



## A TOWER OF STRENGTH AND COURAGE

Civil rights icon, pioneering broadcaster, and advocate for justice, Xernona Clayton has established an undeniable legacy. Well known as the CEO and Founder of the Trumpet Awards, which aired on TBS, she is the first Black person in the South to host a weekly prime-time television talk show. "The Xernona Clayton Show" aired in the 60s on Atlanta's WAGA. She once interviewed Calvin Craig, who was at the time, the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan in Atlanta. It was Xernona's dialogue with him during the show that later influenced Craig to resign from the Klan and renounce the organization. In the 80s, Clayton was appointed director and vice president of public affairs by Ted Turner, making her the first Black female corporate executive at the network. Eventually she would become the

assistant corporate vice president over urban affairs. Mrs. Clayton is credited for uncovering employment discrimination on behalf of the Chicago Urban League and organizing civil rights events for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), for which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was the first president. Mrs. Clayton developed a close relationship with the King family and was with Coretta Scott King following the assassination of her husband. Last March, a statue unveiling ceremony was held in her honor at the City of Atlanta's Hardy Ivy Park. Full of tenacity, vibrance and charm, she spoke on program, bringing light and laughter to all. This Black History Month we salute the legendary, Xernona Clayton.

[Click to Learn More About Ms. Clayton \(2023\) https://www.11alive.com/article/news/local/atlanta-trailblazer-xernona-clayton-statue-downtown-to-be-unveiled/85-40cf70cf-bceb-446a-ac59-7c0b4d464b67](https://www.11alive.com/article/news/local/atlanta-trailblazer-xernona-clayton-statue-downtown-to-be-unveiled/85-40cf70cf-bceb-446a-ac59-7c0b4d464b67)



# A Message from the Commissioner

This month we celebrate a great part of American history, Black History. We acknowledge and honor the amazing contributions of all past and present pioneers who have paved the way for humanity. In this issue of Inform, we recognize trailblazer, Xernona Clayton. In 2023, we placed a statue of Mrs. Clayton in Hardy Ivy Park and hosted a program recognizing her great legacy. I encourage you to visit the park soon and enjoy this beautiful, artistic installation.

The state of Georgia observes Arbor Day, the third Friday in February. It is a time set aside to appreciate the powerful benefits trees provide to us daily. Several tree-planting activities will occur the weekend of February 16 (see the article on Tree USA). We hope that you will participate. The Department of Parks and Recreation is hosting several park cleanup and beautification projects around the city during "Love Your Park Volunteer Month." Details are in this issue.

Atlanta offers an abundant tree canopy and is known as the "City in a Forest." We are proud to announce that on February 4th Atlanta City Council issued a proclamation observing Georgia Arbor Day 2024! Special thanks to Mayor Andre Dickens and Council for this great honor. Happy reading!

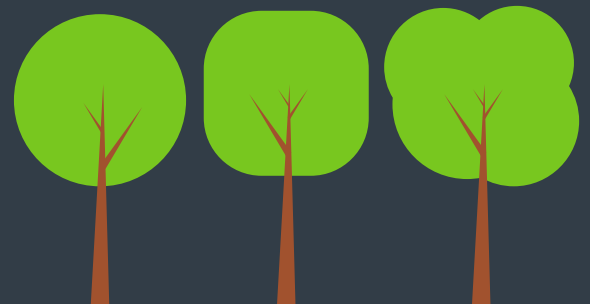
Parks and Recreation Commissioner, Justin Cutler



Commissioner Cutler Accepts Georgia Arbor Day 2024 Proclamation

## Atlanta City Council Issues Proclamation

The City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation has much to celebrate in 2024. This month, Atlanta City Council issued a proclamation to the department acknowledging Arbor Day 2024 (February 16). Not only that, the work of the Office of Parks in the areas of urban and community-based forestry resulted in the City of Atlanta's 39th consecutive Tree City USA Award from the Arbor Day Foundation and Georgia Forestry Commission. The award recognizes excellence in environmental stewardship, in particular, the conservation and growth of the city's tree canopy.





