

Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association

2009 Annual Awards



PETER C. O'BRIEN HUMANITARIAN AWARD

Patricia M. Armstrong
Yarmouth, MA

Pat Armstrong has been Director of Recreation for the Town of Yarmouth, MA since 1997. As Director, she oversees the administrative, organizational and supervisory work planning and directing operations of a comprehensive community recreational program for a seaside community of 24,000 year-round and 65,000+ seasonal residents. She supervises three full-time department employees and approximately 16.7 full time equivalent seasonal or part-time employees as well as numerous (200+) volunteers. She administers an annual budget of just under \$1 million, with \$190,000 coming from tax support and the remainder generated through user fees and other receipts. The comprehensive responsibilities of the division include beach operations, program development and implementation, oversight of public access projects funded through HUD Grants, park staffing and light maintenance, long range planning and development of public open spaces, coordination of community-wide special events and is Health & Wellness Coordinator for the community.

Pat's Job history includes: Director of Recreation, Westover Job Corps Center (1984-86); Director of Recreation, Town of Yarmouth, MA (1986-92); (Commercial Recreation), Director of Operations, TOURCO, Hyannis, MA (1992-95) and her current position of Recreation Director, Town of Yarmouth, MA (1997 to present).

Pat has seen major programming impact in the following programs: Yarmouth Instructional Sailing Program – a comprehensive instructional and racing program incorporating group instruction utilizing Cape Cod Knockabouts. In this program over 600 individuals participate each year; Flax Pond Adventure Program – The Town of Yarmouth purchased a 100 acre antiquated resident camp with a matching \$500,000 LWCF Grant in 1986 and broke it into three distinct parcels. A 20 acre parcel was identified for active recreation use. The Recreation Division consolidated the existing summer playground programs, located at 6 pocket parks throughout the community, and invited children to come to this location for a half-day program. On the first day 480 children arrived to the surprise of the twelve staff and Director and Senior Open Swim & Aquatic Exercise – the off-season (Nov – Mar) can be very isolating for our year round senior citizens who do not have family in close proximity. We partnered with four local motels to offer an aquatic program four mornings a week from Sept through May. This program has served over 1200 different individuals and developed cooperative services with the local Senior Center, Elder Services and Libraries.

Many Facilities have been developed in the Community including: 1997 – Landfill Reclamation and Reuse Project, Old Town House Park, Bass River Beach Decks and Beach Access, Cape Cod Child Development Pre-School Playground; 1998 – Parker's River Beach Concession/Bathhouse and Access Walkway, Bass Hole/Gray's Beach Boardwalk, Pearl Harbor Memorial Flag Pole and Beach Access Deck; 1999 – Packet's Landing Marina, Flax Pond Recreational Area Arts & Crafts Handicapped Access Deck, Seagull Beach Access Deck and Concession; 2000 – Cape Cod Child Development

School –Age Playground; 2002 – Flax Pond Fishing Deck and Wheelchair Access; 2004 – Bass River Beach Concession/Restrooms and Parking Lot Rehab and 2005 – Flax Pond “Chuckwagon” Roof Repair.

Pat has been active professionally in the: Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association, Cape & Island Recreation Association, National Recreation and Park Association and Rotary International. Pat has been Past President of MRPA, served as MRPA State Conference Chair and currently is MRPA Treasurer. On the National level she has served as NETI Host Committee Chair, NERC Council Chair, APRS Executive Committee and NRPA Congress Program Committee. As a member of Rotary International, Pat has been on the Executive Board, served as President and has received the Paul Harris Fellow award.

She recently was recognized by the New England Regional Council receiving their highest award “NERC Annual Citation” for outstanding service to the promotion of Parks and Recreation in the State of Massachusetts and the New England Region.

In her spare time, you can find Pat on the golf course, hard shell clamming, singing with the Chatham Chorale or in her kitchen where she relaxes.

