



PRPS Recognition and Awards Program

NOMINATION FORM

The PRPS Agency of the Year Award inspires and recognizes exemplary accomplishments in positioning parks and recreation as an essential public service with meaningful community impact. The municipal park, recreation and/or therapeutic and leisure service agency to be considered provides a fresh perspective on significant parks and recreation issues, shows innovation and collaboration, and has demonstrated a high level of resourcefulness, especially in recent years. The winning agency is required to have at least one member of PRPS in order to qualify for this award and must have demonstrated the achievements, benefits and outcomes in providing public park and recreation services for a minimum of five years.

All nominations must be received by January 25, 2019.

AGENCY INFORMATION

Name of Agency: East Goshen Township Department of Parks and Recreation

Director: Jason Lang

Municipality: East Goshen Township

County: Chester

Telephone: 610.692.7171

Website: <https://eastgoshen.org/>

<https://www.eastgoshenrec.com/info/default.aspx>

SUBMITTED BY

Name and title of person submitting nomination: Jason Lang, CPRE, Director of Parks and Recreation

Affiliation to Agency: Director

Agency Address: 1580 Paoli Pike

City: West Chester State: PA ZIP: 19380

Email: jlang@eastgoshen.org Phone: 610.692.7171

Is the nominated agency a member of PRPS?

Yes

No

Does the nominated agency have at least one PRPS member on its staff?

Yes

No



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ENTRY INFORMATION AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

Nominations will be rated individually by a panel of distinguished park and recreation professionals who are independent of the PRPS Recognition and Awards Committee.

1. The nominated agency is required to have at least one member of PRPS in order to qualify for this award.
2. The agency being nominated must have shown the benefits and outcomes in providing public park and recreation services in the past five years.
3. Provide a detailed narrative which describes how the municipal park, recreation and/or therapeutic and leisure service agency has demonstrated a significant achievement(s) or level of distinction in the recent past. Indicate how the agency positions itself as an essential service to its constituency, how they have effected positive change from their initiatives, and their efforts to be exciting, creative and resourceful in their provision of recreation and park opportunities. Has the agency overcome any period of hardship or a particular obstacle in providing recreation and park services, and placed or returned itself to a level of prominence in the public perspective? The focus of the narrative should be to highlight what sets this agency apart from others and why it deserves this recognition.

Further information, such as supporting details or photos may be attached (limit 5 pages). For large files, such as photos or videos, that cannot be emailed, please email directly to prpsawards@gmail.com

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Introduction:

If ever a parks and recreation department embodied the underdog spirit of famed Philadelphia boxer Rocky Balboa, East Goshen Township Parks and Recreation is it! A one person department, it has **grown exponentially** from offering simply “camps and trips” into a robust, diverse, thoughtful and **impactful change agent**, actively shaping the wellness of its residents. Just as Rocky drew encouragement from his neighbors, this change has come about from the entire East Goshen community collectively taking ownership and breathing life into the department. Prior to 2014, the agency had very limited programming, hadn’t updated park planning documents since 1983 and didn’t comply with various industry standards. In 2014, a new Parks and Recreation Director took the helm and was emboldened by an invigorated Board of Supervisors, who stated that parks and recreation was a blank slate, “Do whatever you want...” In the first year, through cultivation of partnerships and an expanding volunteer base, **programming hours increased 344% while associated expenses decreased 4%**. CAPRA standards and the three National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) pillars of Social Equity, Conservation and Health and Wellness were introduced, to educate elected officials, volunteers and the general public about how impactful a parks and recreation department could be. The Park & Recreation Commission, increased in size from 7 to 9, and planning became an essential parks and recreation function. Since, the



EAST GOSHEN TOWNSHIP

Department of Parks & Recreation



In the business of making memories...



Comprehensive Plan, Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan, Paoli Pike Trail Feasibility Study, Paoli Corridor Master Plan and East Goshen Township Park Master Plan have been adopted. These plans communicate the department’s vision that serves its unique residents while preparing for the next generation of park users.



