

Woodstock Parks and Recreation Department 2019 Annual Report

2019 was a big year for the department. Preston Pooser who was the Parks and Recreation Director accepted a Director position in Florida and relocated in April. A new Parks and Recreation Director, Michael Huffstetler was hired in June. Michael came to Woodstock from the City of Marietta where he was serving as the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation.

There were a couple note-able accomplishments during 2019. One being the relocation of the community garden. The new site provided a season of free gardening for registered participants and after many discussions with gardeners and staff, a priority list of improvements has been made for 2020 that will help the site be more attractive, and to also improve the experience of the gardeners and staff maintaining the area. The second thing was the purchase of city reporter park & playground inspection software. Staff was trained on how to use this technology to efficiently inspect and monitor the safety of playgrounds, park amenities, and the overall aesthetics and use of the parks system. This process uses iPads and iPhones to record inspections, make comments, and take necessary pictures, as well as record the repair of noted deficiencies. The program will be in full use in 2020 and will ensure the safety and upkeep of all the parks and playgrounds, as well as help prioritize operations and budgeting.

Lastly, bids were approved, and a contract awarded for the construction of Phase I of the Elm Street Downtown Playground. Located adjacent to the Elm Street Green and the Noonday Creek Trailhead, the nature and musical inspired playground will be a great asset for downtown Woodstock. Thank you to Elm Street Cultural Arts and the Woodstock Downtown Development Authority for their commitment to this project, and for their assistance with the design and implementation. The project should be completed in spring of 2020.

Staff Development

As in other occupations, parks and recreation standards and methods of improvement are continuously changing, as well as the trends and interests of the communities being served. All the parks and recreation department staff completed a lot of training in 2019. Michael Huffstetler represented Woodstock and attended the National Recreation and Park Association conference in Baltimore. In addition to attending sessions and workshops, Michael attended a workshop on the latest standards and updates for CAPRA Accreditation. The accreditation renewal for Woodstock is in 2023 and all staff are being trained on and assigned areas of responsibility to prepare for the visit.

Michael Huffstetler, Heather Gaddis, Marybeth Stockdale, Jamey Snyder, Elmo Phillips, and Jeff Armstrong all attended one or more days of the Georgia Recreation and Park Association conference in Dalton, GA. Classes attended focused on administration, leadership, strategic planning, maintenance, park operations and planning, as well as recreation program planning. All the maintenance staff attended the GRPA Maintenance Field Day where they got to network with other departments, meet vendors, and attend several workshops on playground maintenance, tennis court maintenance, field maintenance, pond management, and test out new equipment. It is a great day to play a little, talk to other agencies, learn best practices, and to visit other parks.

Other important trainings included UGA Succeeding as a Supervisor, attended by Elmo Phillips and Jeff Armstrong, UGA Extension Maintenance Industry Training, attended by Elmo Phillips, Jeff Armstrong, and Jamey Snyder, and several online CEU sessions were completed by staff, as well as many city sponsored trainings: CRASE Training, Defensive Driving, IT Security Awareness, Open Records, CPR/AED, and Active Shooter. In-house parks and recreation staff trainings during meetings included leadership, smart goals, mission and visions statements, playground inspections, cash handling, and strategic thinking.

Several staff have earned their professional certifications and completed continuing education certificates with the National Recreation and Park Association. Jamey Snyder earned his CPRP Certified Park and Recreation Professional certification in September, which illustrates his commitment to the profession as well as has the knowledge and understanding of key concepts within the parks and recreation field. Jamey joins Marybeth Stockdale and Heather Gaddis as certified park and recreation professionals. Michael Huffstetler is a CPRE Certified Park and Recreation Executive, which is the highest level of certification in the field. CPRP certifications require earning 2.0 CEU's in a 2-year period, while the CPRE requires earning 3.0 CEU's in a 3-year period. These are earned by attending conferences, workshops, contributing to the field through articles, and by volunteering in leadership roles with state and national organizations.

Marybeth Stockdale and Heather Gaddis both have earned the NRPA Leadership Certificate in 2019. The leadership certificate is designed to provide leaders practical and applicable methods for transforming themselves and their agency. The program consists of 4 subjects, including strategic thinking, human capital management, operational leadership, and diversity and cultural awareness.

