

2018



**NRPA**

**GOLD MEDAL**

**APPLICATION**



# TUALATIN HILLS PARK & RECREATION DISTRICT

## 2018 NRPA GOLD MEDAL APPLICATION

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# OUTSTANDING

## AGENCY

### QUESTION 15

**What makes your agency “outstanding”? Please cite three specific examples that capture the outstanding nature of your agency as you serve your unique community.**



Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District's (THPRD) commitment to all members of the community has never been stronger. [Access for All](#) is more than an expression – it is the philosophy driving our policy, planning, programming, and public outreach. In 2017, over 2,000 community members celebrated the opening of [Mountain View Champions Park](#), our first all-inclusive park featuring an all-abilities playground and Oregon's first fully accessible multipurpose sports field.

THPRD's [expansive regional trail system](#) serves as one of the region's most significant conduits, connecting neighborhoods, schools, and communities while providing access to the region's distinctive natural areas, forests and waterways. Over two million people use our trails annually, and since 2015, we've added seven miles of trails, bringing the total to 20-plus miles of paved, off-street trails.

To further support Access for All, THPRD's [Rec Mobile](#) and [Nature Mobile](#) reach 20,000 children in apartment complexes, parks and low-income neighborhoods where families face barriers to accessing recreation opportunities. We provide over 64,000 free and healthy meals to these participants and children enrolled in our camps and afterschool programs.

**Access for All  
is more than  
an expression  
- it's a  
philosophy.**





# POSITIVE IMPACT

## QUESTION 16

Tell us your story about how your agency positively impacts the community you serve.

We are the [region's leader in providing swim lessons](#), serving 30,000 swimmers a year, including 2,000 experiencing disabilities. We also partner with the USA Swimming Foundation to provide free swim lessons to over 160 kids with financial need.

Our [Scholarship Program](#) increases access to recreation for low-income residents. \$200 scholarships help residents afford programs from swimming to exercise classes to summer camps. We have awarded nearly \$1 million in three years and recently widened access by revising eligibility requirements.

To encourage active aging, [Wellness on Wheels](#) supplies trainers and equipment at independent living facilities and other locations. At THPRD's Elsie Stuhr Center, over 16,000 seniors a year enjoy daily meals, social experiences, recreation and fitness.

In support of a healthier community, our free [Fitness in the Park and Walk with Me programs](#) make fitness opportunities available to everyone. Community members of various ability levels participate in instructor-led outdoor activities, connecting people to nature, parks and trails.

THPRD's commitment to watershed health includes wildlife surveying, invasive plant removal, and native planting, yielding 300,000 new trees and shrubs installed in three years. We engage the public in this effort through both education and volunteer opportunities.

**Each year, we provide scholarships to help qualified, low-income residents cover program costs.**



# QUESTION 17

There are few resources more critical than public support, citizen involvement, and staff engagement. Please identify one outstanding example for each of these three characteristics.

## Public Support

[Our community demonstrates strong support of THPRD](#) through feedback collected from evaluations, surveys, [community conversations](#), focus groups and other methods, including social media. In 2017, we hired an independent research firm to conduct a scientifically valid community awareness survey that enabled us to capture insights on the use of facilities, user satisfaction, and engagement from community members. As a result, changes to service delivery and programming were designed to better meet the needs of the community.

## Citizen Involvement

We are currently piloting new ways to involve our Spanish-speaking community using interpreter services and hosting all-Spanish-speaking

meetings, ensuring that our park planning projects reflect more of the community. Our three [citizen advisory committees](#), composed of 27 total appointed volunteers, provide oversight to our park planning process, discussions, and general feedback. Multiple friends groups engage the local community by helping organize community events, supporting park activities, and promoting volunteerism.

## Staff Engagement

THPRD staff are actively engaged in our communities, regularly communicating with local neighborhood association committees and community participation organizations (15 in all). Thirty staff have graduated from [Leadership Beaverton](#), a program of the Beaverton Area Chamber of Commerce that engages citizens and business leaders to improve the local

community. In addition, since 2016, [over 20 staff members have achieved CPRP status](#).





## QUESTION 18

Public entities have been increasingly called upon to demonstrate the results of their services and practices to decision-makers and the general public. Please share with us 3 results you have measured.

## RESULTS

THPRD has moved aggressively to reduce the burden on taxpayers resulting from a \$100 million, voter-approved bond measure passed in 2008. Through favorable bond sales and refinancing, liability has been cut from \$173 million to \$142 million over the 20-year-payback period. [Our strong credit rating contributed to this \\$31 million in savings](#), which will help pay the balance two years early. A citizen-based bond oversight committee met regularly to review progress and recently held its final meeting as the bond program nears completion.

