



Park and Recreation Commission

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS **DATE: AUGUST 17, 2026**

FROM: PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: JULY IS " PARK AND RECREATION" MONTH; "THE POWER OF PARKS AND RECREATION" CAMPAIGN, DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS; AND RECOGNITION OF THE 2025 EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

ISSUE:

Presentation of the programs and services of the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department highlighting how "Parks Make Life Better" and the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) July campaign "The Power of Parks and Recreation" video, and recognition of the 2025 Employee of the Year.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Park and Recreation Commission:

1. Receive report on department highlights;
2. Receive video presentation of Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department "The Power of Parks and Recreation" campaign; and
3. Recognize the Department's 2025 Employee of the Year.

BACKGROUND:

On July 10, 2018, the City of Riverside's Council adopted the Proclamation to support Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department (PRCSD) by declaring July as "Park and Recreation" month. Since then, the PRCSD has continued to implement the theme month each year by providing an array of programs and services to enhance the lives of the residents of Riverside and align itself with the National Recreation and Parks Association's (NRPA) mission. A dedicated staff prides themselves on providing high-quality services to the community with award-winning programs and activities for residents of all ages and interests in a variety of safe and attractive parks, landscapes, and facilities; from maintenance, park renovations and construction projects; to special events, athletics, social services, cultural arts, school aged programs, the summer food lunch program and much more. The primary objective of PRCSD is to provide the community with resources, safe places to relax, adequately maintained facilities, physical activity and to have fun. With the collaboration of community groups, local businesses and non-profit organizations, staff and volunteers ensure that "Parks Make Life Better."

The National Recreation and Parks Association's (NRPA) "The Power of Parks and Recreation" campaign celebrates the many ways park and recreation reveal the power of what connects us:

- **The Power of Connection:** Parks and recreation is where relationships grow, cultures meet and communities' bond.
- **The Power of Play:** From playgrounds to programs to youth sports, play fuels creativity, joy and lifelong learning.
- **The Power of Community:** Public spaces offer room for everyone to gather, celebrate and heal.
- **The Power of Nature:** Nature restores and inspires us, and parks ensure everyone can access its benefits.
- **The Power of Belonging:** Welcoming parks and programs make every person feel valued.
- **The Power of Well-Being:** Parks and recreation advances health, resilience and shared community benefits.

DISCUSSION:

To support the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) "The Power of Parks and Recreation" campaign and the City's annual recognition of July as Parks and Recreation Month, the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department (PRCSD) will offer a variety of programs, events, and services that highlight the many ways parks and recreation strengthen communities and improve quality of life.

Throughout July, residents will experience "The Power of Parks and Recreation" through Summer Concerts in the Park, Movies in the Park, Summer Splash, STAR and STEM Day Camps, swim lessons, recreation swim, youth sports, senior trips and tours, and community park pop-up activities through the Rec-2-Go mobile recreation program. In addition, 2026 marks the Nation's 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, and PRCSD will incorporate this historic milestone into events and activities that celebrate community pride, civic engagement, and our shared history.

According to NRPA's 2025 Engagement with Parks Report, parks and recreation services continue to be among the most valued services provided by local government. More than 227 million adults, or a member of their household, visited a local park or recreation facility in 2025, demonstrating the enduring importance of parks and recreation in communities across the nation. Additionally, approximately 68 percent of adults strongly agree that parks and recreation is an essential local government service, while nearly all respondents (99 percent) report experiencing a sense of belonging in their local park and recreation spaces. Parks and recreation agencies also play a critical role in youth development, with 92 percent of agencies offering youth sports programs that foster confidence, teamwork, leadership, and social connections. Furthermore, 95 percent of agencies identify promoting social connection and reducing social isolation as a primary benefit of older adult programming, reinforcing the important role parks and recreation plays in supporting healthy, connected, and resilient communities. These findings demonstrate that parks and recreation are far more than amenities; they are essential community assets that promote health and wellness, strengthen social bonds, provide opportunities for play and learning, and create a sense of belonging for residents of all ages and abilities.