Continuous improvement is very important in parks and recreation and in how the community is served. Staff have dedicated time, energy, and have committed themselves not only to the City of Woodstock, but to the profession both locally and nationally, and more importantly in improving themselves as professionals.

Northside Hospital-Cherokee Amphitheater

In 2019, the Northside Hospital-Cherokee Amphitheater completed its third year of operation with another successful year of events and programming. The amphitheater hosted 28 events in 2019 with over 50,000 estimated attendees. A monthly fitness series AMPED in the Park was added in 2019, as well as a larger AMPED in the Park Health Fair. Several of these events have already been scheduled again for 2020.

Unfortunately, weather caused the cancellation or relocation of several events in 2019, including First Baptist Church Woodstock's Good Friday, and Kids Fest. The first 3 concerts in the Woodstock Summer Concert Series were impacted attendance-wise because of inclement weather, but the shows went on. With a full concert schedule, several events scheduled, and new programming, 2020 looks to be exciting.

2019 Special Events

The parks and recreation department had a very successful event season in 2019. 21 special events were held with over 72,500 estimated attendees.

The 2019 Special Event season kicked off on Friday, February 15th with the City's **Arbor Day Celebration**. The City of Woodstock gave away 800 tree seedlings for residents to plant at their homes. Each seedling came with a tree care guide.

The City's annual **Greenstock Day** was held on Saturday April 27, 2019. The annual event features city wide yard sales and recycling event. The city-wide yard sale had 73 registered garage sales throughout Woodstock, 14 of which were community sales. The annual recycling event collected over 17,500 lbs. of electronics, 1,447 lbs. of batteries, 9,500 lbs. of paper was shredded, and almost 3 tons of other recyclables were collected. Over 416 cars carrying 532 people came through the event.

The 2019 **Movies in the Park**, sponsored by Northside Hospital-Cherokee included Incredibles 2 on May 25th, How to Train Your Dragon – The Hidden World on June 15th, and Captain Marvel on July 20th. Each movie had about 500 participants.

2019 marked the 23rd Annual **Woodstock Summer Concert Series** at the new Northside Hospital-Cherokee Amphitheater in 2019. Bands included Mark Wills in May, Better Than Ezra in June, The BB King Blues Band featuring Michael Lee of The Voice in July, the Little River Band in August, and The Molly Ringwalds in September. Approximately 46,000 people attended the concerts. Unfortunately, rain during the first three concerts didn't help attendance. Sponsorship for the concert series was \$189,000 which showed an increase of \$ 27,500 over 2018.

The **City of Woodstock Memorial Day Ceremony** on Monday May 27th had over 400 attendees pay their respects to those that have given the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

The City's Annual **July 4th Spectacular Parade, Festival and Fireworks** was very successful. An estimated 8,000 people came in to Downtown Woodstock to watch the parade with over 70 entries and attend the festival in The Park at City Center. The annual 5K Freedom Run had over 780 runners in this year's event. The annual Fireworks display brought an estimated 30,000 to the highway 92 and 575 corridor to watch the display.

The 2019 September **Brown Bag Concert Series** featured a free lunchtime concert on each Thursday at The Park at City Center. Concerts featured Dani & Dylan, A Theory of Now Band, David Keenum, and "Mr. Jason" Koornick. The weather was great for each concert and there were more than 200 attendees at each performance.

The 14th Annual **Woodstock 9/11 Day of Remembrance** had over 300 in attendance. Guest speakers included Mathew Dunn, US Army, and Brandon Williams, USAF. A new bagpiper at this event made it even more special.

The annual **Woodstock Elementary School Downtown Walking Tour** was held on Friday, October 4th. More than 300 third graders made their way to The Park at City Center, The Chambers at City Center, and the Northside Hospital-Cherokee Amphitheater to learn about the history of the City of Woodstock and the services it provides. The highlights of their trip are a question and answer session with Mayor Henriques and Juanita Hughes, and demonstrations by Police K9, and Fire Department uniforms and equipment.

Mother Nature did not cooperate for the annual **KidsFest** which was held on Thursday, October 31st. Frigid temperatures, high winds, and rain moved the event indoors to The Chambers at City Center. That didn't stop approximately 3,000 people from attending! The event featured Halloween trick or treat activities for our younger ghouls and goblins, including DJ Ronnie, Tim the Magician, games, face painting, costume contest, and candy give-away. This event is held on Halloween as a safe alternative to trick-or-treating.

