

# AK Recreation & Parks Association

2020 Holiday Newsletter

## ~Our hats off to you good friends~

Hello Friends and Family,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for doing the good work you do within your communities and supporting the mission of ARPA throughout this year. We think it goes without saying that the value of Parks & Recreation was emphasized time and again in the face of the global pandemic. We are proud of Alaska's resiliency and the adaptation each of you deployed to remain relevant and active in the services you provide your fellow community members.



*With that, we wish you a very Happy Holiday season and New Year. Please enjoy this holiday newsletter developed by your colleagues around the state.*

From,

Your friends at the Alaska Recreation & Parks Association

## ~Meet the members of the ARPA Board & Committee Chairs~



**Mike Illg**



**Nick Farline**



**Joel Todd**



**Joan Klapperich**



**Lauren Eck**



**Lauren Anderson**



**Tyler Florence**



**Kate Thomas**



**Mike Bork**



**Donnie Hayes**

~Missing photo of Dan  
Cain~

## **Juneau Parks & Recreation**

We're currently putting on a P&R Candy Cane Hunt in downtown Juneau where we partnered with 35 local businesses to hide candy cane numbers in their storefront windows. Participants then printed off our candy cane tracker and went around matching up businesses to their number. The goal was to encourage folks to stay with their household bubble but also to shop locally this holiday season. We received close to \$1,000 in donations from the businesses for prizes which totally blew me away! I've been seeing families running around downtown with their trackers playing and it literally just makes my day! I love being able to organize activities for families to get out and do something new within our community. This is the last weekend for the hunt and we'll be compiling all the submissions next week and hold our drawing.



## **“Look at how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness” ~ Ann Frank ~**

During the Holiday Season, homes, businesses, boats, and parks are adorned with lights. Here in Alaska these lights are integral to surviving the long dark winter. These lights can also cause frustration and risks. Below is a list of things to consider while you are preparing to light the night in your facilities and parks.

- Make sure all your light strands are UL certified. This certification is important to meet code and protect you from electric issues.
- Test and inspect all your lights before you begin to decorate.
- Secure your extension cords so that they are not a tripping hazard.
- Use appropriate hooks to hang your lights. Stay away from nails, screws, and tacks.
- Use extension cords that are rated for the environment and electrical load you are putting them in.
- Have an electrician inspect the outlets you plan to use. Sometimes those outlets have issues that are not noticed since they don't have significant use year-round.
- Always hang lights with a co-worker.
- Make sure you are wearing the right clothing and PPE for the temperature, and the work. If you can hang lights when it is warmer outside that will save fingers, toes, and faces from frostbite.
- Look into new technology like LED lights that can be up year round.

Although issues can arise while preparing for holiday cheer, it is also a great way to brighten lives all Winter long. A simple stroll through a light encrusted Park brings miles of smiles to our communities. Here are a few ideas to help get the community involved.

- Tree lighting ceremonies.
- Parade of lights – This could be with vehicles, boats, or walking tours.
- Holiday Markets among the lights.
- Bright Light 5k's- everyone wears glow sticks, and other light up gear.

Being among the lights make our days merry and bright! Be safe and bright this Holiday Season.

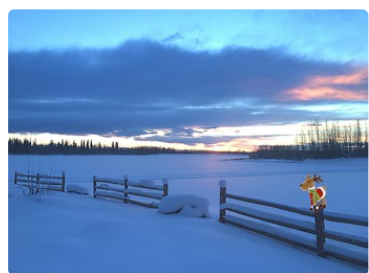


## ~From the North Country~

Fairbanks put on a Holiday Treats program - think bag full of ingredients and supplies to make snacks, cocoa and crafts. Each one had 3 crafts, a snack to make, a drink to make, coloring pages and a small bag of candy, stickers, and toys. We offered 3 different themes, Grinch, Rudolph, and Peanuts, offering 75 total boxes. Registration filled up in 25 minutes! Myself and my staff, Mark, had fun packing the bags. Who doesn't love filling 75 cups of sprinkles, icing, etc.! We've found that take home boxes are a great way to offer programming while adhering to safety regulations. They are extremely popular in the Fairbanks community among young children. I've included some photos for you!

