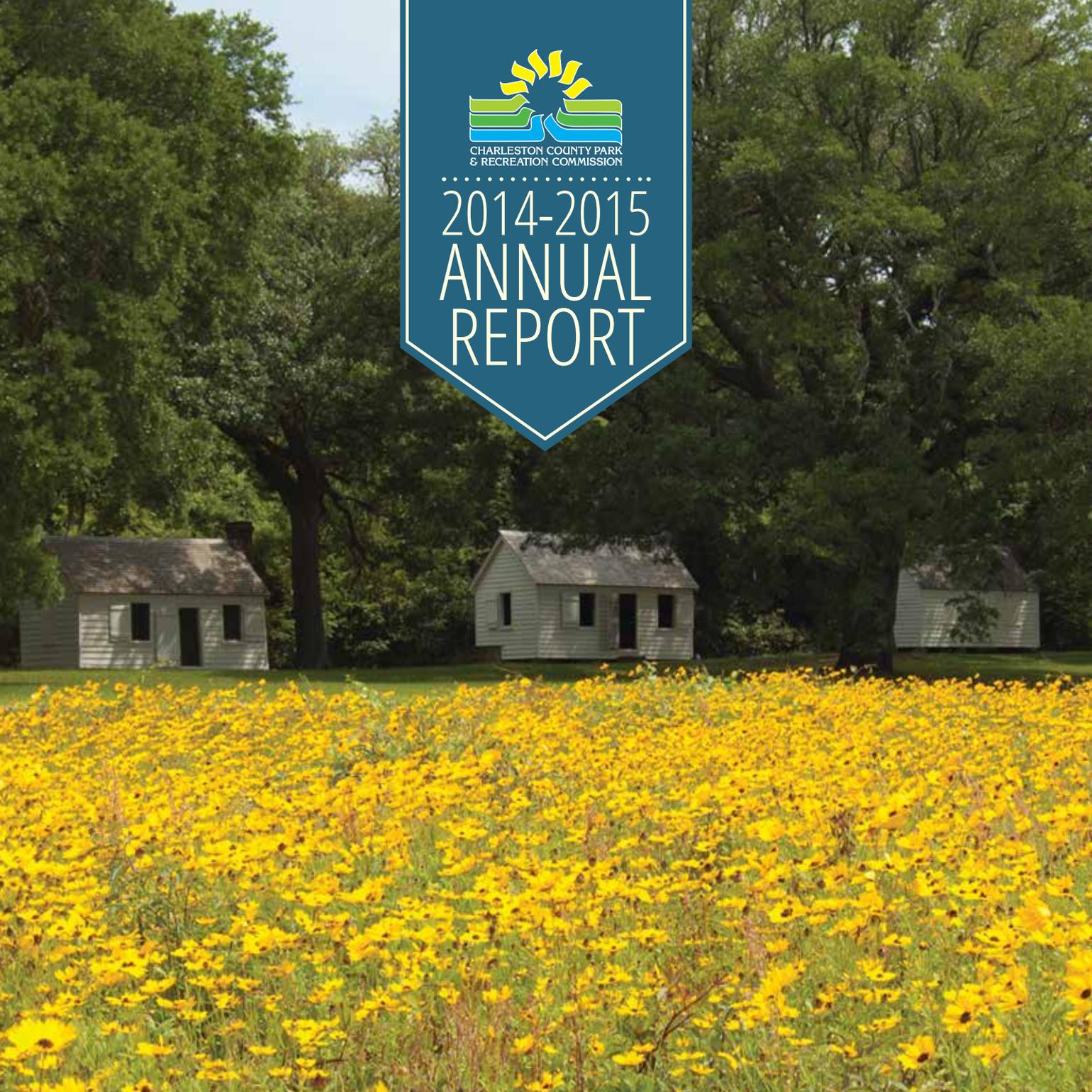




CHARLESTON COUNTY PARK
& RECREATION COMMISSION

2014-2015
ANNUAL
REPORT





Chinese Tallow Tree (Popcorn Tree) Photo by Fred Durette

Message from the Executive Director



Tom O'Rourke

Dear Charleston County Residents:

Charleston is becoming one of the top places to live in the United States. Many aspects of Charleston that people love reside right in Charleston County Parks: beautiful beaches, fishing piers, historic sites, waterparks, campgrounds and nature parks. Just as Charleston continues to grow, Charleston County Parks is expanding to accommodate this growth.

