Celebrating 40 Years of People, Parks & Programs!

parks.rec@jamescitycountyva.gov
jamescitycountyva.gov/recreation
Towards the Future

James City County Parks & Recreation celebrated its 40th Anniversary in 2021! Over the past 40 years, I’ve had the great opportunity of working with hundreds of outstanding local government employees. Our Parks & Recreation employees have been extremely passionate, customer focused and hard-working professionals who love their jobs. I believe fiscal year 2021 was the most challenging for public servants due to COVID and the changes, challenges and uncertainties that accompanied this pandemic. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our team members for adapting to new service delivery models, accepting more responsibilities and continuing to serve the public in a safe and effective manner.

I’ve highlighted a few of our team members below and please say thank you the next time you see them. This front-line group continues to amaze me with their outstanding work effort, compassion for each other, and commitment to our mission and the citizens we serve. The accomplishments that are included in this report represents only a small percentage of what our team accomplished this year and I thank each one of them for their outstanding contributions!

Ben Knecht ● Park Supervisor
“Customer service is at the forefront of our success,” notes Ben. If issues should arise, we resolve them quickly by listening to and understanding the needs of our patrons. He says the best part of the job is getting to know so many interesting members of our community as well as our staff.

Amy Fiedor ● Program Coordinator
The Lounge & Seniors
Amy has worked for Parks & Recreation for 27 years, and says her continued goal is to do whatever she can to ensure her patrons have the best experience possible in a safe and inviting environment. She notes one of her proudest moments was when 22 of her patrons nominated her for – and she won – the award for Outstanding Provider of Senior Services in the Greater Williamsburg Area in 2019. Amy notes she loves striving to provide exceptional recreation services and good, old-fashion fun.

Alisha Berkley ● Senior Administrative Coordinator
Alisha, who’s been with Parks & Recreation for 17 years, began her career as a part-time Customer Service Assistant at the James City County Recreation Center. Alisha lives and works by the golden rule - treat others how you want to be treated. She’s always kind and courteous, especially when it’s impossible to completely fulfill every demand. Her vision of the future is seeing the children who were once our program participants choosing employment with Parks & Recreation because of their positive personal experiences with us.

Paul Wildenberger ● Senior Customer Service Representative
Paul says he’s never met a customer who wasn’t important to the department’s success. Everyone deserves to be spoken to respectfully and treated with empathy. He says the benefits in James City County are endless – especially visiting the parks and trails and working with a team of professionals at the James City County Recreation Center who provide so much to the community. He notes that during COVID more citizens, many for the first time, took the opportunity to explore our outdoor community for its peace, safety, comfort and beauty.
Responding To COVID

As the impacts of COVID-19 continued to be felt, staff and resources were reallocated to accommodate our citizen’s changing needs. New safety procedures and program designs were implemented to provide recreational activities that families could do from their homes and in the comfort and safety of our local parks, all while keeping the community safe, engaged and physically and mentally healthy:

- Modified fitness equipment layout at the Recreation Centers to enhance COVID protocol for social distancing.
- A new standalone temperature scanner screened patrons entering the Recreation Center to increase safety and reduce direct contact between staff and patrons. An average of 481 patrons were scanned on a daily basis.
- The annual Fitness Open House event was restructured to a virtual format where 54 patrons interacted with Fitness Instructors through Zoom and new classes samples were offered in a safe and distanced format.
- A new reservation system was created through SignupGenius.com and eventually SignUp.com was implemented for most amenities offered through the James City County Recreation Center. Over 2,200 reservations were taken weekly at its peak.
- Implemented more than 50 new programs for all ages to include virtual and online opportunities, drive-thru events and a Virtual 5K Run with 67 participants that included local residents as well as runners from all over the country.
- In response to the new virtual learning Williamsburg-James City County Schools model, REC Connect ensured quality childcare and educational support to families by providing consolidated full day programs to close to 200 participants at four site locations. As schools returned to in-person learning two days a week, REC Connect began offering before & after school and full day program options at consolidated sites to almost 170 participants. Additional site locations were opened when schools returned to four days, with REC Connect serving close to 225 participants.

