



We  parks!

Summer 2020

Congratulations go to...

2020 SPF Neighborhood Park Grant winners

Morningside Neighborhood Association

\$6,000 for landscaping and hardscape replacement in **Clark Creek Park**

North East Salem Community Association

\$1,950 for an information kiosk in **Thorp Park**

North Lancaster Neighborhood Association

\$3,000 for a pollinator garden in **Brown Road Park**

Southeast Salem Neighborhood Association

\$3,000 for basketball court repair in **Aldrich Park**

Southwest Association of Neighbors

\$1,572 to replace a broken park bench in **Nelson Park**



Pinot for the Parks 11

CANCELLED

Due to the uncertain nature of Salem's COVID19 situation, we are not able to hold our annual event this year. The need goes on and Pinot for the Parks will be back next year with wine that is another year older and possibly more interesting.

Ways to Give to Salem's Parks

- **Mail** a check to Salem Parks Foundation at P.O. Box 5764, Salem, OR 97304.
- **Donate** at www.salemparksfoundation.org
- **Link** your Fred Meyer Rewards card to **SPF** at www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards
- **Amazon Smiles SPF** participates in the Amazon Smiles charity program. Please choose SPF as your charity at Smile.amazon.com.
- **Match** Many employers match contributions. See if your workplace provides this giving opportunity.
- **Buy an owl sign!** Purchase online or by mail.
- **Consider gifting** the park lovers on your list with a donation in their honor. You can designate a specific city park or park project. We will send them a card acknowledging your gift.
- **Bottle Drop/Give** Your Refundable Cans and Bottles can help improve Salem Parks. Salem Parks Foundation is now a part of **Bottle Drop/Give**. Fill our pre-labeled blue bags with refundable cans and bottles and drop them off at any of the Bottle Drop sites in Salem. Send an e-mail to info@salemparksfoundation.org. We will arrange to get the bags to you.





Mill Creek Correctional Facility

Park Hero II - continued from our Spring issue

Because of the park services provided to the City of Salem at cost effective rates, the Adults in Custody (AIC) crews were nominated as Park Heros. We recognized them in our Spring issue and due to the complex nature of the subject, we continue in the Summer issue. This article is an attempt to capture some of the background and nature of the AIC program, a program designed to help the community, but also to help the individual AICs gain skills.

Mill Creek Correctional Facility (MCCF)

It might seem like a reach to identify an institution as a Park Hero. Yet, after touring this facility, SPF Immediate Past President Betsy Belshaw and your newsletter editor felt we could do nothing less than point out to our readers the impacts that Mill Creek Correctional Facility (MCCF) and the Adults in Custody (AIC) program there provide to our community. Our parks benefit greatly from this program, but there are other benefits as well.

The elaborate birdhouse visible when one enters the building is the first clue one has that this might be a different kind of prison. Lt. Patrick Mullen, MCCF Operations Lieutenant, is our guide for this tour. As we are checked in, surrendering our IDs and cell phones, we see bars on the only two cells in the entire building to remind us that this is indeed a prison.

We start by walking past a bank of telephones; all of which are being used. Lt. Mullen explains that the residents of MCCF are allowed to use telephones to contact family. We are guided past a room filled with bags. Our guide explains that these bags are the filled orders from the canteen, waiting for pick up. **AIC Park Hero Part I** in the **Spring 2020 issue** explained that the AIC teams are paid in points, used to purchase items from the canteen. Our guide also explains that this room, like most of the rooms at MCCF is used for other purposes. In this case, this room is also used for classes for the Master Gardeners programs; one of the many opportunities offered to the residents. MCCF is a small facility, multi purpose rooms are one way to maximize the use of limited space.

We move on to another classroom, walls painted to provide a scenic map of the State of Oregon. The scenes are what the viewer would see if they had an actual view to that direction. We see mountains, the Oregon Coast, the sweeping landscapes of Central and Eastern Oregon. A support pillar has been painted to resemble a tree trunk, with branches and birds included, extending onto the ceiling. All the art work is done by the AICs. Since these folks are from all over Oregon, it serves to remind them of where they came from - home.

We continue on the tour, seeing dormitories, rooms for music composition, art, physical exercise, and classrooms. Outdoors, we see gardens, woodshop, garages to hone mechanical skills; all for the purpose of education and acquiring skills to rebuild lives.

For the Community

MCCF is largely self contained. AICs produce and prepare their own food. They launder and mend clothing. Education for GEDs is provided. Skills to provide employment upon release are taught. Families are allowed to visit weekly. Every effort is made to restore functioning adults back into the community.

As well as the AIC work crews, tangible benefits include the food produced by MCCF that goes directly to Marion-Polk Food Share. Acres of gardens produce tons of fresh produce for local and regional food distribution.

Less tangible but possibly more important is the change created in people. As an example, standard recidivism rates for AICs are about 42%. For AIC that have gone through the Master Gardeners program and participate in the MCCF gardens, the recidivism rate is 6%.

