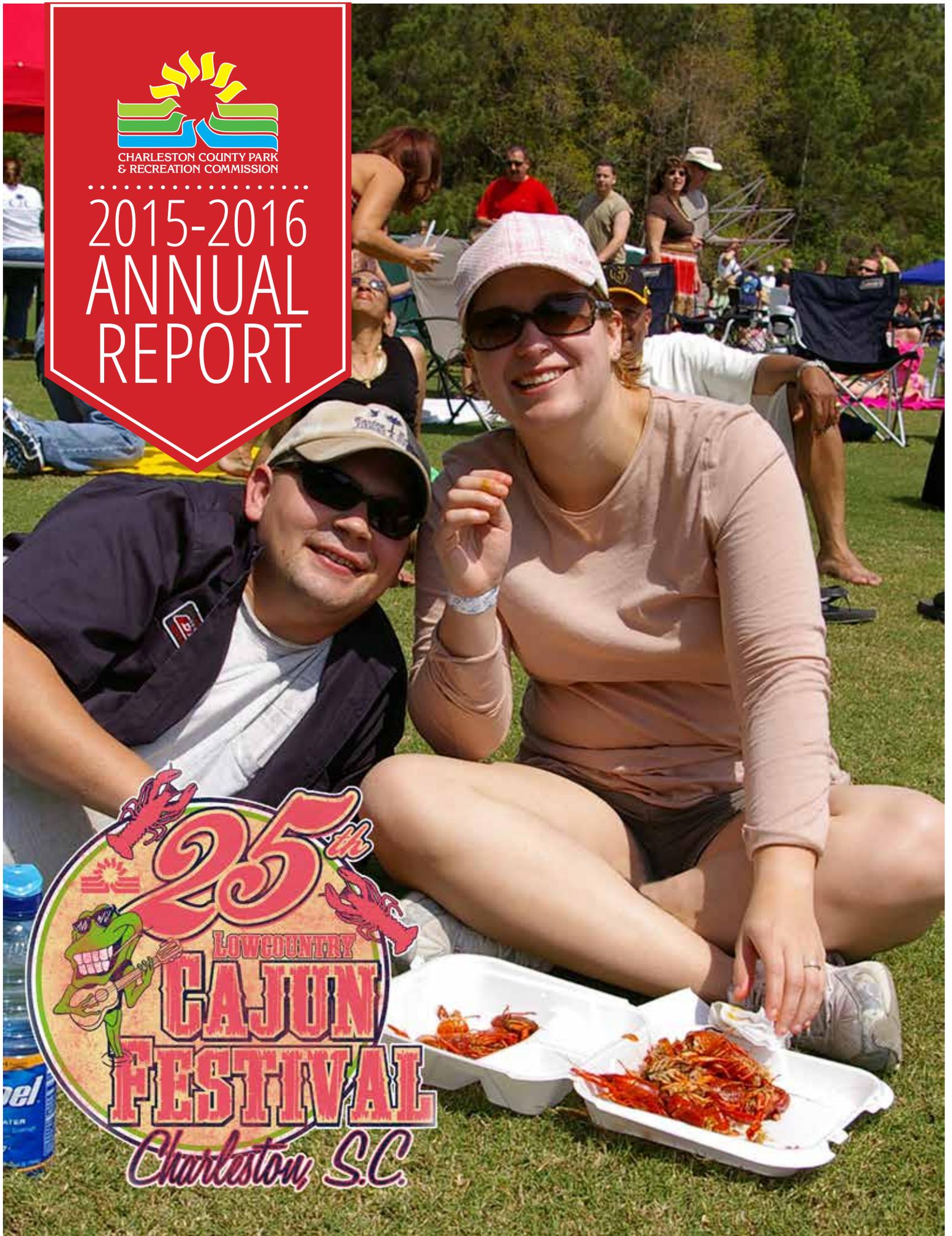
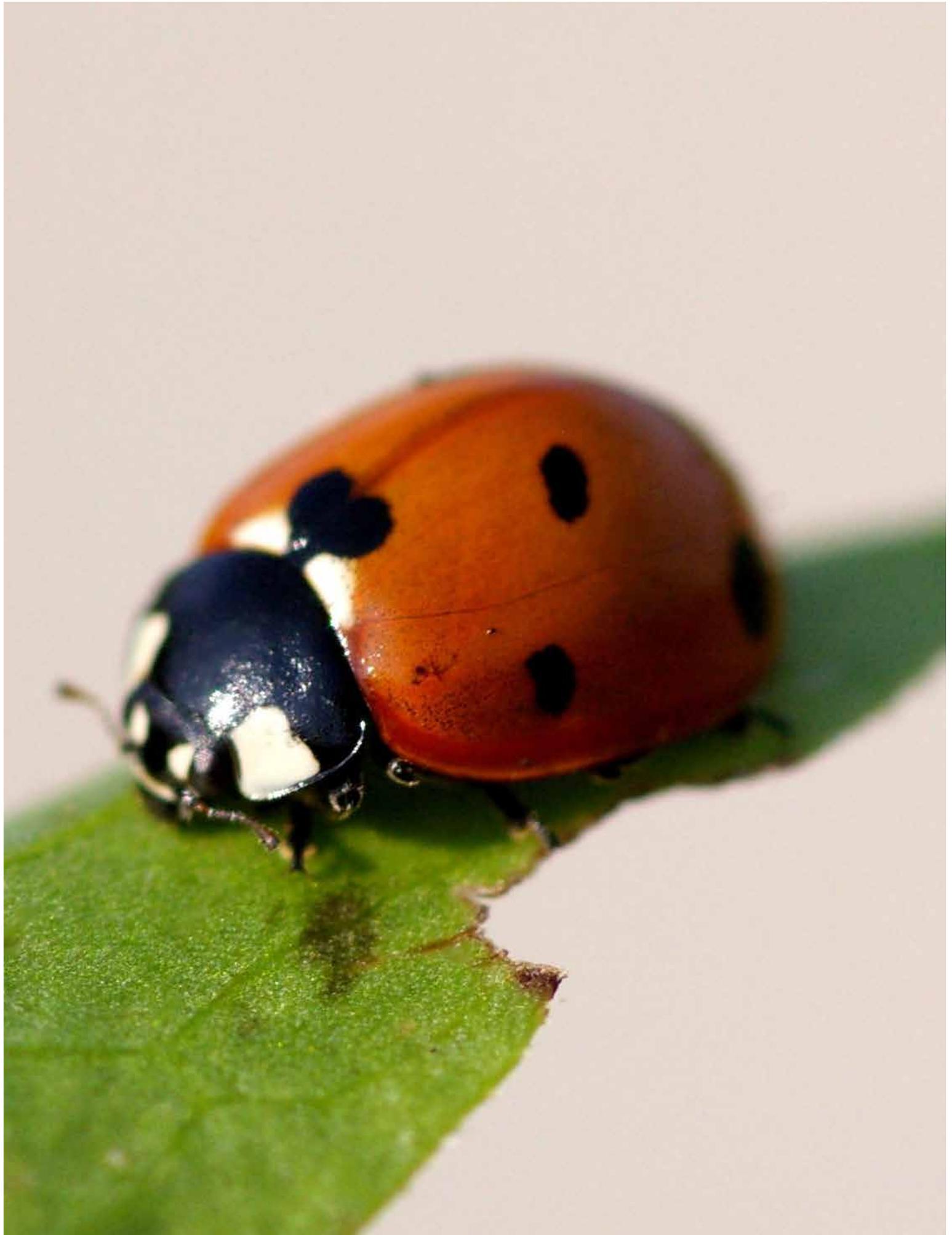