COMMUNITY PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

MATTHEW CASPARIUS

MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA, MA

Matt Casparius has served as the Director of Parks & Recreation for the Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea since April 2006. As Director, he is responsible for overseeing a Department with a budget of approximately \$500,000. During his tenure as Director, the Department has increased programs and services to the Community by over 250%. In the Department's eight year of existence, it has grown from a single person Department to now having 2 Full Time Employees along with approximately 100 seasonal employees who currently oversee over 300 programs per year along with 5 ocean beaches, 5 community parks & playgrounds, 4 athletic fields, 2 tennis courts, 1 basketball court and a skateboard park.

Before becoming the Director, he worked for four years as a Recreation Leader for the Brookline Recreation Department where he was responsible for coordinating four day camp programs which served over 600 children each summer. Prior to working in Brookline, he spent two years working for the Lexington Recreation Department first as an Intern and then later on as the Program Coordinator.

Matt has spent seven of the last ten years serving as a member of the MRPA Executive Board in the roles of Secretary, Vice President (2x), President-Elect, President & Past President. He has also served on the MRPA State Conference Planning Committee for eight years including 3 years as State Conference Chairman. In 2007, he also served as Chairman of the New England Training Institute.

Matt was the initial designer of the MRPA Website and served as the Association's webmaster until 2007 when the role was turned over the MRPA Executive Director. Matt was the 2002 Recipient of the Young Professional of the Year Award and in 2001 received the Young Professional Fellowship from the National Recreation & Park Association. Matt is a member of the National Recreation & Park Association, the Massachusetts Recreation & Park Association and the New England Park Association.

In his spare time he is a member of the Manchester-Essex Rotary Club; Serves as a Volunteer with the American Red Cross as a Health & Safety Instructor and Disaster Relief Worker and as a Volunteer with the Red Sox Foundation.

New Professional of the Year

Jon Marshall
Natick, MA

Jon Marshall has been the Program Coordinator for the Natick Recreation & Parks Department since 2004, and in 2007 he added the responsibilities of the Special Needs Coordinator due to changes made in the department.

Jon got his start with the Natick Recreation & Parks Department in 1992 when one of his sisters gently nudged him into volunteering at Camp Arrowhead a special needs camp run by the department. After a rocky first year of volunteering, Jon decided to give it another try, what a difference a year makes.

Jon became the waterfront director at Camp Arrowhead in 1997 and stayed through 2002. After Graduating from Salve Regina University in 2002 where he served as the East Bay Area Games Director for the Special Olympics, he started his post college life working as a mental health counselor on a child psychiatric unit at Leonard Morse Hospital. He continued working for the Natick Recreation & Parks Department part time at Sassamon Trace Golf Course and as the assistant beach manager.

Jon has served on a number of community boards including the Natick Days Committee, the Friends of the Fourth, NASAP and the Active Lifestyles Committee. He continues to add to the vast programming the department offers with the expansion of the summer playground programs, the addition of an outdoor adventure program and the formation of special events. With the help of his fellow staff, Jon helped create (borrowed ideas and made them their own) the Mother Son Challenge which now has 50 teams competing in zany challenges. Jon works with local businesses, non-profit groups and town departments to offer quality events to Natick's residents.

He believes that community is the key to our success.

LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

Representative Mary E. Grant

Beverly, MA

Representative Grant. Mary has been the State Representative for the City of Beverly since 2003. As you can see from her bio sheet, Representative Grant has been involved in many community groups in Beverly dealing with education, affordable housing and health care. Mary keeps regular hours at the Senior Center and has been a supporter of this center since it was built 17 years ago.

In addition to her work in these areas, Representative Grant has been a huge advocate for recreation in Beverly. Having raised three children in Beverly who all participated in youth sports and other recreation activities, Mary has always been a supporter of the Beverly Recreation Department and the Greater Beverly YMCA.

A few years ago when the Myles McPherson Youth Center in Beverly was falling into disrepair, Mary was diligent in seeking \$580,000 in funding in the FY2007 State Supplemental budget for the renovation of the McPherson Youth Center, including building renovations (new roof, two ADA compliant bathrooms, new kitchen area, computer lab, flooring and furniture) and extensive renovations to the outside facilities at the center. These facilities include a brand new skate park, two new basketball courts, much improved parking and drainage around the center and new lighting for the courts and parking areas. This project was awarded the 2008 MRPA Design of Facility Award. The completion of this project in 2008 was instrumental in bringing hundreds of kids back to the youth center on a regular basis after the numbers dwindled to only a handful when the building and grounds were badly outdated.