To better serve our most vulnerable populations, we expanded our scholarship program and holiday giving drives. In 2016, THPRD matched scholarship eligibility to free/reduced lunch requirements, enabling staff to approve 140% more applications in 2017. More than 40% of scholarships awarded were used for swim lessons. Our [2017 holiday giving drive](#) focused on homeless families and unaccompanied youth, doubling our collections. THPRD also donated over 1,000 pounds of linens, towels, hygiene products to

Union Gospel Mission's LifeChange program for women and children.

Our Nature & Trails Department has increased short-term volunteer opportunities and streamlined signups. This increased volunteerism by 73% between 2015 and 2016. [Volunteers recruited by our Nature & Trails Department](#) contributed 18,384 hours in 2017, 41% of all volunteer hours at THPRD.





# CREATIVITY INNOVATION

## QUESTION 19

Park and recreation agencies have long been known for creativity and innovation.

Please identify and briefly explain three innovations.

We received a [2016 Safety Excellence Award from Oregon Recreation & Park Association](#) for two innovative safety-related projects. The first was a reunification plan developed with the Beaverton School District and local law enforcements to be activated in the event of a school shooting or other major crisis. The plan, endorsed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, would bus students to our main complex for reunification with their families. The award also recognized a security plan that protected athletes, officials, and guests attending an international Davis Cup tennis event at the main complex.

In developing plans for [Mountain View Champions Park](#), THPRD formed a Champions Too Steering Committee composed of representatives from over 20 disability service organizations. Committee members played an integral role in ensuring the park is inclusive for people of all abilities.

THPRD continues to collaborate with this committee to create diverse programming for children and adults experiencing disabilities. Collaborators include representatives from Special Olympics Oregon, Adaptive Sports Northwest, Autism Society of Oregon, and the Beaverton School District Special Education Department.

Our Maintenance Department continually pursues creative opportunities to achieve results including: partnership with a local corrections facility, leading to over 4,000 hours of community service that helped complete 163 projects; collaboration with AmeriCorps to complete nine ADA compliance projects with 1,500 community service hours; and an agreement dating to the 1980s that has provided meaningful employment opportunities to more than three

dozen citizens with developmental disabilities.

**THPRD values innovation and was a finalist for the 2016 Oregon Innovation Award.**





# SOCIAL EQUITY

THPRD aims to remove barriers to participation by fostering an inclusive culture and offering programs that celebrate our diverse population. Efforts include translation services, gender-neutral restrooms, multicultural events, and multilingual signage. We are learning more about our community by participating in a community-based research

project to learn the lived experiences of communities of color.

A partnership with [Family Promise](#), an organization supporting children and their families experiencing homelessness, is underway. We are opening our doors to families and providing safe overnight accommodations with access to showers and recreational opportunities.

THPRD partners with FACT Oregon to host an annual all-abilities youth triathlon. [Tri4Youth](#) provides young people experiencing disabilities, their peers, and siblings an opportunity to participate together on a fully accessible course.

## QUESTION 20

In what ways has your agency addressed the NRPA Pillar of Social Equity?





# HEALTH & WELLNESS

## QUESTION 21

**In what ways has your agency addressed the NRPA Pillar of Health and Wellness?**

We support health and wellness with [no-charge amenities that include circuit training equipment](#) and bike repair stations along our trail system. More than 50 free fitness classes are offered in our parks during summer 2017.

The [Elsie Stuhr Center](#) serves our rapidly growing 55+ population with a 2,436-square-foot fitness room and 60,000-plus annual class visits. Free fitness testing improves patron health awareness and guides program offerings.

Through grant funding, we partnered with the city and school district to provide nature education and sports classes to children at Title I schools. These out-of-school activities encourage healthy lifestyles.

We completed our transition to healthier snacks and beverage machines in 2017, and all 3,600 acres of THPRD properties are smoke-free.