2015-2016  
ANNUAL  
REPORT





# Message from the Executive Director



*Tom O'Rourke*

Dear Charleston County Residents:

This annual report highlights many of our great accomplishments in the 2015-2016 fiscal year. Our park system saw approximately 2.5 million visitors this year, which was a 9% increase over the previous year. While Charleston County Parks continued to maintain an 11,000-acre park system of beautiful beaches, fishing piers, historic sites, waterparks, campgrounds and nature parks, we could not have expanded our offerings as we did in FY 1516 without the support of our community partners. This year in particular, we saw how these relationships opened doors, allowing us to provide programming and educational opportunities not previously offered. Our partners' expertise also allowed us to develop new relationships, grow the size of our park system, and cultivate philanthropy throughout the community.

Public interest in expanding our AccessABILITY programs led to a partnering with Ocean Cure and Adaptive Surf Project to offer a Wheel to Surf program that gives people with physical disabilities the opportunity to surf. Without their expertise and equipment, we would have not been able to offer participants this memorable experience at Folly Beach.

Even though we put on more than 40 unique events each year with in-house staff, partnering with other organizations and companies can have its advantages. Paul King and his family, who had been managing the five-race Charleston Sprint Triathlon series for nearly 25 years, passed the torch to us last year. As an established event series, the Kings not only transitioned over a smooth operation to us, but also a loyal group of returning participants.

Special collaborations with unique groups have also forged new partnerships. When McLeod Plantation Historic Site was looking to offer performing arts events at the site, the Lowcountry Voices choir seemed to be the perfect fit. Their spring concert of freedom songs honored the lives of all who had resided on the site. Meanwhile, the Charleston Outdoor Festival invited the Polynesian Voyaging Society to participate in our event and share their adventure of sailing around the world in a double-hulled voyaging canoe. Charleston County Parks was pleased these new partnerships brought experiences like these to the Lowcountry.

Partnerships have also given us the opportunity to secure and preserve additional property. The South Carolina Conservation Bank and Ducks Unlimited secured 638 acres between Ravenel and Adams Run, which allowed us to preserve natural areas of the Lowcountry for public access and enjoyment.

