

2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT



CHARLESTONCOUNTYPARKS.COM



*Marsh Wren at
Caw Caw Interpretive Center*

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Charleston County Residents:

I am pleased to share with you the Annual Report for fiscal year 2020 – 2021. Looking back on this year, we were still in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In the early days of the pandemic the CCPRC team was quickly adjusting to ensure we continued to provide access to the parks and programs our community loves. As the pandemic moved into its second year, we found ourselves adapting to a new normal. I am very proud to say that, through innovation and flexibility, CCPRC not only adapted during this time, but thrived.

In the fall of 2020, we began the process of replacing the Folly Beach Fishing Pier. The old wooden pier, damaged by age and worm borers, was taken down, and the new pier construction began in its footprint. We opened the observation deck and renovated gift shop just in time for the 2021 beach season. CCPRC is proud to be creating this new Charleston icon, slated to open in the spring of 2023, to serve generations to come.

During this fiscal year we were excited to open many new amenities, including a dog park at Wannamaker County Park complete with fun splash pad feature, a dog park at Johns Island County Park, and an all-new fishing dock at James Island County Park. A playground upgrade for the Sol Legare community was completed through the use of Park and Recreation Development (PARD) grant dollars. Each of these amenities provides valuable space for families, friends and dog lovers to enjoy the outdoors.

We also introduced several new events like the Fairy House Festival and Toast Under the Oaks, while also launching our first-ever Swim Club based out of the West County Aquatic Center. In an effort to adapt to Covid-times and offer near-contactless transactions, we began offering online ticket sales at the Holiday Festival of Lights. We found that many of our patrons enjoyed this option and have started using it for many of our events.

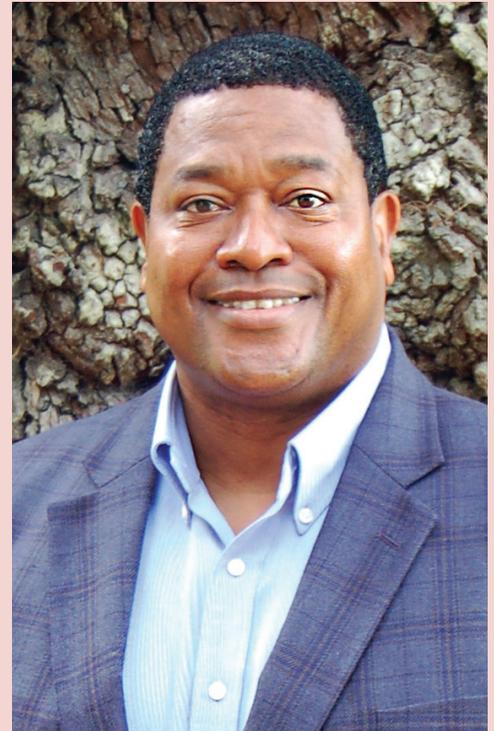
This past fiscal year we were also honored with several recognitions. We received the True Inspiration Award from Chick-fil-A along with a \$125,000 grant to help fund the important work being done by the Charleston County Parks Foundation. We were honored by GovTech with an innovation award for our team's ability to quickly create an electronic onboarding process to bring-on and orientate our new hires without having to meet in-person. I'm also pleased to announce that our Caw Caw Interpretive Center was selected as a new listing on the National Park Service's National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

While this past fiscal year had some unique challenges, the team at CCPRC was able to adapt and often create improved processes. Finally, I want to say thank you to you, our patrons. Your ongoing commitment to CCPRC is what drives us. We look forward to another year of making memories in the parks with you and your loved ones.

Warmly,



David Bennett
Executive Director
Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission



David Bennett

Agency Overview

The Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission operates over 11,000 acres of property, including regional parks, beach parks, a historic plantation site, fishing piers, waterparks, boat landings, a climbing wall, an interpretive center, an equestrian center, a skate park, vacation cottages, campground, a marina, and event facilities. We also offer a variety of recreational services - festivals, concerts, races, camps, classes, and more.

Mission Statement

The Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission will improve the quality of life in Charleston County by offering a diverse system of park facilities, programs and services.

Vision Statement

To be distinguished as a nationally accredited and financially sustainable park and recreation agency through our commitment to preserving our natural, historical and cultural resources, offering a clean, safe and exceptional visitor experience that is accessible to all.

