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BRINGING PARKS CLOSER TO HOME

A Purpose Built School, Luther J. Price Middle School recently opened its greenspace to the community. Through an innovative plan to provide community access to high-quality, outdoor school environments, Price is among several Atlanta Public School campuses making it possible for Atlantans to have a park or greenspace within a 10-minute walk from home. The national initiative, led by Trust for Public Land allows community access during after school hours and on weekends. Some local collaborators include City of Atlanta, Urban Land Institute Atlanta, Atlanta Public Schools and Park Pride.

Price Middle School received tremendous support to implement a vision developed by its students. The \$200,000 investment includes a timber shade structure, climbing wall, outdoor fitness equipment, accessible walking path, and

a collection of site furniture. Having a park or greenspace within a 10-minute walk from home is a major priority within the Department of Parks and Recreation's *ActivateATL Masterplan*. Price is one of four community schoolyards that were activated the week of March 18. Others include: Harper Archer Elementary, Scott Elementary and Centennial Academy.

DPR Commissioner Justin Curler attended the Price ribbon cutting joined by Interim APS Superintendent Danielle Battle, Atlanta District 1 Councilmember Jason Winston, TPL Georgia Executive Director George Dusenbury, and TPL Director of Georgia Urban Parks Jay Wozniak. Partners exclusive to the Price project include Purpose Built Schools, Delta Airlines, COA Department of Watershed, and the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation.



A Message from the Commissioner

Spring has finally arrived and with it, warmer temperatures and blooming flowers! It is the perfect time to visit your favorite City of Atlanta park and explore new ones. Whether you choose to break away from the office to enjoy an outdoor lunch, meet up with friends, or exercise, I encourage you to plan a day to get out and enjoy the sunshine!

The Department of Parks and Recreation is committed to building strong communities by providing safe and exceptional parks through collaboration and innovation. Recently, the City welcomed four new Community Schoolyards at Atlanta Public Schools. Learn more in this month's feature, "Bringing Parks Closer to Home." We are excited to bring you the Spring issue of *Inform!* It is filled with exciting news going on within the department as we continue to Move Atlanta Forward. Enjoy the read!

Parks and Recreation Commissioner, Justin Cutler



Time is Running Out!

Register your child today for City of Atlanta's Camp Best Friends! Activities include sports, arts and crafts, golf, swimming, fieldtrips and more! This year's theme is "Road Trip." With a variety of options available for kids ages 5-12, teens ages 13-18 and Prime Time Seniors ages 55+, there's something for everyone. Camp runs June 3 – July 19, 7:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. The cost is just \$35. Multi-child discount and hardship assistance available. Spaces are filling up fast. Register today at www.atlantaga.gov/iparcs.



CAMP BEST FRIENDS



Celebrating the Incredible Women of DPR

During Women’s History Month, we acknowledged the widespread contributions of women both in the Department of Parks and Recreation and around the world. On March 27, DPR hosted breakfast to celebrate the incomparable work of every woman within the department. We want you to know that we see you. We value you. And we applaud your service and efforts.



Park Beautification Project Delivers

In February, the Department of Parks and Recreation partnered with the nonprofit Park Pride to host the first-ever citywide park volunteer initiative, “Love Your Parks.” Beautification projects were held at 12 City parks with nearly 350 volunteers participating. The event at Kirkwood Urban Forest doubled as a dedication ceremony with Mayor Andre Dickens joining the celebration.

Through a collaboration with The Conservation Fund, the Department of Parks and Recreation was able to acquire two new acres of land. Kirkwood also had 60 volunteers: the largest turnout of all. Thanks to Atlanta City Council, Park Pride, Friends of Parks groups, conservancies and the amazing Atlanta community for participating in this incredible cause to help build community and enrich City of Atlanta Parks. Click here to see more

<https://roughdraftatlanta.com/2024/03/19/kirkwood-urban-forest-preserve-grows-by-two-acres/>



We Are Moving Atlanta Forward

The Department of Parks and Recreation is committed to providing quality recreational programs, parks and greenspaces for Atlantans of all ages to enjoy. Check out some of our most recent efforts to positively impact communities around the city and plan a visit soon!