Although Charleston County Parks has never operated a skate park, that did not hold us back from developing a state-of-the-art facility to fulfill the requests of many for such a park. We partnered with Pour It Now, a skate park advocacy group; Team Pain, a skate park construction company; and Hightower, a general contractor, to build the first regional-sized skate park in Charleston, scheduled to open in 2017.

When our foundation, The Parklands Foundation, was creating a children's story book to sell as a fundraising initiative, we knew we could not afford to hire an illustrator so we partnered with the James Island Charter High School art department. They illustrated the book for us at no charge, while the students received valuable experience and a body of work to include in their art portfolios. It was a win-win for everyone.

Some partnerships are all about supporting a good cause. Charleston County Parks was chosen to participate in the Flag of Hope tour in 2015. This 60-city tour sought to capture the hand prints of 5,000 people to create an American flag in an effort to promote unity, freedom, patriotism and love. The final piece will be a museum exhibit that delivers a truly powerful message. We are confident that through smart partnerships we can continue to offer new facilities, programs and events in our park system. We are grateful for these partnerships and the support of the community. I hope to see you at the parks!



# Agency Overview

The large park system features over 11,000 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, skate park, 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



**Mattese Lecque**  
**Chair**



**Andrew Thomas**  
**Vice-Chair**



**Teddy Manos**  
**Secretary-Treasurer**



**Lisa S. King**



**Ravi Sanyal**



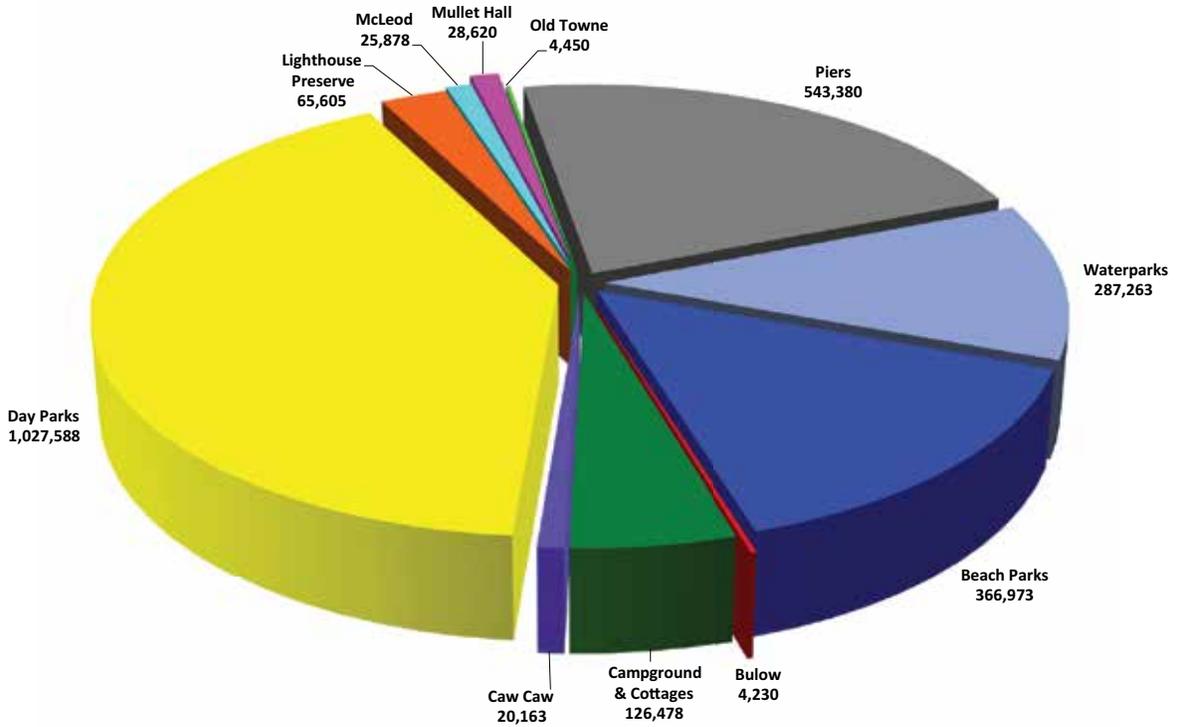
**Collin Bruner**



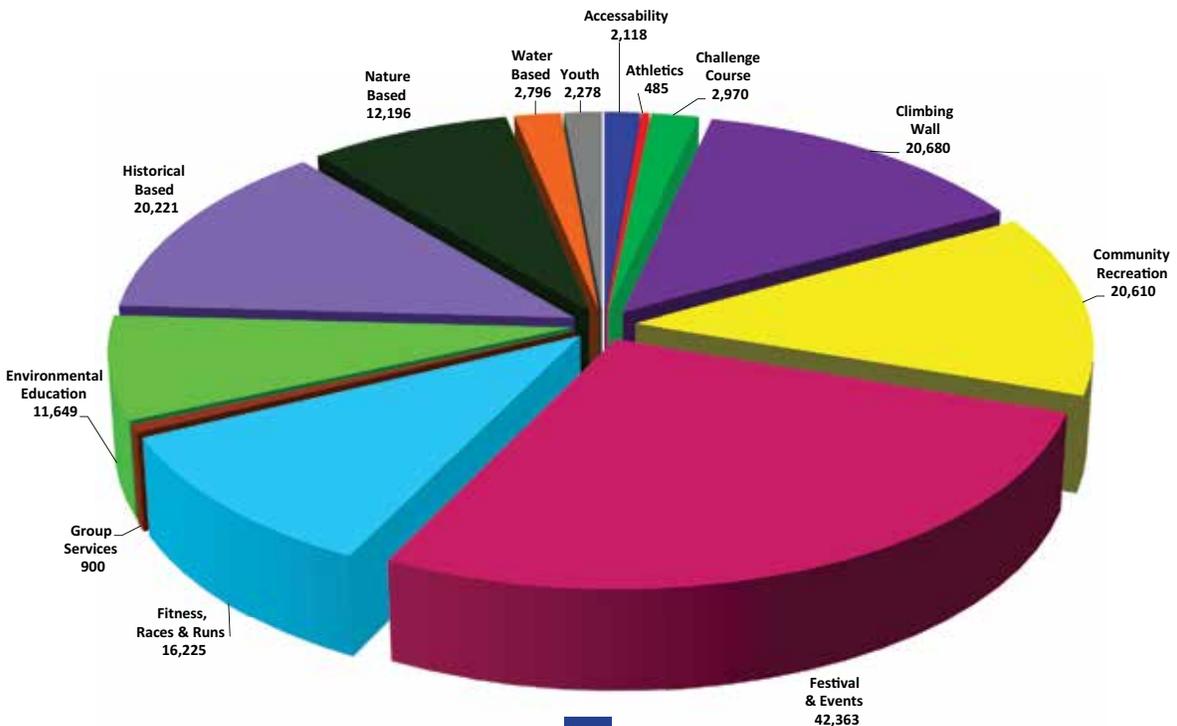
**Benjy Cooke**

# Patrons at Play

Park and Facility Attendance  