Core Values

Community Enrichment

Enabling lives through education and programs

Leadership

Providing professional staff development

Fun

Delivering fun to customers

Exceptional Customer Service

Always focusing on you

Health and Wellness

Providing and promoting healthy lifestyle opportunities

Quality

Striving for quality throughout the park system

Diversity and Inclusion

Creating a park system that reflects the diversity of our community

Safety

Ensuring safe and secure environments

Accessibility

Removing barriers to make programs and facilities accessible for all

Stewardship

Preserving and conserving cultural, natural, and historical resources

Building a Legacy

Maintaining a vision for the future while sustaining a healthy park system



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS



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Chair



Eduardo Curry
Vice-Chair



Dale Aren
Secretary-Treasurer



Lisa S. King



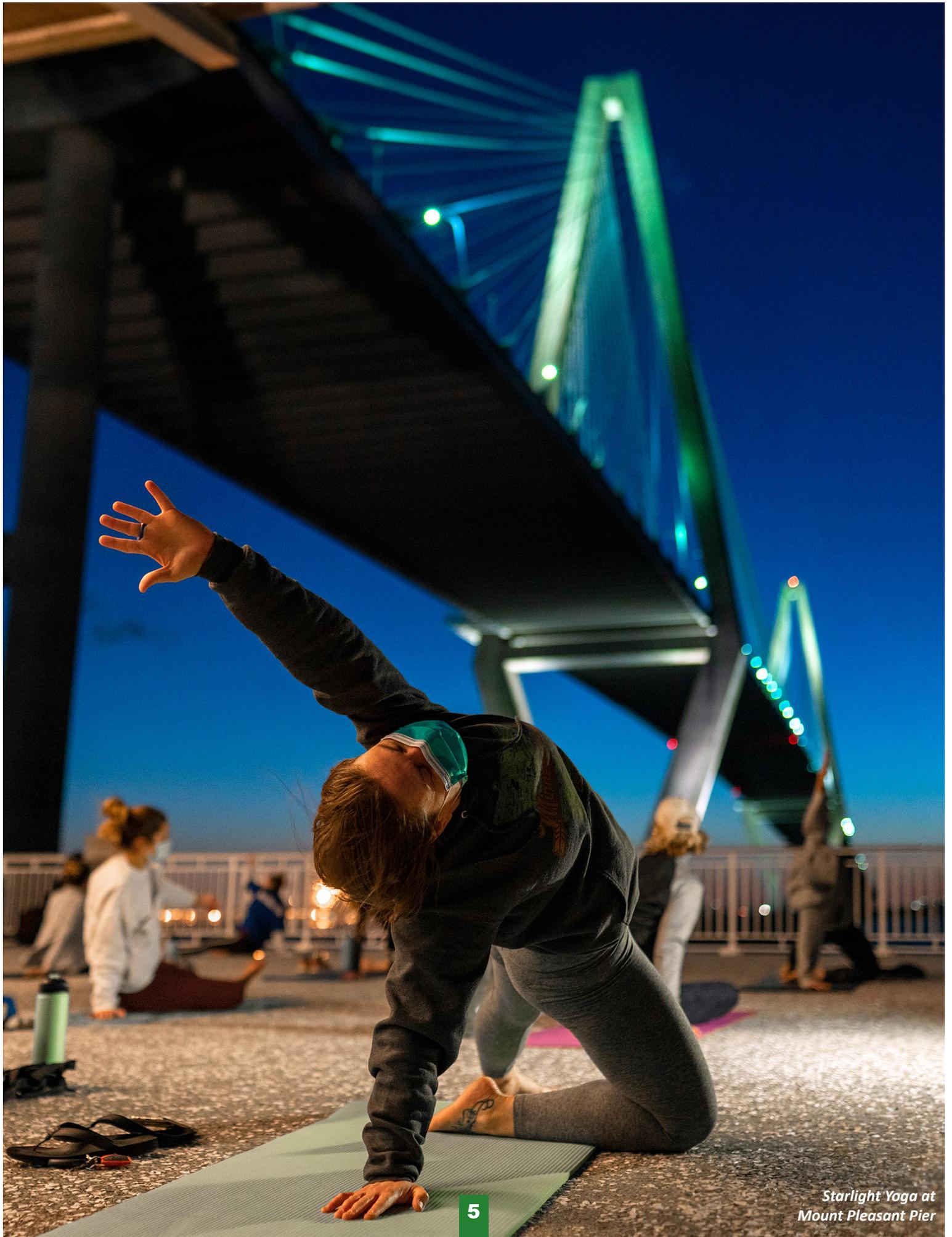
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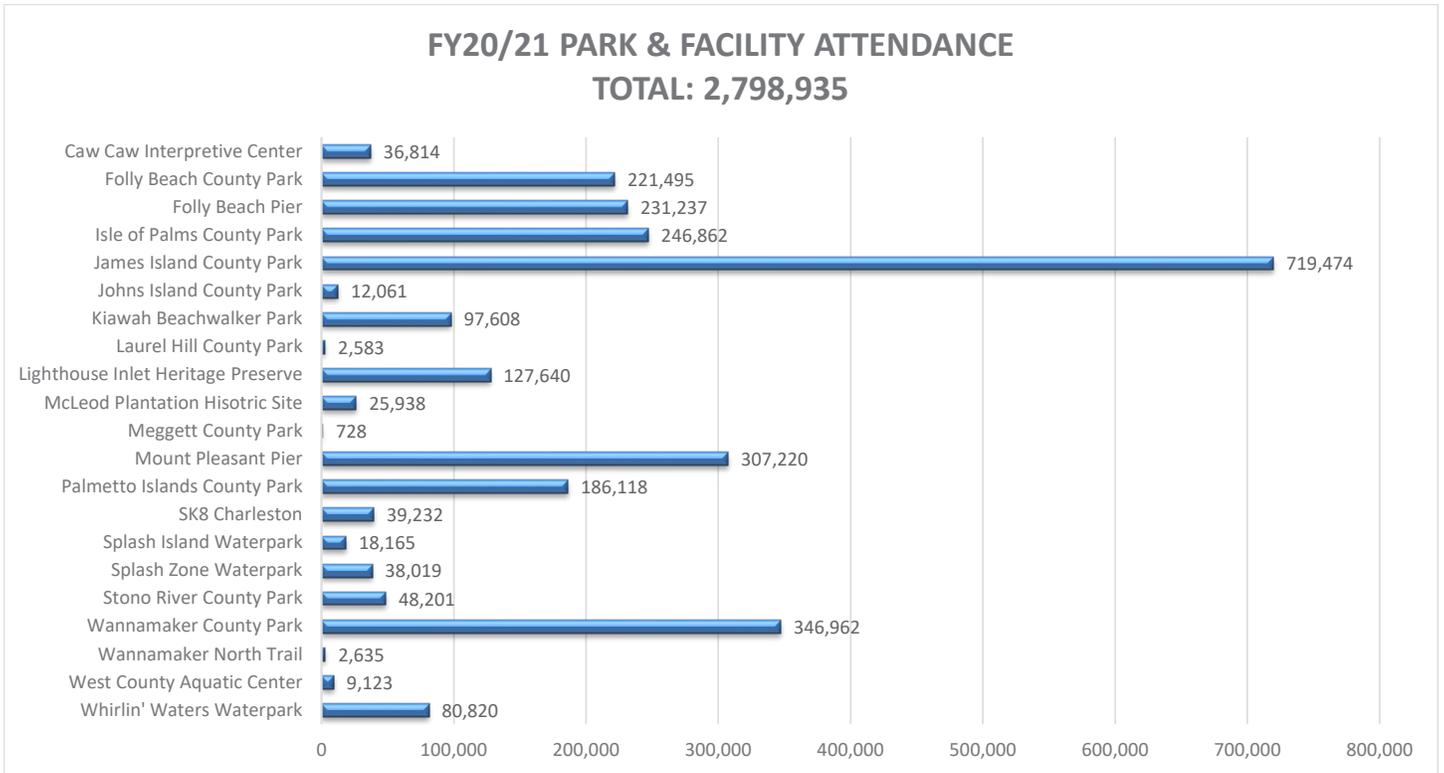
Teddy Manos