About The Cover

The REC Connect program celebrated 35 years of providing quality summer camps, before & after school and school break programs to our community. In FY21, over 600 youth participated in safe, affordable, educational and recreational fun opportunities.
Exceptional Public Services

Parks & Recreation partnered with more than 40 community, business and school organizations on initiatives to offer equitable access to recreation services. These projects included a day support program for young adults with disabilities to learn life skills, practice job readiness strategies and enjoy recreational opportunities; traditional youth and adult sports and environmental programming; and services that provide free summer camp, transportation and lunches for youth with financial need.

Completed 21 ADA participant assessments/reassessments, providing year-round accommodations for successful inclusion in recreational programs, facilities and services for nearly 250 participants with special needs.

Recreation Services offered over 600 customer-driven programs serving over 33,000 citizens, with a 90% program make rate and high customer satisfaction. Keeping programs diverse, cutting-edge and responsive to community needs, 53 of those were new programs in response to COVID social distancing guidelines. Offerings included virtual/online programming such as virtual trivia nights, language and genealogy courses, park scavenger hunts and redesigned traditional programs such as skate camps, athletics, science, paddling, pottery, paint-at-home kits and holiday cake and cooking baking workshops.

Investing in quality family time and making connections with the community, over 2,100 citizens participated in parks & recreation special events such as Scarecrow Row, Santa Calling, Family Fun Night, Freedom Stories, Senior Games, Bike the Bridge, Capital Color Ride, Project 547: the Longest Day of Play, pool parties, neighborhood events and REC Connect family events.

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By The Numbers

FY2021

(statistics impacted by COVID closures)

Customer Satisfaction Rate
96% (voted excellent/good, 2020)

Direct Financial Recovery Rate
39.31%

#Households Receiving Discount Assistance
85

Volunteers/Hours
(excluding affiliates)
455 Volunteers
5,072 Hours

Official Partners
44

Partnership Participants
158,728

Programs Offered
1,112

Civic Engagements
4 events attended
(neighborhood meetings, public presentations & community outreach)

Parks & Recreation Attendance
5,586,314
Programs: 61,676
Parks: 5,340,313
Centers: 182,210
Legacy: 2,115

Parks
17

Miles of Trails
48.56

#Acres/Parks & Facilities
1,711
Provided **neighborhood outreach partnerships and free programs/services** in our lower-income neighborhoods by supporting neighborhood events and programs, and when needed, events were adjusted to meet restrictions and/or safety protocols related to COVID:

- In lieu of the in-person Neighborhood Winter Carnival event, approximately 64 “Create-a-Carnival” kits were packaged and distributed in the Grove community, reaching over 250 area residents. Kits included games, prizes, crafts, photo props, decorations and carnival snacks – all to encourage families to have fun at home.

- Some 144 “Hunt-at-Home” Easter bags were created and distributed in the Grove and Lafayette neighborhoods, with pre filled eggs, crafts and other items to help families provide positive activities for Easter.

- In the Grove and Lafayette Square/Village Apartment areas, over 500 people participated in activities and services such as the RECn’ It Out Spring and Summer Camps, library events (offered by the Williamsburg Regional Library) and other partnered events including a drive-thru Neighborhood Block Party. The annual Block Party was redesigned as a drive-thru, complete with community information bags, prizes, balloon animals, craft kits and a catered meal. Approximately 126 individuals attended the event held in the parking lot at Abram Frink Jr. Community Center.

- Working with other non-profit organizations and local churches, provided summer meals and self-directed recreational activities to over 200 youth (nearly 100% increase from previous year) living in Longhill Grove, Powhatan Apartments, Burnt Ordinary, those precariously housed in local motels and in the RECn’ It Out! Neighborhood outreach program.

- Collaborated with the College of William & Mary and York County Parks and Recreation’s Senior Center to bring the H.E.A.L. program to local seniors. H.E.A.L. is a free online health series offered through a partnership with the Southeastern Virginia Chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association. Topics included healthy eating, medications, emergency response, preventing disease, advance medical directives, mental health and brain health.

**Health & Wellness** offered 342 programs reaching 10,211 participants through fitness activities such as TRX Circuit, cycling, yoga, chair fitness, youth weight training, paddleboarding, a virtual open house at the Recreation Center and a virtual 5K run.

