City of Bellevue
Parks & Community Services Department

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 5, 2016

To: Mayor Stokes and City Councilmembers

From: Patrick Foran, Director, 452-5377
Parks & Community Services Department

Subject: Parks & Recreation Month

"I remember a hundred lovely lakes, and recall the fragrant breath of pine and fir and cedar and poplar trees. The trail has strung upon it, as upon a thread of silk, opalescent dawns and saffron sunsets. It has given me blessed release from care and worry and the troubled thinking of our modern day. It has been a return to the primitive and the peaceful. Whenever the pressure of our complex city life thins my blood and benumbs my brain, I seek relief in the trail; and when I hear the coyote wailing to the yellow dawn, my cares fall from me - I am happy."

–Hamlin Garland, *McClure's*, February 1899

In 2009, the US House of Representatives passed a resolution designating July as National Parks and Recreation Month. Since 1965, Bellevue's parks and recreation system has been embedded into the cultural, physical, and economic landscape of this city. While most services offered primarily attend to the needs of Bellevue residents, their benefits far exceed the boundaries of city limits. The positive effects of parks and recreation systems on the environment, physical health, social well-being, economy, mental health, and youth development have lasting and extensive benefits.

Public parks and recreation services play a central role in promoting and providing physical activity, which improves overall physical health. It's been well documented that America faces a major health crisis, as more than one-third of adults in this country are clinically obese and the statistics for children are similarly grim, with one-third of American children overweight and one in six obese. Multiple studies indicate that time outdoors is the strongest correlate of physical activity (especially for children). In one study, just a half-hour forested walk resulted in large drops in blood glucose levels in diabetic study participants. Exposure to nature and physical activity clearly has a soothing effect on our minds, our bodies, and our spirits.

Parks and recreation systems support young people by building cognitive, social, and emotional skills that will allow them to contribute to society. Studies indicate participation in recreation programs is associated with autonomy and identity development, positive social relationships, learning conflict resolution, academic success, mental health, and civic engagement for young people. Community violence and anti-social behavior occurs less frequently among youth with access to strong parks and recreation systems. Using a conservative cost-benefit analysis, researchers conclude that every dollar invested in afterschool programs saves society $2.50 in future costs related to juvenile crime. Students who participate in at least one hour of extracurricular activities per week are 49% less likely to use drugs and 37% less likely to become teen parents.

Local benefits from Bellevue's parks on property values and taxes, and increased economic development from tax revenues from tourism, improve the quality of life for our citizenry. Publicly available and accessible services create a healthier and more interconnected citizenry. These factors exponentially enhance the City's ability to proactively respond to the progressively more challenging social, economic, and environmental issues faced today, and provide solutions for Bellevue's future.

The City of Bellevue's parks and recreation system is iconic to the character of this area. As a "city in a park," this system boasts regional and national accolades for its excellence in parks, services, and well-maintained amenities. Bellevue's comprehensive and diverse services and offerings provide lasting value to residents and visitors alike. The City and its residents reap a myriad of individual and collective returns on these investments.

Please join us in celebrating Parks & Recreation Month by attending a special event, taking a walk on a trail, visiting a neighborhood park, canoeing the Mercer Slough, participating in a recreation program, or simply taking a walk with nature.

cc: Parks & Community Services Board

CITY OF BELLEVUE, WASHINGTON

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS: The US House of Representatives has designated July as Parks & Recreation Month; and

WHEREAS: Parks and recreation programs are vitally important to establishing and maintaining the quality of life in our community; and

WHEREAS: Parks and recreation programs partner with the community, providing places for people to gather, celebrate, and volunteer their time and talents to make a difference; and

WHEREAS: Parks and recreation programs build healthy, active communities and aid in the prevention of chronic disease, provide therapeutic recreation services for the disabled, and improve the mental and emotional health of all citizens; and

WHEREAS: Parks and recreation programs enhance a community's economic prosperity through increased property values, increased tourism, the attraction and retention of businesses, and crime reduction; and

WHEREAS: Our parks and natural areas ensure the ecological beauty of our community and provide a place for children and adults to connect with nature and recreate outdoors; and

WHEREAS: Bellevue has long been seen as a *City in a* Park, and parks and natural recreation areas are fundamental not only to the ecological beauty of our community, but also to its environmental wellbeing by improving air and water quality, protecting groundwater, preventing flooding, and providing vegetative buffers and habitat for wildlife; and

Now, therefore, I, John Stokes, Mayor of the City of Bellevue, Washington, and on behalf of the City Council, do hereby proclaim **July 2016** as:

Parks & Recreation Month

in Bellevue, and urge everyone to enjoy and recognize the many benefits of Bellevue's parks and recreation facilities and programs.

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John Stokes
Mayor