These new facilities have allowed many new programs to be run at the center, serving kids from all over Beverly but particularly helping the at risk children living in the downtown Beverly area. There are now many after school programs to attract the kids to the center instead of just old video games and a dilapidated skate park. Without Mary's hard work and diligence, these renovations would never have been possible. The City of Beverly did not have the funding available to do the work and several years of a fundraising effort for the project fell far short of the original goal of \$125,000. When we received the \$580,000 from the state, our prayers were answered. We were able to shift gears from doing band aid maintenance at the youth center to doing a full renovation.

More recently, Representative Grant was able to get a \$1M bonding bill approved last year for the Beverly Recreation Department to renovate a 100-year old carriage house at Lynch Park in Beverly. The total project is estimated at about \$4M. This \$1M bond will help jumpstart the fundraising effort for this project and allow us to transform this 19th century historical building, which is currently being used to store DPW equipment, into a 21st century cultural and community center for all of the citizens of Beverly to enjoy. Again, Mary worked very hard over the past few years to secure this funding for our department. This project will enable us to run many more programs in our own space instead of using schools or rented space for our classes and programs. It will also enable us to have offices that are fully ADA compliant and provide space for plays, concerts, art shows and many other community functions, in addition to providing a significant revenue stream to the Beverly Recreation Department.

FACILITY DESIGN AWARDS HASKELL PLAYGROUND, SUDBURY, MA

Summer is quickly disappearing and fall is on our doorstep and while everyone has been getting ready to go back to school an amazing transformation has been taking place at the playground at Haskell Field. A dream that began over 18 months ago is now a reality...a playground where EVERYONE can play all together! This amazing playground is a state of the art facility with play opportunities for kids ages 2-12 and will prove to be a popular community asset for years to come.

This playground began with a grant application submitted by former director Dennis Mannone with the assistance of Lotte Diomede. This grant, from Boundless Playgrounds, was generously donated by the Lyons Family of Sudbury and allowed for the complete construction of the 5-12 portion of the playground. Lyons' Pride, the 5-12 section of the playground, is the first Boundless playground in Middlesex County. This new inclusive playscape opened on October 9th with over 400 people in attendance, many in wheelchairs ready to have some fun. Boundless Playgrounds is the leading national nonprofit developer of truly inclusive playgrounds where children, with and without disabilities, can play together. A Boundless playground puts ALL children in the middle of the playground fun. By playing together, every child gains the developmental and health benefits derived from unstructured play. They also learn to appreciate the abilities of every child, regardless of any perceived disability.

Since spring 2008, Boundless Playgrounds has been working with the Park & Recreation Department and the Lyons Family to design the play area. Spurred by the plan to develop Lyons' Pride, a secondary phase for the overall project was planned shortly thereafter by the S.M.I.L.E. Sudbury group. This phase included the renovation and upgrading of the existing play area for children ages 2 – 5. The "tot" area of the playground contains a boundless play structure, swings, a handicap accessible play structure and a beautiful sand play area.

In addition to the generous donation from the Lyons Family of Sudbury, CVS Caremark made a contribution to help complete the project. All Kids Can, a program of the CVS Caremark Charitable Trust and CVS Caremark, is a five-year, \$25 million commitment to support children with disabilities. The goals of All Kids Can are to support children with disabilities by raising awareness in schools and in local communities about the importance of inclusion, creating greater opportunities for physical activity and play, and providing access to medical rehabilitation and related services. CVS Caremark and its more than 215,000 employees plan to help children with disabilities learn, play and succeed through partnerships with leading local and national nonprofit organizations such as Boundless Playgrounds and many others across the country. More than 30 CVS Caremark volunteers traveled from communities throughout Massachusetts to help with Sudbury's community build, led by CVS Regional Manager Dave Padrazo.