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**James City County 2035 Strategic Plan Goals**

- Exceptional Public Services
- Modern Infrastructure, Facilities and Technology Systems
- Expanding and Diversifying Local Economy
- Fiscally Efficient Government
- Protected Community Character and an Enhanced Built Environment
- High Quality Education
- Sustainable Long-Term Water Supply

*For more information, visit [http://www.jamescitycountyva.gov/2708/Strategic-Plan](http://www.jamescitycountyva.gov/2708/Strategic-Plan)*

**OUR MISSION**

We work in partnership with citizens to ensure responsive programs, facilities and open space which promote personal growth, social development and healthy lifestyles.

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*The Annual Report is produced by James City County Parks & Recreation Communications. For more information, please contact: veda.mcmullen@jamescitycountyva.gov, 757-259-5415 or parks.rec@jamescitycountyva.gov.*
Exceptional Public Services

Sixty-nine aquatic programs, classes and co-sponsored events were offered at the James City County Recreation Center indoor pool and the County’s two outdoor pools, reaching 17,516 participants to promote swimming proficiently and fun water fitness.

To spread the message of kindness, REC Connect staff and participants helped make a “World Kindness” video for World Kindness Day in November 2020. The video was posted on the Parks & Recreation Facebook page and the link emailed to REC Connect families. In addition, in celebration of National Random Act of Kindness Day in February, several REC Connect sites participated in activities with gift exchanges, painting kindness rocks and distributing kindness cookies to all staff and participants.

Three outdoor multigym fitness stations were installed on the Virginia Capital Trail and at the trailhead of Greensprings Interpretive Trail, allowing trail users the opportunity to add strength training to their walking, jogging or cycling routine. The project was a collaboration between Parks & Recreation and Eco Discovery Park Founder/Spoke & Art Provisions Company owner owner Steve Rose.

To help reduce the demand for park restrooms and reduce customer wait times for use of the facility, a portable outdoor changing station was installed at Jamestown Beach Event Park. The station allows patrons a private indoor space for changing clothes and other uses, eliminating significant delays for other visitors who need to use the restroom facility. Two additional changing stations are planned to be installed.

Celebrating Our Patrons!

Happy World Kindness Day!
November 13, 2020

The youth in this Fall 2008 Destination Recreation Brochure (above) pledged participation in the “No Child Left Inside” initiative. Where are they now?

Fall 2021

Front: Ethan, 19, graduated from Warhill High School and is working full time with a local contractor. He enjoys fishing and building and racing RC cars and trucks. L-R: Jonathan, 21, graduated from Woodside and attended Thomas Nelson Community College. He enjoys traveling, watching sports, playing basketball and gaming. Josh, 16 and over 6’1” completed his sophomore year at Jamestown High School where he is on the soccer team and is the kicker for the football team. He enjoys spending time out on the water. Hannah, 22, is completing her senior year at Longwood University where she is studying Therapeutic Recreation. Her goal is to become a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist and work with individuals with disabilities.
Exceptional Public Services

To provide park swimmers and boaters the latest information on water quality conditions, the James River Association (JRA) continued to perform testing at Jamestown Beach Event Park, James City County Marina, Chickahominy Riverfront Park and Powhatan Creek Park and Blueway seasonally, Memorial Day Weekend through Labor Day. JRA volunteers visit the sites weekly to collect water samples to measure bacteria levels and the information is then posted on JRA’s website at (www.jamesriverwatch.org/) as well as on County park webpages where the public may view test results and check other river conditions.

The Rainout Line, a new athletic field status service, was implemented to provide parents and coaches with quick access to field notifications when County athletic fields were closed due to weather or for maintenance. Rainout line users have three options to access field status information – automated voicemails, the Rainout Line mobile app and the Parks & Recreation website which also has a live scrolling list of all field statuses.

Through the Adopt-A-Park program, citizens support the department in continuing efforts to make County parks, trails and greenways safe and attractive while helping lower maintenance and equipment costs. New Adopt-A-Park agreements were completed with the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists who adopted the Greensprings Interpretive Trail, the Pressey family who adopted Ironbound Park and Judy and Drew Kinshaw-Ellis who adopted Freedom Park’s Free Black Settlement.

