



**NRPA** National Recreation  
and Park Association

# 2016 ANNUAL REPORT





# CONTENTS

- A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO.....2
- OUR VOICE.....4
- OUR REACH.....5
- OUR MEMBERS.....6
- LEADERSHIP THROUGH INNOVATION..... 8
- OUR THREE PILLARS.....10
- OUR IMPACT..... 11
- OUR WORK
  - CONSERVATION.....12
  - HEALTH & WELLNESS.....14
  - SOCIAL EQUITY.....16
- OUR FUTURE.....18
- OUR PARTNERSHIPS.....20
- FINANCIAL HEALTH.....22
- BOARD OF DIRECTORS.....24

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO

Traditionally, parks and recreation has been seen as a source of play and leisure – a true but limited scope of what we do. Through our collective work, however, the public is starting to see more of who we are: essential service providers, solution suppliers, and community health, conservation and equity leaders.

This past year, we took great steps in moving our field forward as innovators. We brought together thought leaders from around the country at the NRPA Innovation Labs where best practices were shared on how to address critical issues like financing, technology and racial equity. We saw our flagship programs expand and new ones begin to provide more resources and opportunities to NRPA members. Our voice was heard by more Americans than ever before thanks to our members and initiatives like Park and Recreation Month.

At the National Recreation and Park Association, we are proud to help lead and support these efforts. By working closely with our more than 50,000 members and partners, we are creating change.

The 2016 Annual Report highlights the significant impact we are making in the areas of conservation, health and wellness, social equity and more. From improving childhood nutrition, to creating more healthy and sustainable communities, we are making a difference.



Moreover, the data presented demonstrates the power of parks and recreation in strengthening communities, encouraging positive engagement and transforming lives.

Now, more than ever, I truly believe we stand at a turnkey moment where we will start being recognized as the innovators we are in helping to solve some of the nation's toughest challenges.

Thank you to everyone for making this year such a tremendous success. I am excited about what the future holds for our great organization and the field. I hope you are, too!

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Barbara Tulipane.

Barbara Tulipane, CAE  
President and Chief Executive Officer

## OUR VOICE

### WE ARE STORYTELLERS

NRPA has the unique privilege of hearing the stories of park and recreation agencies across the nation. We listen to these stories, process them, draw conclusions and share them back out to the world as the national voice for public parks and recreation.

This year, that voice was heard by more people in more places. And, the public is recognizing the impact parks and recreation has in creating happy, healthy communities. There is still work to be done, but our voice – filled with heartfelt stories, data and passion – will continue to speak out and be heard.

In 2016, we spoke about how parks and recreation have superpowers to strengthen our community, and we showcased the superheroes who make it all happen. We lifted our voices by bringing Capitol Hill to local agencies – showing Congress in person the difference our work makes. We shared how parks build and transform communities with The Walt Disney Company during Earth Month. And, every day we shared stories big and small on social media, creating a constant drumbeat about the value and importance of parks and recreation to every community.

## OUR REACH

We reached

**10 MILLION PEOPLE**

with local park and recreation stories through email, social media, public relations and more.

Park and Recreation Month and #SuperJuly were shared through

**5,000+ SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS**

and nearly 300 news articles.

