



NATIONAL RECREATION FOUNDATION

ANNUAL REPORT



2020

Focus On Access





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A Message From the President

John W. McCarter, Jr.

What a difference a year makes!

The National Recreation Foundation was proud to celebrate a historic occasion in 2019: our organization's 100th anniversary. The year 2020 brought a history-making event of a completely different kind: a worldwide pandemic.

It has been a challenging year for all, but it also has been a very productive one for the Foundation. I'm pleased to report that we have taken bold steps to advance our mission of enhancing the role of recreation as a positive force in improving the quality of life for youth.

In 2020, we expanded and diversified our Board of Trustees in a strategic effort to bring new skills, expertise and perspectives to NRF's governing body. As we mourned the passing of two longtime trustees and anticipated the retirement of several others, we called on present trustees and retained a search firm, Koya Leadership Partners, to help identify candidates and develop an expanded trustee on-boarding program.

As a result of these initiatives, we are pleased to welcome nine new trustees whose experience and backgrounds will benefit our organization. Our thorough reflection and planning process also provides us with a recruiting template and a pipeline of future candidates.

This year the Board of Trustees also adopted an equity statement that confirms our commitment to modeling diversity and inclusion in our programs and to maintaining an inclusive environment within our organization.

We're also dedicated to supporting programs that provide just and equitable opportunities for all youth to get active and outdoors. That's especially important this year during the coronavirus pandemic, when being outdoors and experiencing nature is critical for both physical and emotional health – above all, for children who live in underserved communities where safe, open-air opportunities may not be easily accessible.

The year 2020 has offered us challenges, but we are grateful that the National Recreation Foundation has the necessary structure and policies in place that will enable us to invest in recreation programs for children across our vast country for years to come.





Our Executive Director

Sophie Twichell



I am a walker. Exercising outdoors is how I decompress and get centered. I needed to walk a lot this year. I am fortunate that I can step out the door at the end of a long day and visit a nearby park, nature preserve or bike path. With constant pressure to develop the land, I am profoundly grateful to those who came before me who set aside open space in my community. These places are critical for replenishing our spirits and strengthening our bodies.

I am conscious of my privilege. Everyone should have access to nearby outdoor spaces, but many in our country do not. Neighborhood parks and open space should not be viewed as a luxury, but as a necessity. Today we understand, based on reams of research (not to mention common sense and ancient instinct), that such access is essential to our health. Unfortunately, far too many people lack access – and now many kids also are dealing with at-home, virtual school as the pandemic maintains its grip on our routines.

A recent report from The Trust for Public Land, "The Heat is On," would be troubling even in more ordinary times, but this year especially so. The report reveals that in the U.S. over 100 million people – including 28 million children – do not have access to a park within a 10-minute walk from their home. Further,

the parks nearest nonwhite populations are half as large (45 acres versus 87 acres, on average) and five times as crowded as parks in majority-white residential areas.

The pandemic has turned our nation upside down in every conceivable way. It brought into sharp relief the need, as confirmed by the Trust's report, to confront glaring problems of access. All kids need access to green space and experiences that promote healthful, holistic development. As America's struggle for racial justice also took center stage this year, it deepened our understanding of the profound inequities that exist and unfairly limit children's ability to play, learn and grow in safe outdoor spaces.

We stand on a solid foundation of accumulated knowledge about the necessity of recreation to our physical and mental health, especially for our youth. NRF's mission has never been more urgent. The ongoing blows to our collective public health in 2020 remind us of what matters: our families, our friends, our communities, and most especially, our children and their future as fully functioning and healthy adults.

NRF has an important role to play in our nation's public health. As this unsettling year comes to a close, NRF's Board of Trustees and staff redouble our commitment to the thousands of young people this foundation serves. Our mission – always purpose in action – is to get kids active and outdoors. As this year has, with blunt emphasis, reinforced the necessity of that work, we aim to make this decade one of vital and positive impact. We invite your input, ideas and partnership. Please walk with me.

