

PRESS RELEASE



Volunteers Recognized for Extraordinary Efforts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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DES MOINES, IOWA ----February 1, 2010 --- The city's Park and Recreation Board and department announced the recipients of their first-ever volunteer awards at the Tuesday, January 26 board meeting.

In 2009, over 1800 volunteers donated service valued at over \$250,000 for a range of activities that included building nature trails, cleaning up rivers and cemeteries, decorating for holiday parties, pulling weeds, growing annual flowers, instructing bird watching and fishing lessons, turning on the downtown holiday lights and many more. The award program was established to recognize outstanding volunteer efforts in several categories, including individual, group, corporate group, staff supervisor and lifetime achievement.

Special recognition was also given to local philanthropists John and Mary Pappajohn for their time, talents, love for and gift of art that have led to the opening of what has quickly become an iconic park for the city of Des Moines, Polk County, the state of Iowa - and the Des Moines Park and Recreation Department - the John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park. Also honored for his tireless leadership, dedication and commitment of time and energy to raising the necessary funds to make the sculpture park a reality, was civic activist Steve Zumbach.

Among those honored were Dennis Kelly, who was named Volunteer of the Year for his exemplary vision, creativity and hard work as the driving force behind the highly successful Yoga in the Park program introduced by the department in 2009. Having experienced a similar program at Chicago's Millennium Park, he brought the concept to Des Moines Parks and Recreation staff and dedicated countless hours through the steps of planning, implementation and marketing to make this a new opportunity a reality for the public. Through Mr. Kelly's leadership, 20 volunteer instructors were recruited and led weekly yoga classes for an average of 300 people Saturday mornings, June through September on the shore of Gray's Lake. Denny's work didn't end in September, however. He immediately began planning for the 2010 program by recruiting instructors and fine tuning the logistics.

Organizers of the River Run Garbage Grab were selected as Volunteer Group of the Year for their intensive planning, coordination and implementation of this annual Des Moines River

cleanup. Their volunteer efforts include securing supplies, staffing host sites, ensuring safety and hosting a recognition dinner with food, entertainment and prizes for event volunteers. Of the overall 400 volunteers working in and along the river as it passes through greater Des Moines, 149 donated nearly 340 hours in clearing over 25,000 pounds of litter in and along the riverbanks in our city, helping beautify it and reduce pollution.

Meredith Corporation and ING were both named as recipients of the Corporate Group Award for their outstanding staff volunteer time and overall project contributions to the Parks Department and the Des Moines community.

In a series of Rebuilding Together projects, Meredith Corporation donated over \$9000 in volunteer labor to design, plan and install new playground equipment at Ashfield Park and landscaping around both Pioneer Columbus Community Center and Capital East Park. Volunteers drew up landscape designs, secured tools and coordinated with city staff to make sure the projects ran smoothly and met the needs of the city and community. In preparation for the Ashfield Park project, for instance, volunteers donated time over the course of several months to meet with neighborhood representatives and city planners, draw up site plans, seek donations, pull together legal agreements, and obtain necessary City Council approval. Then, on a dreary and rainy fall day, 25 volunteers worked to install the playground and sidewalk leading to it to complete the project, which is valued at over \$50,000. The Meredith-supported improvements provide safe, accessible and beautiful areas for the community to come together, enjoy and be proud of.

ING and Corporate Volunteer Manager Deanna Benningsdorf are an outstanding example of corporate giving and involvement in our community. ING has provided steady support for several Parks and Recreation projects throughout 2009, in terms of both financial donations and the time of volunteer labor valued at over \$5000. ING volunteers enjoyed cold winter months in the department's warm greenhouse, transplanting seedlings which they volunteered to help distribute in the spring rain to community representatives coming to pick up and plant the flowers in neighborhoods, schools and other areas throughout our community. In the summer they helped Parks staff in the Evelyn K. Davis Park "Make a Difference" summer camp program, assisting with craft and sports activities and serving as role models for youth participants in the King-Irving neighborhood. Their support to the department also included assistance with database entry projects, hosting events at the Hershey's Track Meet, participation in the country's National Day of Service and Remembrance by assisting with an aquatic center landscape project, helping kick off the holidays at Holiday Lights Des Moines and at community centers' children's winter holiday parties. Through all seasons and for a wide variety of projects, ING volunteers have stepped forward to support Parks and Recreation and our community.