We brought Congress to parks and rec centers with

**150 PARK CHAMPIONS**

**17 agencies**

hosted events for

**20 CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES**

**30 MILLION**

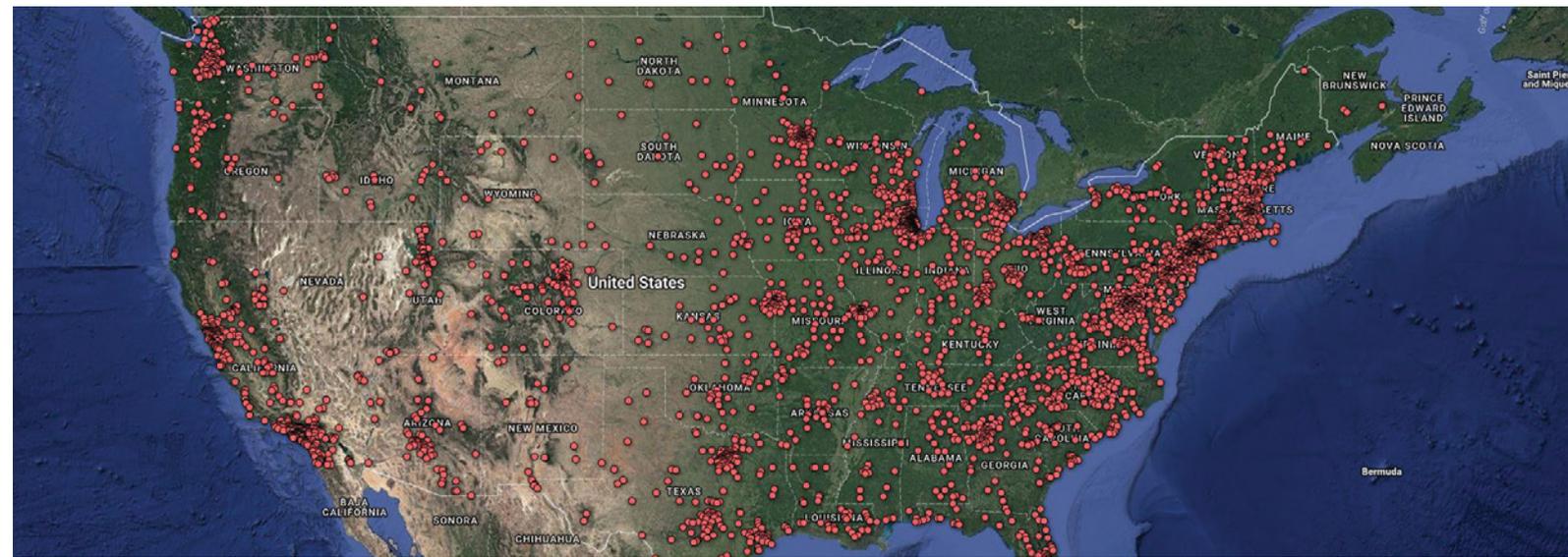
media impressions from our Parks Build Community Earth Month campaign with The Walt Disney Company.

**10,000+ POSTS**

on NRPA Connect – sharing ideas, resources and stories.

# OUR MEMBERS

Our more than 50,000 members are a vital part of our reach and voice. Where NRPA promotes the story of parks and recreation nationally, our members are the living embodiment of this story on the ground. Through our members, nearly every person in the United States is positively impacted by public parks and recreation.



Our 50,000+ members are based in all 50 states and beyond.



## LEADERSHIP THROUGH INNOVATION

NRPA provides our members with national research and innovative education to empower them to address some of the nation's toughest challenges. Through our thought leadership, we help bring national focus to the impact, power and potential of parks.

### NRPA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH FOCUS:

- Developing benchmarks and identifying best practices that help park and recreation professionals better serve their constituents. Our tools include the largest resource of park and recreation performance measures – tracking everything from park acreage to budgetary and staffing numbers.
- Investing in research that further makes the case for greater and more stable funding for parks and recreation. Recent reports include the *Economic Impact of Local Parks* and the *Americans' Broad-Based Support for Local Recreation and Park Services*, which found that seven out of 10 Americans say they visit their public parks, more than eight in 10 say they personally benefit from parks and greater than nine in 10 say their communities benefit from public parks.

America's local and regional public park agencies generated nearly

**\$140 BILLION IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY**

and supported almost

**1 MILLION JOBS**

from their operations and capital spending alone in 2013.

Data from NRPA's *Economic Impact of Local Parks* Report

### NRPA INNOVATION LABS

We know that parks aren't the solution to every problem facing our communities, but we do know that they are part of a solution to many of them. The NRPA Innovation Labs are designed to bring together leaders from inside and outside parks and recreation to discuss ways park and recreation agencies can expand their impact. From racial equity, health and wellness, economic impact, data and technology, and cross agency collaboration, we've convened mayors, public health professionals, designers, community organizers, top thinkers in academia, business leaders and more for high-level conversations and hands-on learning to address these issues.