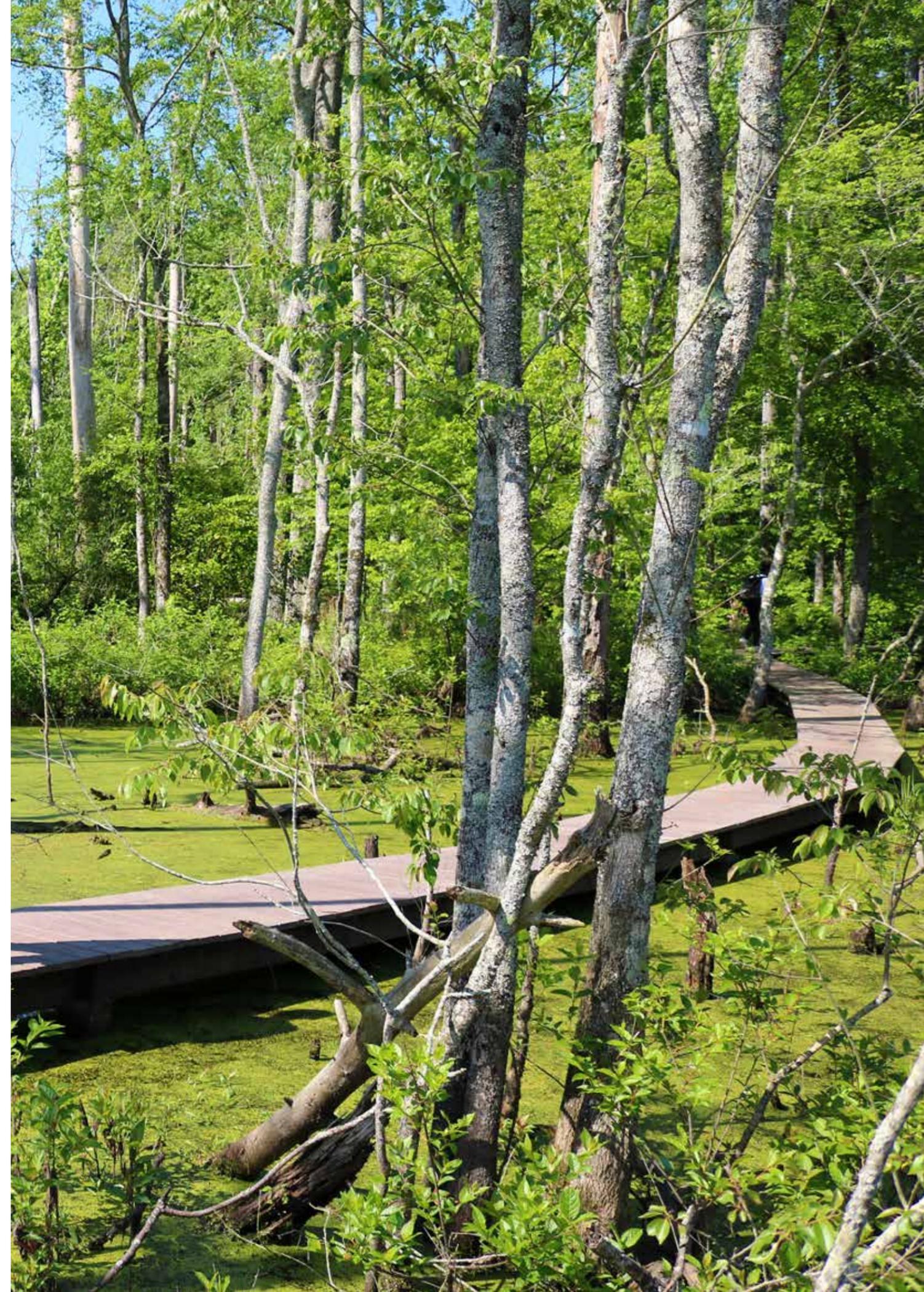


Charles E. Hartsoe Fellow

Caitlin Reilly

Named for Charles E. Hartsoe, educator, author, and ardent advocate. He is regarded as a "man for his time," significantly influencing, visioning, and shaping America's park and recreation professional movement for over five decades. Hartsoe embarked on his professional career as an intern with the late Robert Crawford, Commissioner of Recreation, in the City of Philadelphia. This Fellowship, sponsored by the National Recreation Foundation, is an important developmental program for graduate professionals.