Brad Taggart



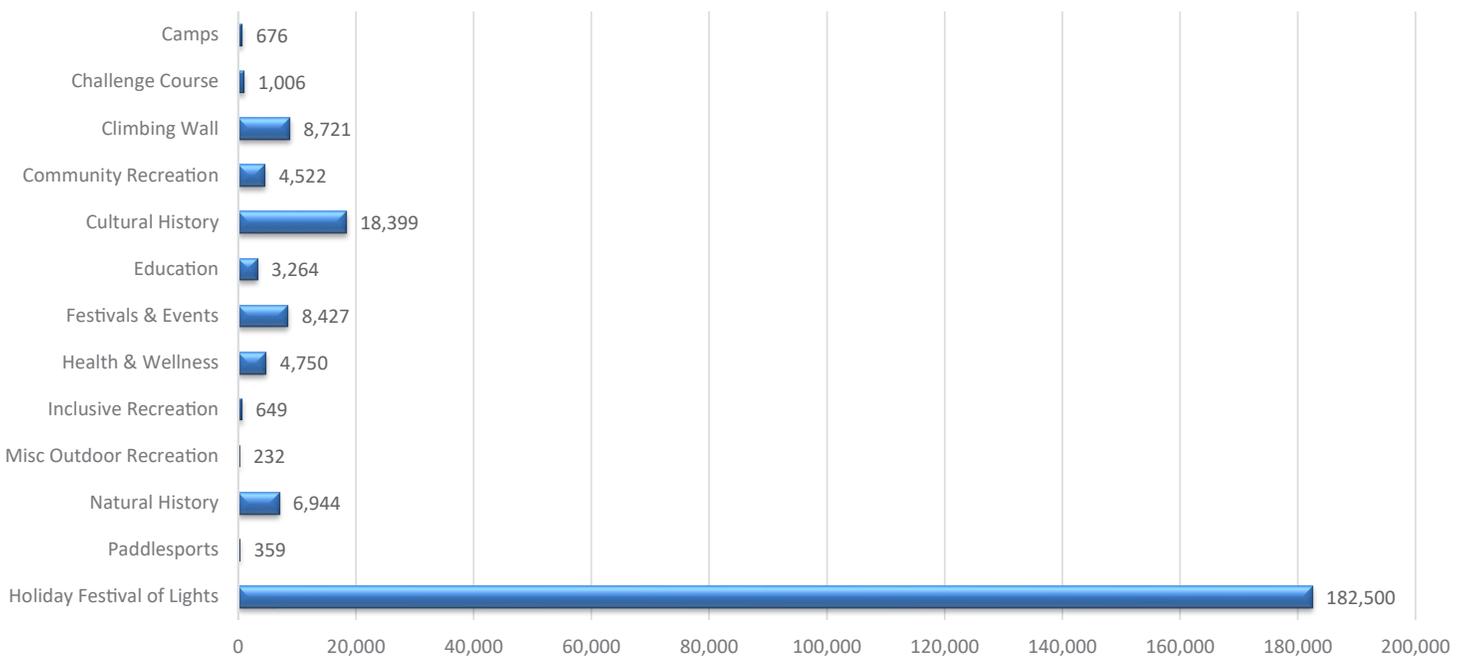
Patrons at Play



* FY19/20 Park and Facility Attendance Total: 2,625,170

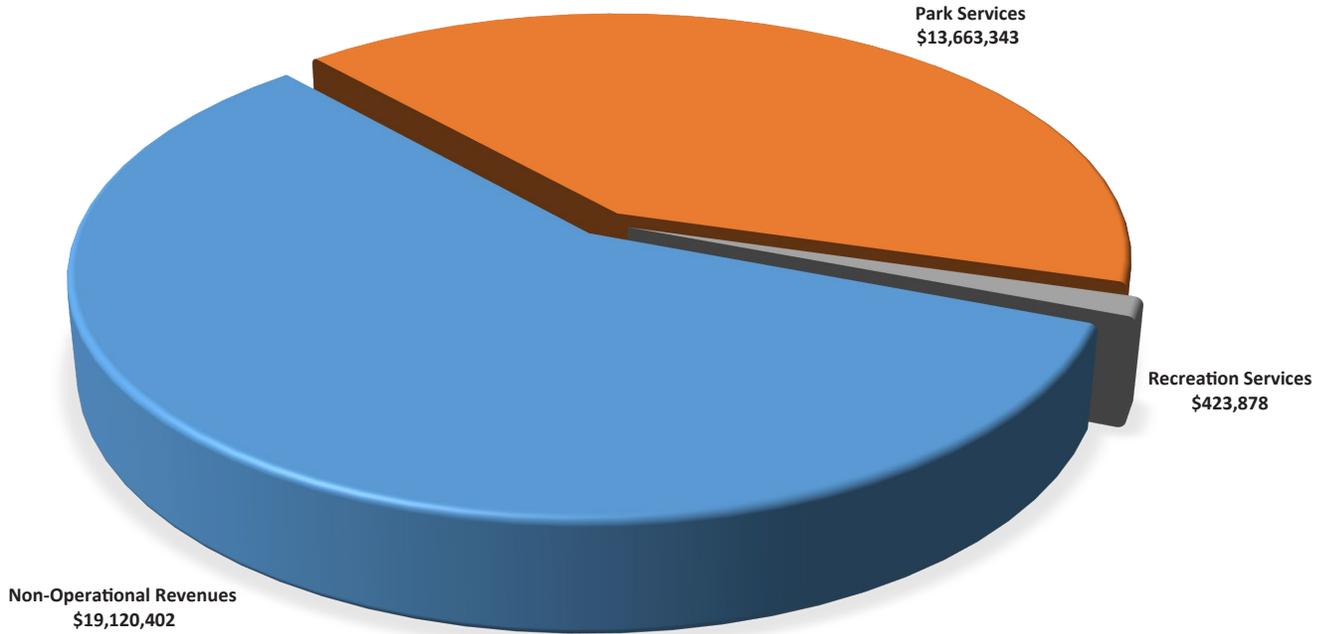
FY20/21 SPECIAL EVENTS & PROGRAMS ATTENDANCE