#### 2016 NRPA Innovation Labs:

- San Diego, CA - *Why Wall Street Cares About Parks and Recreation*
- Boston, MA - *Data Driven Government and Parks and Recreation*
- Portland, OR - *What Parks and Recreation Can Do About Equity*

# OUR THREE PILLARS



## CONSERVATION

Parks create sustainable communities, protect natural resources and open space, and connect people to the benefits of nature and the outdoors.



## HEALTH & WELLNESS

Parks and recreation improves the health of communities by increasing access to physical activity opportunities and improving access to healthy foods.



## SOCIAL EQUITY

Parks and recreation provide access to programs, facilities, places and spaces to all people, making their communities great.

# OUR IMPACT



**\$4.6Mil**  
grant dollars  
awarded



**876**  
communities  
benefited



**20Mil**  
healthy meals  
and snacks served  
to children



**322K**  
people with access  
to improved  
park spaces

**431K**  
people with  
increased  
physical activity



**59K**  
children connected  
to nature



**1.9Mil**  
people with improved  
access to healthy food



## OUR WORK

# CONSERVATION



“Local parks play a truly vital role in connecting Americans to nature and the outdoors. Because they are local, they offer daily opportunities to play, learn and discover nature within walking distance.”

Kevin Coyle  
*National Wildlife Federation and NRPA Board Member*



The average American child spends as few as 30 minutes in unstructured outdoor play each day, and more than six hours each day in front of an electronic screen.



Severe weather events have increased significantly due to global temperature changes, causing damage to floodplains where many parks are located. Flood damage in the U.S. is predicted to exceed \$750 million annually by 2100.



Failing traditional gray infrastructure in American cities has significantly increased stormwater runoff and is contributing to increased pollution of our waterways.

Parks serve a vital role in the protection of our environment through green infrastructure, conservation of public lands and more. However, if we don't also foster the next generation of environmental stewards, our work will not continue to grow.

Research shows that children are spending half as much time outside as they did 20 years ago. As indoor activities and time spent in front of screens increase, America's children are becoming more sedentary, more stressed and less connected to the natural world. The implications to children's health and well-being, as well as to the planet are dire.

NRPA along with our partners at The Walt Disney Company | ABC | ESPN have pledged to reverse those trends and recognize that children in urban areas are particularly susceptible to the nature deficit phenomenon. In 2015, Disney partnered with NRPA to support projects that connected more than 25,000 children to nature in 16 urban communities as part of NRPA's Parks Build Community initiative.

One of those projects took place in an underserved neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, where local volunteers transformed an underutilized space into a robust, multi-purpose community garden and classroom, complete with a solar-operated energy station and functioning beehives. By engaging students from surrounding schools in the installation, the project itself became an opportunity for local youth to develop new skills, learn about the natural world and create meaningful connections within their community. The completed space provides improved access to healthy food, improved park space and environmental education opportunities for thousands of nearby residents – more than 90 percent of whom are living below the poverty line.

## OUR WORK

# HEALTH & WELLNESS



“ Park and recreation agencies are essential to the health of a community, providing valuable opportunities for youth and families to be more active and form lifelong healthy habits. ”

Dr. Howell Wechsler  
CEO of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation  
and NRPA Board Member

Park and recreation agencies are the health and wellness leaders in their communities. Having a safe place to go after school, being active and eating healthy are vital services park and recreation agencies provide. That's why NRPA created Commit to Health in 2014 – a campaign that supports the implementation and evaluation of Healthy Eating and Physical

Activity (HEPA) standards in park and recreation sites across the country. To date, 1,206 park and recreation sites have pledged to implement the standards, impacting more than 216,000 children annually.