FY 15 - 16

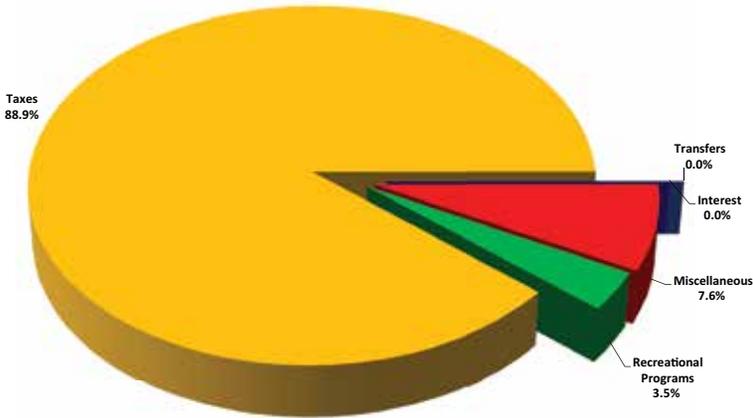


Special Events and Program Attendance  
FY 15 - 16

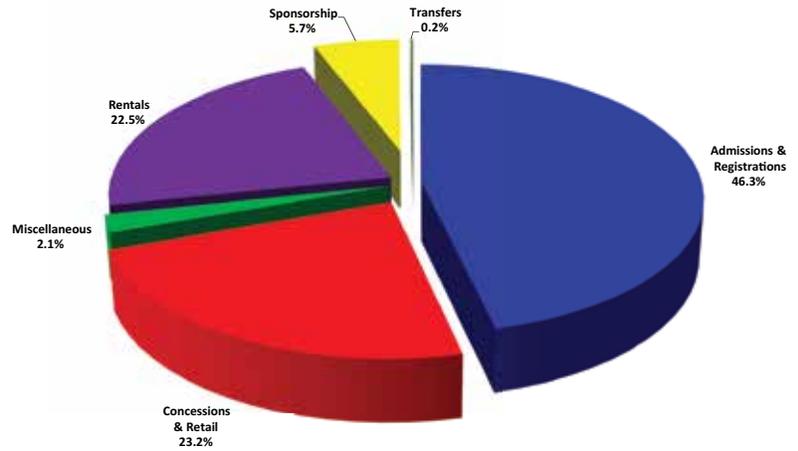


# Your Dollars at Work

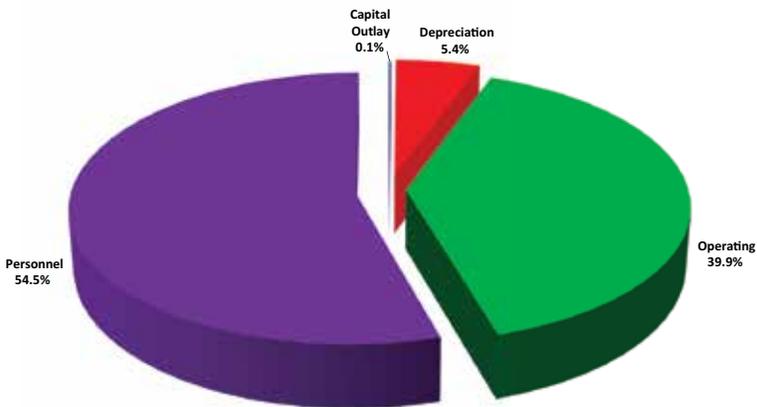
Operating Receipts - General Agency  
FY 15 - 16



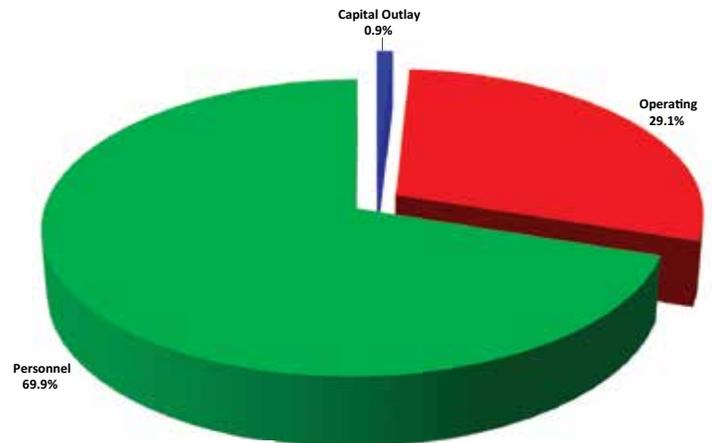
Operating Receipts - Enterprise  
FY 15 - 16



Operating Expenditures - Enterprise Funds  
FY 15 - 16



Operating Expenditures - General Agency  
FY 15 - 16





# *New Programs and Events*

## **Silver Anniversaries**

Two James Island County Park events that debuted soon after the park's opening celebrated their 25th anniversaries this year. The Charleston Sprint Triathlon Series (CSTS) celebrated 25 years in summer 2015, featuring its 100th triathlon event on Aug. 9, during the championship race for that year's series. This was also the first year that CCPRC gained ownership of race series after Paul King and his family, founders of the CSTS, passed the torch on to CCPRC. On April 3, 2016, the Lowcountry Cajun Festival honored a quarter of a century of celebrating Cajun and Creole culture with big name performances and tons of Louisiana fun.

## **Starlight, Chili and MovingIT!**

In 2015, CCPRC introduced a new trail race with a dramatic length - 50K! Known as an ultramarathon, the inaugural Ultra Chili was an approximately 31-mile-long race course, offered via continuous loops of a 5K trail at the recently opened Laurel Hill County Park. The race, held Nov. 21, was open to individuals and teams of two to four participants. Runners enjoyed cold beverages and hot chili after the event.

Another fitness program born this year was Starlight Yoga at the Holiday Festival of Lights. Offered under the stars and with beautiful light displays as the background, dozens of participants enjoyed combining one of the agency's most popular events with a family-friendly wellness program.

