The Waukegan Park District (WPD) has embraced partnerships as a way to deliver and enhance programs and services. From the top to the bottom of the organization, internally and externally, WPD has embraced forming unique partnerships as a strategy.

The strategic plan goal of community engagement is supported by the initiative to develop and maintain partnerships. The Board of Commissioners and staff constantly seek mutually beneficial partners and relationships in the community for several reasons.
The park district does not always have to be the lead provider of programs and services.

- The park district does not have the resources alone to meet the needs and desires of the community.

- As a strategic plan value of organizational sustainability: The board and staff will use a collaborative and cooperative team based approach that results in the best decisions for the long term greater good of the entire community.

- The park district can add value and credibility to partner initiatives, and vice versa.

- Volunteers, patrons, future leaders and program participants are generated.

- Partnerships stretch funds, generate revenue and enhance cost recovery.

- Creates community engagement and makes the park district more relevant.

The Waukegan Park District has approximately forty active partnerships. Some of the more unique ones of interest include:

**Faith Community**

*First Presbyterian Church of Waukegan and First Methodist Church of Waukegan*

These churches provide rehearsal and performance space to the Waukegan Concert Chorus. The annual Messiah at Christmas is also held in a church. No rental fees are levied. These churches also allow the use of their musical instruments and equipment.

*St. Anastasia Catholic Church*

St. Anastasia School is landlocked and does not have any open space for classes, events or after-school activities. WPD utilizes space at the church for cultural performances. The Jack Benny Center for the Arts provides exhibit space for the student art show.

**Nonprofits**

*United Way*

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, led by the United Way of Lake County in partnership with Waukegan School District #60, Waukegan Park District, Waukegan Public Library and Kohl Children’s Museum, has helped eliminate the achievement gap for third grade reading between Waukegan schools and the state of Illinois. Reaching out to approximately 10,000 low-income children in a district of 17,000 students, the campaign has ensured children from low-income families in Waukegan enter school with the skills they need, have fewer unexcused absences and increased summer learning opportunities.

*Gang Outreach*

Supporting the mission of Jane Addams Hull House, WPD provides space to a faith-based group and the Waukegan Police Department to assist young people transitioning out of gangs. Opportunities for tattoo removal were available, as well as new clothes that were not associated with gang colors or symbols.

*Bowen Country Club Committee*

The Bowen Country Club Reunion Committee works with the district to preserve the history of Jane Addams and the Hull House as the summer program was housed at Bowen Park from 1912 to 1962. Thousands of Chicago inner city youth were brought to the property for leisure education. The committee has raised approximately $75,000 to build a memorial arbor, a brick walkway and benches in Bowen Park in memory of past directors. The group also built the Bowen Country Club Memorabilia display. The Waukegan Park District provides the group space for annual picnics, an annual reunion and clerical assistance. Their efforts helped in designating Bowen Park to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.
Waukegan Arts Council (WAC)
The WAC is a grassroots organization that works to promote the arts in Waukegan and acts as an economic and tourism driver. The district has provided the organization with an annual $1,500 grant, mailing support and meeting space. The district’s executive director sits on the Honorary Board and two staff members are on the Executive Board. In turn, WAC places the cultural arts department banner on the council’s website once a year, promotes programs and activities on the council’s website calendar and social media page.

Waukegan Harbor Citizens Advisory Group (CAG)
CAG is a grassroots citizen’s group interested in the cleanup of environmentally distressed properties and environmental education. It is comprised of governments, nonprofits, environmental advocacy groups and businesses. CAG has secured millions of dollars of grants through state and federal programs. The group has assisted with the inventory of the botanical, reptile and bird populations in several of the district’s parks. CAG has provided opportunities for summer camps to participate in W.G. Jackson research vessel tours on Lake Michigan. The group has acted as a resource for WPD’s Dandelion Wine Fine Arts Festival and Live Green special events, as well as the Citizen Scientist and For Earth’s Sake programs. CAG sponsored the Geosphere (also known as the Earth Balloon) at the Field House for school children and the general public to experience.