TOTAL: 240,449

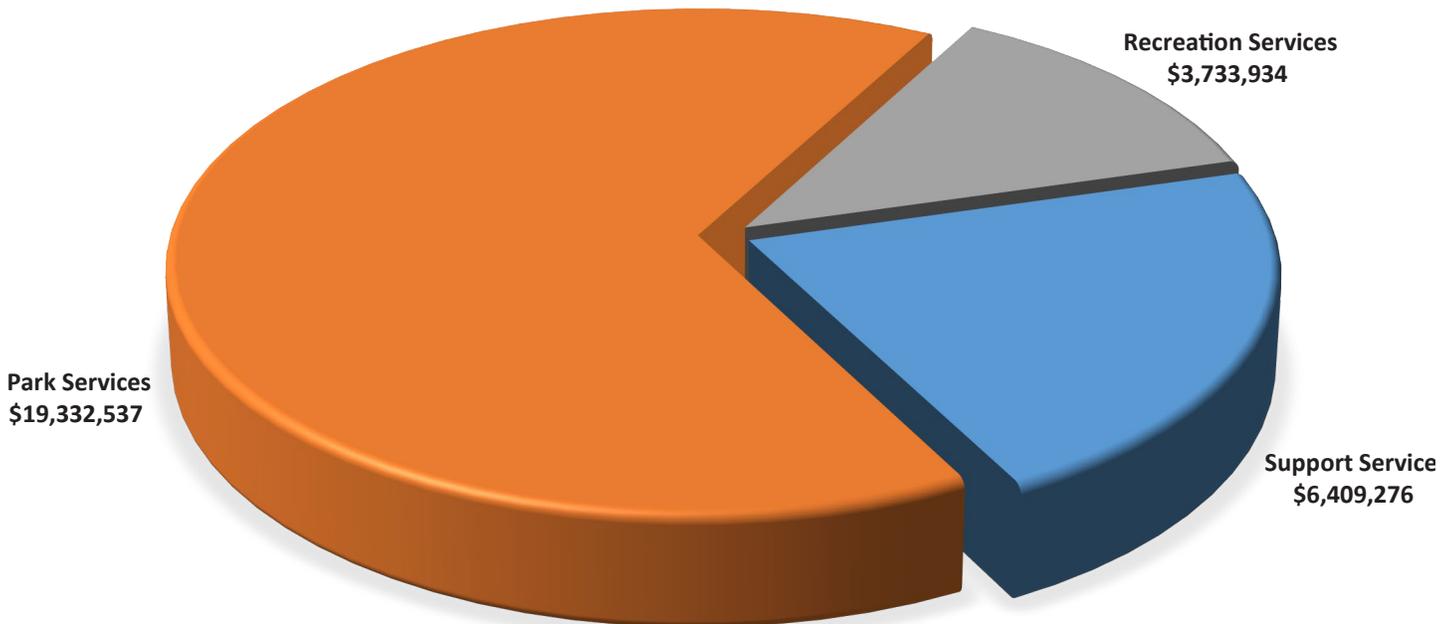


Your Dollars at Work

FY20/21 TOTAL REVENUES TOTAL: \$33,207,623



FY20/21 TOTAL EXPENDITURES TOTAL: \$29,475,747





SK8 Charleston



Growing

Folly Beach Fishing Pier Replacement Project Begins

This fiscal year, CCPRC bid farewell to the old Folly Beach Fishing Pier and announced plans for the new pier and its design. After final permits were received in September 2020, CCPRC unveiled renderings of the new pier to the media and the public. The Folly Beach Pier Replacement Project officially began in October 2020 with demolition of its observation deck area. In May 2021, the rebuilt deck opened, making available for public use the gift shop, restrooms, showers and beach access. The rest of the pier remained closed to the public while demolition continued. Construction of the new pier is planned to continue through Spring 2023.

James Island County Park Fishing Dock

The new fishing dock at James Island County Park was completed in November 2020. In addition to spectacular marsh views and concrete piles, the dock features composite decking and aluminum & composite handrails. At the end of the boardwalk, there is a covered pierhead with a bench, solar-powered lighting and an aluminum gangway leading to a floating dock, with an attached canoe/kayak launch. The boardwalk and pierhead are designed to ADA standards and are fully accessible. The dock has a 75-year lifespan and will require minimal maintenance.

Playground Upgrade for Sol Legare

We awarded a Park and Recreation Development (PARD) grant to the Concerned Citizens of Sol Legare Foundation to help renovate the playground at their community recreation center. The Planning & Development division worked with community leaders to receive input about the project before moving forward. Work started with removing old playground equipment and an old fence. New elements installed included new playground equipment, fencing, seating, grills, and a renovated basketball court.

Growing (continued)

New Johns Island County Park Dog Park Opens

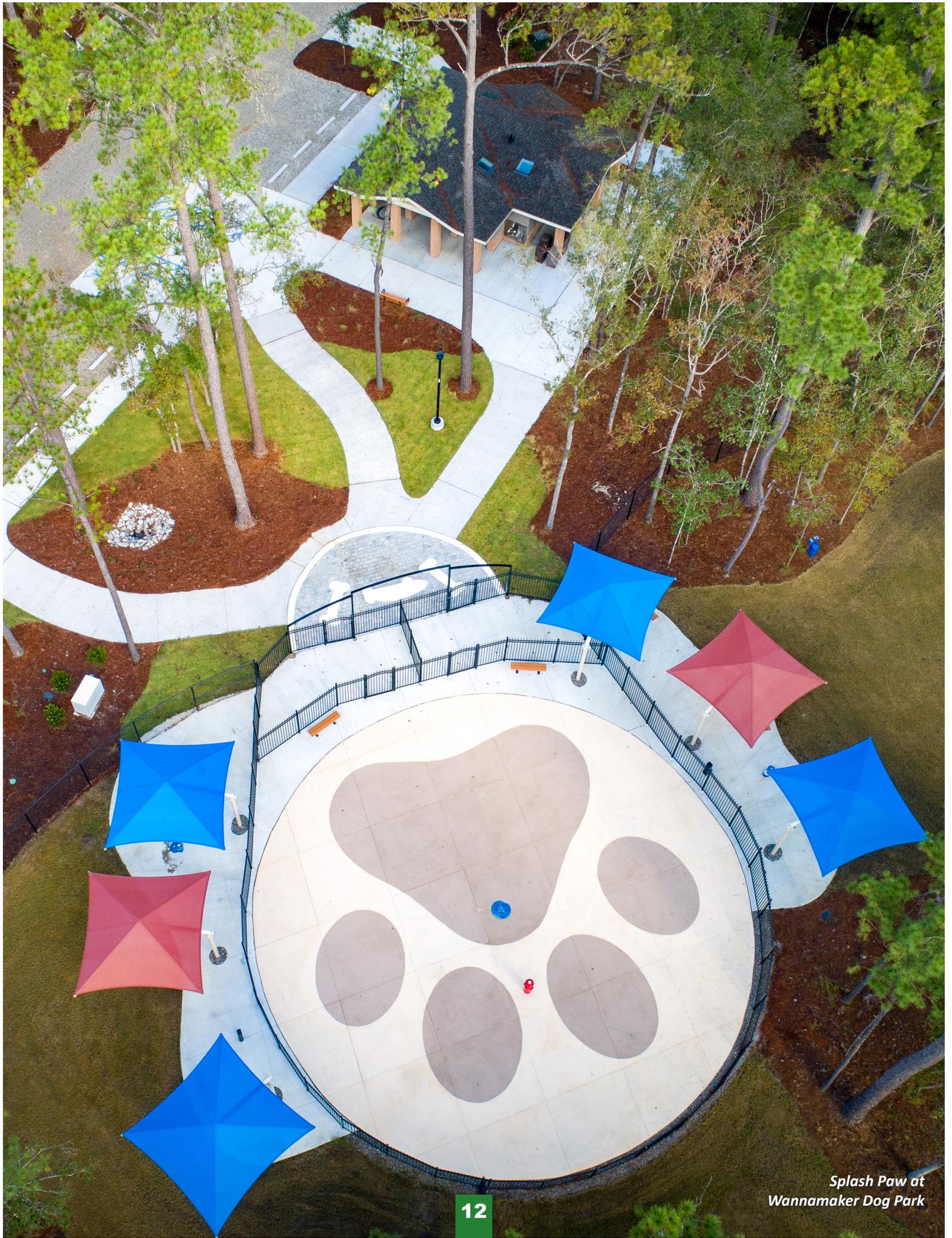
In April 2021, CCPRC opened a new dog park at Johns Island County Park. The dog park offers a shade structure, picnic benches, and wash-off area. A new drainage system was installed to improve conditions during heavy rain. A successful grand opening event titled “Evening in the Park” was held in late May.

