



Making a Difference: *One Kid at a Time*

Camp Best Friends (CBF) is one of the best and most affordable summer camps in Atlanta! The camp provides youth a wealth of opportunities to explore, create, express and enjoy! Offering specialty camps that include tennis, golf and art, CBF has something for everyone!

Meeting the Need

Few people know the extent to which the Department of Parks and Recreation goes to meet the needs of all children, particularly those with special needs. That's where Coan Recreation Center comes in.

A therapeutic site, the center offers inclusive after school programming throughout the school year. During summer, youth ages 6-18 with mild to moderate cognitive and sensory disorders such as down syndrome, autism and cerebral palsy, participate in Camp Best Friends.

Activities include horseback riding, swimming, fieldtrips and gymnastics. An Atlanta Hawks and State Farm "Good Neighbor Club" site, Coan offers a unique sensory lab available to participants.

Incredible Commitment

Havalyn Brooks best known as "Ms. Hav," is Coan's Camp Director and has served as a camp employee with the City for 26 years! She is also a bus driver who transports special needs kids for Atlanta Public Schools, and has done so for the same 26 years. "These are the kids I choose to take my vacation with every summer," states Ms. Brooks. Facility Manager, Diallo Robertson began working with the City the same year as Havalyn. Together, they create a

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Pittsburgh: A Community of Firsts

Historically known as one of Atlanta's oldest Black neighborhoods, the Pittsburgh community has much to celebrate including a new outdoor basketball court made possible by Park Pride through a \$100,000 nonmatching Legacy Grant.

Located in Southwest Atlanta, [the Pittsburgh community](#) was founded in 1883 as a working-class suburb for African Americans, alongside the Pegram rail shops. "A lot of people may not know this, but Pittsburgh is one of the Atlanta communities that personified "Black Excellence" way before it was a "thing," shared Mayor Andre Dickens.

The community is also home to [Carrie Steele Logan](#), founder of Atlanta's first orphanage for African American children. [Clark College](#) (1869) also relocated to Whitehall and McDaniel streets in 1871.

Pittsburgh continues its rich legacy of reimagining the community with engagement from Pittsburgh Association President John Floyd and Vice President Winfrey Young who were instrumental in contributing to the park's master plan.

The July 13 ribbon cutting was a full circle moment for many including City Councilmember Antonio Lewis. During remarks, he shared personal basketball moments growing up inside Pittman Park gym. Outside, on the all-new basketball court, Lewis showed off his basketball skills as Camp Best Friends campers enjoyed a refreshing, iced treat.

Special acknowledgements to Commissioner John Dargle, Park Pride Executive Director Michael Halicki, Community Facility Manager Charles Phillips and radio host, Jerry Smokin' B.

Making a Difference continued...

trusting, family-rich environment for campers. Coan employs teens with disabilities each summer, laying the foundation for life skills. "It's a joy to see former campers being productive in the community," says Diallo. "One of our kids now works at Kroger."

Meeting the Need

We met Camp Counselor, Kayci during our visit. She openly shares undergoing brain surgery and only having the use of one hand. Yet, her enthusiasm is off the charts! Kayci will attend Kennesaw State University this fall. She plans to study film and work with Tyler Perry someday. We asked what she enjoys most about Camp Best Friends, "The kids and staff give me good energy to help conquer my fears and try new things like ziplining."

To all who helped make Camp Best Friends a success this summer, we extend a heartfelt thanks. You truly are making a difference!





COMMISSIONER'S FAREWELL MESSAGE

While July is celebrated as National Parks and Recreation Month, I am reminded of all the great accomplishments we have made through the collaborative support of multiple City agencies, the philanthropic community, partners and City administration. Together, we have seen remarkable progress, often in the face of heavy social burdens. Yet, despite challenges, it is clear: Atlantans appreciate DPRs work and support our amazing parks and recreation system. It is one of the best in the nation!