We've also been running Moose on the Loose, an "elf on the shelf" in our parks. Moose visits a different park each Wednesday this month and participants must guess which park he visited based on a photo we post on our Facebook Page. More than 60 families are playing along each week. So far Moose has visited a recreation area, park, and pool. 1 winner is chosen randomly each week and they receive a \$25 parks and rec gift card and their very own Moose on the Loose stuffed animal.

*~Content provided by Lauren Eck~*



# THE POWER OF PARKS

Do you know the power of your local parks and recreation? Yes, they provide beautiful green spaces and fun programs, but they do so much more and the benefits are immense. Learn more at [www.nrpa.org/power-of-parks](http://www.nrpa.org/power-of-parks) and watch the video.

## PARKS HAVE ENVIRONMENTAL POWER



**1 ACRE OF TREES**  
absorbs the carbon dioxide produced by  
**DRIVING A CAR 11,000 MILES.**

## PARKS HAVE HEALTH POWER



Increased access to places for physical activity leads to a  
**25% increase**  
in people exercising  
3 or more days a week.

## PARKS HAVE SAFETY POWER

In Macon, GA, a revitalized park that included new programming and beautification efforts  
**reduced incidents of crime and violence by**  
**50%.**

Sources:  
Centers for Disease Control, Environmental Protection Agency,  
American Planning Association

## PARKS HAVE COMMUNITY POWER



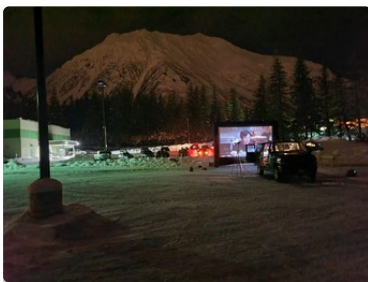
Parks strengthen community ties and  
*bring diverse populations together.*

**Parks have the power to strengthen communities, transform lives, and protect the future.**

**Parks are the most powerful aspect of every community.**

 **National Recreation and Park Association**

**#PowerOfParks**



## Carpool Movie Night in Seward

On Saturday December 12 at 6:00pm the lights for the High School parking lot went out and about 25 cars were lined up and parked. The generators were humming, and the movie "Elf" started to project on our 24' blow up screen. The first Carpool movie night in Seward was in full swing.

For this event we had to coordinate with the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District to get approval to use their parking lot, Seward Public Radio to help transmit the audio, and Seward Seahawks Athletic Booster Club provided concessions. We received the movie rights through Swank Motion Pictures. Thankfully the weather held out for us with no snow, rain or wind. Any of those factors would have forced us to cancel this event. We are planning to continue this event each month for the rest of winter. Also looking into receiving some sponsorships to help offset costs for this event.

You could really see the appreciation on the public's faces when they checked in. This was the first big event that Sports and Recreation has held since Halloween. It was nice to see the community out and about enjoying themselves and we can't wait to continue this event, if Alaskan weather will allow it

## Homer Happenings!

Happy Holidays from the "Cosmic Hamlet By the Sea"...or what the maps continue to display: Homer, Alaska! To say 2020 has been an unusual year is clearly a major understatement. Like many of you across the state, we were challenged to find different ways to continue to serve the needs and demands of our community members and visitors alike. The irony of the pandemic that requires physical distancing to minimize transmission of an infection when the core of what most of the parks and recreation industry provides is to bring people together.



Addressing the increased camping demands, creating reservation systems for gym use, vandalized restrooms, creating mitigation plans, purchasing PPE (if you could find it), shutting services completely down, etc. How grateful we are to have our ARPA organization to provide support, ideas, templates, friendships and resources to our fellow members in a time of great need and unprecedented uncertainty. I believe the ARPA organization has truly benefited from the pandemic. While we certainly look forward to attending our annual conference in person where create new connections, learn new skills, explore a new community and come away feeling completely re-charged about working in the parks and rec. But as you know we could not attend in person this past year and we hosted our first Virtual Conference (which was super fun and very well done). The utilization of video conferencing software will now allow us to remain even more connected especially being such a large geographical state whereas travel can be expensive and timely. While I look forward to our Annual Conference again in person (Soldotna 2021!), I envision we will continue to use the technology beyond the pandemic to strengthen our organizational purpose and functions by staying connected as much as possible.