# NPU Q Welcomes Long Awaited Park

West Cascade Park is the newest park in DPR's inventory, and it is the first and only park located in NPU Q. Because of the collaboration between the Department of Parks and Recreation, Park Pride and District 11 Councilmember Marci Overstreet, every Atlanta NPU now has a park to call their own! Community members, city officials and neighbors joined Mayor Andre Dickens, former Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms and Commissioner Justin Cutler for the grand opening in December. The new park development involved extensive community engagement, planning, and visioning. Amenities and features include an extraordinary playground, a three-quarter-mile walking trail, parking, security cameras, lighting and beautiful landscaping.



## New Coalition Aims to Reduce Childhood Drownings

The Department of Parks and Recreation, YMCA of Metro Atlanta, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, the American Red Cross and WABE have partnered to form the Atlanta Water Safety Coalition to combat childhood drownings. The collective hosted the "World's Largest Swim Lesson" at Grant Park in June 2023. Studies show the highest drowning rates are among children ages 1-4 and boys ages 15-19. However, youth in Black and Brown communities are at greater risk overall. The coalition endeavors to develop age-appropriate strategies and create greater access to swimming and water safety instruction for Atlanta's youth, especially people of color. January 25, the organization hosted the screening of the documentary "Drowning in Silence:" one of many efforts to drive greater awareness and elevate action through prevention.



"World's Largest Swim Lesson" at Grant Park in June 2023.



# Tech Lab Opens New Doors

by *Sasha Smith*

Esports is one of the fastest growing industries in the United States and even the world! The City of Atlanta Mayor's Office of Technology and Innovation has teamed up with the Department of Parks and Recreation to launch Atlanta's first ever city-wide youth Esports league at Thomasville Recreation Center.

## About the Program

This is an exciting industry with explosive growth opportunities for students to compete internationally, earn scholarships, and learn key technical skills. A part of Mayor Andre Dickens' Year of the Youth initiative, this program encourages students of all ages to consider careers in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math). The program aims to increase diversity within the technology industry and mentor next-generation innovators.

## What is Offered

Registration is now underway for teens to join our Esports Gaming League. The league promotes technical expertise beyond gaming, including coding and graphic design. Youth of all skill levels can receive professional coaching, meet experts in the field, and learn about the exciting opportunities available in the Esports industry. Participants can also become certified in Esports. No gaming equipment is required.

Thomasville Recreation Center boasts an all new state-of-the-art technology lab with future sites planned in 2024. The program runs on the same schedule as Atlanta Public Schools.

[Click Here to Register!](#)

See the 11 Alive broadcast on Esports :

<https://www.11alive.com/article/news/local/atlanta-new-esports-lab-surging-demand/85-26bd0522-9dfe-4b4c-a71b-e6d6f784a622>



**ARE YOUR KIDS INTO VIDEO GAMES?**  
*Do They Aspire To Create Their Own Gaming App?*



Esports is one of the fastest growing industries in the world with some colleges offering full scholarships in the field! Get started today, join the City of Atlanta Esports Gaming League. Through this exciting program, youth will take their love for gaming to a whole new level through competitive gaming! With coaching from our tech savvy instructors, students will gain digital readiness, meet industry experts, and build their strengths in problem solving, teamwork and STEAM, all while exploring a new career pathway into the exciting world of technology and gaming. Let us help your child turn their passion for gaming into something more than just a hobby. **Sign up TODAY!**

**Slots are filling up fast!**  
Registration now underway!  
Register at [www.atlantaga.gov/iparcs](http://www.atlantaga.gov/iparcs) or scan QR code!



