



January 23, 2017  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **LOCKPORT TOWNSHIP PARK DISTRICT RECEIVES ILLINOIS DISTINGUISHED ACCREDITED AGENCY AWARD**

LOCKPORT, IL - - The Lockport Township Park District (LTPD) has been recognized as an Illinois Distinguished Accredited Agency by the Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA).

The two statewide associations administer the Illinois Distinguished Accreditation program with the goal of improving the delivery of park and recreation services to Illinois residents. “Illinois has a reputation for the best park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies in the nation,” said Peter Murphy, IAPD President and CEO. “The Illinois Distinguished Accreditation program provides an opportunity for these agencies to undergo a voluntary, comprehensive evaluation process to demonstrate that they have met state guidelines to provide exceptional park and recreation services to their community. The end result is to improve the quality of life for Illinois residents.”

“This program gives recognition to park and recreation agencies that go above and beyond in dedicating themselves to offering quality programs and services designed to fulfill their community’s needs,” said Debbie Trueblood, IPRA Executive Director.

A park district or recreation agency interested in applying for Distinguished Accredited Agency recognition undergoes a detailed, lengthy process of application and evaluation. A Joint Distinguished Park and Recreation Accreditation Committee (JDPRAC) comprised of members from IAPD and IPRA coordinates the process. “Agencies submit a self-evaluation and a formal letter requesting admission into the process,” said Penny Randel, IAPD Co-Chair of the JDPRAC. “If the committee determines the agency is eligible to continue the process, we send them an evaluation date.”

According to Randel, on the day of the evaluation, the agency presents documented information and gives a tour of pertinent facilities and parks for the evaluation team’s review.

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## *Distinguished Accredited Agency/2*

The team reviews general management procedures, finance and business operations, facilities and parks, personnel, recreation services, legal documentation and other materials including mission statements, goals and safety manuals.

Upon completion of the evaluation, the agency is notified in writing of the official results within ten days. Agencies that have achieved Distinguished Accredited status are recognized with a plaque at the IAPD/IPRA Annual Conference Awards Luncheon in January.

“There are tremendous benefits for an agency that achieves Distinguished Accredited status,” said Dan Jones, IPRA Co-Chair of the JDPRAC. “The agency’s application and review process is an excellent self-evaluation and agencies that apply realize increased operational efficiency and effectiveness. Communities can have confidence that their park district or recreation agency employs qualified professionals and has met professional standards.”

LTPD applied for the Illinois Distinguished Accreditation program in Dec., 2014.

“This was a very intense process that took over two years to ensure that the evidence of compliance for hundreds of procedures, policies and practices were stringently documented,” said Sue Micklevitz, Executive Director of LTPD. “Going through this demanding process has validated what we already knew . . . that the Lockport Township Park District is a quality operation.”

The JDPRAC approved LTPD for Distinguished Accredited status in Nov., 2016 with a score of 489.2706 points from a total of 500. The committee highlighted the following areas as outstanding:

- Chart of goals and objectives
- End of year PowerPoint presentation
- Board Orientation Manual
- Financial Report and thorough reporting
- Fundraising
- Citizen’s input for projects, etc.
- Master Plan
- Educational support
- Employee satisfaction survey

In compliance with the program, LTPD will be reevaluated in six years to verify that they have continued to demonstrate sound management practices in providing quality park and recreation services to the community.

IAPD is a non-profit service, research and education organization that serves park districts, forest preserves, conservation and recreation agencies. The association advances these agencies, their citizen board members and professional staff in their ability to provide outstanding park and recreation opportunities, preserve natural resources and improve the quality of life for all people in Illinois.

IPRA is a not-for-profit organization and public interest group who is an advocate in providing quality park, recreation and conservation education, resources and services to professionals and citizens throughout the state of Illinois.

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