Jean Murray and Sarah Mullihan were selected for the Volunteer Supervisor of the Year Award for a well-planned and implemented greenhouse volunteer program that touches not only the volunteers who participate but all those in our community who enjoyed the 400,000 annual plants that were transplanted and later beautified our streetscapes, schools, parks, and public spaces. Jean's and Sarah's welcoming personalities and greenhouse expertise made it easy for volunteers to learn about the plants, the job and about Parks and Recreation, which kept them coming back all spring. Over 200 volunteers helped staff the greenhouse in 2009, donating over

2200 hours to the Park and Recreation Department's beautification efforts and thereby helping to increase the value of homes, neighborhoods, and creating a beautiful community that people want to live in, businesses want to invest in and people want to take care of and enjoy.

Suzette Jensen and Joseph Galloway were both named as recipients of the Lifetime Achievement Award for the leadership they have provided and their undying commitment to the vision and goals of the Park and Recreation Department.

Mrs. Jensen first became associated with the Park and Recreation Department in the mid-90s, while serving on the Des Moines Public School Board, which appointed her to fill its seat on the Des Moines Park and Recreation Board. She showed so much passion and interest in this "one year assignment" from the schools that she was fully appointed by the City Council in 1998 to serve as a permanent member. Her leadership and passion quickly led to her election and re-election as president of the Park Board, of which she is still a member. During her tenure as president, Suzette provided guidance through the development of multiple neighborhood parks projects including Grandview Park, Union Park, Gray's Lake Park and the initiation of the Principal Riverwalk. Her inclusive and highly professional Board meeting leadership has been highly valued by Board members and Parks staff.

Mr. Galloway has served ten years on the Park and Recreation Board and has been serving as its president for nearly four years. But that's not how the department first came to know of Joe Galloway. Prior to joining the board he was involved with gaining approval for Beaverdale's Interurban Recreational Trail, which was the first Des Moines trail to be constructed in an established residential area. The trail has served as a model for later trail development in the City. An avid runner, Joe has dedicated himself to improving Des Moines' trail system through his involvement on the board's Trails Advisory Committee. He was also instrumental in initiating the Friends of Des Moines Parks as well as the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers Greenway Preservation Group, a multi-jurisdictional group that is undertaking a public planning process addressing the future of those rivers' greenways. Joe is an inspiration to staff and the Board alike. He has the ability to make sure all are included and his leadership has resulted in remarkable growth to development of Des Moines' neighborhood and regional parks at a time of difficult fiscal matters in the city.

A strong volunteer program provides many positive outcomes for the City, the individuals who participate as volunteers and the community overall. One of the most important benefits is a decrease in city operating costs brought about by the volunteer labor force. In addition, through the work of volunteers, the Park and Recreation Department is able to offer many recreation programs and initiatives/improvements in the parks that would otherwise not be available due to funding limitations. Although volunteers have been a mainstay of Parks and Recreation programming for many years, through a staffing reorganization in 2008, the department expanded its volunteer program. In 2007, we had over 140 volunteers whose service was valued at approximately \$13,000; in 2009, the number of volunteers has increased to 1800 volunteers whose year-to-date hours of service is valued at over \$250,000 (value of time is computed using a national volunteer factor).

In 2009, our corps of Parks volunteers has helped with a variety of projects ranging from restoration of the Ewing Park Lilac Arboretum to staffing free movies in neighborhood parks. Corporate volunteers helped staff the summer drop-in day camp program at Evelyn K. Davis Park and Rebuilding Together volunteers rebuilt a park playground and landscaped one of the community centers. They've organized the Downtown Community Garden in Allen Park, hosted invasive species removal days at Greenwood Park, modified nature trails to be more sustainable at Ashworth Park and monitored quality of water in several Des Moines parks. On Earth Day, over 750 volunteers from 34 businesses and organizations gathered to clean up downtown, Gray's Lake and MacRae Park, removing an estimated 23,000 pounds of litter during the Trash Bash event. Volunteers assist with the care of the municipal cemeteries, lead Yoga in the Park, teach canoeing and sailing lessons and help carry off numerous events such as the Mayor's Annual Ride for Trail, the Father-Daughter Dances and the Des Moines Winter Games. They bring diverse skills and talents and help enrich our community and Parks and Recreation in ways that cannot be measured.

The Parks and Recreation Volunteer Award program is coordinated by the Volunteer Recognition Team comprised of staff representing different areas of the department. The awards ceremony was broadcast live in conjunction with the monthly Park and Recreation Board meeting and will be re-broadcast at various times throughout the month of February on the city's Cable Channel 7. Electronic photographs of the ceremony may be requested by emailing parksvolunteer@dmgov.org. For more information about volunteering, visit www.dmparks.org, email parksvolunteer@dmgov.org, or call (515)248-6380.