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NRPA's Three Pillars of Conservation, Social Equity and Health and Wellness

Conservation:

In 2018, East Goshen Township achieved Gold-level sustainability status through the Pennsylvania Sustainable Community Certification program, the first in Chester County and one of only twenty across the Commonwealth. This is a true achievement, touching on all aspects of municipal governance, but also speaking to the Township's commitment to water and air quality, walkability in land planning, and park maintenance. Each year, 80,000 gallons of water are diverted from the Ridley Creek Sewage Plant to water the greens at the Applebrook Golf Course. EGTPR hosts E-recycling events in our parks, over the last three years we've kept landfills free from 129,799 lbs. of electronics. The Butterfly Pollinator Garden was



placed by our flagship playground in 2015, encouraging youth-based conservation education and was awarded a PHS Garden of Distinction Award. East Goshen Township Park has the second municipal Stones Course in the country, a conservation focused ball-toss sport played "in the woods" with boulders and trees in play. Indoor recreation is held in the Township Building where geothermal HVAC was installed in 2015. Since, electrical kilowatt usage has been reduced 30.2% annually. Most recently, the department unveiled a fun community-wide initiative in partnership with the PA Department of Agriculture to combat the spread of the spotted lanternfly. After a brief discussion from the Department of Agriculture about the spotted lanternfly,

the Department Director, dressed as one himself, raced around the 2,000 person event as kids "smashed" him with pool noodles. The absolute silliness of the event struck a chord with local families and substantially raised awareness.



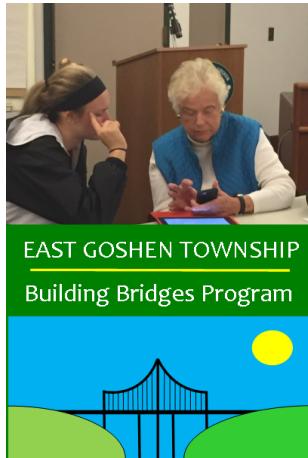


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Social Equity:

Since 2015, over \$500,000 has been raised for community charities at EGTPR facilities. Monies have funded youth mentoring programs, pediatrics, eating disorder programs, even the installation of female bathrooms at schools in India. In 2016, EGTPR began the Next Up: Female Leadership Series to offer direct connections between emerging teen and seasoned professional female community leaders. EGTPR created the Building Bridges program to cultivate relationships between seemingly opposite groups, opening new dialogues across age, gender, socioeconomic status, and knowledge base. One of the department's newest events is Holi, which is a Hindu cultural celebration of the coming spring. Teenage populations are often marginalized in recreation settings. The Chester County Teen Awesome FEST was a "by teens, for teens" event that promoted a positive night of activity and shared experience. All residents have access to our summer camp program. Through a partnership with East Goshen Elementary, students are sent to camp on scholarship via a student-run Coin Drive. This coin drive has generated over \$6,000 since 2014, sending 50 kids to camp without financial consideration.





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Health & Wellness:

EGTPR is a progressive department and believes in the changing definition of health and wellness that includes mental health as well as physical wellness. The Fit and Fun in the Park initiative was a summer movement encouraging community-wide physical and social health and wellness. Held in 2016, 1400 residents took part in the summer long initiative that was later awarded a Local Government Excellence Award by Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf as the best municipal health and wellness program that year. Uniquely, EGTPR also focuses on mental health via its Liv Live Concert and 22 in 22: Pushups with a Purpose initiative. “22” was a social media driven pushup challenge in recognition of the 22 military veterans who commit suicide daily. The Liv Live Concert raised awareness and identified support resources for those suffering from depression. Our Farmers Market provides local produce to residents and Paoli Hospital led nutrition discussions. EGTPR teamed with NRPA to offer the Walk with Ease Program. EGTPR partners with county resources to fight the opioid epidemic. For example, we host “recovery” only sports events and offer Naloxone trainings. To alleviate walkability concerns, EGTPR identified need for the Paoli Pike Trail (PPT), securing \$3.6M in federal grants and a \$2.2M Township match since 2015. It connects land uses under the Complete Street concept, allowing residents/students to walk and bike while supporting business/work centers.



Please return to Emily Schnellbaugh at prpsawards@gmail.com before January 25, 2019.