# CONSERVATION

## QUESTION 22

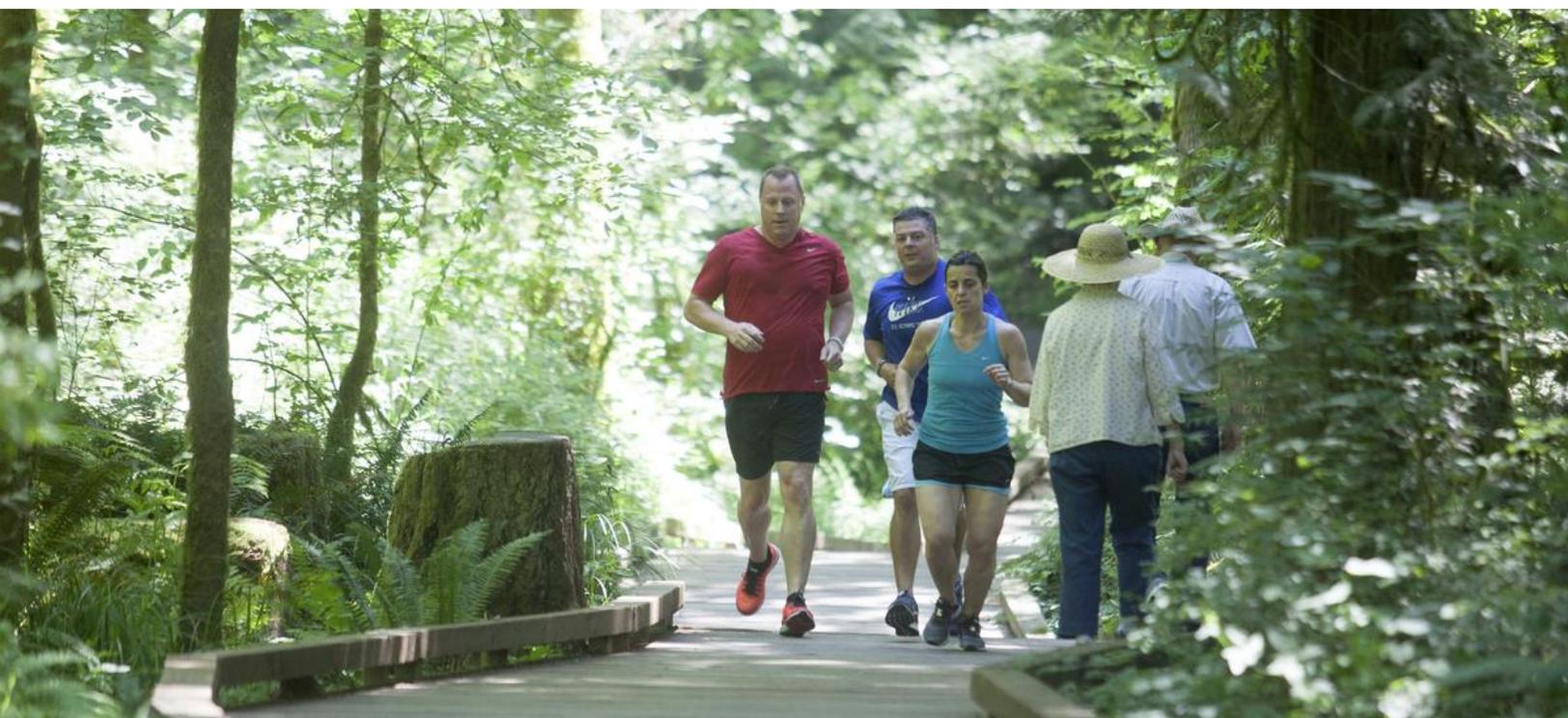
**In what ways has your agency addressed the issue of conservation?**

THPRD's commitment to conservation includes our [Nature Mobile](#) environmental education program, which reached over 13,500 people in 2017 with free, nature-based activities. Our semiannual [Native Plant Sale](#) promotes native yard habitats, water conservation, and pesticide reduction.

Natural areas acquisitions have added over 18 acres since 2015.

Our sustainable purchasing policy ensures preference for green products and vendors that positively affect the environment. THPRD purchases Renewable Energy Certificates for all electricity accounts through our vendor's Clean Wind Program.

We participate in a Strategic Energy Management program, [saving 82,155 kilowatt hours and 31,592 therms](#) since 2016 through investments in HVAC upgrades, LED installations, and changes in staff behavior. Carbon emissions for fleet, natural gas, and electricity have dropped 10% since 2010.





# RESOLVING CHALLENGE

Facing double-digit water rate increases over the next decade, THPRD has implemented water conservation initiatives. We categorized parks into three watering level tiers, including 128 low and no-water sites. We posted signage to educate the public about our water-saving measures. We also [upgraded our irrigation systems with automated controls](#) featuring weather and soil moisture sensors. Water use dropped 29% from 2015 to 2017.

THPRD's service territory has increased significantly in recent years with almost 1,500 acres of land added. More than 9,500 new homes are anticipated. Keeping up with this rapid growth in residential construction has been challenging, especially as land prices continue to soar. In 2015, THPRD went through a rigorous process to update Systems Development Charges methodology. The outcome was an overall increase in park and recreation fees that developers pay for each residence constructed. These fees are in place to ensure funding is available for constructing park and trail projects to keep pace with growth.

## QUESTION 23

**What challenges has your community and/or agency experienced over the past 3 years and what steps or actions have you taken to resolve these challenges?**



To address a backlog of park and building maintenance projects, we incorporated them into our cost recovery budget, quadrupling deferred maintenance funding from \$1.2 million (2007) to \$4.9 million (2018). This practice has enabled major improvements at our main Aquatic Center, including

HVAC efficiency upgrades and removal of 43 ADA barriers.

**THPRD's service territory has increased significantly in recent years.**