On Monday, November 11th, the City hosted its annual **Veterans Day Ceremony** in The Park at City Center. This celebration honors America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country, willingness to serve, and sacrifice for the common good. The Marine Corps League Detachment #1311 in Woodstock, the American Legion Post 316, and the Warriors' Watch Riders, and 250 guests helped celebrate veterans who have given us liberty and freedom. The event featured a Candlelight ceremony and music.

The 3rd Annual **Tis the Season to be Green Recycle Event** took place on Saturday, November 16th. To celebrate National Recycling Week, the event offered document shredding and recycled

electronics, batteries, textiles, cell phones, light bulbs, glasses, magazines and newspapers. Over 10,300 lbs. of electronics and 3 tons of other recyclables were collected, and nearly 12,000 lbs. of paper was shredded. 216 cars carrying 305 people were counted at the event.

The **Christmas Jubilee Parade of Lights and Festival** was held on Saturday December 7th. The event had an estimated 10,000 person draw into Downtown Woodstock to kick off the holiday season. With mild temperatures in the upper 50's, many people stayed downtown after the parade to enjoy the festival. Many families enjoyed hot cocoa and cider, cupcake decorating, crafts, vendors, inflatables, and hanging out with the "man in red". **Santa's Mailbox** was available from December 2 – 16, 2019 for children to drop off their letters to Santa. More than 260 children mailed letters to Santa. 549 Christmas Trees were recycled in January from the **Chip and Dip** and **Bring one for the Chipper** events.

The **Chambers at City Center** hosted 14 Public Input Meetings, 14 HOA Meetings, 4 corporate meetings, and 3 Chamber of Commerce breakfasts. In addition, many meetings and training sessions were held there by City of Woodstock Departments, the DDA, Planning Commission, Fire Department, Citizens Public Safety Academy, Main Street Woodstock, Mastermind, Council meetings, Sojourn Church Sunday School, Elm Street meetings and receptions, GROW, Morning INfluence, Chattahoochee Tech, and the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council.

Staff is currently planning and preparing next year's special event calendar and expects another successful year in 2020.

The William G. Long Senior Center

The William G. Long Senior Center had an exciting year in 2019. There are currently 720 registered members at the senior center with 231 new members joining in 2019. There was an average of 50 daily participants utilizing the center with 12,682 visits.

Members enjoyed many trips, tours, and activities during the year including Atlanta Braves games, Rock City Christmas Lights, white water rafting on the Nantahala River, numerous concerts and performances at the Falany Performing Arts center in Waleska, Ga., ziplining in the north Georgia mountains, a tour of the M.L. King Jr. Center in Atlanta, multiple trips to the Dekalb Farmers Market, the Georgia Aquarium, and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, and more, including 86 members who took two extended day trips in 2019. The trips included an 8-day cruise of the Hawaiian Islands, and a week-long trip to Nashville, Tn.

The center offered 20 special events on-site, in addition to regularly scheduled daily programs and activities. Highlights included were a Valentine's Day Party, St. Patrick Day Party, Mother's Day and Father's Day Luncheon, Cherokee County Senior Olympics Wii Bowling and Billiards,

Black History Month Luncheon, Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon, membership picnic, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Luncheons, and a New Year's Eve Party.

Many special interest classes, workshops, and activities were offered as well. Classes included many informational topics, including, wills and probates, CPR, fire prevention, flu shots, Master Gardeners, chair yoga and ageless grace exercise classes weekly, AARP safe driving classes, painting, beginning and intermediate bridge, Mahjongg, and medicare seminars. The center also supported MUST Ministries and The American Cancer Association with annual collection drives and earned 4th place in the City of Woodstock Scarecrow Contest.

Thank You

As 2019 ends, all the staff in the parks and recreation department would like to thank all the program participants, volunteers, community partners, sponsors, and all the visitors and citizens who utilize the city's parks, trails, facilities, and who participate in special events and activities. The staff would also like to thank all City of Woodstock administration, mayor, council, and all the departments who assist and help the parks and recreation department be successful. Creating safe, healthy, attractive, and an enjoyable place to live, work, and play takes a great dedicated team, so thank you.

2019 was a great year, and 2020 is looking to be even better.

Best Regards,

Michael Huffstetler

Michael D. Huffstetler, CPRE
Parks and Recreation Director