New Wannamaker County Park Dog Park Opens

North Charleston-area dogs and their owners rejoiced in October 2020 when the brand new off-leash dog park at Wannamaker County Park opened. New amenities include the popular Splash Paw, a spray-jet play pad for the dogs, as well as shade structures, seating benches, drinking fountains for dogs and people, cell phone charging stations and large off-leash play areas. The site also features restrooms, beautiful landscaping, fencing, shade structures and a large parking area. That fall, Wannamaker’s first Yappy Hour was held to celebrate the new dog park’s opening, 364 people and their dogs enjoyed music, beverages and explored the new park at the event.

Joining TikTok and Snapchat

The Marketing division created new accounts on TikTok and Snapchat, two emerging social media platforms which trend toward a target demographic under the age of 25. These accounts showcase the playful side of the agency and will ensure CCPRC reaches more young people in the future.



Splash Paw at Wannamaker Dog Park



Growing (continued)

Online Event Ticketing Now Available

To encourage near-contactless transactions and increase efficiency, CCPRC rolled out an advance online ticket purchase option with the 2020 Holiday Festival of Lights. Available through ActiveWorks, an online registration and event management software, the ticketing system offers a full suite of tools to take and manage registrations and communicate with customers. The mobile check-in app allowed gate staff to easily scan tickets and move customers through the gate with efficiency.

The success of the process was evaluated, and it was determined that CCPRC will continue the use of advance online ticketing for events that offer individual or vehicular admission at the gate and individual admission at a pedestrian gate.

The Start of Swim Club

The first CCPRC Swim Club was formed in late spring of 2021, calling the West County Aquatic Center home. The club's goal was to build upon basic swim knowledge and skillsets so that the young swimmers would learn to develop technique and endurance for various competition strokes including breaststroke, butterfly, backstroke, and freestyle. Throughout the season, the coach practiced a swim team approach to help kids grow in swim skills, team building, and leadership roles.

Eco-Therapy

The interpretation team continued to find new and innovative ways to connect people to the natural and cultural resources found in Charleston County Parks. At Caw Caw Interpretive Center, we introduced people to Forest Bathing. Based on the Japanese practice of shinrin-yoku, forest bathing allowed participants to take in the forest atmosphere through all of their senses to reconnect with the natural world and maintain a healthy body and mind.

Growing (continued)

Fairy House Festival Debut

For almost a decade, CCPRC's education team hosted Fairy House Days at Caw Caw Interpretive Center, inviting visitors to build homes for fairies and gnomes with natural materials found in the park. Fairy House Days offered children and parents a chance to have fun and tap into skills such as creativity, collaboration, critical-thinking, and problem solving in a natural environment. The popularity of the event inspired plans for a Fairy House Festival.

January 2021 marked the first Fairy House Festival, and it was held at Palmetto Islands County Park. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a limited number of spaces were available, but the size of the park made it easy to offer ample space between designated building plots to encourage social distancing. Not only did participants build fairy houses and gnome homes, but activities also included a scavenger hunt, food truck vendors, and story time led by our partners at Charleston County Public Library.

Toast Under the Oaks

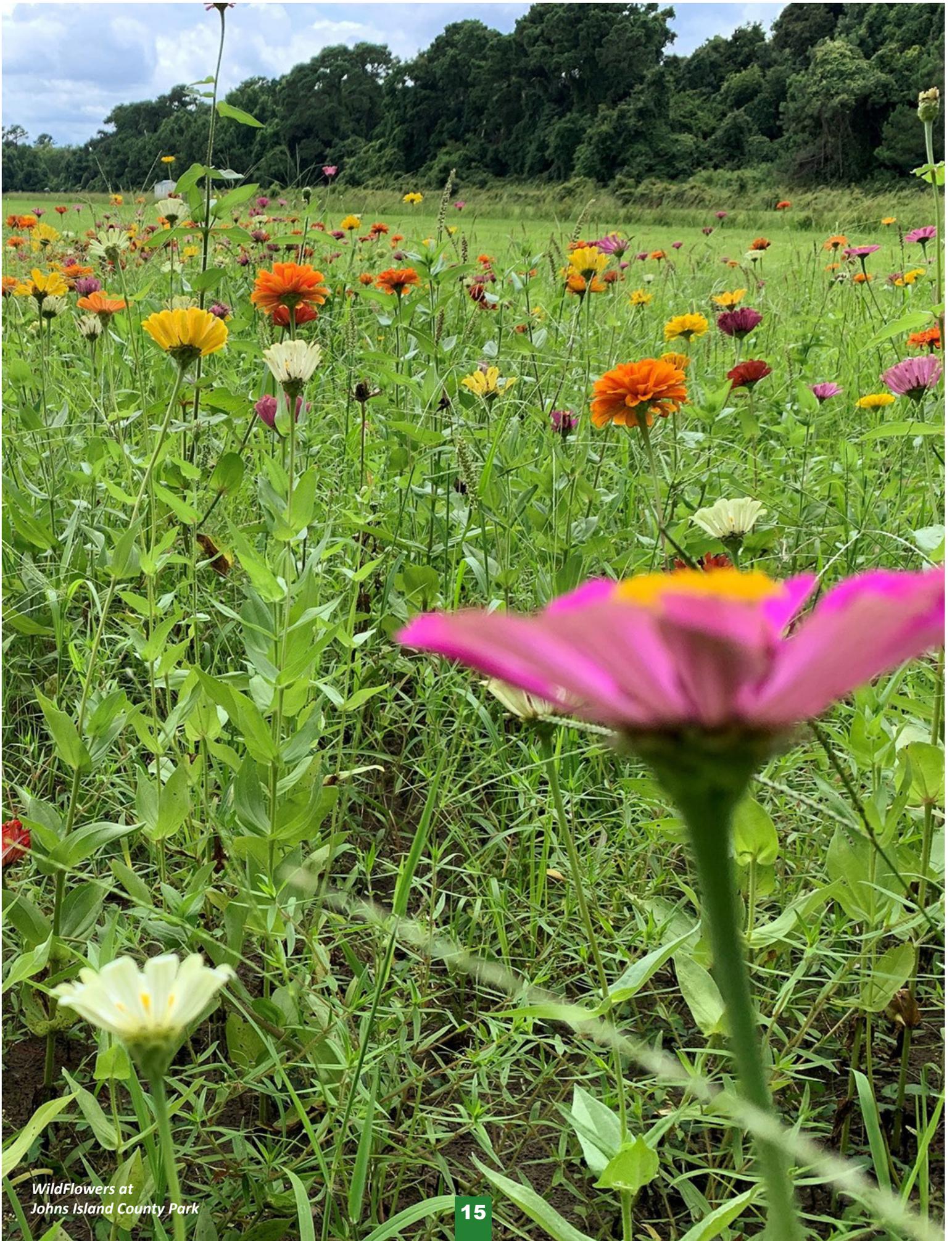
In the fall of 2020, the Festivals and Events team introduced a new outdoor happy hour series at Johns Island County Park called Toast Under the Oaks. The event features food truck fare, live music and drinks all under the park's sweeping oaks. The series was an instant success and will continue to be a staple on the event calendar.