In January, CCPRC's MoveIT! Program took big strides in encouraging year-round fitness by introducing the MoveIT! pass, which offers 365 days of fitness programs and park access. Passholders can take advantage of yoga, group runs, stand up paddleboarding fitness programs and other classes at their leisure, as well as other CCPRC programs at discounted rates. The pass also includes individual admission to 12 county parks for a year.



*Ultra Chili 50K*



*Starlight Yoga at HFOL*



*Wheels to Surf Adaptive Surfing Clinic*



*Carolina Green Fair*



# *New Programs and Events*

(continued)

## **Surf's Up!**

This year, CCPRC's AccessABILITY program expanded its Adaptive Recreation Expo to include a Wheel to Surf Event at Folly Beach County Park. Part of a series of clinics conducted by experts at Ocean Cure (Wilmington, NC) and Adaptive Surf Project (North Myrtle Beach), Wheel to Surf offers modified surfing equipment for participants with physical limitations. Also introduced this year was the Adaptive Recreation Club. Offered at various county park sites, the club provides people with disabilities the opportunity to try outdoor activities in a relaxed setting among their peers. Knowledgeable staff are on hand to make adaptations to help participants enjoy activities they once thought were not accessible to them, while developing skills and honing interests. In addition to surfing, CCPRC now has equipment and trained staff to allow for adaptations in climbing, paddling, archery and fishing.

## **Now It's Easy Being Green**

In 2015, CCPRC proudly took over ownership of the Carolina Green Fair. Independently run for 7 years, the fair continues its mission to educate and encourage South Carolinians to use environmentally friendly products, services and technologies in a fun, family festival environment. The 2015 event was held in September at James Island County Park and offered free admission.