Please welcome Caitlin Reilly, our new Hartsoe Fellow. Caitlin is a current M.S. student in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management at North Carolina State University. Her research focuses on intergenerational environmental education and youth agricultural literacy with an emphasis on environmental justice lenses. Caitlin grew up in Charlottesville, Virginia and attended Davidson College where she majored in environmental studies, was a member of the women's crew team, and worked for the college outdoors program and on-site farm. Following graduation, she worked as an outdoor recreation and environmental education practitioner in the Carolinas, Iceland, and Australia. In her free time, Caitlin loves spending time running, biking, camping, and relaxing outside.





Color (BIPOC) communities. We also declare our audacious goal of doubling the number of youth we impact over the coming three years. To achieve this goal, NRF is forging partnerships with like-minded funders, resulting in increased funds for grants, greater numbers of youth served, and new resources and services for grantees. This effort is led by former NRF Trustee Tim Richardson.

A few early partnership successes from 2020

- ◆ Honeywell Corporation: In the social justice flash-point of Brunswick, GA, NRF joined forces with Honeywell, other local funders and ultimately the Atlanta United Foundation to build a new mini soccer field (pictured at left) for Coastal Outreach Academies, which provides soccer, academic enrichment and community service programs for youth from four public housing developments.
- ◆ REI: A new NRF/REI partnership is fueling the growth of an exciting new YMCA outdoor recreation model, Boys and Girls Outdoor Leadership Development, known as BOLD & GOLD. The concept beta tested at the Y of Greater Seattle engages BIPOC youth in their first outdoor recreation and leadership development experiences.
- ◆ Sport Court: A partnership with the largest manufacturer and installer of sports surfaces in the world allows NRF grantees to receive special discounts on new and refurbishment projects.



NRF 2020 Focus: Partnerships

2020 saw oppressed and economically challenged communities across American cities erupt with cries for social justice and equitable services for all. This unsettling scenario was also the case in 1965, the first years of NRF's existence. Through the late sixties, NRF proudly provided grants and professional development training that brought needed, enduring youth recreation programs to still smoldering cities. Today, as the nation continues wrestling with issues of race, injustice and economic disparity, NRF's mission of supporting physical activity, outdoor recreation and a better quality of life is needed more than ever – but our resources alone are not sufficient to satisfy the tremendous need.

NRF today redoubles its commitment to support life-changing recreation programming for youth, with a special focus on serving under-resourced Black, Indigenous and People of





National Recreation Foundation Grants Overview

Organizations Receiving Grants

TRUSTEE GRANTS - \$477,269

Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Bradford Woods Climbing Club
Breakthrough Urban Ministries
Classical Theatre of Harlem
Colorado Discover Ability
Elevate Indianapolis
Elevate St. Louis
Empower Dance Foundation
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Environmental Learning for Kids
Forza Sport Academies
Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles
Harlem Grown
Lake Forest Open Lands Association
Muddy Sneakers
SailMaine
Street2Feet
Stepping Stones, Inc.
The First Tee of Greater Detroit
TheGifted Arts, Inc.
West End Neighborhood Association
Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center

SPECIAL GRANTS - \$758,942

Camping and Education Foundation
Detroit Police Athletic League, Inc.
Elevate USA
Grow Home
Jackie Joyner-Kersey Foundation
Jubilee Consortium
Mannie Jackson Center for the Humanities Fdn.
Mercy Neighborhood Ministries of Philadelphia, Inc.
Rippleeffect, Inc.
SOS Outreach

IMPACT GRANTS - \$240,000

Laureus Sport for Good Foundation USA
Para La Naturaleza

PARTNERSHIP & OTHER GRANTS - \$102,000

Coastal Outreach Academies, Inc.
YMCA of Greater Seattle
Detroit Hives
Philadelphia Youth Orchestra
Rippleeffect, Inc.
Row New York, Inc.
Tiny Hope Village
Unlimited Potential

In 2020, the National Recreation Foundation awarded over \$1,678,211* in grants to organizations providing opportunities for youth from disadvantaged circumstances to get active and get outdoors!

* Total reflects an additional \$100,000 given in COVID-19 relief grants.

For 60 years, Robert W. Crawford served others through his role as Commissioner of Recreation in Philadelphia and as Executive Director of the National Recreation Foundation.