In the City of Little Rock, the park and recreation department is tackling the state's obesity crisis head-on. Arkansas suffers from the highest obesity rate in the nation, with 36 percent of all adults and 20 percent of all 10 to 17-year-olds classified as obese in the 2016 State of Obesity Report. To address this statewide epidemic, Little Rock Parks and Recreation made the commitment to serve healthier foods, increase physical activity and provide nutrition education within their out-of-school time programs. In May 2016, Little Rock Parks and Recreation held a Commit to Health community fair at Stephens Community

Center for hundreds of youth and their families. This free event featured vendor booths of community partners and health services, healthy food and youth activities, and provided a number of resources on healthy eating and physical activity to parents and caregivers. Their commitment to healthy living has helped to spark more engaged partners within the community, as well as increased participation in their programs now impacting more than 1,350 children.



People who live in walkable neighborhoods are twice as likely to get enough physical activity as people who don't.



For every 100 low-income children who rely on school lunches during the school year, just 15.8 children, or roughly one in six, participate in the summer nutrition programs.



People living more than 1 km from green space have nearly 50 percent higher odds of experiencing stress than those living less than 300 m from green space.

## OUR WORK

# SOCIAL EQUITY



Less than 39 percent of the United States lives within a half-mile walking distance of a park.



People of color are 21 percent more likely than non-Hispanic whites (blacks 52 percent, Asians 32 percent, Hispanics 21 percent) to live in neighborhoods that lack tree cover and have land covered by impervious (paved) surfaces.



70 percent of African-American and 81 percent of Hispanic neighborhoods lack recreational facilities compared to 38 percent of white neighborhoods.

“The benefits of parks are countless; however, not all neighborhoods have parks or equal access to these community assets. Providing safe and equitable access to parks and recreational opportunities for underserved communities is key to building vibrant, active communities in which everyone can thrive.”

Sharon Z. Roerty,  
*Senior Program Officer, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*

Parks are open to all, regardless of race, gender, creed or economic class. They are gathering places, locations for physical activity and spaces to connect with nature. Yet, analysis from CDC's National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network suggests that only 39 percent of the United States population lives within walking distance of a park.

To address this inequity, NRPA, with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), developed the Safe Routes to Parks initiative to ensure equitable and safe access to quality parks. Safe Routes to Parks uses policy, program and environmental strategies to ensure that all people, particularly those most disadvantaged, can safely and easily walk or bike to a park in their neighborhood and that it is a desired community destination.

One example includes Chicago's Safe Passage program. In response to growing crime rates and increasing violence, the Chicago Park District joined forces with the Public School system and the Police Department to expand the Safe Passage Program. Since 2009, the Safe Passage program, has hired a force of adults to monitor kids walking to and from schools in at-risk neighborhoods. In 2016, the Safe Passage program expanded into the summer to supervise children and teens walking to and from park and recreation

programming. Through partnerships and with the support of Mayor Rahm Emanuel, children and teens can now safely access enriching summer opportunities at park and recreation centers and have safe public places to connect with others.

## OUR FUTURE

Public parks and recreation are a national birthright of all Americans and they are essential to our health and vitality as a people. Every community in America benefits from having public parks to use and enjoy. NRPA advances the cause of public parks and recreation for the benefit of all people. We contribute to reducing chronic disease and obesity, preserving open space and wildlife, improving social equity and environmental justice in underserved communities, and making our communities more livable, sustainable and resilient.

NRPA continually looks to provide the resources, training and education for professionals and citizens to meet the challenges that our communities face now and in the future. Our Annual Conference, Innovation Labs and continuing education programs bring together top experts and cutting-edge thinking to demonstrate how quality parks and recreation contributes to the life and health of every community.

Here are some examples of current NRPA initiatives that are demonstrating how parks and recreation is making communities more sustainable, livable and equitable:

### GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN PARKS

Recognizing the essential role that parks can play in solving stormwater management challenges within cities, NRPA, in partnership with the American Planning Association, developed the Great Urban Parks Campaign which focuses on improving both environmental and social outcomes in underserved communities by implementing green infrastructure projects in public parks. Thanks to NRPA's 2016 Great Urban Parks Campaign grant awards, 2017 will see the completion of four large-scale green infrastructure projects in parks in Atlanta, Baltimore, Denver and Pittsburgh, as well as the creation of evidence-based educational resources for park and recreation leaders and planners nationwide.

### YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

NRPA is expanding Commit to Health to create a Youth Ambassadors program. Using youth as the catalysts for change, NRPA will help public park and recreation agencies inspire communities to change policies and practices to provide healthier foods, nutrition education and physical activity opportunities through the implementation of Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards. With support from the Target Corporation, NRPA awarded three communities grant funds to expand or create Youth Ambassador programs this year. NRPA will document best practices and share success stories from this first set of communities.



# OUR PARTNERSHIPS

## NRPA WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR PARTNERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT

Alliance for a Healthier Generation	US Environmental Protection Agency	Partnership for a Healthier America
Applied Materials	The JPB Foundation	Phillips 66
American Water Charitable Foundation	The Knight Foundation	Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
CBS EcoMedia	Major League Baseball	Southwest Airlines
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	National Association of Chronic Disease Directors	Target Corporation
The Coca-Cola Company	National Wildlife Federation	The Walt Disney Company   ABC   ESPN
The Coca-Cola Foundation	Niagara Bottling	Walmart Foundation

## WHY PARTNER WITH NRPA?

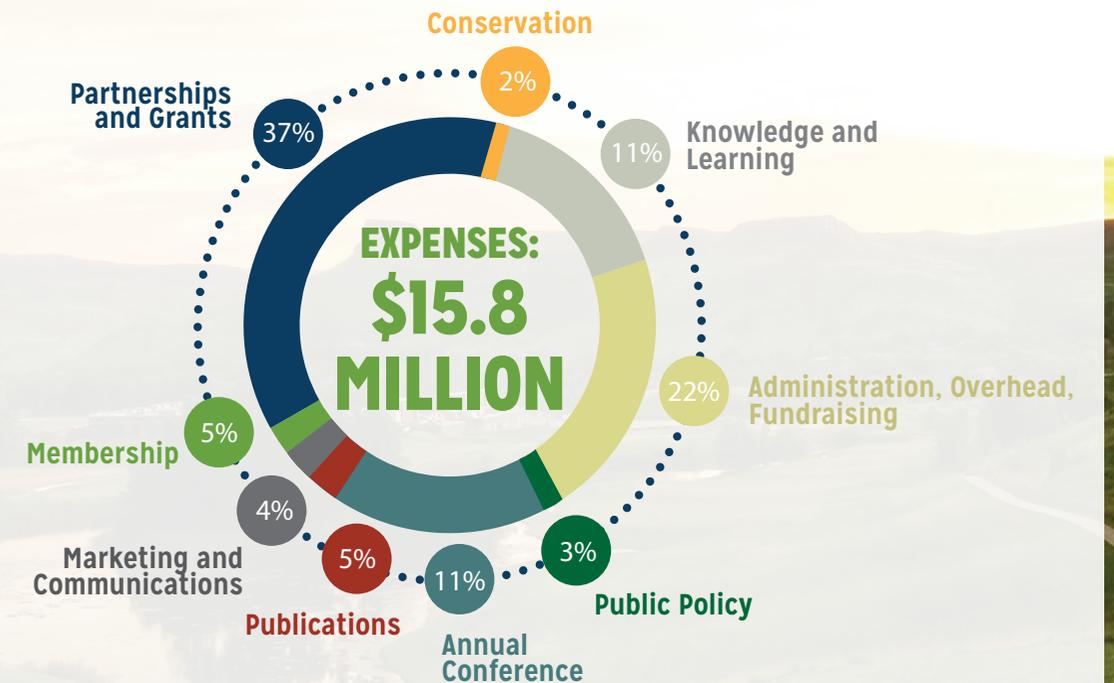
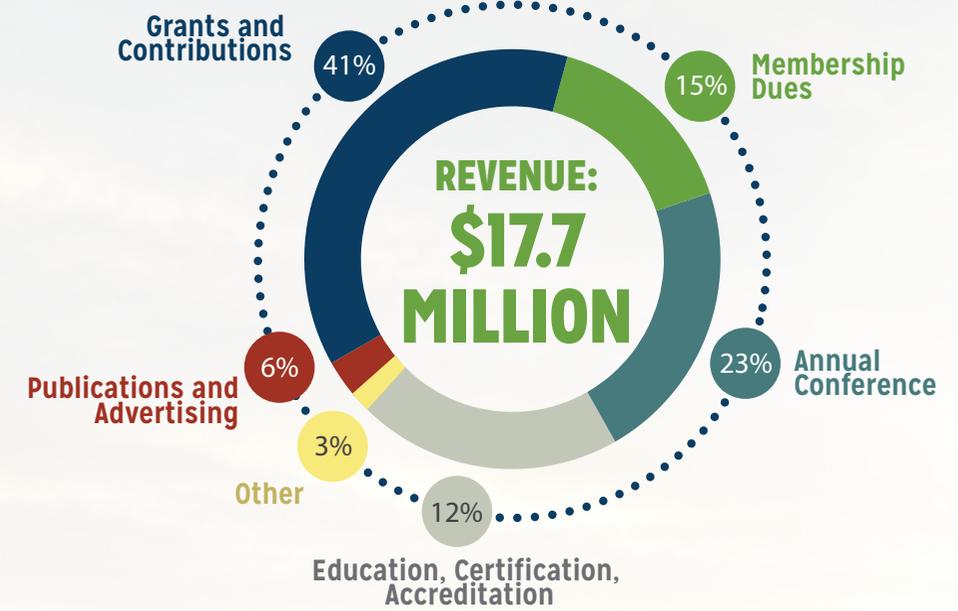
- More than 50 years of working with corporate and philanthropic leaders
- Experience taking evidence-based programs to scale
- Impact local communities and tell the story nationally
- Ability to offer community and employee engagement
- Reach into every community
- Leader in facilitating community-oriented park improvement projects
- Trusted ally to community park and recreation agencies

