

# Salem Parks Foundation



We  parks!

Summer 2021

## What a year!

The past year has brought a global pandemic, sanctioned camping in Wallace Marine and Cascades Gateway Parks, wildfire smoke that prevented outdoor activity for two weeks, an epic ice storm that brought down trees throughout Salem, demonstrations and counterdemonstrations accompanied by graffiti that parks staff has to remove. Due to the pandemic, resources such as the AIC (Adults in Custody) crews were not available, so staffing was short. All this at a time when the public flocked to the parks for exercise and stress relief. Somehow, the City of Salem Parks Operations staff kept the entire operation working seamlessly through it all. Our Summer 2021 newsletter is dedicated to this remarkable team and the work they do to keep our parks safe, clean and beautiful. We are honored to present profiles of seven members of the team in our **Park Hero** feature.

We are also proud and pleased to announce the winners of the Salem Parks Foundation's Neighborhood Park Grant Program. It is never too early to start thinking about how to make your neighborhood park a better, more interesting, safer and more fun place to take a walk, recreate, hang out, birdwatch, or anything else you like to do in your park.



## Are parks important to you? Here are some ways to give to Salem's parks

- **Mail** a check to Salem Parks Foundation at P.O. Box 5764, Salem, OR 97304 or Donate online at [www.salemparksfoundation.org](http://www.salemparksfoundation.org)
- **Link** your Fred Meyer Rewards card to SPF at [www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards](http://www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards)
- **Amazon Smiles.** SPF participates in the Amazon Smiles charity program. Please choose SPF as your charity at [Smile.amazon.com](http://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
- **Bottle Drop/Give.** Your refundable cans and bottles can help improve Salem Parks. Fill 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](mailto:info@salemparksfoundation.org) We will arrange to get the bags to you
- **If you are over age 72**, arrange with your IRA custodian to send some or all of your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) directly to Salem Parks Foundation
- **Make a charitable bequest** in your will to SPF and/or name it as a retirement plan beneficiary

## Congratulations to the 2021 SPF Neighborhood Park Grant winners!

- North Lancaster Neighborhood Association (NOLA): \$2,000 for a path in Brown Road Park
- South Central Association of Neighbors (SCAN): \$1,100 partial funding for restoration of the Sundial Area in Bush Park
- Northeast Neighbors (NEN): \$1,995 to restore the storm damaged pollinator garden in Englewood Park
- Morningside Neighborhood Association: \$2,500 for a bench on a concrete pad in Fairview Park
- Northeast Salem Community Association (NESCA): \$5,000 for 2 benches in Geer Park
- Southeast Salem Neighborhood Association (SESNA): \$1,800 for a picnic table at Lee Park
- Southwest Association of Neighbors (SWAN): \$9,000.00 for a new drinking fountain in Nelson Park
- Northgate Neighborhood Association: \$2,500 for a bench on a concrete pad in Northgate Park
- West Salem Neighborhood Association (WSNA): \$2,500 for a bench in Orchard Heights Park



**What a year! City of Salem Parks Operations staff has kept our parks whole through this challenging time. They are our Summer 2021 Park Heroes.**



**Jeff Ball** takes care of Riverfront Park; at 23 acres, it is one of the biggest and the most actively used park in terms of events and event spaces. It is home to the Carousel, the Willamette Queen paddlewheel boat, the Rotary Pavilion and the new Gerry Frank Amphitheater. It is connected to Minto Brown Island and Wallace Marine Parks by two iconic bridges, Union Street Railroad Bridge and the Peter Courtney Bridge. If Salem has a living room, it is Riverfront Park. Jeff's responsibilities are to make sure everything in the park is clean, safe and maintained. He interacts with park visitors to make sure their experience is pleasant. Jeff describes the past year as "a bit of a struggle". He listed the pandemic, wild fires, dealing with the construction process of the new restrooms and amphitheater, and the ice storm as some of the challenges faced and overcome by teamwork. Jeff offers the following advice to park users: "With the world in lockdown due to the pandemic, parks offer community building, mental health and physical relief. Having the ability to be outside with fresh air and exercise has never been so important. Come out and enjoy; do yourself some good!!"



Jeff is married with three daughters. One plays softball for Linfield College. When he is not taking care of our parks, Jeff coaches Girls Fast Pitch softball at West Salem High School. Go Titans!



## City of Salem Parks Operations: our Summer 2021 Park Heroes

**Jason Bailey** manages Minto Brown Island Park. At 1205 acres, it is also a wildlife refuge and wildlife are a constant presence. He sees deer every day, the occasional bobcat, and there has been a recent cougar sighting. Bald Eagles are currently nesting in the park, requiring closure of the nesting area to the public. Jason's job is to keep the park safe, clean and sustainable. He works to protect both people and the environment, sometimes from each other. It is a complicated job, but one he finds rewarding. The past year has been challenging. Routine tasks such as managing invasive species, like the *Lugwegia* growing out of control in the Willamette Slough, has been joined by the ones specific to this year such as coping with the damage caused by the ice storm. People come to Minto to find comfort in the nature and solitude, but stressed people can react in unusual ways, requiring patience and tact on the part of park staff. Jason understands that one of the important purposes for parks is outside space to seek mental and physical health. His advice for park users is to follow the golden rule and have respect for the park, for nature, and for each other.