In 2014 and 2015, the Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission (CCPRC) experienced explosive growth in our park system. We opened up Laurel Hill County Park in Mount Pleasant as our newest day park complete with miles of trails to explore. We opened the McLeod Plantation Historic Site on James Island to preserve and share its rich history that has spanned over the past 300 years.

CCPRC continually gathers input from the community on how to develop our park system. We acquired property on the Charleston City peninsula to develop the very first skate park in the area, and we began developing the master plan for the Stono River County Park and the property along the Ashley River in North Charleston to reach even more residents.

But we are more than just parks. This year, we launched the Move IT! Charleston County program. This partnership with Roper St. Francis Physicians Endowment gives people the opportunity to participate in health and wellness programs that are overseen by certified instructors. We hope to see a dramatic increase in the health of the community. We took on the Pass It Forward Project as part of The Parklands Foundation's mission to remove barriers to having access to our parks and programs and the Adaptive Recreation Expo offered recreational activities for people with physical limitations.

Our commitment to quality service is key. We proudly accepted accreditation from the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies. This honor, awarded to 135 parks in the country, recognizes CCPRC's exceptional level of service, management and operation. Our participation in the World's Largest Swim Lesson resulted in the agency being listed in the Guinness World Records. We also celebrated the 25th year of the Holiday Festival of Lights, a cornerstone festival for the holiday season. All of this information is available to all through our newly renovated website and mobile app.

Financially, CCPRC holds an AAA Bond Rating by Moody's Investor Services, which represents the highest rating possible. Our finances are structured into two parts: a General Fund, which is the main operating fund for administrative tasks and non-enterprise operations; and the Enterprise Fund, which accounts for operations that are financed and operated like a private business where revenue is gained from 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 our great accomplishments in 2014-2015. Thank you for your support and the opportunity to shape and grow our park system to meet the needs of the community. I hope to see you at the 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 four 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, a plantation, 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