The Parks division also entered into new agreements with the Colonial Revolution Youth Mountain Bike Team, who in exchange for training on the bike trails at Upper County and Freedom Parks, will maintenance those park trails and host bike programs in the parks. Tose Sports, who offer girls youth basketball programs to the community, will join 17 other recreational and travel leagues who are provided fields, gyms, equipment and resources as needed.
Exceptional Public Services

Thirty interpretive signs were replaced along the Greensprings Interpretive Trail to further detail the trail history and improve trail appearance. Several local American Indian Tribal Chiefs were solicited for feedback and input on the use of appropriate and respectful language within the sign text.

Three community outreach activities were conducted at Freedom Park in fall 2020 with local Cub Scout packs and Girl Scout troops, offering participants night hikes and nature walks. Total participation across the three activities was 76.

Modern Infrastructure, Facilities and Technology Systems

Parks & Recreation launched PerfectMind, a new registration system that streamlines many patron services for a more user-friendly experience such as self-management of your own information – the ability to change your password, add or delete family members, update your contact information, add a credit card to your account for easier checkout and view your list of registered programs, all while assisting staff in developing, evaluating, promoting and operating the activities you enjoy.

Park Master Plan updates for Upper County Park, the Warhill Sports Complex and the James City County Recreation Center Park were underway in FY21. A public input period, which included online surveys and two virtual public meetings, solicited over 175 comments from the public. The plans and comments are being reviewed; adoption of the plan is expected in early 2022.

To keep pace with the popularity of James City County parks and trails:

► Phase I improvements began at the James City County Marina and included dredging the basin, demolishing and replacing fixed wooden docks and replacing them with a new floating ADA-accessible dock system equipped with power and water hookups; demolishing the fixed docks in the Cove area and installing a new dedicated ADA-accessible paddle craft launch area; installing a rock revetment; relocating the fueling tank and fuel pump; improving electrical and lighting; and making improvements to pedestrian walkways and the entrance road. Construction delays pushed the completion of Phase I improvements to early 2022.

► At the Warhill Sports Complex, new trail markers, a new trail head message board and signage were added; the soccer and lacrosse goals were completed; replaced the scoreboard controllers and fence; and improved the drainage systems on baseball fields.

► At the Forest Glen Playground, a drainage project was completed consisting of creating a shallow swale to move standing water from the playground area to a nearby ditch and reseeding grass.
Modern Infrastructure, Facilities and Technology Systems

► Three benches along the Virginia Capital Trail were refurbished, offering trail users improved resting stops. Work included replacement of wood, sanding, staining and sealing the wood. The benches were over ten years old and had become significantly weathered.

► To educate and improve identifying locations for patrons, staff and emergency services personnel, 27 trail bridges along the Greensprings Interpretive Trail were numbered on each end of the bridge. Knowledge of location will assist with patron input and staff and emergency services communication.

► To improve patron access to the Virginia Capital Trail, a path from the Fernbrook neighborhood was upgraded with surface material on low-lying areas. The path had often become impassable after rainstorms. Collaboration occurred among staff and volunteers to organize efforts to spread material on the path. Seven volunteers from the Fernbrook neighborhood participated in the project.

► As part of the Playground Safety Program, multiple pieces of equipment at Kidsburg (Veterans Park) were replaced including a tire swing, rope ladders, leaf steps, portholes, telescopes and cannons on the ship. A new piece of musical equipment was installed, the GameTime Jazz Combo, which is a collection of precision-tuned musical instruments that add a symphony sound to the playground. Music is an inclusive activity that encourages social and creative play for children of all ages and abilities.

► Annual maintenance projects were completed to replenish mulch in park playgrounds (left). The project included measuring existing levels, tilling the compacted mulch and blowing in new mulch to meet playground-surfacing standards. Almost 565 yards of mulch was spread among 10 playgrounds.

► Two areas of the Little Creek Reservoir Park playground border were removed to ensure an open travel path and make the playground ADA accessible.

► In an effort to modernize the James City County Recreation Center’s fitness equipment, the 20 year old Nautilus fitness line was replaced by a new Life Fitness circuit, a new cable crossover was added to the inventory as well as a new leg press machine and most of the free weight benches were replaced with Hammer Strength benches.

Fiscally Efficient Government

To expand environmental and preservation educational programs, James City County was awarded a $4,500 Chesapeake Bay Grant.