**Thomasville Recreation Center**  
1835 Henry Thomas Drive SE | Atlanta, GA 30315

**Date and Time:**  
Wed. 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.  
Sat. 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

For more information, contact Gerard Jackson at 404.624.0816 or [gjackson@atlantaga.gov](mailto:gjackson@atlantaga.gov)



ATLANTA  
PARKS & RECREATION

# City of Atlanta Wins Tree City USA Award for 39th Year!

by Taryn Heidel, DPR Senior Arborist

Georgia Arbor Day is February 16 and the City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation has much to celebrate in 2024. The work of the Office of Parks in the areas of urban and community-based forestry resulted in the City of Atlanta's 39th consecutive Tree City USA Award from the Arbor Day Foundation and Georgia Forestry Commission. The award recognizes excellence in environmental stewardship, in particular, the conservation and growth of the city's tree canopy.

**Conservation:** DPR continues its goal of acquiring park land to ensure parks are available and accessible throughout the city, with a goal of preserving 50% of the land as natural area. In 2023, DPR acquired 74 acres of forested land. Since 2020, DPR has acquired a total 468 acres of forested land.

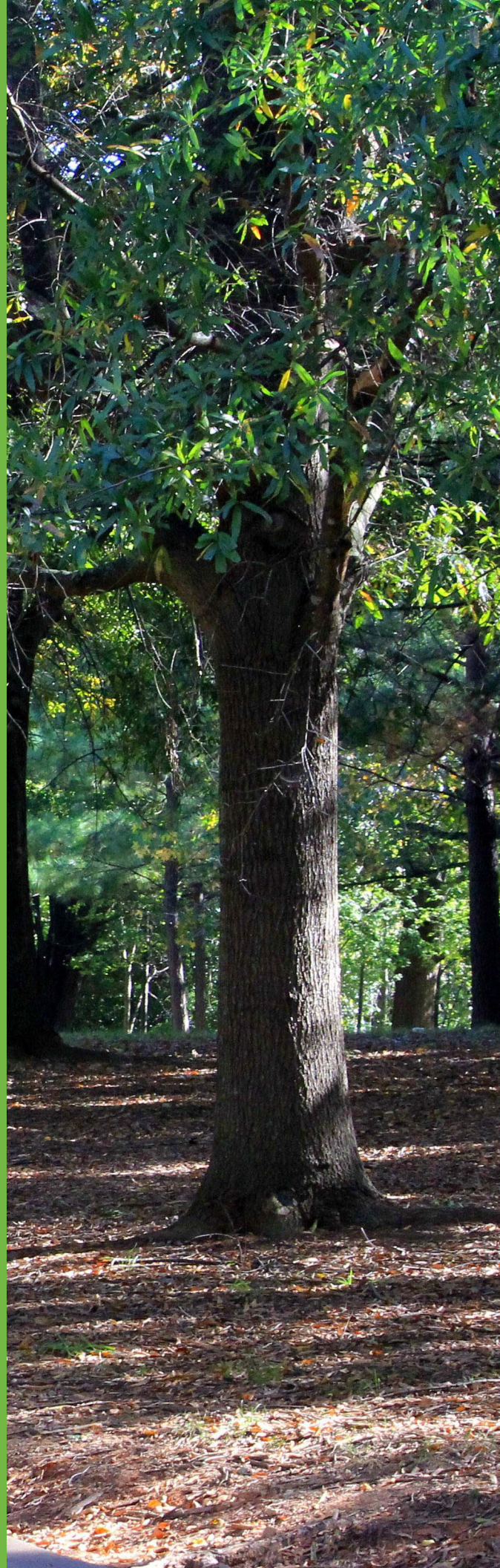
**Growth:** The City of Atlanta along with community partners Trees Atlanta, Atlanta Downtown Improvement District, and Central Atlanta Progress continue to make progress on the Downtown Atlanta Urban Tree Planting Plan which aims to plant 8,000 trees in downtown over the course of 10 years.