In 2025, PRCSD demonstrated the Power of Parks and Recreation through the following efforts:

The Power of Connection – Recreation Division

- Provided programming and services through 14 community centers and seven pools, creating opportunities for residents of all ages to connect, learn, and engage.
- Offered youth sports, adaptive recreation, after-school programs, camps, special events, swimming lessons, recreation swim, and community-based programming.
- Expanded senior services through the Eldertainment Series, including Bordchella, New Year's Bash celebrations, themed luncheons, dinners, and social activities designed to reduce isolation and increase engagement.
- Added recreational youth and adult volleyball opportunities and expanded access to aquatic programs through grant-funded swim lessons and free swim opportunities.
- Supported family connections and community engagement through year-round special events and recreation programs.

The Power of Nature – Parks Division

- Maintained almost 3,000 acres of developed and natural parkland, including 68 developed and undeveloped parks, trails, landscapes, and community facilities.
- Performed daily landscape maintenance and coordinated volunteer opportunities such as tree plantings and park clean-up events.
- Utilized Deferred Maintenance funding to improve facilities through painting projects, fencing upgrades, irrigation improvements, landscaping enhancements, and LED lighting conversions.
- Continued implementation of the Tree Grid Pruning Program to improve aesthetics, public safety, and environmental stewardship.
- Conducted Defensible Space maintenance activities in high-risk areas to protect residents, facilities, and natural resources.

The Power of Belonging – Special Transportation Division

- Provided transportation services through Riverside Connect, helping seniors and individuals with disabilities remain active and connected to the community.
- Celebrated more than 51 years of service by offering complimentary ride days to recognize residents who utilize these essential transportation services.
- Supported access to recreation programs, medical appointments, shopping, social activities, and community resources.

The Power of Community – Arts & Cultural Affairs Division

- Served as a catalyst for arts, entertainment, and cultural experiences throughout Riverside.
- More than 100 special events and film permits are issued annually and support community celebrations and economic activity.
- Maintained public venues and supported artists and nonprofit organizations through grants and partnerships.
- Developed programs and experiences that celebrated Riverside's diversity, creativity, and cultural heritage while bringing residents together.

The Power of Play – Park Planning and Design Division

- Oversaw Park planning, capital improvement projects, development review, fee assessments, and parkland acquisition.
- Completed improvements at Tim Strack Park.
- Installed new playground equipment and playground surfacing at multiple park locations citywide.

- Added nine new pickleball courts at Arlington Park to meet growing recreational demand, and managed numerous other capital improvements that promoted active recreation and outdoor play.

The Power of Well-Being – Department-wide Commitment

- Supported physical, mental, social, and environmental well-being through parks, recreation programs, cultural experiences, transportation services, and community events.
- Provided safe, accessible, and welcoming spaces that encouraged healthy lifestyles, social interaction, and lifelong learning.
- Continued investing in facilities, programs, and services that improved quality of life and strengthened community resilience.

Employee of the Year

During the Department's Employee Service Awards held on May 27, 2026, Victoria Koo-Young was recognized as the 2025 Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department's Employee of the Year.

Victoria joined PRCSO in 2021 and quickly became an integral part of the Department's success. She played a key role in launching and operating the Bourns Family Youth Innovation Center during the COVID-19 pandemic, helping establish programs and services during a particularly challenging time.

Since then, Victoria has been instrumental in developing innovative STEAM and STEM programming opportunities that inspire youth and families throughout the community. Through her creativity, leadership, and ability to build strong partnerships, she has helped transform the Innovation Center into a vibrant hub for learning, exploration, and innovation.

Known for her professionalism, positive attitude, and willingness to support others, Victoria consistently goes above and beyond to serve both the Department and the community. Her dedication, creativity, and commitment to public service have made a lasting impact on PRCSO and the residents it serves.

In recognition of her outstanding contributions and exemplary service, Victoria Koo-Young was selected as the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department's Employee of the Year.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to the General Fund associated with this report.

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Attachment: Presentation Video