Fitness

The community celebrated the installation of a new outdoor Fitness Court Studio® at D.H. Stanton Park, March 13. Through a nationwide vote, Atlanta was selected to receive the multi-use court which features various stations to tone the entire body along with a space to host group classes like yoga. In its effort to make fitness more accessible within communities, Muscle Milk launched “The Lifting Project” to create a solution. The organization joined forces with seven-time WNBA All-Star Candace Parker, who attended the ribbon cutting, and the National Fitness Campaign to make free, outdoor fitness accessible in Atlanta.





Trails

Chastain Park Conservancy hosted a ribbon cutting to celebrate the completion of the **Northwoods Trails** project, March 8. Over the years, the trails which were built in the 1940s, became overgrown and underfunded. Through the interests and support of the conservancy, the community, the City of Atlanta and other partners, the trails have been restored. The two-mile nature trail located between the playground and amphitheater boasts beautiful stonework, waterways, grills, and plants native to the Georgia woodlands.



Art

SCAD Serve unveiled its newest "Paint Our Parks" basketball court at Stone Hogan Park. This is the ninth mural commissioned for city park spaces. The project was completed in collaboration with the City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation, Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs, Turner Foundation for Community Advocacy, and LIFE Church Atlanta. The mural was conceptualized by SCAD SERVE Alumni Ambassador artist Nina Robinson who led a team of volunteers which included SCAD students, faculty, community advocates, and LIFE Church congregation. This magnificent work of art inspires unity, interconnectedness and community strength.



Learning their History

Students who attend City of Atlanta recreation centers' after school program participated in the "Ella Baker Black History Bowl," March 1. The event, hosted by Rosel Fann Recreation Center included elementary, middle and high school teams. The incredible display of knowledge and excitement was impressive! The Black History Bowl began in 2018 under the leadership of Senior Recreation Operations Assistant, Aramond Wilkins. Inspired by his passion for Black History as a child and understanding its relevance for today's youth, Wilkins shares why he started the program. "I felt as though I could somehow fill a void that so many in our community believe exists as it pertains to our knowledge of self." Formerly named the Black History Bowl, Wilkins renamed this year's event in recognition of the pivotal role women played in the Civil Rights Movement. Hats off to Recreation Director Patricia "Trish" Davis and recreation staff for helping to facilitate this amazing event.

6th Annual Black History Month Quiz Bowl Winners

Ages 5-8 Division:

1st place: Dunbar

2nd place: Rosel Fann

3rd place: Pittman

Ages 9-12 Division:

1st place: Rosel Fann

2nd place: Dunbar

3rd place: CT Martin

Teen Division:

1st place: Rosel Fann

2nd place: South Atlanta High School

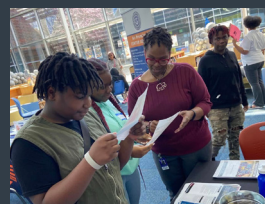
3rd place: At Promise

DPR in the Community

By Phillip E. Smith

The Brotherhood + Sisterhood Summit held at Benjamin E. Mays High School was a huge success! Students participated in authentic conversations including personal development and self-care, family and life transitions, community resilience and safety.

DPR Communications members, Yolanda Harris and Julia Bond, attended the event with engaging programming and job opportunities for teens this summer.



Experience the Fun at City of Atlanta Racquet Centers

By Rachel Maher



Earlier this year, the Department of Parks & Recreation welcomed Agape Tennis & Pickleball Academy as the new operators of the City of Atlanta's five racquet centers. Since then, Agape has been hard at work connecting with the tennis and pickleball communities, council members, and neighborhoods to build a top-tier experience that will enrich and expand recreational opportunities for everyone!

The breadth and depth of tennis and pickleball programming planned for each racquet center by Agape is something to look forward to. Lessons, offered as both group and private, have returned with instructors who hold coaching certifications from the US Professional Tennis Association and/or Professional Tennis Registry.