**Celebration:** Ready to celebrate trees on Georgia Arbor Day? Join us for the following Department of Parks and Recreation funded activities hosted by Trees Atlanta:

- **Plant a Tree:** Trees Atlanta will lead Georgia Arbor Day tree-planting projects on Feb. 16th in Rose Circle Park, and Feb. 17th at Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy, Herman J. Russell West End Academy, and Kindezi West School.
- **Care for a Tree:** Learn how to prune your tree by attending the Pruning 102 class in West End on Feb. 17th

**Check out**

<https://www.treesatlanta.org/news/georgia-arbor-day-2024/>





## Join Us For Agape Tennis Open House by Rachel Maher

Earlier this month, Agape Tennis Academy assumed management and operations of all five City of Atlanta Tennis Centers, including Bitsy Grant, Chastain Park, Joseph McGhee, Washington Park, and Sharon Lester Tennis Center at Piedmont Park. During the initial transition, operating hours will remain the same.

With this change, we are excited to announce new programming! Registration is OPEN for tennis lessons (both group and private), drills, and camps! Agape instructors hold accredited coaching certifications in tennis and other relevant areas, such as pickleball, cardio tennis, and more. Join us for the Agape Community Events at each location which are scheduled weekends, now through March 10. There will be fun, giveaways, refreshments and lots of excitement! Visit the Agape website, navigate to your location of choice, and learn more about community events and lessons.

[www.agapetennisacademy.com](http://www.agapetennisacademy.com)



## Remember those New Year's Resolutions?

Many people start the new year strong, setting admirable goals like incorporating self-care, quality time with family and friends, and fitness. Typically, by February, the enthusiasm to pursue those goals dwindles for some. No worries. DPR's recreation centers have you covered. Sign up today for our 30-day FREE fitness program, now through February 29. There is no upfront cost and you can utilize any participating City of Atlanta recreation center. If you decide to become a member, and we know you will, individual membership is just \$119 for the entire year! Now that's a steal. Click the [link](#) and sign up today.

# PARK ACCESS TO THE CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER!

DPR Commissioner Justin Cutler joined Mayor Andre Dickens, Georgia State Director of Trust for Public Land George Dusenbury, DWM Commissioner Mikita Browning, Executive Director of Atlanta Regional Commission Anna Roach, councilmembers Dustin Hillis and Matt Westmoreland, along with other City departments, partners and supporters for a groundbreaking celebrating the upcoming construction of an ADA accessible kayak launch and camp & paddle trail at Standing Peachtree Greenspace. Soon, Atlantans will be able to enjoy activities like swimming, kayaking, walking, cycling and camping within the Chattahoochee Riverlands. Together, we are Moving Atlanta Forward.



# Upcoming Events & Activities

## ATHLETICS

### Esports Gaming League

Ages 13-18 | Registration Ongoing | Thomasville Recreation Center | Wednesdays 5 – 7 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

### Men's Basketball Leagues

Ages 35+ and 50+ | William Walker Recreation Center | \$375 / team  
Call 404.346.5891

### Spring Break Teen Basketball Tournament (FREE)

Ages 13 – 18 | Games April 1 – 4 | Register at Zaban Recreation Center or call 404.416.4909

### Track & Field

Ages 5-14 | \$75 Resident/\$150 Non-Resident  
Registration Ends, March 20 | Season Begins, March 9

### Youth Baseball Registration

Ages 5-12 | \$75 Resident/\$150 Non-Resident |  
Registration Ends, April 18 | Opening Day, April 14  
Southside Complex

To Register, visit [www.atlantaga.gov/iparcs](http://www.atlantaga.gov/iparcs)

## CAMPS

### Camp Best Friends Registration

Ages 5 – 18 and Seniors 55+ | June 3 – July 19  
7:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. | Multi-child Discount  
(Search Key Word "CBF" and Navigate to Preferred Location)

