

Success Stories from the **National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability**

Inclusive Innovation in Parks and Recreation

Public Health Issue

Park and recreation agencies are leading the way to inclusive communities across the country. Since the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) began in 1990, park and recreation agencies across the United States have made their facilities accessible and inclusive to those with disabilities. Although parks and public spaces are mandated to meet ADA requirements, there is much more that can be done to foster inclusion in all park and recreation programming, initiatives and health and wellness efforts. To address this issue, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) joined forces with the National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability and Lakeshore Foundation to launch [Parks for Inclusion](#).

Program Overview

Parks for Inclusion is NRPA's formal pledge to the Commit to Inclusion's Partnership for Inclusive Health. The pledge will ensure that all people have access to the benefits of local parks and recreation. The collaborative will prioritize inclusion in existing national programs and initiatives; provide resources, professional development opportunities and technical assistance to local park and recreation agencies; and develop metrics, collect impacts and disseminate findings to scale best practices across the field of parks and recreation.



// NRPA is proud to partner with Lakeshore Foundation and NCHPAD on this new initiative, — Our goal is to ensure everyone — regardless of income, race or ability — is able to enjoy the benefits that parks and recreation provide. //
— Barbara Tulipane, CAE, NRPA president and CEO

Making an Impact

Parks for Inclusion officially launched in September 2017 at the NRPA Annual Conference. Since the launch, several partnership activities have taken place to scale impact for inclusion in parks and recreation. NRPA developed and disseminated an [adapted version](#) of NCHPAD's 9 Guidelines for Disability Inclusion to create expectations for establishing inclusive parks and recreation programs and environments. Several media collateral were developed to raise awareness about Parks for Inclusion such as [two marketing videos](#) and inclusive Park and Rec Month campaign materials. To highlight and implement innovative inclusive opportunities, a [microgrant program](#) was designed to award four local park and recreation agencies. Over

44 applications were received for this microgrant opportunity to support built environment, model policy development and best practices for program implementation. NCHPAD staff served as grant reviewers. As reported by grantees, 42,970 people with disability will be reached by these projects.

The McBeth Recreation Center in Austin, Texas, is implementing a Learn to Ride Adaptive Bike program in its facility as well as at Zilker Park, The Ann and Roy Butler Hike and Bike Trail and other local Austin trails. The first-of-its-kind program will allow community members with disabilities to participate in various cycling opportunities. In the city of Prichard, Alabama, the "Playing Together Project" will allow access to the intergenerational community gardens at the newly designed Shirley M. Shark Historic Park. The innovative aspect of this park will be the use of mobile park ramps and adaptive signage, allowing those with disabilities access to the community gardens, as well as to other recreational programs within the city. Philadelphia Parks & Recreation in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is developing an inclusive "Grow Up Green Club" for preschool-age children, based on the successful Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Grow up Green Tot program. Children with autism will participate with typically developing children as they explore sun, water, wind, dirt and backyard nature. Following the pilot, the program will be developed into lesson plans, and training will be conducted so the program can be easily replicated. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board will implement mobile-sensory spaces called "Sense Tents" for park users with physical and cognitive disabilities. The space will include items to regulate the senses and intends to provide a calming space for people when they need relief at events.

Improving Organizational Inclusion

In addition to the national and local impacts for Parks for Inclusion, this initiative has impacted the organizational inclusivity of NRPA, a 60,000 strong membership base that represents public spaces in urban communities, rural settings and everything in between. NRPA will "ensure that all organizational and public-facing policies, resources, trainings and programmatic materials utilize inclusive language and that accommodations are made when necessary."