CHARLESTON COUNTY PARK & RECREATION COMMISSIONERS



Benjy Cooke
Chair



Mattese Lecque
Vice-Chair



Andrew Thomas
Secretary-Treasurer



Lisa S. King



Ravi Sanyal



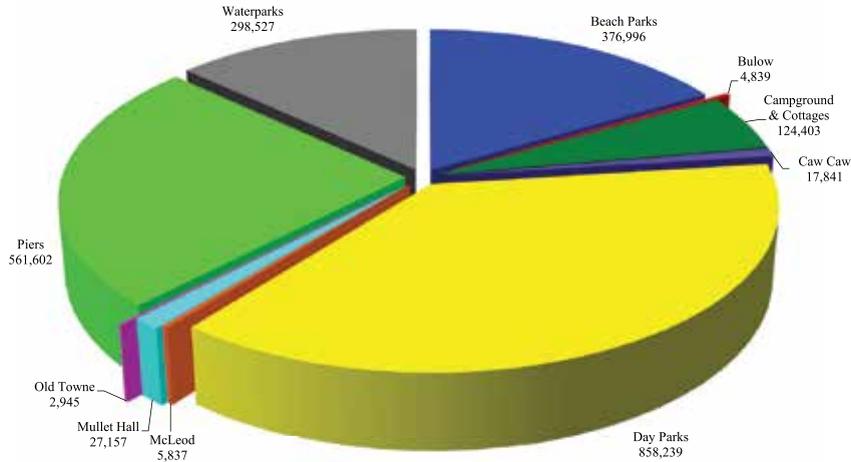
Collin Bruner



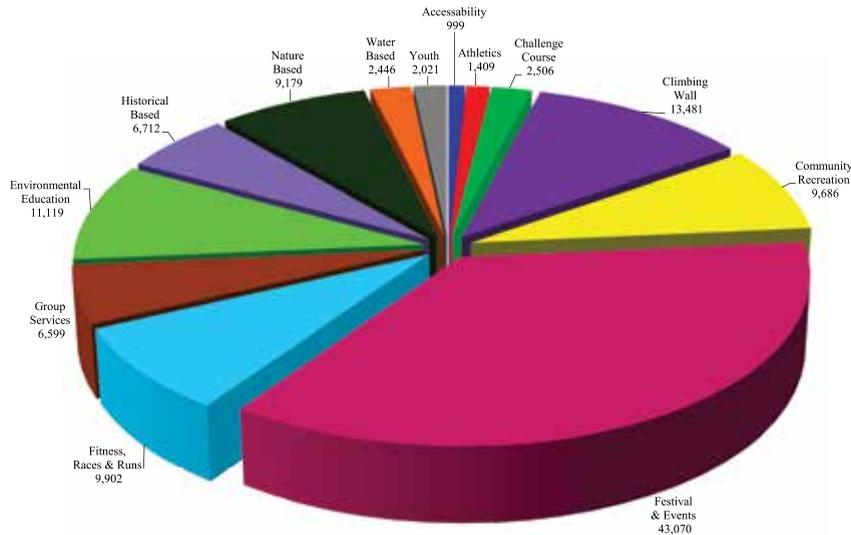
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Patrons at Play