As the Commissioner of Recreation, Crawford established a national model for local government's provision of recreational services for all citizens. His creativity and innovative ideas won him international recognition. He also played an important role in the development and growth of the National Recreation Foundation.

The purpose of the prize is to recognize a living person who is dedicated to enhancing recreation opportunities for youth, making it possible for more young Americans to live healthy, participatory lives, thus reinforcing the work of the Foundation.

Each year, the prize is awarded to that person, whether professional or volunteer, who has made an extraordinary contribution in advancing recreation programs for youth from disadvantaged circumstances.

The prize consists of a \$50,000 cash award to support the recreation-related project of the recipient's choice and is presented at the Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees.



The Robert W. Crawford Prize



Crawford personified those qualities of leadership and commitment that the Foundation seeks to foster, which is why this achievement prize is named in his honor.



Derwin Hannah

2020 Recipient

More than two decades ago, ABC Park on Baltimore’s west side was a dangerous, rundown site littered with trash and overrun with illegal activity. It certainly was not a safe place for anyone to spend time – especially children. That’s when neighborhood resident Derwin Hannah stepped in.

An overnight delivery driver for a commercial laundry, Hannah took the bull by the horns. When he came home from work in the morning, he’d catch a few hours of sleep and then head over to the park to pick up trash. His wife and son often joined him.

"Every child needs the right to have an actual childhood, and that means having a safe park to play in," Hannah says. Although he was doing his part, he realized that revitalization would require more hands. Hannah began talking with local businesses and local government agencies to build support.

In 2010, he recruited 50 community members and U.S. Naval Academy midshipmen to join in a day-long cleanup. He sought donations from merchants to purchase a snowball machine, which he knew would bring children and their parents back to the park. In 2013, Hannah established a youth tackle football team at the park, which has grown into the year-round Seminole Sports League. Sixteen volunteers serve as coaches and mentors



to the 250 kids ages 6 to 17 who join the co-ed football, baseball, basketball, dance and cheer teams. Hannah makes sure every child has the opportunity to take part. He solicits donations, and he and the coaches often pull out their own wallets to help.

"When these kids are with you, they're your kids," he says. Hannah also went to work encouraging city officials to renovate the park. Thanks to his efforts, the city committed to a \$1.5 million renovation, for which ground was broken in 2018.

Last year the Seminoles' 12U football team won the city championship and was invited to take part in the regional Pennsylvania Snow Bowl. This year, when sports programs were curtailed because of COVID-19, Hannah spearheaded a program to distribute food to families and senior citizens.

Jonathan Scott, who nominated Hannah for the award, describes him as a "gentle giant." "Derwin's persistence, quiet intelligence and demanding presence, combined with an overwhelming passion and commitment to the kids in the neighborhood, has yielded a remarkable result," he writes.

Today, more than 100 neighborhood residents visit ABC Park daily. They take advantage of movie nights, back-to-school events, community cook-outs, kickball tournaments, and the popular "Day of 1,000 Hot Dogs."

Hannah doesn't plan to stop any time soon. His goals include expanding sports travel programs, mentoring and employment opportunities, and health and community resource fairs.

Michael Dorsey, executive director of GROW HOME, a Baltimore nonprofit that helps mobilize recreation programs in the city's park system, says Hannah's steady leadership and drive have "truly transformed a community through the benefits of recreation."

- 2019 Richard Louv, *Julian, CA*
- 2018 Peter Westbrook, *New York, NY*
- 2017 Susan Teegen, *Philadelphia, PA*
- 2016 Michael "Spike" Lobdell, *Stonington, CT*
- 2015 Khary Lazzarre-White, *New York, NY*
- 2014 Jackie Joyner-Kersey, *St. Louis, MO*
- 2013 Harrison I. Steans, *Chicago, IL*
- 2012 Lt. Gen. John B. Conaway, *Bethany Beach, DE*
- 2011 Eleanor M. Josaitis, *Detroit, MI*
- 2010 Melissa T. Harper, *Boston, MA*
- 2009 Robert Kohel, *Marquette County, WI*
- 2008 Sidney Epstein, *Chicago, IL*
- 2007 J. Kent Hutcheson, PhD, *Denver, CO*
- 2006 Margaret C. Daley, *Chicago, IL*
- 2005 Ronnie Lott, *Redwood City, CA*
- 2004 Peter A. Witt, PhD, *College Station, TX*
- 2003 Jane G. Pepper, *Philadelphia, PA*
- 2002 Dr. David McLone, *Chicago, IL*

Prior Crawford Prize Recipients

NRF is pleased to add the name of Derwin Hannah in 2020 to the list of individuals recognized for their tireless efforts in bringing youth positive experiences through recreational activities.