# *New Programs and Events*

(continued)

## **Voices of Freedom**

McLeod Plantation Historic Site is a place with incredible history, tied intimately to the lives of all who lived there. One of the site's most powerful stories is that of the transition to freedom for those enslaved on the plantation. To share the voices of these people, McLeod was proud to host local performing arts organization Lowcountry Voices on April 10. The North Charleston-based choir, who has performed throughout the country and for notable occasions such as the funeral for the Honorable Reverend Clementa Pinckney, sang freedom songs as part of a special evening concert. The powerful performance allowed an opportunity to honor the lives of all who lived and died at the plantation.

## **A voyage like no other**

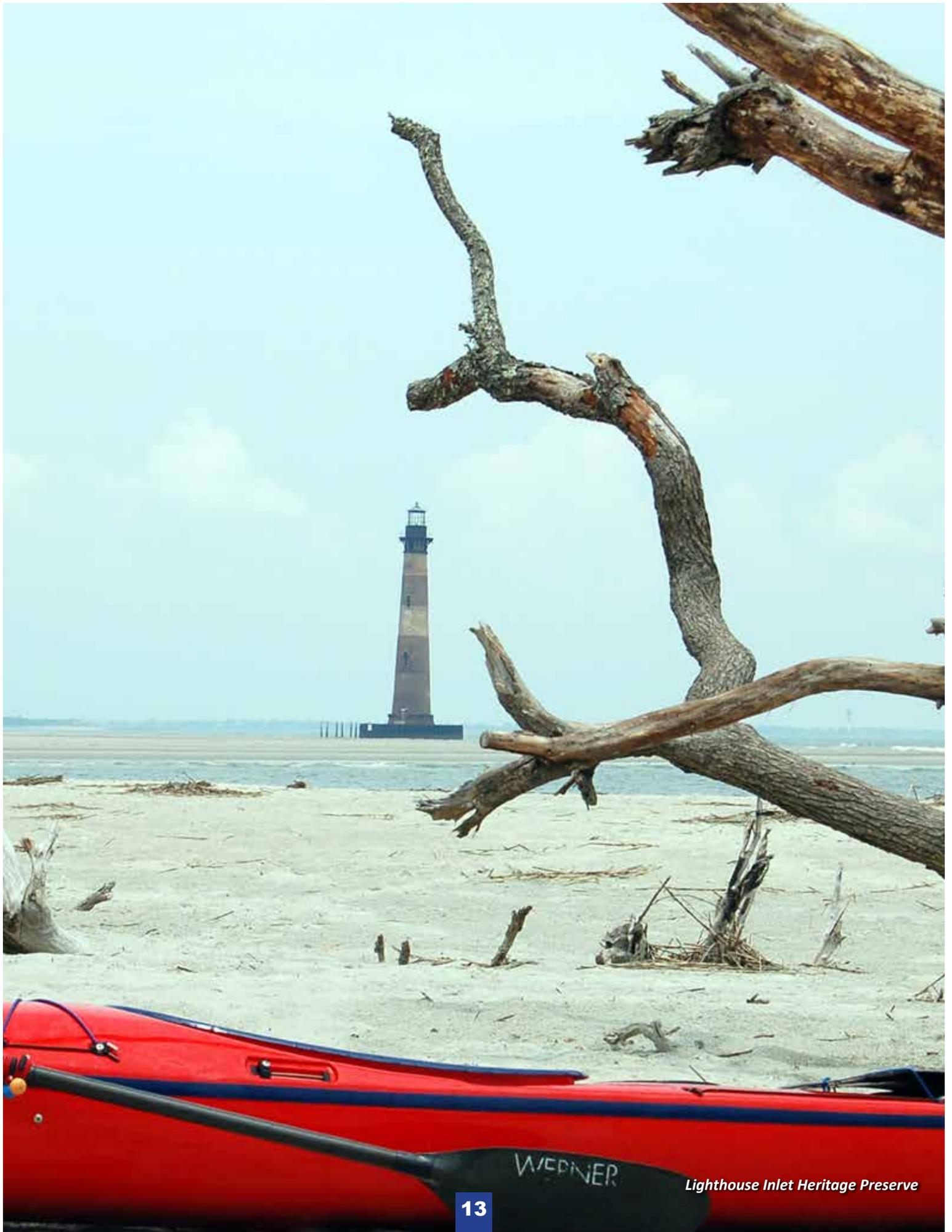
In addition to a new name, the East Coast Paddlesports and Outdoor Festival welcomed one hull of a visitor to its festivities in 2016. The Polynesian Voyaging Society and crew members from the legendary double-hulled voyaging canoe Hōkūle'a sailed into the Lowcountry during the new Charleston Outdoor Festival in April. The historic Hōkūle'a was sailing across Earth's oceans using wayfinding, in an effort to join and grow the global movement toward a more sustainable world. The ship's crew members were keynote speakers at the festival's symposium, and shared their experiences to make cultural and environmental connections on the voyage. The Charleston Outdoor Festival was honored to host the ship and its crew while proudly sharing its new name and program offerings.