Park & Facilities Attendance

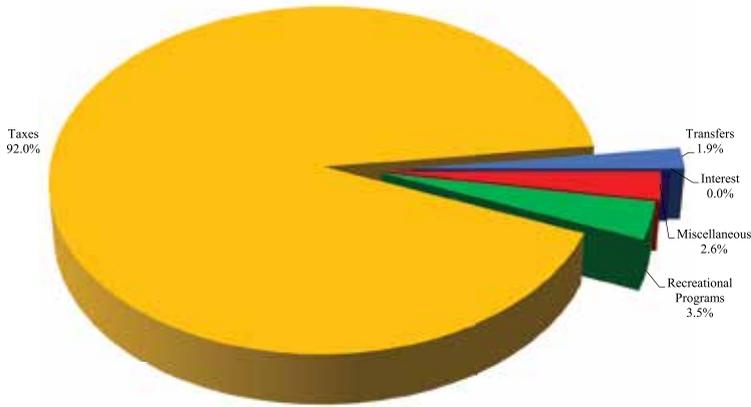


Special Events & Program Attendance

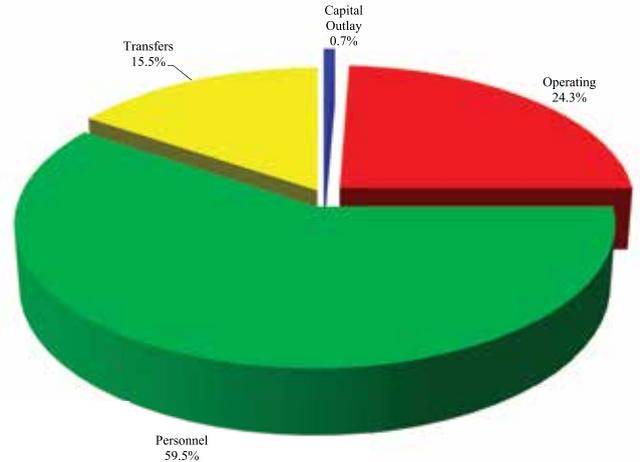


Your Dollars at Work

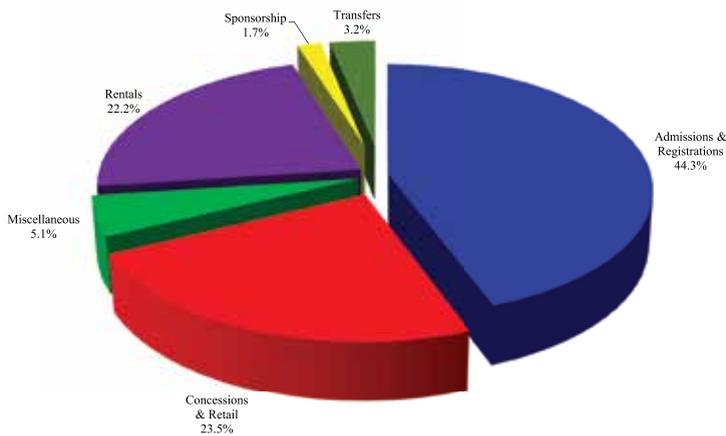
Operating Receipts - General Agency



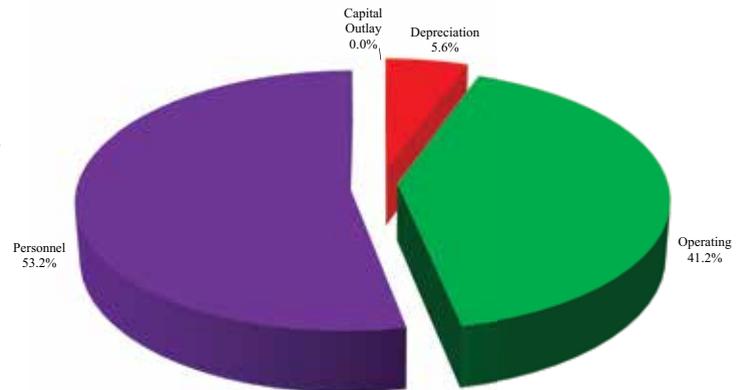
Operating Expenditures - General Agency



Operating Receipts - Enterprise Funds



Operating Expenditures - Enterprise Funds



New Parks and Enhancements

McLeod Plantation Historic Site – Grand Opening

After a year-long stabilization and construction project at the 300-year-old property, CCPRC proudly opened McLeod Plantation Historic Site on April 25, 2015. The long-awaited opening came after years of working with consultants, a steering committee, and public input to create a master plan, as well as conducting extensive inventory and analysis before securing and sealing the site's historic buildings.

Thousands of visitors have already explored this 37-acre park on James Island, which includes homes where enslaved families and their descendants lived and transitioned to freedom in the 19th and 20th centuries. Other attractions and structures on site include an ancient live oaks, a creekside pavilion available for rentals, and a new welcome center.

Whirlin' Waters Rip Tide Run

In June, Whirlin' Waters Adventure Waterpark proudly opened a new and improved Rip Tide Run mat racer slide. The six-lane slide, which can accommodate 150 guests per lane per hour, towers at 45 feet and now features red light/green light controls and a finish line clock that posts riders' race time.

Laurel Hill County Park

On January 21, Laurel Hill County Park opened to the public, providing several miles of unpaved trails for Mount Pleasant pedestrians. The scenic, 745-acre park features an oak allée, open meadows and a small lake, and is also open for leashed dogs, bicycles, picnicking, and catch-and-release fishing.

Folly Beach Pier Encapsulation Project

In May, a maintenance project at the landmark Folly Beach Fishing Pier reached completion. Aiming to increase the life of the 1,045-foot-long pier, which opened in 1995, the project included replacing bolts, timber cross braces, and repairing and encapsulating pilings.



McLeod Plantation Historic Site



New Property Acquisitions

Skatepark land purchase

On September 24, the Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission officially became the owners of property on Oceanic Street on which to construct SK8 Charleston. Keeping the park site on the Charleston peninsula has remained a high priority for many parties involved in the skatepark project. Thanks to generous contributions by the City of Charleston and the Speedwell Foundation, funds were raised to allow for the proper repairs of the land in order to keep the skatepark site at this location.

Stono River County Park development

This year, CCPRC began master planning for the future park located between West Ashley and Johns Island near the Limehouse Bridge. This included giving it a name - Stono River County Park. This 85.5-acre property offers opportunities for kayaking, bird watching, and other recreational activities. The master planning process will explore pedestrian and vehicular circulation, a dock connection to the marsh island and river, constructed improvements that provide opportunities for recreation, as well as connections to the West Ashley Greenway and the Southeast Coast Saltwater Paddling Trail.

Baker Hospital site

In February, CCPRC became the owners of a future park property located at the former Baker Hospital site. Situated on the Charleston peninsula, the 57-acre property is located south of Cosgrove Avenue and west of I-26 on the Ashley River – a unique location in the center of the peninsula and south of I-526.

New Programs and Events

Move IT! Charleston County – Launch

In 2014, health and wellness program MoveIT! Charleston County was created through a partnership between CCPRC and Roper St. Francis Physicians Endowment.

Move IT! incorporates two types of programs: physician-referred and self-enrolled. The physician-referred approach to Move IT! Charleston County allows participating physicians to identify patients with chronic health conditions who would benefit from physical activity and refer them to the program. In turn, highly specialized health and wellness professionals assess participants and lead classes specifically designed for patients managing chronic conditions. They conduct a baseline assessment for each participant before patients enter the physician-referred program and then begin training at the appropriate level. Quarterly assessments track participants' progress to ensure trainers provide appropriate challenges. Participants starting at the physician-referred stage can develop their fitness abilities until they reach the self-enrolled aspect of the program.