Virtual Inclusive Dance Party

While COVID suspended our in-person Inclusive Dances, we were happy to offer a new Virtual Inclusive Dance Party series. These dances were held throughout FY 20/21 and included members of the community as well as participants from the Disabilities Board of Charleston, MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital and the Institute of Psychiatry. The dance parties were an hour long and included upbeat music and an opportunity for everyone to show off their favorite moves.



*Fairy House Festival at
Palmetto Islands County Park*



*Wildflowers at
Johns Island County Park*

Enhancing

ADA Access Audit and Accessibility Citizen's Advisory Committee

In 2020, the WT Group, LLC Accessibility Practice presented findings from their Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access audit of all CCPRC facilities and programs, and worked with the agency to develop a transition plan. One recommendation from the audit was to form a citizen's group as a means to create connections to the local community, provide feedback to staff, and assist in initiatives related to access and inclusion for people with disabilities. In April 2021, CCPRC Recreation staff hosted the first Accessibility Citizen's Advisory Committee, comprised of 10 individuals with disabilities and family members or/caregivers for individuals with disabilities. The members represent a wide spectrum of disabilities, and several members are also certified healthcare and medical professionals or therapists. The committee began important discussions on how they wish to advocate for community members with disabilities. CCPRC liaisons look forward to collaboration with the committee to improve access and inclusion for all.

Wildflowers for People & Pollinators

Johns Island County Park and the Planning and Development division partnered to plant a plot of wildflowers in the spring. The flowers have thrived and several visitors used the area for photos. The Planning and Development division is in the process of certifying and registering the site as a Monarch Waystation, which will serve to educate the public on the value of pollinators and Monarch butterflies. This project not only brings additional beauty, but education to this unique and diversified, rural facility.

Beetle Invasion

The Asian Longhorned Beetle, an invasive insect, was first reported in South Carolina in June 2020, destroying a variety of trees, including maples, elms and birches. For several weeks in February, Stono River County Park was closed in order to remove infested trees. The Planning and Development division continues to work with park staff, Clemson Extension, and the United States Department of Agriculture to coordinate an ongoing management strategy.

Enhancing (continued)

Longleaf Planting Restoration Project at Two Pines County Park

CCPRC staff along with multiple stakeholders, including United States Fish & Wildlife, One Tree Planted, American Forest Foundation and Longleaf Alliance planted over 20,000 longleaf pine seedlings within approximately 40 acres at the future Two Pines County Park. This initiative will help restore the park's ecology back to its native longleaf pine ecosystem, which once dominated Southeastern forests. Over 75% of the project was funded by natural resource grants provided by American Forest Foundation and One Tree Planted.

Moving Forward After Wannamaker County Park Fire

Wannamaker County Park staff responded quickly after a fire sparked during an electrical storm destroyed the snack bar/restroom building on March 18, 2021. Within weeks a new temporary snack bar was opened in the nearby Park Center meeting room and then moved to an upfitted food trailer. Although this refurbished trailer will serve the temporary needs of Wannamaker, the park looks forward to the building of a new snack bar/restroom building in the near future.

Splash Zone Gets Colorful Facelift

James Island County Park staff collaborated with Charleston County School of the Arts to repaint the mural at the entrance to the Splash Zone Waterpark. An 8th grade class at the school completed six separate murals in just five hours depicting several different jungle scenes including monkeys, frogs and tigers.

Stargazing Shed

The Lowcountry Stargazers is a group of amateur astronomers whose goal is to further the education of their members and the general public in the field of astronomy. Having partnered with CCPRC for a number of years now to offer nighttime observing programs, the Charleston area group found a new home for their equipment building in the pepper field at Johns Island County Park. They will be able to set up a projector on the side of the building to show live views from the telescopes.



Rita Rosal Low
The Artist's Name

Mural at Splash Zone



Foundation receives the True Inspiration Award

Honoring

True Inspiration Award

The Charleston County Parks Foundation was awarded as one of the 2021 True Inspiration Award winners from Chick-fil-A. Honoring and supporting community organizations that make a positive impact in the area of hunger, homelessness and education, this year's awards supported Black-led nonprofits or those that impact communities of color. As one of 34 recipients, the Charleston County Parks Foundation received a \$125,000 grant to fund their mission, which aims to help all residents experience CCPRC facilities and programs.

An Opportunity to Own a Piece of Folly Beach History

The Legacy Core Value committee spearheaded an initiative to sell the Folly Beach Pier benches, fishing stands and slices of the pilings so that Lowcountry residents have the opportunity to take home a piece of the iconic landmark. The committee sold 15 benches and 75 fishing stands in the fall of 2020 and raised nearly \$10,000 for the Charleston County Parks Foundation. As the wooden pilings were pulled from the ocean beginning in spring 2021, the committee worked to salvage them. The pilings, many with distinctive patterns from worm borers, were sent to Dockmasters where they are sliced, preserved and hand-branded with an image of the pier. Each pier piece will also have a unique serial number. An interest form for those wanting to purchase a pier piece was created and over 4,000 people signed-up. The pieces will go on sale in late 2021 and proceeds will benefit the Charleston County Parks Foundation.