### Winter Break Camp Registration

Ages 5 – 12 | February 19 – 23 | 7:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Six Locations

To Register, visit [www.atlantaga.gov/iparcs](http://www.atlantaga.gov/iparcs)

## EVENTS

### A Celebration of Talent

Ages 13 – 19 | Believe Music Hall | 181 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd. | February 22 @ 7 p.m.  
Call 404.416.4909

### Agape Tennis Center Grand Openings

All Five Tennis Centers | Select Location of Interest  
for Information | [www.agapetennisacademy.com](http://www.agapetennisacademy.com)

### DPR Hiring Event

C.T. Martin Recreation Center | February 24,  
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

### Ella Baker Black History Quiz Bowl

Rosel Fann Recreation Center | February 29, 5-7 p.m.

### February is "Love Your Park" Volunteer Month

Sign up to Volunteer | All Ages and Abilities  
<https://parkpride.org/>

The Atlanta Teen Leaders Academy presents  
**A Celebration of TALENT**  
SHOWTIME | 7PM  
Believe Music Hall | 181 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd. | Atlanta, GA 30333  
22 FEB.  
Important Dates:  
2.5.24 Audition video registration closes.  
2.7.24 A list will be posted of the 25 acts selected.  
2.16.24 Auditions held at 8:30am Park 10 am-10 pm.  
2.17.24 Dressing to determine order of performances.  
• The First 50 teens to submit a 50 second audition video via the QR code will be considered.  
• Only 25 teens will be chosen.  
• Your name, age, and act should be stated in the video before QR submission.  
• You must follow the Atlanta Teen Leaders Academy's K3 page.  
Contact: Nicholas Clark 404.416.4909 or @jessie@atlantaatlanta.com

**LOVE YOUR PARK**  
A City-wide Park Volunteer Month  
Hosted in Partnership by:  
City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation and Park Pride  
It's February and love is in the air...  
so we're calling on all volunteers to show some love to your park!  
Join neighbors, friends, and family  
in this Atlanta-wide volunteer initiative to beautify our city,  
build community, and give back to the parks that give so much  
to us. Twelve parks will be beautified in February with  
volunteer projects for all ages and abilities.  
Saturday, Feb. 3 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Louise G. Howard Park  
Saturday, Feb. 10 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Herbert Taylor Park  
Saturday, Feb. 17 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. Jennie Drake Park  
10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Cascade Springs Nature Preserve  
Outdoor Activity Center  
Peachtree Hills Park  
More sites coming soon!  
Follow the QR code or the link below to  
Park Pride's website to learn more  
about each park project and to register.  
Space is limited - register today!  
[www.parkpride.org/love-your-park/](http://www.parkpride.org/love-your-park/)

# Staff Shout Out!!

DPR Teen Program Director, Nicholas Clark, was recently the first featured guest to appear on Mayor Andre Dickens' Growing Up ATL podcast. Staying atop all things teens, Nick leads a group of teen coordinators in providing exceptional programs and opportunities year round, through the Atlanta Teen Leaders Academy. The after school program for teens ages 13 – 18 is FREE! Special shout out to DPRs teen coordinators for their great commitment daily. The Atlanta Teen Leaders Academy was recognized by Mayor Dickens at the "Year of the Youth" relaunch this month. Click [HERE](https://growingupatl.podbean.com/) to hear the interview. <https://growingupatl.podbean.com/>



## Contact

If you have a story or topic that you'd like us to consider, email us at [informdpr@atlantaga.gov](mailto:informdpr@atlantaga.gov).

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**Recreation Director:** Dannette Leininger

**Parks Design Director:** Keith Hicks

**Director of Communications and External Affairs:** Aisha Washington

**Senior Graphic Designer / Photographer:** Greg Parmer

**Communications Manager / Writer / Editor:** Yolanda Harris

**City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation**

160 Trinity Avenue SW, Suites 2200 & 3100

Atlanta, GA 30303

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