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Strategic Snapshot - Planning today for tomorrow:

East Goshen Township, from a land use perspective, is nearly built out, currently 95%. This placed stakeholders in the difficult position of preparing for future park and recreation needs, with little available “land canvas” to work with. The 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update noted this challenge while assessing the Township’s need to reposition for changing resident recreation needs and desires. Most pressing, there are no walkable connections amongst land uses. In addition, the PA Department of Environmental Protection condemned two Township dams in 2014, giving the municipality five years to address the issue located in our passive parks. Lastly, our flagship park’s playground space was over twenty-five years old and well past its life cycle. When these challenges were communicated to the public, residents overwhelming chose to immediately move forward with timely solutions. The Township passed an \$8M municipal bond to fund these capital projects. The first goal became creating the Paoli Pike Trail that would parallel our major thoroughfare, connecting parks, municipal complex, schools, businesses and corporate work centers under the Complete Street concept. The 2015 Trail Feasibility Study identified trail alignments, engendered sweeping public support, cultivated regional planning agency buy-in and informed our funding strategy. Master plans were adopted to breach both dams, with adjoining park renovations that will reuse and recycle a majority of demolition-related materials. Improvements will include ADA fishing piers, internal trails, stepping stone crossings and waterways guided by over eighty 6’ tall boulders. These projects will also satisfy PA state MS4 requirements once complete. The EGT Park nature playground was completed in June 2018, becoming the first state funded playground of its kind. Play mounds, willow trees for swinging and buried velociraptors envelope playing children in a wonderful sensory roller coaster. The playground draws people from across the county and is affectionately called “Disney North” by the locals. Since 2016, careful planning, tremendous public support and municipal acumen has translated into \$5.6M in grant funding, from federal, state and local funding sources for these projects.





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Supporting the Profession:

As funding cycles ebb and flow in a challenging political climate, the parks and recreation profession faces difficulties in communicating its efficacy in the face of competing municipal functions. With that in mind, the EGTPR staff believes it is imperative to contribute to the national and state parks and recreation story. To that end, the Director of Parks and Recreation has contributed in a number of ways:

Created the Mid-Atlantic Camp Dance in 2015. In 2018, EGTPR partnered with NRPA to offer the NRPA National Summer Camp Dance, based on the 2015 model. Over 50,000 campers took part across the country this past summer.

Worked alongside NRPA and the Department of Veteran's Affairs to have the CPRP and CPRE certifications added as Post 9/11 GI Bill eligible for military veterans.

Has served as an AAPRA/NRPA Networks Mentorship Program Mentor since 2017.

Recently served on the DCNR/PRPS Leadership Summit planning committee and served as Team Lead for the Health and Wellness paper. The summit is held once per decade to forecast and plan for upcoming professional challenges.



Conclusion:

The East Goshen Township Department of Parks and Recreation staff works together with elected officials, the Park and Recreation Commission and the public to deliver a deliberately planned park and recreational experience that is inclusive, encompassing and memorable. The department is proactive, as can be seen by implementing 90% of the 2015 Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan's principal actions and 70% of the action items during the first three years. There is always something going on in our parks - program hours have increased 583% since 2014. Residents look to the department, and its parks, as essential elements in their daily lives. This is most readily seen in the enthusiastic public support for the \$8M municipal bond that funds four capital projects: the Paoli Pike Trail construction, Milltown Dam Park and Hershey's Mill Dam Park projects, and renovations to the EGT Park playground. The entire Township operating budget is only \$10.2M—seen through this prism, it shows just how important park and recreation is to our residents. The East Goshen Township Department of Parks and Recreation is invigorated by the wonderful progress it's made in shaping the current quality of life for its residents, and looks forward to continuing to shape life here in East Goshen Township. After all, as our tagline states, East Goshen Parks and Recreation is "*In the Business of Making Memories...*".



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2014 Accomplishments:

- Decreased Summer Programs staff payroll by 4% while tripling program hours offered
- FY13 = 100 Youth Summer Camp Program Hours offered; FY14 = 344 Hours offered
- Created various department manuals to communicate standards, policies, procedures and compliance with state regulations
- Grand opening for the Amphitheater; first year events included: Movies in the park, choir concerts, theater; All Inclusive Recreation (AIR) Festival - music festival to benefit future adaptive recreation programming
- Department names first Township Poet Laureate—Ms. Virginia Newlin; Ms. Newlin hosts Poetry workshops, partners with East Goshen Elementary School and contributes original poems to the Township newsletter
- Created a host of new programming including: Senior Camps, robotic lego's, rocketry, NFL Punt Pass & Kick, NAYS Sports, Toddler Story Time, Rocketry Camp, & Holiday Celebration, Building Bridges, Neighbor to Neighbor Day, Senior Card Club, Ping Pong, and Origami
- Partnered with Immaculata University to co-host a High School Entrepreneurial Academy
- Resurrected the flailing Township Farmers Market, added vendors and positioned the market as the community's hub of social activity