Never played tennis? No problem! Take a Standard Class to learn the basics including scoring, rules, and techniques in a fun environment. Advanced player? Agape's got you covered there too offering classes with pros for people who play 4.5 / A2 level tennis or higher.

Through February and March, Agape hosted free events at each racquet center, inviting neighbors and community members in to experience what they have to offer firsthand. Over 500 Atlantans came out to experience the fun. At each of these events, coaches ran drills, provided instruction, and taught the basics of tennis and pickleball. There was food, music, and prizes too, where guests could win all sorts of great gear like racquets, paddles, and private lesson certificates! Thanks to Atlanta City councilmembers Mary Norwood, Byron Amos, Alex Wan, and Marci Collier Overstreet for joining us!

What's with the Name Change?

Have you noticed that City of Atlanta Tennis Centers are now called Racquet Centers? That's thanks to the fact that these centers now offer amenities for multiple racquet sports, including tennis and pickleball. At Bitsy Grant Racquet Center, you can play platform tennis, too! Permanent pickleball lines have been approved to be laid on a limited number of courts at each center, creating shared tennis and pickleball courts. Permanent lines have already been laid at Sharon Lester at Piedmont Park and Joseph McGhee Racquet Center. Grab your paddle and head over to enjoy them today!

Visit [agapetennisacademy.com](https://www.agapetennisacademy.com) to learn more, sign up for classes, or reserve courts.

PICKLEBALL ROLLS OUT ACROSS THE CITY

By Rachel Maher

In response to the growing popularity of pickleball, the Department of Parks & Recreation launched the Pickleball Pilot Program last summer, introducing the sport to parks across the city. Many courts are now open for play including the City's first six dedicated pickleball courts at Southside Park. Residents are eagerly embracing this exciting new activity.

Pickleball, a hybrid sport combining elements of tennis, badminton, and ping pong, has quickly captured Atlanta's attention. From families seeking outdoor recreation to seniors looking for social interaction, pickleball offers something for everyone, building social cohesion and healthy lifestyles along the way.

Through the pilot program, DPR aims to provide accessible and inclusive recreational opportunities for all residents. With pickleball courts strategically located in parks throughout the city, enthusiasts of all ages and skill levels are encouraged to join in the fun.

In addition to the dedicated courts at Southside Park, Atlantans can currently enjoy pickleball with permanent lines in the following locations:

- East Lake Park
- Isabell Gates Webster Park
- Lenox-Wildwood Park
- Maddox Park
- Peachtree Hills Park
- Shady Valley Park
- Joseph McGhee Racquet Center
- Sharon Lester Racquet Center at Piedmont Park

More locations coming soon!



The Pickleball Pilot is Expanding!

Many more locations are on deck to receive permanent pickleball overlays, as was recently shared by DPR's Racquet Sports Manager, Luke Burden, at the Pickleball Pilot Update Meeting held virtually on March 14. During that meeting, Luke shared that DPR has expanded the pickleball pilot, growing the number of dedicated pickleball courts planned in City of Atlanta Parks from 14 to 24. The number of shared courts will increase from 33 to 63, for a total of 87 courts overall!

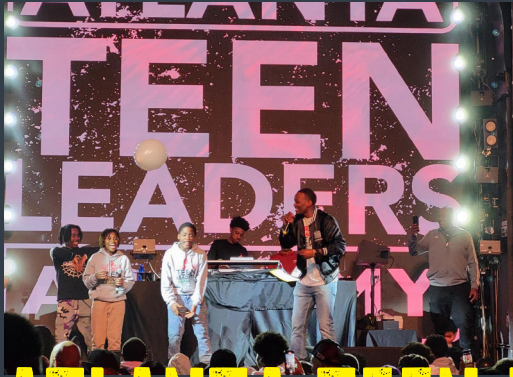
For questions, contact Luke Burden, Racquet Sports Manager, at ldburden@atlantaga.gov.

Visit bit.ly/pickleball_atl to view the details of the presentation and learn where you can expect pickleball courts to pop up next!