Caw Caw Listed on the National Park Service's National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom

Chosen because of its proximity to and relationship with events surrounding the 1739 Stono Rebellion, Caw Caw Interpretive Center was selected as a new listing on the National Park Service's National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. Caw Caw was one of 16 new additions to the network, which honors, preserves and promotes the history of resistance to enslavement through escape and flight and features 680 sites across 39 states. The application for the listing was prepared by the students of Jon Marcoux last semester in Clemson University's historic preservation graduate program.

Honoring (continued)

Interpretation Team Members Recognized for Excellence in Marine Education

In November, the South Carolina Marine Educators Association (SCMEA) recognized Heidi Champion and Lindsay Patterson for their work in the field of marine education. Heidi was awarded the President's Choice Award, which is given to the individual that consistently exceeds expectations and goes above and beyond in supporting the work of SCMEA. Through her work with SCMEA, Heidi is providing critical resources to individuals working to preserve aquatic environments.

Lindsay Patterson was recognized as the 2020 SC Marine Educator of the year. Over the course of her career, Lindsay has delivered hundreds of marine science and freshwater programs and educated thousands of children. Additionally, she co-chaired the NMEA conference in Charleston, served on and supported the SCMEA board is serving on the NMEA board, served as part of the project team that created the BioDiscovery Project, served as part of the group that created the Palmetto Environmental Education Certification program, and created a scholarship program that removed barriers of access for children who wanted to become CCPRC Jr. Naturalists. Lindsay played a key role in assisting NMEA in becoming a more equitable organization as is a member of their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion ad-hoc committee.

New Species Confirmed at Caw Caw

In June 2018, then Interpretive staff member Tess Moody found a species of millipede at Caw Caw Interpretive Center. She noted its uniquely marked appearance, took a photo of the arthropod and posted it to an online entomology group for identification. Tess was contacted by Dr. Jackson Means of Virginia Tech, who believed it could be an unidentified species.

Moody and Dr. Means were unable to find another specimen at Caw Caw again until June 2021. This second discovery allowed the two to confirm that the millipede was indeed previously undescribed in scientific literature. The millipede belongs to the genus *Pleuroloma*, and Moody will have naming rights to the species name. She has indicated that she may choose something along the lines of "harenae," which means "sand," to reflect the species' texture as well as its habitat preference.



Lindsay Patterson (left) and Heidi Champion (right)



CHARLESTON COUNTY PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION

Century Industries

The Reckoning in the Park

Adapting

Ensuring Safe Environments for a Return to Parks

The beginning of FY 20-21 saw crowds of excited guests returning to their Charleston County Parks. While we were thrilled to reopen the gates to our parks, we also faced the challenge of how to keep our patrons and our hardworking staff safe.

Summer camps were offered in a limited capacity with a reduction in attendees. Shelter rentals became available, and administrative offices reopened with various procedures in place to keep staff safe. CCPRC followed CDC recommendations for mask requirements, and plexiglass was installed at park gates and other areas where staff had face-to-face contact with guests. A Gold Pass pause went into effect during the parks' closure, so members had additional time to enjoy their Gold Pass benefits after the parks reopened.

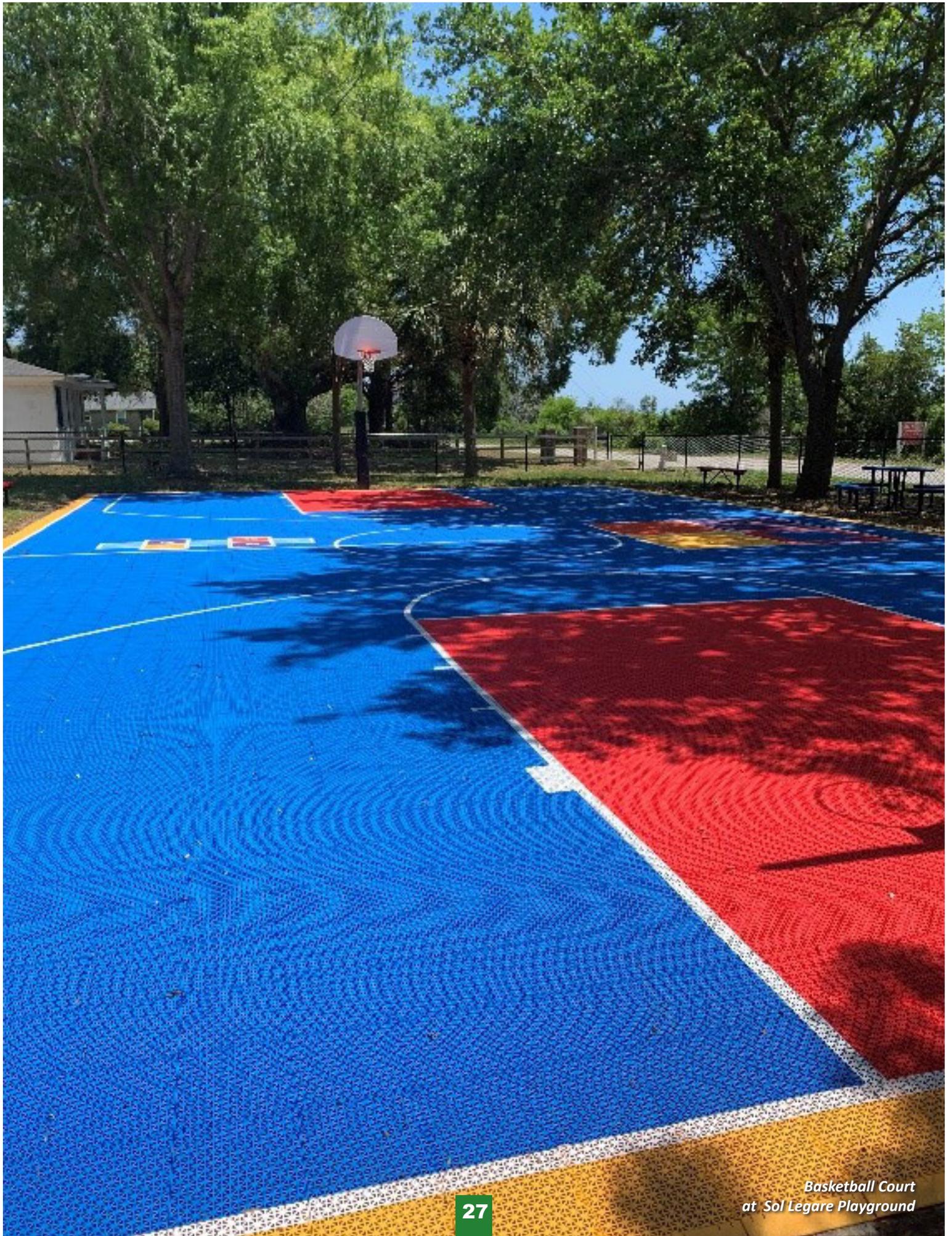
Restrictions were put into place at many CCPRC events and programs that were held in person. Registration caps were introduced at popular events such as Wine Down Wednesday, which caused frequent sell-outs, and many events instituted social distancing guidelines. Three socially-distanced concert events were successfully held during the pandemic: Pickin' in the Park, inspired by the Harvest Festival at Johns Island County Park and held in February; The Reckoning in the Park, a Grateful Dead tribute at Palmetto Islands in March; and the Johns Island Concert Series, held throughout the summer. Each event promoted social distancing by placing attendees within 10x10 squares to enjoy live music in the outdoor settings of the county parks. Some large-scale festivals and events unfortunately had to be canceled, but races were able to take place with some modifications including registration caps, no post-race celebrations and participants starting the race in staggered starts to encourage social distancing. Virtual events also continued for select groups during this period, including Virtual Inclusive Dance Parties and the very successful Your Parks, Your Classroom Virtual Program Series.