A couple of things happening in here in Homer in response to improving the lives of our residents includes the "Light Up Homer" program created by our newly minted and ever creative Parks Superintendent Matt Steffy. In a partnership with the local chamber of commerce, any business that would like to illuminate their storefront with seasonal lighting the City will provide the lights if the business can provide the installation. Lighting will be collected back up in the spring for redistribution again in the fall. Businesses can add their own additional decorations to enhance their displays. The Chamber will be issuing awards for the best lighting arrangements. Another program we will be rolling out soon is the "Sports Gear Library". Similar to a public library, the city will provide and check out some outdoor recreational gear to community members such as sleds, skates, snowshoes, Frisbees, etc for free. We envision this to be a collaborative effort with other community organizations to help connect people with gear that they otherwise would not be able to afford or simply would like to try something out before purchasing. Ultimately the goal is to assist with getting people active and eliminate any potential barriers from recreating outdoors.

*~Content provided by Mike Illg~*

**Stay informed on the Alaska State Budget**

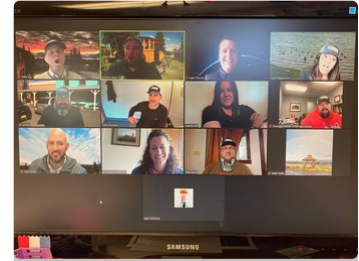
# A Path Forward

Alaska State Fiscal Year 2022 Fact Sheet

## Did you know?

Did you know, as of today, we have **85 professional certifications** related to the parks and recreation industry in Alaska? Check it out!

- 44 Certified Playground Safety Inspectors (CPSI)
- 19 Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS)
- 16 Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP)
- 4 Aquatic Facility Operators (AFO)
- 2 Certified Parks and Recreation Executive (CPRE)



Did you know that the certification processes usually requires adequate time, preparation, training and the exams are not cheap? They're spendy!

Did you also know that ARPA provides some **financial assistance** to help *you* obtain the professional certifications you have been thinking about to expand your skill set and advance your career? It's true!

ARPA currently offers **6 scholarships** per year (December 1 - November 30) of up to \$500 each in the following categories:

- Three individual scholarships to assist with **professional development** (any certification/education relating to the Parks & Recreation field with preference given to NRPA programs).
- Three individual scholarships to **assist with attendance** at the ARPA Annual Conference (allowable expenses include travel, registration fees and/or hotel)

The proposed scholarships do not require the recipient to pass any tests/exams if pursuing certifications. Scholarship requests are open only to current ARPA members in good standing. Scholarships may be awarded to an individual in each category once every two years.

Please contact the Scholarship Committee Chairperson for more information: [donnie.hayes@fnsb.gov](mailto:donnie.hayes@fnsb.gov)

Informational links.

<https://www.nctrc.org/about-certification/ctrs-the-qualified-provider/>

<https://www.nrpa.org/certification/>



2021 ARPA CONFERENCE

# *Save the Date*

OCTOBER 6TH & 7TH, 2021  
SOLDOTNA, ALASKA

## **Petersburg Alaska Embraces New P&R Director**

*Read from her own words, Stephanie Payne's climb to the top. Provided below her autobiography you can read more about her success through KFSK's Radio Article.*



I graduated from University of Central Missouri with a master's in biology, focusing on Wetland Ecology in 2012. Shortly after, I made my way up to Alaska with my family, landing in Homer. After a year in Homer, we transplanted to Petersburg in southeast AK. At the start, I worked in 3 retail businesses prior to landing at Petersburg Parks and Recreation as the Program Coordinator in April of 2019.

In just a few short months I moved into the Facility Supervisor position. Unfortunately, in February our facility suffered 3 debilitating equipment breakdowns, and we lost our Director, my mentor. With that loss, and a healing facility, our City Manager, Stephen Giesbrecht, stepped in as Acting Director. As busy as he was with managing all our other Borough Departments, I took the bulk of the on-the-ground work with facilities, crew, and functioning. As with many other communities we shut down in March when COVID took its hold. We were closed until July, when we were able to safely re-open. It took a solid effort to get the doors open as safety was a significant concern. Everything was so new at the time.