To learn more about partnering with NRPA and customized partnership opportunities, please contact Rebecca Wickline, Senior Vice President of Development, at 703.858.2163 or [rwickline@nrpa.org](mailto:rwickline@nrpa.org).

[www.nrpa.org/Partnerships](http://www.nrpa.org/Partnerships)

# FINANCIAL HEALTH

REVENUE	2016		2015	
Grants and Contributions	7,227,081	41%	7,767,271	45%
Annual Conference	4,137,292	23%	3,908,074	23%
Publications and Advertising	1,059,494	6%	910,839	5%
Education/Certification/Accreditation	2,146,894	12%	2,036,493	12%
Membership Dues	2,593,366	15%	2,303,586	13%
Other	556,483	3%	256,455	1%
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>17,720,610</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>17,182,718</b>	<b>100%</b>
EXPENSES				
National Partnerships and Grants	5,912,346	37%	5,650,987	38%
Annual Conference	1,786,417	11%	1,752,622	12%
Knowledge and Learning	1,705,189	11%	1,712,051	11%
Membership	772,586	5%	819,256	5%
Marketing and Communications	631,727	4%	595,240	4%
Publications	802,633	5%	681,600	5%
Public Policy	514,981	3%	449,561	3%
Conservation	271,494	2%	139,960	1%
Total Program Serve Expenses	12,397,373	78%	11,801,277	79%
Administration/Overhead/Fundraising	3,433,418	22%	3,172,126	21%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>15,830,791</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>14,973,403</b>	<b>100%</b>
Pension Adjustment	(689,874)		(426,971)	
Change in Value of Investments	38,006		36,961	
NET ASSETS				
Change in Net Assets	1,237,951		1,819,305	
Net Assets Beginning of Year	8,081,038		6,261,733	
Net Assets End of Year	9,318,989		8,081,038	



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