Over the past four years, I have been tremendously grateful to serve as your Commissioner of Parks and Recreation. During that time, what we have achieved has been exceptional. Together, we have accomplished many things that better our system:

- **Added nearly 1,000 acres to the park and trails system.**
- **Jumped from #49 to #27 in the 2022 TPL ParkScore rankings.**
- **Launched *Activate ATL*, DPRs first comprehensive 10-year master plan.**
- **Awarded by the U.S. Green Building Council for making Grant Park Gateway the first project in the world to earn Parksmart Bronze, LEED Silver and SITES Gold certifications.**
- **Attained Lake Charlotte Nature Preserve, one of the largest acquisitions in city history (216 acres).**
- **Built Browns Mill Food Forest, the largest in the nation.**
- **Completed several parks, including Kathryn Johnston, Cook, and Westside parks**
- **Installed a pedestrian bridge spanning the confluence of Peachtree Creek.**
- **Acquired Lower Paul Avenue Park, providing park access to the Chattahoochee River.**
- **Improved rounds and revenues year over year at our four golf courses.**
- **Reenergized Midnight Basketball.**
- **Established inhouse management of our five tennis centers.**
- **Improved attendance and enrollment of our legendary summer camp and afterschool programs.**
- **Delivered 18,611 meals to seniors; provided 100,000 free meals to afterschool students; conducted a virtual summer camp program; and created learning pods that served 200+ students all during the pandemic.**
- **Simultaneously, our staff kept parks clean, safe and accessible.**

DPRs mission is to provide equitable access to outstanding recreational, natural, and cultural experiences that enhance the happiness, health, and well-being of all Atlantans. Because voters passed the 2022 Parks and Recreation Infrastructure Bond, more can be done. Thanks to the City's leadership, DPR staff, volunteers and partners. Keep up the great work, great support, great advocacy, and great sacrifice on behalf of all Atlantans!

John Dargle, Jr.

*Commissioner Dargle, thank you for your committed service to our staff
and the citizens of Atlanta!*



PRIORITIZING MENTAL WELLNESS WITH PARKS AND RECREATION

Nearly two years since the COVID-19 outbreak, many people began to experience a “new-normal” of restrictions and social distancing. [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) reports that — though not all — some of the increases in stress, anxiety and other associated forms of mental health concerns people are experiencing is completely normal.

There are healthy ways to help cope with stress. One of the top recommendations to improve mental wellbeing is physical activity. To be effective, it’s important to choose a form of exercise that you enjoy.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) states [residents reported less mental distress and higher life satisfaction when they were living in greener areas.](#)

By utilizing the City of Atlanta parks system, you can take a walk, hike, or cycle through nearly 400 parklands and greenspaces throughout the city. So, lace up those sneakers, grab a friend and head to the great outdoors!

FACE TO FACE

Nearly 100 Prime Time Seniors had the pleasure of participating in an exclusive Town Hall with Mayor Andre Dickens during his monthly People's Day in July. Others on the panel included Chief of Staff Odie Donald II, COO Lisa Gordon, and Senior Advisor Courtney English. During the discussion, seniors shared concerns as well as ideas for the future. The event included lunch, bingo, music and of course, plenty of dancing.



Volleyball for All!

Teen Leaders Academy participants had an amazing opportunity to learn volleyball techniques from Bailey Dickens at Central Park Recreation Center. Participants learned how to serve, spike and hit. What a great way to close out Camp Best Friends!

DPR Summertime Recap

July is National Parks and Recreation Month, and the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is excited to share a few summer highlights.

We begin with Midnight Basketball! This weekly event, spearheaded by Mayor Andre Dickens in collaboration with DPR and the Atlanta Police Department, has taken over Southwest Atlanta Wednesday nights at C.T. Martin Natatorium and Recreation Center! It was also the C.T. Martin team who brought home the championship trophy during season one. A second location has been added at Rosel Fann Recreation Center Mondays. Games begin at 7 p.m. and feature players ages 18 – 25.

The Summer Teen League series also hit the court on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Central Park. The league showcases the talent of middle and high-school aged boys: many, who are members of Atlanta's Teen Leaders Academy.

DPR's efforts to keep Atlanta youth safe and engaged is a top priority. Camp Best Friends continues to be a "safe haven" for youth each summer. Mayor Dickens, a CBF alum, visited the Dunbar site, and found campers enjoying activities like science and technology, music, and basketball.

The Department of Parks and Recreation also partners with Bright from the Start to provide breakfast and lunch to school-aged children through its *Summer Food Program*. A mobile program is also offered, and DPR partners with various sites including libraries, college campuses, residential complexes and Camp Best Friends. It's been a great summer!



Councilmember Andrea Boone

Welcome to the Team



The Office of Recreation welcomes Aquatics Director, Marcus Byams. Raised in Atlanta, Byams earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Community Leisure and Recreation from Georgia Southern University and has over 20 years' experience in youth sports and aquatics. A goal setter, Marcus is focused on increasing program accessibility and participation this fall.

Some considerations include incorporating swimming as an extra-curricular option for youth attending the City's afterschool program and expanding the Dolphins swim team through partnership with Atlanta Public Schools. "We want to teach kids how to swim as a basic life skill," Marcus shares. A life-guard training program is also on the horizon.