Just when we thought we were in the clear, we suffered a catastrophic blow in October to our main electrical system controlling our Aquatic Center. A surge so powerful that Ketchikan felt the wake!! Striving to keep the crews hopes alive with prospect of long term facility closure, while balancing multiple facility operations and preparing for fall programming, I managed to keep things moving successfully.

Not long after the incident the miracle work of electrical engineers, mechanical engineers, and contractors paid off, and the facility was able to fully function again! We have hosted a very successful Christmas event and are gearing up to keep kids and adults both moving during Christmas Break. Our facilities are heavily used and partially owned by our local school district, so each closure significantly impacted their schedule and education. We are thrilled to be back up and running for the holidays. It just makes Christmas that much sweeter.

Remember when I said the Director position was vacated and the City Manager was Acting Director? Well, we have worked our way through the hiring process for our new Director, 10 months later. Having fought my hardest to keep facility, crew, and community going, while absorbing a tremendous amount about what our community wants - I earned the position of new Petersburg Parks and Recreation Director! It has been a hard fight this year, not only with COVID, but with a failing facility. This place has become my baby, so to speak.

It is an honor to have been given the chance to move us successfully into the future. Petersburg has become home to me and my 3 daughters and I plan to continue working hard for them and the community to help keep this place an incredible place to enjoy our lives.

*~Content provided by Stephanie Payne~*

## Read KFSK's Story in Petersburg

[Click here](#)



### **Yukon Kuskokwim Fitness Center Welcomes New Staff**

In the midst of the pandemic, The Yukon-Kuskokwim Fitness Center (YKFC) in Bethel has been happy to be able to welcome a new Member & Guest Experience Manager. Kerri Donnelly started with the team in early December after moving to Bethel from Norfolk, Virginia.

Kerri has a bachelor's degree in Tourism and Event Management, Hospitality from George Mason University and previously served as the Events Manager at the Virginia Zoo. When the opportunity to pick up and move across the country presented itself Kerri couldn't resist the new adventure. "Coming from a Southern beach town where 90 degree days are more common than snow covered roads has been a big change, but I'm loving every second of it" says Kerri who has been spending her free time walking by the river or along the city's boardwalks. With a background in customer service the new position is a great fit and an exciting opportunity to get fully emerged in the Bethel community. "I'm excited to be working with the only fitness and rec center in the area, I think it'll be a great way

Starting a new position now is a little tricky, but luckily there's a lot of opportunities to explore the facility and get ready to welcome guests back. "I'm learning as much as I can about the facility, programs, and the area so I can be ready when we re-open" says Kerri. YKFC offers a six lane competition pool as well as an exercise room and studio for group fitness. Offering the only swim lessons in the area, YKFC serves as a vital piece of the community's recreation as well as an essential part of the community's safety.

Do you want to be like Kerri and join in the Bethel Adventure at YKFC? Visit [ykfitness.org](http://ykfitness.org) for facility information and to see how you can join our team!

*~Content provided by Stacey Reardon & Kerri Donnelly~*

## Outstanding Business Partner Award

The **OUTSTANDING BUSINESS PARTNER AWARD** recognizes one business partner that has supported ARPA and its mission. This support can be shown in any manner. **MyRec.Com Recreation Software** was chosen as this year's recipient. MyRec.Com Recreation Software helps departments operate more efficiently with tools like online registration, leading to savings in service delivery, operations, and business planning. In 2019, MyRec.Com Recreation Software set up a website for ARPA free of charge. Their outstanding customer service and dedication to helping ARPA become a more visible and quality organization led them to receiving this award. MyRec.Com Recreation Software has provided ARPA with tools such as, memberships, online conference registration, email blasts, and overall a more streamlined and easy-to-access site.



**~Read more about this year's award winners~**

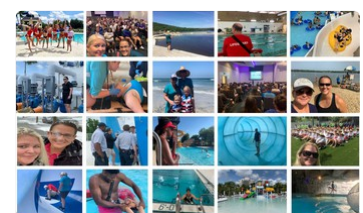
**~New aquatics resource shared by one of the best, Wendy Clubb~**

## Build your aquatics tool box with ALIVE Solutions

We exist to keep people & businesses ALIVE and well!