These programs serve as a middle ground between a rehabilitation center and a traditional gym or fitness facility, bridging the gap by providing a nurturing and specialized environment without being too restricting or intimidating. Self-enrolled programs include park-based fitness classes like Walk and Restore, yoga, stand-up paddle boarding, and many more.

The program had humble beginnings, with just three physicians from Roper St. Francis referring patients to the program. Now, after less than a year, Move IT! Charleston County is providing programs for 200+ patients referred from over 50 different physicians, with graduation already on the horizon for several patients.



Move It! Charleston - Yoga Unplugged



New Programs and Events

(continued)

Pass It Forward

The Parklands Foundation adopted the Pass It Forward program in 2015. The program's mission is to provide opportunities for all members of the community to access park facilities, programs, and services throughout Charleston County. Some people in the Lowcountry encounter challenges in gaining access to CCPRC parks, programs, and events - ranging from a lack of transportation to financial difficulties. The Pass It Forward program aims to alleviate those obstacles. The Parklands Foundation is working to identify members of the community who encounter barriers to accessing park facilities, programs and services. The foundation will also encourage and promote the giving of donations and goods, and pass on these resources to members of the community in need.

Adaptive Recreation Expo

At CCPRC, we believe that physical fitness should be a part of life for everyone. With that goal in mind, the Adaptive Recreation Expo was launched on Sept. 28 at James Island County Park.

This showcase of adaptive sports and leisure activities, free and open to the public, helps guests with physical limitations try something new, rediscover a past recreational pursuit, or just have fun. The inaugural expo featured yoga, archery, paddling, bocchia, and climbing. American Canoe Association-certified Adaptive Paddling instructors assisted participants with adapting watercraft to fit their needs. Guests enjoyed wheelchair basketball and dance demos, a nature tour, and hand cycling. Vendors and experts were on site to offer information, demonstrations, and equipment. Plans for the 2015 event include expansion to two days with additional activities.

New Programs and Events

(continued)

Cast Off Fishing Tournaments and the Reel It In Weekly Challenge

In 2015, the Mount Pleasant Pier and the Folly Beach Fishing Pier teamed up to offer a new monthly fishing tournament series - the Cast Off Fishing Tournament. The "Reel It In" Weekly Challenge was also introduced at both piers, offering anglers the chance to earn weekly fishing points, culminating in prizes for those who accumulated the most points from May through October.

Brewsday Tuesday

Following the success of the park site's Wine Down Wednesday Series, Old Towne Creek County Park introduced a new event for the beer crowd in fall 2014. Called "Brewsday," the series is held on select Tuesdays and features live music, craft beer, and food trucks on site. Plus, it's a great opportunity for area residents to get a sneak peek of this beautiful West Ashley park currently open for special events only.

Bark in the Park Oktoberfest and St. Paddy's Pawlooza

Wannamaker County Park introduced two new festivals this year for some of our most popular guests - those with four legs! In October, man's best friend was introduced to Bavaria at Bark in the Park Oktoberfest - a traditional German celebration with food, beverages, and Oompah music. Then, in March, Wannamaker introduced the St. Patrick's Day counterpart - St. Paddy's Pawlooza, costume-friendly festival offering green beer, Irish food, and live music. Both events also featured pet-related exhibits, rescues, and activities.

Moonlight Mixers

Following a year-long hiatus, the Moonlight Mixers have returned! Due to ongoing maintenance at the Folly Beach Fishing Pier, the popular shag dance and beach music series was suspended for the 2014 season. But following the completion of the project, CCPRC was proud to bring this event series back to the pier on May 22.



*St. Paddy's Pawloza,
North Charleston Wannamaker County Park*



CHAR
& REC

SpongeBob SquarePants at Whirlin' Waters Adventure Waterpark

Public Service and Awareness

Safety Training - Spot the Drowning Child

In June 2015, a Whirlin' Waters rescue video went viral after a lifeguard rescued a small child who was having trouble swimming. Waterpark manager Kevin Rowland caught the candid event on film and posted it online for lifeguard training purposes. Because the small boy was quiet and difficult to spot in the crowded wave pool, it made a great tool for teaching the signs of drowning.

Weeks later, the video began receiving national attention from Good Morning America, Time.com, and other media outlets via the Associated Press, helping educate people nationwide about the signs of drowning. Today, the video has been viewed over 14 million times and was even awarded the Kelly Ogle Memorial Safety Award by the World Waterpark Association.

