



# New Beginnings

## Mississippi Recreation & Park Association

Ulive Branch, Mississippi



## 2010 - 2011 Award Winners

### 2010-2011 Professional of the Year

Tohona Larthridge has worked for Aberdeen Parks and Recreation for 18 years. She has been the agency's director since 2004. Since becoming director she has been instrumental in starting many new programs that have enriched the lives of the youth of Aberdeen. In June Tohona received a grant from the National Recreation and Park Association and the Wal-Mart Foundation in the amount of \$35,000. The grant supported the agency's summer feeding program and enhanced educational programming. Congratulations to Tohona Larthridge as our Recreation Professional of the year.



Amy Williams, Aquatics Director for the City of Tupelo accepted the **Therapeutic Recreation Award of Merit** for that city's Special Olympic Swim Team event. Much preparation went into preparing 7 athletes to represent AREA 11 in the Special Olympics at Kessler Air Force base. The athletes competed in 25 meter freestyle, 25 meter breaststroke, Assisted Swim, and Pool Walk. Each athlete brought home a couple of medals for all their hard work.



The City of Clinton won the **Therapeutic Special Event Award** for their Senior Valentine's Dance. This event provided seniors with a day of entertainment, dancing, refreshments, door prizes and an opportunity for Valentine photos. There were approximately 85 attendees. Congratulations to Clinton and Chandra Fontenot who receive the award.



### 2010-2011 Recreation Therapist of the Year

The **2011 Recreation Therapist of the Year** award is given by MRPA to recognize outstanding contributions made to TR services. The 2010-2011 Recreation Therapist of the Year is Allie Pearson of the North Mississippi Medical Center's Rehab Institute. Allie has worked as a Recreation Therapist for 15 years and the last six at NMMC. She is responsible for treating at least 20 patients with physical disabilities, strokes, spinal cord injuries, amputations and brain injuries. She provides innovative recreation therapy to her patients.



The **Hayward Bo Phillips Design Award of Merit** went to the City of Grenada for their Senior Citizens Complex. The Lewis Johnson Senior Citizen Complex Building is a 1.5 million dollar facility. It includes an exam room for health screenings, an exercise room, a therapeutic pool, a computer room, banquet facilities, an arts and crafts room and the agencies aging service offices.



**Special Event Awards of Merit** were made in Class I, Class II and Class III. The Class I winner is the City of Richland for their "Christmas on the Square" program. The event was huge success. They even brought in an ice skating rink. The event also featured carnival rides, entertainment, cookies with Santa and the Christmas Parade.

The Class II Special Event Award of Merit winner is the City of Brandon for its "Princess Ball". This event turned out to be an overwhelming sensation. Daddys and Daughters purchased tickets for a night of dancing, games, photos,

door prizes, and much more. They anticipated 400 tickets and they actually sold 800. The quality time that Dads and daughters spent together was priceless! Michael Taggart, Brandon's Park and Recreation Director received the award.

The City of Biloxi for took the Class III Special Event Award of Merit for their "Grillin' on the Green" program. Twenty-one grill teams in both professional and amateur classes competed. There were approximately 5,000 who participated in this event. More than 70 arts and crafts vendors came and there was live entertainment. This event was selected as a top 20 event in the Southeast!

**The Arts and Humanities Award of Merit** was also awarded in all three Classes. The Class I winner is the City of Aberdeen for their Youth Arts and Crafts Classes. These classes lasted three weeks during the summer break. The children were able to express their art skills and put them on display for everyone to see.

The City of Pascagoula too the Class II award for their Arts on the Avenue. The city's old senior center facility has been converted to a public arts gallery/studio. A retail store front has been created along with a slate of art classes. They offer art camp, pottery, bring-your-own brush, photography, drawing, and watercolors. Darcie Crew, the department's director was there to receive the award.



The City of Biloxi won the Class III award for their Old Biloxi Cemetery Tour. This program involved a walking tour of graveside reenactments. This program helps in preserving the stories of the city over the past 312 years.

**Awards of Excellence in Sports Programming** were made in Class I, II and III. The Class I winner is the City of Aberdeen for their Football and T-Ball Leagues. Their young people are learning skills to help shape them into an athletic at the next level.

The Class II winner is the City of Starkville for their P&R/MSU Institute of Golf Junior Golf Camp. Matthew Rye, Starkville Park and Recreation Director received the award. The golf camp was held for ages 5-12. The program gave everyone the opportunity to try golf, even those who have never played before. The program is called SNAG...Starting New at Golf.



The Class III winner is the City of Tupelo for their Hershey's Track and Field program. A local meet was held in Tupelo with 25 participants. Seventeen out of the 25 got a chance to go to the state meet held down on the Gulf Coast. One athlete from Tupelo now



holds the Hershey's Track and Field state record and was chosen to represent the state of Mississippi at the National meet in Hershey Pennsylvania. Shanta Eiland, Tupelo's Program Director accepted the award.

**Therapeutic Agency Award** winner is the North Mississippi Medical Center Rehab Institute for their Annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July Festival. Admitted patients in the rehab unit found fun therapeutic activities with a patriotic theme to work on their functional goals such as standing/sitting, balance, fine and gross motor skills, cognition, ambulation and wheelchair mobility. The patients got to exact revenge on therapy staff with water guns!

**Recreation Programming Awards of Merit** were awarded in Class I, Class II and Class III. The City of Aberdeen is the Class I winner for their 18 and under cooking classes. Area youth were placed on co-ed teams and received cooking instructions and then competed in a cake baking competition. The life skills that they learned will be taken with them through their lives.

The Class II Recreation Programming Award of Merit was given to the City of Clinton for their Senior Appreciation Health Fair. Health screenings were offered; even a pulmonary study which helped local physicians collect data for research. Various vendors were there with health related information.

The Class III winner is the City of Tupelo for its SafeSplash program. This program provided all 2<sup>nd</sup> grader in the Tupelo School system 8-10 days of free swimming lessons with the parent's approval. Out of the 538 students there were 459 that went through the year program this year.

More than forty award nominations were received and reviewed this year by the MRPA Awards Committee. You are encouraged to consider now submitting a winning nomination for the 2011-2012 Awards Program.

Thanks to MUSCO Sports Lighting for their continued support of the MRPA MUSCO Awards Program.