The second phase of the playground project was made possible by the extremely hard work of the S.M.I.L.E. Sudbury committee who raised over \$126,000 to provide a state of the art play experience for children ages 2-5. In this area, first developed in memory of Dr. Adelson, S.M.I.L.E. Sudbury added features to allow access for all children and greatly enhanced their play opportunities. S.M.I.L.E. Sudbury worked diligently in securing funds to allow for this beautiful playground to be constructed for all to enjoy. As you enter the playground you will see the addition of bricks lining the new handicap access walkway that pay tribute to the many residents who donated funds to see this project through. In addition S.M.I.L.E. Sudbury held over 5 community build days where young children to senior citizens worked together to install this section of the playground.

This project was a collaborative effort between three different entities and the in-kind work of the Sudbury Park and Recreation Department and the Sudbury Department of Public Works. As with any project of this scale much time was devoted to the coordination of these different

entities and overseeing the work done on site. The end result is a beautiful new playground that will easily accommodate hundreds of children playing together at the same time.

What a great community asset that has been built by the residents of Sudbury that, for the first time, can truly be enjoyed by everyone! This town had a dream and set the expectation that all can and should play together...what a wonderful accomplishment.

Look for additional improvements forthcoming in October as we update the bathroom facilities at Haskell Field to bring those into Accessibility Compliance as we continue to make Sudbury a better place to live and play. The Town of Sudbury and the Park and Recreation Department would like to thank all the residents and businesses that gave monetary and in kind support to this project. In addition a huge thank you to all the volunteers who so unselfishly gave of their time so that ALL kids could have a place to play. I thank you all for the work that you have done and the dream that you have accomplished.

Nancy McShea

Director of Parks and Recreation
Town of Sudbury

SKYLINE PARK - Brookline, MA

The Newton Street Landfill Closure and Park Development Project consists of over 55 acres of publicly and privately owned land. There were two landfill sites, known as the Front and Back Landfills, an inactive incinerator and associated buildings that were used for the Town's solid waste transfer and recycling operations. The issues faced by the town increased significantly when it was discovered that the landfill extended onto 24 private homes located around the edge of one of the landfills. The Town undertook an intensive public land-use planning process that involved three separate neighborhoods, a state agency who owned a portion of one of the landfills, several conservation groups, and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). After 10 years of planning, design and construction Brookline DPW has successfully transformed the former landfill site into Skyline Park; a state-of-the-art park complex for active and passive recreation, developed a highly efficient public works operations area, and implemented a unique approach to address off-site waste on residential properties.

The Park and Open Space Division and the Engineering Division were responsible for the design development, construction and oversight for the new 15.15-acre community park on the former front landfill site. The dedicated parkland is an incredibly valuable asset, unique to such a highly developed and diverse urban community. Skyline Park includes active and passive recreation amenities for all ages and abilities. This park was designed to be a "multi-generational facility". The park provides a full-size synthetic turf playing field, playground structures for older children and tots, picnic areas, a comfort station, restored wetlands, scenic walking trails and connections to the once isolated conservation areas owned by the Town of Brookline, City of Newton and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In addition to town tax dollars, the new park was funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Urban Self-Help Grant Program and the Brookline Travel

Soccer Club; a true public-private partnership. President of the Brookline Travel Soccer Club, Alan Einhorn, stated that they were "proud to have played a key role in helping to build this state of the art field". Skyline Park is a wonderful resource to the entire community. Creation of the new synthetic turf athletic field has helped reduce some of the pressure on other park fields in Town which were subject to over-use and significant deterioration.

The Brookline Landfill Closure and Park Development Project is an excellent example to municipalities throughout Massachusetts that are required to meet the regulatory requirements to cap inactive landfills while maintaining vital public works uses and developing active recreational facilities. Skyline Park, a once unattractive disposal site, is an example of how the development of an active and passive recreational park can have an immediate, powerful and positive impact on the quality of life of people in the community and in the region.