2015 Accomplishments:

- 2015 Park, Recreation and Open Space Update adopted
- Started online registration, the first parks and recreation agency in Chester County
- 623 kid engineers design the East Goshen Township Park concept playground
- The East Goshen Farmers Market received a Daily Local Reader's Choice Award
- Creation of the Butterfly Pollinator Garden (BPG) in partnership with the WC Garden Club, funding via a PECO Green Region Grant
- Created and piloted the Mid-Atlantic Summer Camp Dance Initiative in PA, MD and VA
- 64% Increase in third party special event revenue; 79% increase in Ball field rentals; 51% increase in trip revenues
- Little Free Library installed funded by the United Way of Chesco
- Led two PRPS Conference Sessions: Robotic Lego's & Entrepreneurial Academy
- Staff appointed to PRPS Awards and Accomplishments Committee



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2016 Accomplishments:

- East Goshen Township Park Master plan adopted; includes concept plan for nature playground
- Six out of ten 2015 PROS Plan Principal Actions complete—other four underway
- Secured \$3.1M in grant funding for the Paoli Pike Trail
- Secured \$450,000 for EGT Park playground renovation
- Pollinator Garden awarded a Pennsylvania Horticultural Society “Garden of Distinction”, one of 9 to win out of 300 entries and becomes a National Wildlife Federation’s Certified Wildlife Habitat.
- The Next Up: Young Women’s Leadership Summit brought leaders like State Representative Carolyn Comitta and Olympian Heather Mitts to meet with emerging female leaders
- Senior’s Card Club had 400% attendance increase
- Director appointed to DCNR/PRPS GOOD Marketing Campaign Committee
- Neighbor-Neighbor Day volunteers raked over 200 bags of leaves for senior citizens—nearly two complete football fields stacked upon each other!
- The Hide the Gnome Series introduced over 250 people to the Township park system in five scavenger hunts across the summer months
- Department Director Jason Lang spoke at the Fall Festival Conference in Wooster, Ohio. His session topic was introducing technology based programming in recreation departments.
- The Stuff Jason’s Office canned food drive raised 308 lbs. for the West Chester Food Cupboard—bringing our three year total to nearly 1400 lbs! This represents feeding 28 families of four for a month.
- Over 800 people voted via social media in the Township House Decorating Contest with the West Chester Griswold’s winning with 194 votes!
- Published Camp Staff Case Study; 88% of polled staff believed camp employment developed professional skills more than any other activity including sports, employment or volunteerism.
- Completed the East Goshen Township Park Master Plan update



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2017 Accomplishments:

- The Fit and Fun in the Park initiative was recognized by PA Governor Tom Wolf with a Local Government Excellence Award as the best municipal health and wellness program in the state in 2016.
- East Goshen Township celebrated its 200 year anniversary with a Bicentennial Celebration. The event drew over 4,000 people and was recognized by the National Recreation and Parks Association as a Park Champion Finalist, one of four across the country. NRPA Park Champion events highlight and advocate for park and recreation initiatives at the federal level.
- Secured \$565,000 in grants from PA DCNR and DCED to develop Milltown Dam Park. Park improvements include two ADA accessible fishing piers, internal trails, ecological improvements and dedicated parking areas.
- Began using the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC) to quantify park usage across various metrics. The department's 2017 Park Usage Report communicated \$7.2M in health care savings to elected officials through Township park use.
- Commitment to developing mental health programming culminates with the Liv Live Concert and 22 in 22 Pushups program (suicide awareness), later awarded a 2017 PRPS Excellence Award.
- Held the “Why is Play Important?” Essay Contest in partnership with East Goshen Township. Hannah Diem, 3rd grader, was chosen by the Park and Recreation Commission and delivered her essay as Keynote Speaker at the new playground ribbon cutting ceremony.
- East Goshen Township Park named the 2017 Best Park by Main Line Today.
- Awarded NRPA Walk with Ease Training Grant. To date, over 150 seniors have benefitted from the program.
- Pickle Ball Courts & Stones Course grand openings; tennis courts renovated
- Department Director Jason Lang spoke at the Fall Festival Conference in Wooster, Ohio. His session topic was applying military leadership techniques in recreation settings.
- The Department Director became a Certified Park and Recreation Executive (CPRE), one of four across Pennsylvania and one-hundred across the country.
- Director named first PRPS GOOD award winner for contributions to the DCNR/PRPS GOOD marketing campaign
- Director joined the PRPS Government Affairs committee
- Director served as the Co-Chair of the 2018 PRPS Conference Program Committee



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2018 Accomplishments:

- East Goshen Township Park playground renovation completed June 30th, 2018, becoming the first state funded nature play area in Pennsylvania.