*Lowcountry Voices at McLeod*



*The Hōkūleʻa*





# *New Parks and Enhancements*

## **Conservation-Minded Partnership Yields new Park**

In late May, CCPRC became the owners of an ACE Basin-area park between Ravenel and Adams Run known as Spring Grove. Thanks to a conservation-minded partnership effort between CCPRC, the South Carolina Conservation Bank, and Ducks Unlimited, the Lowcountry will have 638 additional acres of protected open space on Savannah Highway. The land, which is under a conservation easement with Wetlands America Trust, was purchased using funding from the Charleston County Greenbelt Program. The easement will protect a mile-long forested buffer along US 17 and a significant, 100-acre bottomland hardwood swamp, as well as offer the potential for connection to other trails in the region.

## **Seeing the Light**

In December 2015, over 10,000 people visited CCPRC's Lighthouse Inlet Heritage Preserve property, located on the northeastern end of Folly Island. On June 1, CCPRC began charging a nominal \$1 fee for people to enter the park, in an effort to help offset maintenance costs. While the park will not be used for ocean access and swimming, the preserve is regularly visited for activities such as viewing the Morris Island lighthouse, surf fishing, beachside strolls, wildlife observation and photography. Fees collected make the popular park consistent with other unstaffed CCPRC facilities like Laurel Hill County Park and the Wannamaker North Trail, and could potentially support future planning initiatives on the property like improved parking, an interpretive center, open shelters and boardwalks.



# *New Parks and Enhancements* (continued)

## **A Groundbreaking Park for Charleston**

On October 27, the Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission (CCPRC) proudly joined with community members and skate park advocates to officially break ground on construction of the agency's new skate park, located at 1549 Oceanic Street on the Charleston peninsula. The long-awaited skate park, called SK8 Charleston, began preliminary construction in April 2015. Located in the Charleston Neck area on the peninsula, the site features 3.3 acres of upland area. The skate park will be a regional-sized park, and will feature one competition-sized bowl, one mini bowl, a snake run, and a street course, as well as a building offering restrooms, concessions, retail and check-in areas.

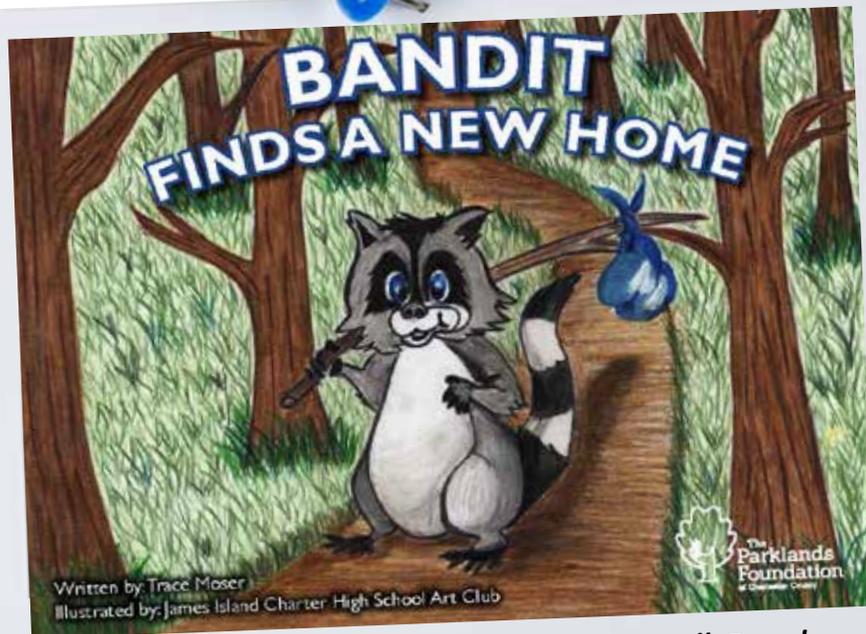
The groundbreaking ceremony was a metaphoric milestone for many members of the community who have been campaigning for and patiently awaiting the arrival of Charleston's own large-scale skate park for many years. CCPRC is proud to announce that SK8 Charleston is slated to officially open in early 2017.



*SK8 Charleston Skatepark  
Ground Breaking*



*The Parklands Foundation Oyster Roast at  
Old Towne Creek County Park*



*The "Bandit Finds a New Home" Book*



# The Parklands Foundation

## **Be Our Guest**

On an effort to engage the public in fun community events in support of the foundation's projects, CCPRC non-profit partner The Parklands Foundation introduced the Patron Series in 2016. The first event of the series, an oyster roast, was held in February at Old Towne Creek County Park. Next was a successful sunset cruise and wine tasting aboard The Palmetto Breeze in April. A fundraiser was held at a Charleston Riverdogs baseball game in June. Members of the community were invited to all three events, with proceeds benefitting foundation projects that provide recreational resources for people in need.