Pandemic brings lessons to our educational system and us

Virtual classrooms were already established supplements to brick-and-mortar schools before the pandemic. But now they've become the critical fall-back to keep our educational system from collapsing.

Some districts have gone entirely to distance learning, while others adopted hybrid models limiting the number of students present in the school building at any given time.

But educators worry about maintaining student engagement and supporting our most vulnerable students. The lack of face-to-face communications and hands-on learning, the confinement at home during lessons, the need of young people to socialize directly with each other, have exposed the drawbacks of a strictly virtual setting with current technology.

There is universal concern that the pandemic has caused many students to fall behind.

One solution is outdoor education. On that topic, history supplies a lesson. During the tuberculosis pandemic at the turn of the last century, schools established open-air classrooms in large warehouses and on rooftops – and even boats – to help safeguard students while lessons continued. Although that was a long time ago, such precedents can inform how we adapt modern settings to keep students engaged during the current health crisis.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many ideas have been discussed and some implemented, by teachers, administrators and parents who recognize the value of outdoor settings to improve safety and keep students on track.

Providing outdoor learning opportunities during the school day has been shown to be advantageous to learning. Child development specialists also understand the importance of youth regularly spending time outdoors, to the benefit of both students and their teachers. As little as an hour a day of outdoor activity can improve classroom behavior, ability to focus on lessons, and enhance academic growth. Some studies indicate it's especially helpful to students with emotional, cognitive or behavioral disabilities – those most at risk for setbacks.

Looking for a silver lining during this contagion invites skepticism, but this year is an ironically "teachable moment." It's an opportunity to approach daunting challenges as creatively as possible, and ensure we're minimizing the impact on young generations.

If we are able to learn the lessons this experience brings, it could usher in a new era of educational support and opportunity for our children, long after the pandemic has peaked.

This is our unexpected and critical "final exam" as the adults in the classroom.





**Green space is
more important
than ever —
access is an
obstacle**

One fact the current pandemic has made clear is that COVID-19, like any virus, is more readily transmitted indoors than outdoors. The reasons are obvious – outdoors, people have more room to create effective distancing; open air environments, often including breezes and sunshine, dissipate and weaken viral concentrations and spread; and children, in particular, benefit from a refreshing setting that strengthens body and mind.

The current pandemic underscores why parks and green spaces are critical to individual and public health. But it has also prompted a movement to help schools, whenever possible, get kids out of the building and into “Mother Nature’s classroom.” Educators, together with health and recreation professionals, are partnering more than ever with educational systems to maximize local green spaces as classrooms.

The North American Association for Environmental Education, in particular, deserves praise for providing school systems with a comprehensive list of ways they can re-purpose school grounds and work with outdoor professionals to create gardens, use gazebos and nature centers, and take carefully planned in-person (or virtual) field trips to natural surroundings.

Across the country, the National Recreation Foundation itself has long sought ways to serve schools, youth organizations and community park professionals, bringing them together to take maximum advantage of local outdoor settings that can enhance physical and academic development.

But there's a major obstacle in making sure all our communities have this advantage: the glaring gap in availability of, and access to, green spaces, especially for low-income and minority households. That disparity was spotlighted this year by The Trust for Public Land in a detailed new report which reveals that parks and green spaces serving nonwhite populations are approximately half the number that are serving majority-white populations, and that these areas are also, on average, four times smaller than parks and green spaces near majority-white populations.

Addressing this disparity is an ideal application of the strategic grant making priorities of the NRF, which is always searching for opportunities to connect youth with the myriad benefits of time spent outdoors. To this end, NRF has partnered with The Trust for Public Land on such projects in Philadelphia, Newark, Chicago and Atlanta. NRF is especially proud to support organizations dedicated to providing youth from disadvantaged circumstances with meaningful outdoor experiences, including the Center for Conservation Leadership, Environmental Learning for Kids, Harlem Grown, Muddy Sneakers, Para La Naturaleza and Rippleffect, to name a few.