Boys and Girls Club of Lake County (BGCLC)
A partnership with the BGCLC to lease the Community Recreation Center for $1 a year has enabled more than 300 high risk children to be better served with the leveraged increase of nonprofit grant funding. There is an annual savings to the district of $90,000, with greater staffing, resources and programs realized at the facility.

Government

Waukegan Township
The Park Place Senior Center was constructed on park district property as an addition to the Belvidere Recreation Center. The Waukegan Park District staff assisted with the construction management. Shared space is utilized for programming in respective buildings. The district provides limited indoor building maintenance and all outdoor landscaping maintenance and snowplowing. Support is given for special events such as the Jazz Fest and Walk for Seniors.

Solid Waste Agency of Lake County (SWALCO)
SWALCO has collaborated with the WPD Green Team to plan community recycling programs and events. The agency offers resources and coordination of recycling collection events and programs. The district promotes SWALCO’s Reuse-A-Shoe program at recreation centers and holds community recycling events. Annually, 30,000 pounds of electronic products, 3,500 pounds of paper and 800 pairs of shoes were collected. The program was recently expanded to collect textiles and bicycles.

Lake County Health Department
In cooperation with the Lake County Health Department, the BeWell fitness program was implemented for people who are battling diabetes. The BeWell program is available for underserved community members with Type 2 diabetes and the program provides these patients with a free monthly fitness center membership and group exercise classes while being counseled about healthy living options.

Business Community

Comcast
Comcast has provided funding to the Cultural Arts Division to start the Comcast Literary Arts and Digital Photography Lab at the Jack Benny Center for the Arts. The purpose of the lab is for children to expand their imagination through playing with words and exploring the world through nature photography. The children in the creative writing classes have learned to create pictures through their words and the photography students tell stories through their pictures.

Vista Health System
Vista and the park district have committed to initiatives that enhance health and wellness within the local community. These include participating in numerous events and activities throughout the year.
including the annual Field House Fitness expo, free bimonthly health screenings at the fitness center, Vista Healthy Woman Zumba Parties, the Vista Healthy Woman Expo and health and wellness lectures by Vista physicians.

**Beach Park Animal Hospital (BPAH)**
The district and BPAH work cooperatively to educate the community on healthy pet owning practices while providing affordable pet services to the community. Together, a special event called K9 Trace and Pace was created to raise funds for the development of a dog agility playground at the Callahan Franklin Dog Exercise Area and the Beach Park Animals' Pet Rescue Fund. The event also provided a wellness aspect for people as they walked around a pond with their dog, tested out dog agility equipment (Pace) and a discounted pet microchipping opportunity (Trace). BPAH also worked in collaboration with the district to offer a discounted vaccination program in which 65 dogs and cats received vaccinations.

**North Shore Gas (NSG)**
Programs developed during this partnership include the Wise Kids Outdoors, We Can, and The OrganWise Guys. NSG funded a Nature Navigator position that enhanced environmental learning for summer campers and they helped create an Environmental School Outreach program. The park district provides NSG employees and their families a Kid's Exploration Day. Children of employees enjoy nature activities at one of the district's local parks. This has been a great way for NSG families to experience the programs they have supported.

**Media**
Waukegan Association for Youth Soccer (W.A.Y.S.) is a sports affiliate of the Waukegan Park District. The park district advertises soccer in the brochure with a full page ad. In turn, W.A.Y.S. distributes a free, biweekly, mostly Spanish written newspaper named Goolpe to its participants and the community, a circulation of 10,000. The district is provided a full page color ad at no charge.

**Board and Staff**

**Volunteers/Patrons**
In February of each year, the WPD recognizes 615 volunteers and 170 patrons at a reception.

**Partners in Parks**
Groups can partner to make park improvements through Corporate Work Days or ongoing commitments. Ongoing commitments are recognized permanently on the park name sign.

**Polar Bear Plunge**
Held on New Year's Day, Commissioner Terry Duffy created and annually promotes a fundraising campaign. It is a competition among local bars to raise money to support special recreation services.

With partnerships, we can engage the community to creatively solve problems and deliver beneficial programs and services in unique ways that we cannot necessarily do alone. The number of potential collaborations and resources available are endless to meet our mission, strategy and values.

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