We Need Summer Staff

DPR is still looking for camp counselors, seasonal and full time staff this summer. Teens ages 15 and up may apply. Starting pay is \$15/hr. Those with a student ID can receive FREE lifeguard training through our Red Cross certification program. Adults are also welcome to apply. Sign up now for our next session. [Learn more here!](#) Visit: bit.ly/parksandrecatl



ATLANTA TEEN LEADERS ROCK WINTER BREAK

Engaging leadership sessions, fun activities and candid heart-to-heart talks are just part of the incredible DPR Winter Break programming hosted this year. This year's teen programming also featured the "Talent of Celebration Showcase" where students competed in talent and beat categories winning trophies and great prizes.

The Atlanta Teen Leader Academy offers phenomenal opportunities, fieldtrips, and after school programming year round for teens ages 13 – 18. The program is FREE! Parents looking for options to engage their teens after school are encouraged to visit us online!

<https://www.atlantaga.gov/government/departments/parks-recreation/office-of-recreation/atlanta-teen-leaders-ages-13-18>

UPCOMING EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

WE ARE LOOKING FOR NEW STAFF TO JOIN OUR TEAM. SEVERAL FULL-TIME AND SEASONAL POSITIONS ARE AVAILABLE.

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)

ATHLETICS

Men's Basketball Leagues Ages 35+ and 50+

William Walker Recreation Center | \$375 / team Call 404.346.5891

Esports Gaming League Ages 13-18 | Registration Ongoing | Thomasville Recreation Center

Wednesdays 5 – 7 p.m. and Saturdays 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

SPRING HIGHLIGHTS



Atlanta Hawks Visit After School Program

The Atlanta Hawks stopped by William Walker Recreation Center in April to engage in STEM activities with after school students. The team, in partnership with State Farm, offers a "Good Neighbor Club" at the site. The "Live & Loud" event included an interactive music production station and live animals.

HONORING THE LEGENDARY HANK AARON

DPR Commissioner Justin Cutler and Youth Baseball Coordinator Ryan Christian attended the Atlanta Braves luncheon honoring the 50th anniversary of Hank Aaron's 715th home run. The event served as the official opening of the new exhibition, "More than Brave: The Life of Henry Aaron" at the Atlanta History Center.



SPRING BREAK TEEN BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

The competition was high and the talent did not disappoint. Twelve teams vied for the trophy. William Walker's Topshottas claimed the victory over Mosquito. Thanks to Mayor Andre Dickens for attending the championship game and providing UniverSoul Circus tickets to the winners!

DALLAS DPR VISITS ATLANTA

The Dallas Department of Parks & Recreation, hosts of the 2023 NRPA Conference, made a visit to Atlanta in April. The trip was an opportunity for City of Atlanta DPR staff to engage with Dallas colleagues, talk about park and recreation operations and amenities and share best practices and learnings. The knowledge shared was invaluable, especially since Atlanta is host city for the 2024 NRPA Conference!



Staff Shout Out!!

After 60 years of loyal service, Mr. Ronald Jackson recently retired from the Department of Parks and Recreation. He was acknowledged by Mayor Andre Dickens during the State of the City address.

Congratulations to Jill Watkins on her 11th year retirement. Mrs. Watkins, who served as a Project Manager III, is looking forward to welcoming her first grandchild into the world, supporting her mother's fitness goals and taking a Mediterranean cruise with her husband.



Mr. Ronald Jackson



Mrs. Jill Watkins

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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



Phillip Smith accepts the Family Engagement Community Champion Award

On Thursday, April 18, the Atlanta Public School's Office of Family Engagement hosted the annual Parent Liaison Appreciation Luncheon at C.T. Martin Recreation Center. Our very own Community Outreach Specialist, Phillip Smith, was awarded *Family Engagement Community Champion*. During the 2023-2024 academic year, DPR, hosted/collaborated on 10+ engagements including Therrell Cluster Back to School Bash and More Than a Trim.

Way to go Phillip!

City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation

160 Trinity Avenue SW

Atlanta, GA 30303

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