The unexpected emergence of a pandemic assigns a special significance to our core mission and its evolution. With renewed determination, the NRF seeks to ensure that every youth in the United States, regardless of where they live, has equal access to parks and green spaces.





New Members to Board of Trustees in 2020



NRF's predominant purpose is to support nonprofit organizations engaged in youth development through recreation – changing young lives and building lifelong skills.

As an informed partner, we invest deeply in understanding our grantees' challenges, and we apply due diligence and care in selecting organizations with a record of achievement and, the potential for even more.

We know our success can only be measured in terms of our grantees' success. And based on NRF's model, this is only possible through the engagement of an informed and active Board of Trustees.

NRF trustees are responsible for managing and directing the significant resources we deliver to our grant partners and the youth they serve. Pooling their talents this year with an experienced core of board members, NRF's new trustees ensure the continued success of our work. Their accomplishments attest to the contributions they will make in fulfilling our mission.

We are delighted to welcome these nine new trustees, their experience, ideas, expertise and values.



Top: **Myron Floyd** - Dean and Professor at NC State University.

Middle: **Martin LeBlanc** - Principal at LBC Action.

Bottom: **Karen Stewart-Ramos** - Former Global Equity Analyst.

Top: **José González** - Founder and Director Emeritus of Latino Outdoors.

Middle: **Kim Moore Bailey** - CEO of Youth Outside.

Bottom: **Lee Storey** - Managing member of TSL Law Group.

Top: **Gary Hall** - Partner with Siebert Williams Shank & Co., LLC.

Middle: **Bakeyah Nelson** - Executive Director of Air Alliance Houston.

Bottom: **Darryl Taylor** - Director of Cranbrook Schools Horizons-Upward Bound.

Officers



President - **John W. McCarter, Jr.** - *Illinois*

President-Elect - **Joseph B. Anderson, Jr.** - *Michigan*

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Our Team



Executive Director - **Sophia B. Twichell** - *Illinois*

Charles E. Hartsoe Fellow 2019-2020 - **Kevin Naaman** - *Indiana*

Charles E. Hartsoe Fellow 2020-2021 - **Caitlin Reilly** - *North Carolina*

Partnerships - **Timothy L. Richardson** - *Georgia*

Advisor - **Jackie Joyner-Kersee** - *Illinois*

Advisor - **Edwin Moses** - *Georgia*

Advisor - **Sarah Milligan-Toffler** - *Georgia*

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Many of the images shown in this publication have been provided by our Grant Recipients. We are grateful for their contributions.

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- 5| Images clockwise from top left corner:
 - SailMaine
 - Bradford Woods Climbing Club
 - First Tee of Greater Detroit
 - Center for Conservation Leadership
 - SailMaine
 - Street2Feet
 - Muddy Sneakers
 - Colorado Discover Ability
 - Camping and Education Foundation
 - TheGifted Arts, Inc.
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 - HSP images
- Center image – NRF image
- 6| Twichell image
- 7| Twichell image
- 8| Reilly image
- 9| Muddy Sneakers
- 10| (top) Coastal Outreach Academies
- 11| Breakthrough Urban Ministries
- 12| Harlem Grown
- 14-15| Crawford Family image
- 15| Crawford Family image
- 16| (top) HSP Baltimore city images
- 16| (middle) ABC Park illustration/HSP
- 16| (bottom) NRF image
- 18-19| Environmental Learning for Kids
- 20-21| Center for Conservation Leadership
- 22| Grow Home
- 23| Environmental Learning for Kids
- 24| Muddy Sneakers
- 25| NRF images
- 28| Boys and Girls Clubs of Boston, Edgerley Family South Boston Club
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NATIONALRECREATIONFOUNDATION.ORG

MISSION

The National Recreation Foundation is dedicated to enhancing the role of recreation as a positive force in improving the quality of life of youth.

Phone

224.880.6550

Email

info@nationalrecreationfoundation.org

Address

736 North Western Avenue, Suite 221, Lake Forest, Illinois 60045-1820