New Website and Mobile App Launch

This year, CCPRC launched a redesigned website and a mobile phone app to make everything from program registration to purchasing park passes easier. The new website is user-friendly and aesthetically pleasing, with improved search capabilities and a new Alert Center, an efficient and noticeable way to get important news out to the community. Available on Apple and Android devices, the "Charleston County Parks" app provides immediate access to alerts, closures, parking conditions, and facility hours, fees and directions.

Nickelodeon Character Campaign

Last summer, special appearances by Nickelodeon characters from the shows SpongeBob Squarepants, Go, Diego, Go!, Dora the Explorer, and Blue's Clues brought record amounts of visitors to CCPRC waterparks.

Cell Phone for Soldiers Promotion

Over the summer, visitors donated 278 used mobile phones at CCPRC parks for the Cell Phone for Soldiers campaign sponsored by WCBD-TV. These phones were exchanged for calling cards provided to members of the US Military serving overseas.

Agency Honors and Awards

CCPRC Accreditation

CCPRC recently joined the ranks of elite park and recreation organizations across the country by earning accreditation through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). CAPRA is the only national park and recreation accreditation, and is a measure of an agency's overall quality of operation, management and service. This distinguished accomplishment indicates an agency has met 144 rigorous standards related to the management and administration of lands, facilities, resources, programs, safety, and services. The two-year accreditation process itself helps identify and spotlight areas of efficiency and accountability, which translates into higher quality service and operation to benefit the community. Only 135 agencies nationwide have this distinction, and this recognition reflects many years of hard work and dedication from CCPRC staff, who are committed each and every day to deliver the highest level of service.

Folly Beach Renourishment Awarded

This year Folly Beach County Park was awarded the Best Restored Beach Award by the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA). To win this, beaches must show successful renourishment to support storm protection, habitat restoration, and recreation. In addition to reopening this public access serving thousands since 1982, the 2013 restoration of Folly Beach County Park also provided beach and dune areas to facilitate sea turtle nesting and protect shorebird habitats. CCPRC will officially accept the award in February of 2016.

A Record-Breaking World's Largest Swimming Lesson

CCPRC is in the record books! Last June, campers took place in group swimming lessons at four CCPRC locations in an effort to spread the word about the importance of learning to swim, as part of the World's Largest Swimming Lesson initiative. This year, together with 36,000 people from around the globe, CCPRC helped break the Guinness World Record for the largest simultaneous swimming lesson!

BEST OF THE BEST



CCPRC's Tom O'Rourke & Pam Ragland with Sara Hensley, the Director of the Austin, TX Parks and Recreation Department and chair of CAPRA





25th Anniversary Holiday Festival of Lights

Agency Honors and Awards

(continued)

25th Anniversary Holiday Festival of Lights

"These memories are the ones we will keep for a lifetime. Thanks for making them happen."

Shelley, a visitor to the festival in 2005

To CCPRC staff and our visitors, the Holiday Festival of Lights is always a special time. But in 2014, CCPRC celebrated a truly special milestone - the Holiday Festival of Lights celebrated its silver anniversary.

In addition to a spectacular grand opening celebration, a highlight of the festival's 25th anniversary was its being named the third Best Public Lights Display in the United States, an award from **USA Today** readers and a panel of experts.

But perhaps what made this anniversary most special is the chance to look back at the event's humble beginnings. The Holiday Festival of Lights debuted in 1990, featuring just 18 light displays made in Wheeling, WV. The following year, park electrician Rich Raab taught himself how to build his own light displays on site. Now CCPRC's Light Show Supervisor, Raab has perfected the technique over the past two and a half decades, and today the park features almost exclusively his in-house light displays - an incredible 750 of them.

Without the aid of dozens of staff members and volunteers, and support from sponsoring businesses, the event never would have reached this milestone. Annually, employees spend hundreds of hours draping thousands of light strings, while volunteers from the park's campground manage tasks like checking and replacing an estimated 180,000 light bulbs.

And our many beloved guests, who return with their families each year, have truly turned this once small festival into a major Charleston holiday tradition. The park has seen over four million visitors from all 50 states and beyond.

At the end of the day, the field of parks and recreation is about bringing joy to visitors, which makes the Holiday Festival of Lights one of CCPRC's proudest achievements.