## **Passing It Forward**

The Parklands Foundation also adopted a new venture in 2015 - The Pass It Forward project. With donations to the new project, the foundation will identify members of the community who encounter barriers accessing park facilities, programs and services. The foundation will facilitate, encourage and promote the giving of donations and goods, and pass on those resources to members of the community in need.

## **Hoping to Make Out like a Bandit**

The Parklands Foundation's next newest project? Helping a raccoon find a home! Bandit, CCPRC's raccoon mascot, served as the subject of the foundation's children's book entitled "Bandit Finds a New Home." CCPRC and The Parklands Foundation worked with James Island Charter High School's art department to illustrate the story. The book, released in June, follows Bandit the raccoon and his adventures searching for and visiting Charleston County Parks as he seeks a new place to live. "Bandit Finds a New Home" was created as a way to raise funds and awareness about The Parklands Foundation, its mission, its two major projects, and is available for sale at CCPRC's park retail stores, The Parklands Foundation events, and on the foundation's website.



# Giving Back

## Flag for Hope

CCPRC staff were lucky participants in a traveling art and humanitarian project in July. The Flag for Hope toured across 60 U.S. cities in Summer 2015 to gather handprints from local residents. Only an estimated 5,000 Americans took part. Headed up by artist Marcos Antonio, the Flag for Hope is comprised of a canvas depicting the United States flag and is said to represent unity, freedom, patriotism and love. Participants placed a paint handprint on the flag and were photographed and videoed. The Flag for Hope will be preserved in a museum alongside other impressions of humanity from around the world. The art project began on Memorial Day Weekend at the Indianapolis 500 and was completed in New York City on September 11 with participation by survivors and heroes from the 9/11 tragedy.

## Lending Hands

As part of their bi-annual retreats this year, the Parks, Recreation and Marketing divisions spent time conducting service work and learning about CCPRC's non-profit partners.

The Recreation Division volunteered at the Lowcountry Food Bank (LCFB), who collects and distributes more than 25 million pounds of food, including 6 million pounds of fresh produce, to 200,000 people each year for hunger relief in coastal South Carolina. A LCFB partner, CCPRC is one of the largest sources of food donation through collection efforts at HFOL, which resulted in 15,893 lbs. donated in 2015. The Recreation Division spent the day sorting and packaging sweet potatoes into bags for distribution - finishing up with over 9,000 pounds of potatoes to be distributed throughout the community.

The Marketing Division spent their afternoon retreat at the Charleston Animal Society, one of CCPRC's sponsors and partners. Staff toured the facility to learn about all they do, and spent time with the facility's rescued animals to acquaint them to new people and to provide them attention and playtime. Cats and kittens up for adoption got some play hours and social time, while adoptable dogs happily received exercise in the organization's dog run area outside.

The Parks Division toured, visited and gave time to SCDNR, The Lowcountry Food Bank, and Charleston County SPCA, among others. The tours were both educational and interesting as each tour focused on their mission, customer service, and general maintenance.



*Flag for Hope*



*Recreation Department at the  
Lowcountry Food Bank*





# Honors

## Leading the Way in Lifesaving and Swimming Advocacy

CCPRC’s safety program made national waves this year through the display of their lifesaving talent, as well as their public education efforts about the need to learn to swim.

In August, CCPRC Lifeguards competed in the United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) National Lifeguard Championships in Daytona Beach and made their mark as one of the top lifeguard teams in the country. Overall, CCPRC’s team placed 11th in the country, out of 42 teams in their division, which consisted of the largest beaches in the country. CCPRC’s team took home six individual top 20 awards with two in the top 10, seven top 10 individual age group awards, and seven top 20 team awards.



The World Waterpark Association (WWA) honored Whirlin’ Waters Manager Kevin Rowland with the Kelly Ogle Memorial Safety Award this year. The award is presented to an individual or organization for significant contributions to guest and employee safety in the water attractions industry. Rowland, who began his career as a CCPRC lifeguard 17 years ago, was honored for innovative and effective safety training and awareness for capturing and sharing videos featuring real-life waterpark rescue situations. Rowland’s videos have been used not only to train lifeguards, but to educate thousands of people around the world about how to spot a drowning victim. According to the WWA, the videos “represent lifeguards in a positive light and spark important discussions on swimmer safety, parental responsibility, and the importance of learning to swim.”



CCPRC also made a national spotlight this year through the agency’s participation in the World’s Largest Swimming Lesson, which not only raised local awareness about learning to swim, but made news across the country with Genesis Project spokesperson Jennifer Holmes leading the way. Holmes also broke news this year as she shared her story about learning to swim less than two years after her son’s tragic drowning.



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*Charleston Sprint Triathlon Series*