The mission of MCCF and the AIC program is to turn lives around. This is evident in the opportunities created and the effort to work with individuals as people - to reconnect people with their families, to make sure they have a way to make a living once out of custody. To help people that may never have known a productive way of life to understand the benefits of giving back to community and to help them find a place in the community from which to grow and thrive.



Lt. Patrick Mullen, Oregon Department of Corrections



Part II of this Park Hero feature tells the story of the people behind the Adults in Custody (AIC) program who make such a difference to our parks and for our community. Space limits the ability to fully convey the impacts of this program. This article features one AIC individual, two key program managers, and one of the facilities that make up the foundation of the AIC program.

City of Salem Parks Operations

Parks Operations professional staff work hard to provide safe, well maintained and beautiful parks for Salem citizens. While the AIC program is important, it has not been available during the COVID19 protocols. City staff have been the front line workers during this time and we want to honor and extend our sincere thanks to them.

When asked about his work in our parks with the AIC crews and how it has affected him personally, Matt Johnston, AIC program leader for the City responded: One of the strongest effects is the sense of pride you gain from your crew and all the work they accomplish. Teaching individuals new skill sets for their life after prison and out in the world makes you feel like you're accomplishing something and really helping these individuals move forward in life. It's almost like being a coach. You set goals for individuals and as one unit working together. Even if it's just the completion of a big job or getting through a task that no one wants to be doing; you get through it. You start to see your efforts evolve and take shape. You watch them grow in skill and as a team over time, getting better and better with each day. Like a well-oiled machine, or a "Good Crew" as we refer to it, you start to see it come together.



A good crew knows its job and needs minimal guidance to perform the work. You get to see these guys blossom as individuals and as one unit. Often, they start to take on the role of a teacher themselves. It is these processes you get to watch within your crew, and the time you spend working with them - to see it start to come full circle, are the best things about this program.



Dan Moore, team leader, equipment manager

Dan Moore, Tool Man

AIC crews work in all Salem's parks. Use of these crews stretch scarce dollars budgeted for our parks.

As leader of an AIC team, Dan Moore is responsible for equipment. To look at the equipment trailer is to understand the care and pride that goes into Mr. Moore's skill in management of both parts and people. Tools hang organized, clean and ready to use. Crew members point out that this storage system and the cabinetry that makes the organization possible is the result of Mr. Moore's skill and hard work. As well as his work in Salem parks, he has also worked on stream cleaning for the City. He is proud of the skills he brings to his work and the ability to play a part in the livability of the City of Salem, our parks and neighborhoods.

To arrive at this position, Mr. Moore first completed a year of good behavior at a facility with a higher level of security. Once at MCCF, he was evaluated by staff and started on a program of learning and development. He was provided with opportunities for learning and working. He acquired training and experience at MCCF and through working in the community on AIC programs. Because of progress both in skills and in character, Mr. Moore was promoted to leader of his AIC team.

The time invested in people like Mr. Moore pays back through their service, community pride and community involvement.

Take A Walk in Brush College Park...

with Bobbie Snead, local nature writer and SPF Board Member

The pendulous nest hangs like a fuzzy gray sock ten feet above the trail. I stand and wait and soon hear the soft twittering of the bushtits as they return to their young. The nest, made from lichens, moss and stretchy spider webs, wiggles with excitement as the babies inside hear their parents, too.



Weighing about as much as a seedless grape, the tiny mother bird disappears into the nest to feed her brood a beakful of insects, foraged from nearby leaves. When she pops out and flies away, her mate brings in his little haul of bugs. Four minutes later, the pair returns to repeat the process. When night falls they will crawl into the nest to sleep with the young ones in the hanging cradle. Tomorrow they will be back at work bringing sustenance to their growing offspring. I observe this little domestic scene on a nature trail along Gibson Creek in



Brush College Park, an oasis of nature in busy West Salem. Named for Brush College Elementary School, the park is located across the street from the campus.

The school dates back to 1860, when the 25' x 30' building was constructed. Locals jokingly gave it its name because of the thick vegetation surrounding the school and because several of its students were much older than their classmates. Their education took more time because farm work pulled them away from their studies. Thus, nearly-grown men sat next to small children in the one-room schoolhouse.



Back at the park, my evening walk takes me close to one of two small wetlands within its boundaries. Stiff-stemmed rushes rise from the shallow water. As I approach, the deep thrum of a calling bullfrog echoes across the park. A woodpecker hammers away at a dead tree behind the wetland. I wander over to a grove of mature Oregon white oaks and find a patch of native camas in bloom. The purple blossoms attract the attention of several pollinating bees. Circling back, I duck under the picnic shelter as rain starts to fall. When the shower is finished, I walk over to a footbridge crossing Gibson Creek and spy water skippers gliding over the surface of the slow-moving stream.

Returning to my car, I feel completely refreshed from my short nature break. When I find myself in need of another outdoor respite, I will definitely return to **Brush College Park**.

Location: Corner of Brush College Road NW and Doaks Ferry Road NW.

amenities: picnic shelter, playground, nature trails, creek access