WE BELIEVE...

- In providing solutions, resources, and knowledge to our community
- We are here to create tools to help people and operators change their lives



- In servicing the space between lifeguard providers and operators
- There is power in bridging the gap between training and reality
- Aquatics Directors / Leaders deserve high quality training
- Aquatics Leadership should have coaches and direct line support to mentoring experts
- Personal & Professional Wellness is important and vital for success
- Post Event debriefs / crisis management can be handled in a singular fashion in a supportive way
- In continual improvement, innovation, and growth
- Trainings is important and powerful, if done right
- In providing high quality online and in person trainings to our community
- In water safety & drowning education
- Perspective is so important to success
- Everyone is Important

#### WE MAKE IT...

We make it Great. We make it Work. We make it Simple. We make it Important. We make it Better.  
We make it Real. We make it Powerful. We make it Creative. We make it Smart. We make it Safe.  
We make it Personal. We make it Unforgettable. We make it Last.

#### WE ARE...

Aquatic Safety Exerts  
Experienced Operators / Managers  
Teachers / Educators  
Creatives / Visionaries  
Consultants  
Coaches  
People Focused  
Wellness Oriented  
Passionate  
Lifeguard Instructors  
Leaders

<https://alive-solutions.com/>

**Enjoy 10 Hours of Yule Logging**

Fireplace 10 hours full HD



## Valdez Holiday Train & Tree Lighting

Each year, to welcome the holiday season, the Valdez Parks & Recreation Department hosts the Annual Community Tree Lighting Ceremony. During these unprecedented times, hosting the traditional close gathering was not an ideal option. Through creative thinking, we came up with the perfect solution to bring everyone together while staying safely apart.



On Sunday, November 29, we put on the first ever Holiday Train & Tree Lighting. We invited the entire community to decorate their vehicles, line up, and tune in for a collaborative on-air event. As with anything new, we were uncertain what the turnout would be. Staff, being as prepared as they could be, never anticipated what would happen next. Lineup started at 5:30PM. By 5:45PM, there were well over 100 festive cars lining the street! What we estimated to be a 30-minute event (tops!) ended up lasting 1 hour and 45 minutes. It was one of the most rewarding moments in my 8-year career with Valdez Parks & Recreation.

KVAK radio broadcasted live, and put together a wonderful radio show featuring the mayor's proclamation reading, in-car games, and upbeat holiday tunes. We led the train through a festive route downtown where Santa parked his fire truck and waved to the children as they passed by. Folks, dressed in their holiday best, lined the sidewalks and rang out shouts of cheer, and KVAK, Frosty and the Prospector crew delivered candy canes in their Mele Kalikimaka attire.

At the end of the route, next to the community tree, Parks & Recreation handed out over 300 holiday cheer bags for kids. Thirty-six lucky little ones received a golden ticket and collected wonderful prizes, all donated by local businesses. It was a proud day, and much fun was had by all!

*Additional photographs are viewable on the Parks & Recreation Facebook page:*

[www.facebook.com/ValdezAlaskaFun](https://www.facebook.com/ValdezAlaskaFun).

*~Content provided by Krystal Moulton~*



## Thank you Jason Jones!

Jason has been a steadfast leader in Park Maintenance, running the ARPA section over a number of years. We value folks like Jason and the knowledge they bring to recreation departments far and wide. Although ARPA does not currently have sections established, feel free to reach out to you pals for advice and brainstorming sessions.

Thank you for your leadership and consistent presence with ARPA!

## Thank you Brandon Harker!

Brandon Harker has been an ARPA champion for more years than we can count. He brings a wealth of knowledge to his professional colleagues in the realm of Therapeutic Recreation. While Brandon isn't active with the ARPA Board currently, we look forward to continued engagement with him in the months and years to come.


Thanks for your outstanding commitment and service to ARPA!



## Alaska Recreation & Parks Association

 Facebook

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 [arpa.myrec.com/info/default.a...](http://arpa.myrec.com/info/default.a...)