Over 30 tournaments and special events were hosted at the Warhill Sports Complex in FY21, contributing to overall tourism for the area. High school sports seasons such as football and field hockey returned to play during the spring. Staff also assisted the Williamsburg-James City County Schools with hosting three outdoor graduation ceremonies for the first time at Sanford B. Wanner Stadium.
Fiscally Efficient Government

Drainage improvements at Jamestown Beach Event Park resolved stormwater erosion issues caused by significant rain events. When rain events washed away sand along the beachfront, staff would regrade the sand to repair deep ruts in problem areas. The drainage improvements help to retain as much sand as possible as the County invests just over $10,000 annually for sand replenishment and grading.

To provide park users with a place to make minor bike repairs including inflating tires, Eagle Boy Scout Kane Dacier constructed a bicycle repair station at Freedom Park as part of his Eagle scout project.

The JCC Ruritans Club donated a flower box in Veterans Park in memory of Will Barnes. Barnes served on the Clean County Commission and volunteered with Parks & Recreation, JCC Ruritans and the Williamsburg Land Conservancy.

The Rotary Club of James City County put on two large flag displays at Veteran Park to commemorate Veterans Day and Flag Day. The displays featured 100 U.S. flags. In conjunction with Veterans Day FY21, the display was in also honor of the hundreds of local healthcare professionals, first responders and “front line heroes” who gave selflessly in the fight against COVID-19.

Protected Community Character and an Enhanced Built Environment

The Chickahominy Riverfront Park Shoreline Stabilization project mitigated the eroding of steep banks along Chickahominy Riverfront Park and Gordon Creek by establishing living shorelines, which address significant erosion issues and improve the quality of runoff from the park. Fifty-percent of construction funds were provided through James River Water Quality Improvement Funds, which is a grant administered by the Virginia Environment Endowment.

Twenty volunteers built a pollinator garden at Veterans Park. James City Stormwater funded the project that included adding mulch and native plants to a dry swell located in the middle of the park. Volunteers and James City County staff have taken on the responsibility of weeding, watering and adding education signage to explain the importance of pollinator gardens.

Sustainable Long-Term Water Supply

Water use at Chickahominy Riverfront Park increasingly became an issue in terms of capacity. Staff regularly monitor water levels and any abnormalities are quickly investigated, resulting in two years of safely staying within the park’s water limit. Staff also prepared a water mitigation plan and applied for a Groundwater Withdrawal Permit with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.
Award Winning Staff, Programs & Certifications

During the annual Virginia Recreation and Park Society conference held virtually in October 2020, Parks & Recreation received top honors for Best Health and Wellness Initiative, in the population category of 50,001 – 100,000. The employee Working Towards Wellness Program served 618 staffers in FY21, helping them to make healthier lifestyle choices through hiking, biking, yoga, hydration and relaxation challenges. The VRPS Conference is a learning exchange and provides an opportunity for recreation and park professionals to discuss areas of common interest while honoring demonstrated excellence in any of several areas during the previous year.

Leading statewide and advocating for the parks and recreation profession, three Parks & Recreation staff members held leadership roles in FY21 in the Virginia Recreation and Park Society. Parks & Recreation Assistant Director Arlana Fauntleroy served as VRPS President; Recreation Administrator Kelley Herbert served as statewide Co-Chair for the VRPS Leadership Training Institute; and Inclusion/Therapeutic Program Coordinator Tracy Newsom served as state-wide Chair of the VRPS Therapeutic Resource Group.

REC Connect Youth/Teen Program Coordinator Katrina York earned national certification as a Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) from the National Recreation and Park Association, joining a select few statewide. York also graduated from the Emerging Leaders Academy, a unique partnership program between James City County, York County and Virginia Tech for high-potential employees who wish to grow professionally.

Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission 2021

The Commission serves as a liaison between the Director of Parks & Recreation and the Board of Supervisors, the County Administrator and the community on recreation and park matters. For more information including the Commission meeting schedule, email alisha.berkely@jamescitycountyva.gov or call 757-259-5410.

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Above, 2020-2021 Commissioners, l-r: Larry Walk; Michael Hand; Kevin Radcliffe, Vice Chair; Linda Knight, Chair; Scott VanVoorhees; Linda Wallace-Cody; and Jay Lipscomb.

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