Byams hopes to pique the interest of middle and high school students to consider aquatics as an attractive career option. The "Learn to Swim" program is open to all ages. And after a long hiatus, seniors can expect the return of water aerobics at natatoriums soon!

After July 31, only four City of Atlanta outdoor pools will remain open. John A. White, Maddox, Pittman and Grant Park will open weekends only. Pool season officially ends Labor Day weekend.

The City of Atlanta
Office of Recreation Presents 2022-2023

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

Ages
5 - 12

STEM/STEAM, PROJECT BASED-LEARNING, HOMEWORK ASSISTANCE, COMPUTER LAB, ART EXPLORATION, SPORTS.

- 18 LOCATIONS
- SNACK & HOT MEAL DAILY
- TUITION & HOMEWORK ASSISTANCE

Monday – Friday | 2:30 – 6:00 PM



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Starts August 8

Secure your spot today!

www.atlantaga.gov/iparcs or onsite at your local rec center

Residents: \$35 Per Week | Non-residents: \$110 Per Week

SALUTING OUR FRONTLINE HEROES!



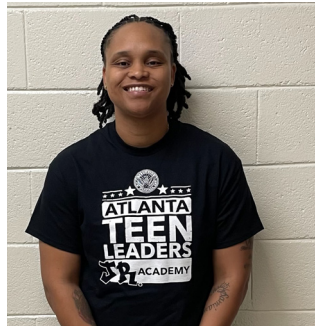
Aquecsayieah Askew

Teen Program Director Assistant
Aquecsayieah always demonstrates great work ethic and a positive attitude! She does a phenomenal job working with our Atlanta Teen Leaders Academy.



Ricky "Dip" Usher,

Recreation Operations Assistant, Sr.
Ricky is the ultimate team player and goes above and beyond for our teens. Recently, a mural was created for his dedication to the community.



Quintara Ganther

Recreation Operations Assistant, Sr.
Quintara is an outstanding leader and the consummate team player. We salute you!

If you would like to nominate a DPR employee who goes beyond the call of duty, send your submission to [Shanesha Blount at sbblount@atlantaga.gov](mailto:shanesha.blount@atlantaga.gov)



UPCOMING EVENTS

Atlanta Teen Leaders Academy
Begins August 8
Monday-Friday 2:30 -7:30 p.m.
www.atlantaga.gov/iparcs



TOT Flag Football-
Registration ends August 31
Season starts on September 27
Register at www.atlantaga.gov/iparcs or visit your local recreation center



Youth Cheer and Football-Season
Starts August 26
Ages 5-12
Registration ongoing
www.atlantaga.gov/iparcs

TEEN PROGRAM AVAILABLE | FREE | AGES 13-18

Cook Park Celebrates Year One!

Rodney Cook Park officially opened July 7, 2021. Located in historic Vine City, the park is a welcomed asset to the City's greenspace inventory. A great place for friends and families to enjoy, amenities include multi-purpose courts, pavilions, splashpads, a rock-climbing wall, playground and exercise equipment. Only in its first year, Cook Park's sustainable features earned it the 2022 Innovation in Sustainable Engineering Award. The recipient of countless state and regional awards, it is also recognized nationally as the recipient of the Grand Design Award. There are so many things to love about Cook Park. Visit soon and you'll see why!



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Credits

Commissioner: John Dargle Jr.

Deputy Commissioner: Alvin Dodson

Deputy Commissioner: Steven Aycok

Deputy Commissioner: Doug Voss

Parks Director: Quentin Moore

Recreation Director: Ramondo Davidson

Parks Design Director: Keith Hicks

Project Manager: Aaron Wiener

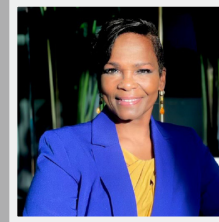
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EDITOR'S NOTE

It's been a great summer! As we close out Camp Best Friends, we are eagerly preparing for an exciting fall season. Now is the time to sign up for our afterschool programs. For only \$35/week, kids ages 5-12 receive homework assistance, participate in extracurricular activities, and enjoy a snack and hot meal. Tuition assistance is offered as well as multi-child discount. Plus teens attend our Teen Leaders Academy FREE! Activities include music, film, graphic design, access to the weight room, computer lab and more! It all begins August 8, so sign up today! Together, we can help prepare your child for a safe and successful school year!
Yolanda Harris

City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation

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