SOPARC analysis conclusions: Playground use is up 418%; Peak month, August with 831 kid's daily Peak day, August 24th with 1311 kids
- Awarded \$483,000 from the federal TAP-Set Aside program for the Paoli Pike Trail, Segment A
- Secured \$980,000 in grants from PA DCNR, DCED and DEP to develop Milltown Dam and Hershey's Mill Parks. This brings the department's three year total to \$5.6M in grant funding for the Paoli Pike Trail, EGT Park destination playground and Milltown Dam Park capital projects.
- East Goshen Township was designated a Gold level sustainable community by the Pennsylvania Sustainable Community Certified Program, the first in Chester County.
- In order to further its appeal to millennials and a changing demographic, the Township changed its alcohol ordinance in 2018, to now include the ability to sell alcohol within Township limits. The park and recreation's Farmers Market newest vendor, Mitchell & Mitchell Winery, sold its first bottle of wine on August 23rd, the first within the Township since Prohibition.
- Teen Awesome FEST brought teenagers from across the county to East Goshen Park. The night is a celebration of being a teenager and includes an open mic, teen stand up performers, bhangra dance, rhythm of life drum lessons and more. Created in partnership with the Chester County Department of Alcohol and Drug Services and eleven other community organizations. Partnered with Chester County PRO-ACT to offer substance abuse recovery kickball in East Goshen Park.
- Newly appointed Poet Laureate Nancy Daversa created the department's first Escape the Blacksmith Shop event. The Blacksmith Shop was brought to original 1780s condition during rehabilitation in 2003. The Escape Room was a wonderfully exciting way to provide a multi-generational program while making history spark alive! Participants were treated to a 1700s appointed escape room. Upon cracking the code, they were then led into the second chamber of the Blacksmith Shop, where the Township blacksmith was working the 2000 degree coals. The event was extremely popular and all seventy spots sold out within 45 minutes.
- Director named the Chair of the PRPS Opioids Task Force. Current work includes securing partnerships with the American Academy of Pediatrics, PA Chapter and the Penn State Consortium to Combat Substance Abuse to offer the Youth Sports Drug Abuse Prevention Program. The program is currently seeking funding.
- Director served as the Co-Chair of the 2019 PRPS Conference Program Committee



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East Goshen Township Department of Parks and Recreation:

1580 Paoli Pike West Chester, Pa 19380 610.692.7171

<https://eastgoshen.org/park-and-rec/prps-agency-of-the-year-submission/>

<https://www.facebook.com/eastgoshen>

By the numbers:

Total developed Parks: 4 (175 acres)

Township owned open space: 322 acres

Total Township parkland: 497 acres (27.6 acres/1000 residents; 3 times the NRPA Park Metric)

Total preserved open space: 1100 acres

Township population: 18,026

Park Usage (2018): 344,000 visitors to our park system

 304,220 Park users on the trail system and EGT Park playground

 21,500 Park users during sporting events

 8,000 Came out to the “Big Four” department sponsored events

 4,500 Enjoyed amphitheater events

 2,500 Visited the Farmers Market this season

 1,500 Kids had an awesome time during youth activities

 1,650 Attended senior programming, trips and other events

 400 Realized health and wellness goals in Township fitness programs

Revenue to Expenditure Ratio: 59% (more than double the 28% NRPA Park Metric)

Five Year Cap. Budget Spending: \$9.9M (more than triple \$2.98M NRPA Park Metric Median)

Full-time staff: 1

Seasonal staff: 50

Professional Volunteers: 15

Seasonal Volunteers: 100



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Programs:

- Yoga
- Pilates
- Zumba
- Bhangra Dance
- Clay Sculpture
- Building Bridges
- Specialty Summer Camps
- Traditional Day Camps
- Toddler Storytime
- Walk across PA
- Walk with Ease
- Senior's Card Club
- Township-wide special events
- Day & destination trips
- Pickleball
- Stones
- Theater in the Park
- Tennis
- Next Up! Leadership Series
- Health Education Classes
- Spotted Lanternfly Smash-athon
- Teen Awesome FEST & Chesco Filmmakers Showcase
- Hide the Gnome scavenger hunts
- Preschool Entertainment Series
- Applebrook Golf