Adapting (continued)

The Holiday Festival of Lights brought much needed cheer to the Lowcountry in November and December, with the driving portion of the light show continuing on as normal. While Santa's Village and Winter Wonderland remained closed, a drive-through concessions stand was created so guests could still enjoy kettle corn and hot chocolate, and the festival gift shops and visits with Santa were made available outside of event hours. Online ticketing was introduced to allow the purchase of advance admission to the festival. And a new light display featuring doves was created to honor and remember all lives impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Spring 2021, a vaccine clinic was held at Johns Island County Park. Charleston County Government and Fetter Health Care Network offered the Moderna vaccine for people ages 18 and up.





*Basketball Court
at Sol Legare Playground*

Supporting

Gold Pass Check-Out at Charleston County Public Libraries

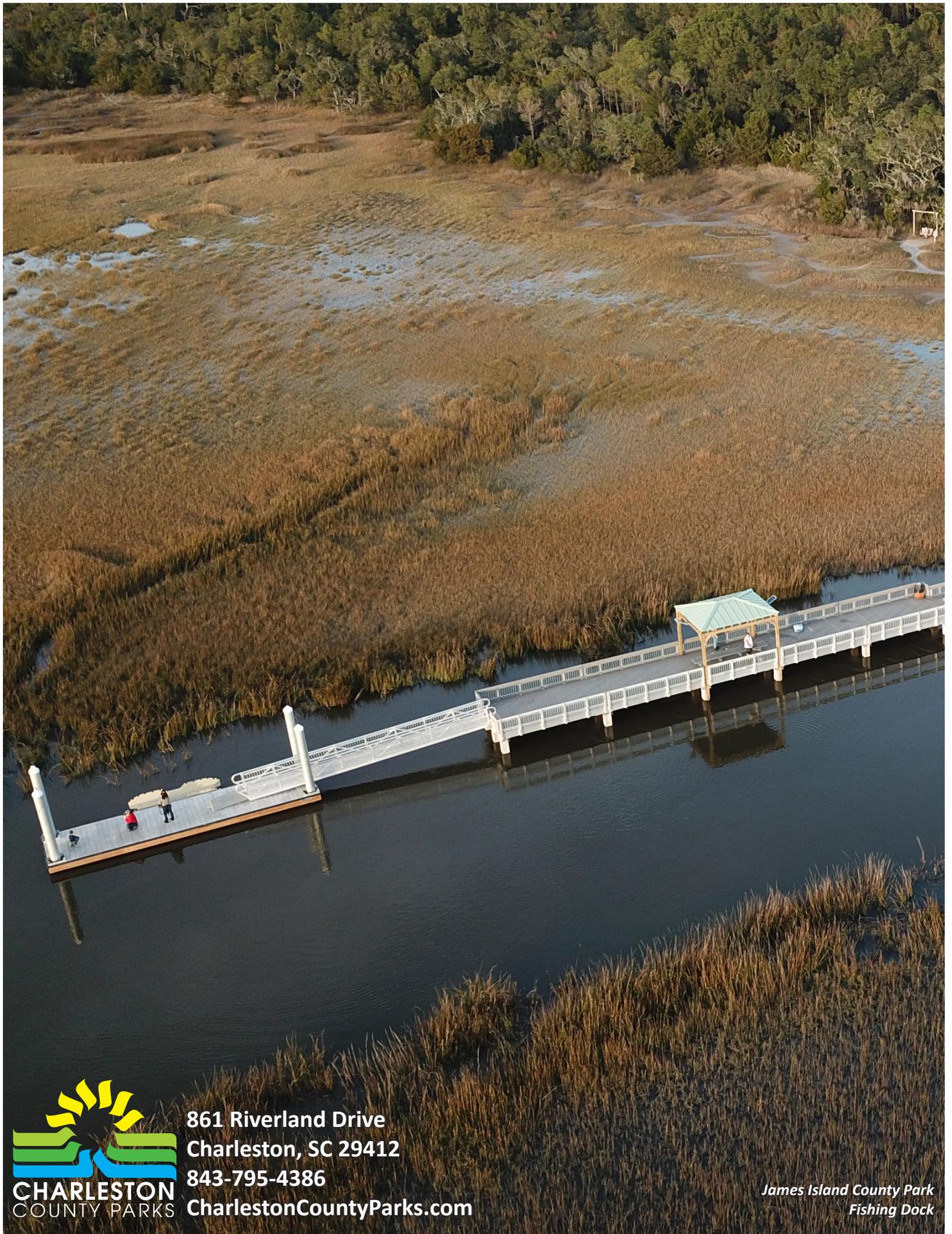
The Charleston County Parks Foundation funded the donation of 100 CCPRC Gold Passes to the Charleston County Public Library. Each of the 19 library locations and one mobile library received five Gold Passes. Just like a book, a Gold Pass can now be checked out for a one-week duration with a valid library card.

Preservation Grant for Historic Cemeteries

The South Carolina Department of Archives & History awarded CCPRC a historic preservation grant for \$11,417. The funds will be used for the agency-wide cemetery preservation management plan. This plan will help identify management and maintenance tasks necessary for the long-term care and preservation of the agency's seven historical cemeteries.

PARD Grant Award

Charleston County Parks was awarded a Park and Recreation Development (PARD) Grant from the State of South Carolina Department of Parks Recreation and Tourism. The grant total, including the matching funds, totaled over \$50,000. Funds from the grant were used for the Sol Legare Park Playground Renovation Project.



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*James Island County Park
Fishing Dock*