PROGRAM OUTREACH AWARD

Cohasset Recreation Fair

We had 40 groups/tables set up throughout the gym. We asked each of our instructors for both year round and summer programs to set up a table and make them interactive. For instance, our babysitting instructor had her 'babies' out to see who can properly diaper a baby. All of our summer sports camps were represented and it marked the first day of registration for the program. All the youth sports were represented. All the 'road races/fun runs' were represented. We had the Board of Health, Police Department, Children's Melanoma, Mass 911 program in attendance. We had nearly 90% of all the health and fitness businesses in Cohasset in attendance.

The goals of the Recreation Fair were:

- Showcase our new summer programs and all of our year round programs
- Begin the process of an earlier summer registration (from June to March)
- Give the nonprofit organizations a chance to show off their summer programs
- Showcase the different health and fitness businesses in town (our theory there was the 'Buy locally' concept and support the economy in Cohasset)

SPECIAL CITATIONS

Ron Russo

Ron Russo has been an employee of the Lexington DPW for over 35 years and he is responsible for maintaining the Lexington Town Pool Complex. The pool is open from approximately June 1st through Labor Day each year and the complex consists of four pools: a wading pool, instructional pool, lap pool, and dive pool. An average of over 80,000 patrons come to the pool during the course of the season. Ron is responsible for making sure all of the pools are chemically balanced, cleaning the locker rooms, bathrooms, hallways, and pool decks before the facility opens each day, vacuuming the pools daily, and ensuring that all of the chlorinators and pool filters are working properly. Ron also informs the Recreation Department of any issues or problems that come up and addresses them immediately. Rather than outsourcing the work, Ron's ability to fix and repair items at the pool has provided a substantial cost savings for the Recreation Department. In addition to the day-to-day responsibilities during the summer, Ron prepares the entire facility prior to opening each spring and winterizes the complex each fall.

Ron always conducts himself in a professional manner. His top priority is to ensure the safety of all patrons and staff while they are at the pool. He is extremely dedicated to his job. Without his efforts, thousands of Lexington residents would not be able to enjoy swimming at the Town Pool.

Gail Carmody

Gail Carmody began working for the Beverly Recreation Department right after graduating from Beverly High School in 1969. Over the past 40 years, Gail has been the behind the scenes leader of our Recreation Department, working with several different Recreation Directors including Joan Fairbank for 26 years and me for the past 7 years. Without Gail's incredible dedication to the department and her invaluable administrative support over the years, we would not have been able to run our programs with such ease and efficiency. Gail's knowledge of the inner workings of our office make my job incredibly simple and I would not have been able to get up and running as easily as I did 7 years ago.

Whenever Joscelyn or I have ideas about new programs or questions about how programs have run in the past, Gail is always willing to discuss the logistics for these programs (fees, hours, locations, staffing, etc.) and makes great suggestions for planning these programs based on how programs have run in the past. In addition, Gail is always willing to provide input on problems encountered in the past to help us better plan for future programs. Gail is also not afraid to suggest changes for programs, policies and procedures to ensure that things run smoother and the participants have a better experience.

Through the years there have been many changes at the Beverly Recreation Department including the addition of summer camps and adult enrichment classes to our program offerings, changing over to Rec Trac, online registration and credit card processing as well as budget cuts and staffing changes. Through all of these changes Gail has been the steady force behind the scenes, making the office run smoothly and interacting with the public. Whether citizens have called to ask questions or register for classes or camps, Gail has always been the pleasant voice on the phone or greeter in the office. Gail has also always been the one to track staff birthdays, make the summer staff (all 100) feel at home and make the office a welcoming place for all. Gail is the one who pays all the bills and makes sure everyone gets paid on time. No wonder everyone loves her so much!

In addition to processing everyone's paperwork and administering about 100 drug tests before anyone can start working each summer, Gail also plays a major part in organizing and executing our annual Lip Synch Extravaganza, our largest event of the year. Gail makes sure all of the parks and camps get their songs and information into the office, produces the event program, rounds up the six judges and works with the judges to tally up the scores and determine the many winners for this event each summer. Gail does all of this while shunning any recognition or accolades.