Jason enjoys working hard and he takes great pride in his work. He loves his family and has two sons that are his life. He loves to see all the visitors that come to Minto Brown Island Park to get away and to commune with nature.

**Frank Evans** is a seasonal parks operations staffer who looks after 20 parks in South Salem and wherever else he is needed. He mows, picks up trash, reports graffiti and needed repairs - keeping the parks safe and clean. He enjoys the South Salem parks that are his responsibility, especially seeing the benefits of exercise and play for park users. He says he definitely notices the benefits to park users from outside activity and contact with nature. This year has been challenging, particularly in the parks with sanctioned camping. Frank can see a need for support both for these park residents and for Parks Operations staff who are responsible for park maintenance and safety. The ice storm damage has been cleaned up in about half the parks he maintains. Some still have storm debris. Frank's advice to park users is to be aware of your surroundings, keep an eye on your children and, most of all, enjoy the park.



When Frank is not working, he enjoys playing the guitar, gardening and playing with his two granddaughters.

**Andy Jucutan** came to Salem Parks Operations as a seasonal employee, after participating in the Siletz Work Experience Program. He manages all the Salem Parks sports fields. This is the first season one staff position has been fully dedicated to sports field maintenance. Andy thinks it has paid off in the improved quality of the playing fields. Judging from the compliments he receives, the public notices. This is Andy's first job in the public sector. It is a challenging experience, but he welcomes the interaction. He works hard for the purpose of enabling the public to enjoy their parks. He remembers the past year as hectic. Added responsibilities have included coping with ice storm damage, short staffing and increased presence of the homeless in parks. He appreciates the teamwork that made it possible for everyone to work together to get through the year. His advice to park users is to pick up after pets, watch for divots in the fields, and enjoy.



Andy is married with three children, two involved in martial arts and basketball. He is interested in photography and specializes in photographing macros.

More park hero feature on the next page



## City of Salem Parks Operations: our Summer 2021 Park Heroes

**Amanda Sitter** grew up working in family vineyards. She graduated from McKay High School and, in 2013, moved back to Salem from the Umpqua Valley. She has worked in Bush's Pasture Park for two years. Bush Park is one of Salem's best loved parks and, at 90.5 acres, it is a large and complicated park. As she puts it, "there are a lot of moving parts." Amanda does it all - planting, hedging, pruning and mowing the many gardens and areas in Bush Park. Her favorite parts of the park are the native Oregon White Oak tree groves. The ice storm was hard on the Oregon White Oaks, with the loss of 25 trees. There was a lot of clean up and fewer hands to participate. Marion County loaned two crews and Salem Public Works loaned another crew to help. The wood that can be salvaged will be repurposed and remain in the park. Some of the wood will be donated to the Marion County Juvenile Program



Amanda enjoys working with volunteers. She appreciates the eyes and ears provided by the many visitors to Bush Park. They help provide security and safety within the park.

**Brian Smith** Brian Smith is a horticulturist and has worked at Bush Park for the past two and 1/2 years. He participated in the development of the Cultural Landscape Management Plan. He has led the new approach toward more sustainable management of the Oregon White Oaks. Changes include no irrigation and larger tree circles filled with wood chips. This prevents soil compaction, allowing beneficial microbes to thrive and better percolation of rain water. Brian remembers the feeling of loss walking into the park after the ice storm and looking at the downed trees and the huge task of clean up. After the clean up, Bush Park remains a place of beauty. The silver lining is the knowledge gained from this event. Bush Park fallen oaks provided "cookie rounds" for the tree study conducted by Willamette University.



Brian's experience with the park users is good, although he and his staff deal with vandalism and plant theft. He appreciates the many volunteers and regular park users. He would like park users to respect the park and to remember it belongs to all. Self policing can keep the park a beautiful place for everyone.

**Sam Welsh** came to Parks Operations almost a year ago. A Salem native, he spent time in Bend and then Las Vegas before moving back home. Sam's specialty is equipment and he is responsible for the new machine called the skid steer, designed to grapple and mow. He remembers the day of the ice storm vividly. It was at least a 15 hour day, ending with trees falling on cars, downed power lines and road closures. Parks staff are still dealing with fallen trees; working the entire week and spending Saturdays helping the City Forester work on the backlog of storm debris. Sam's advice to the public is to get outside and enjoy the beauty and opportunities for recreation offered in Salem parks.



Sam takes his own advice. He is an avid fisherman, snowboarder, motorcyclist and enjoys time spent at the coast. He is happy to be back in the Pacific Northwest.