



COVID-19 Champions Awards Program Saluting Innovation Across the Commonwealth

After a year's hiatus due to the restrictions of COVID-19, the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation annual awards return in 2021. The awards program has always meant to recognize outstanding service, programs, and people so that we may all be reminded of the exemplary work being done in our state parks and forests, by both staff and volunteers, to improve Pennsylvania's quality of life and to protect our natural assets for future generations.

That recognition takes on new meaning in the face of the ongoing pandemic. While much of the economy and our personal and business lives stalled as a result of quarantines and physical distancing, it was universally recognized that **outside** was the place we needed to go for mental health and physical release. And so the use of our outdoor spaces exploded during 2020.

The creative thinking, dedication, and determination of volunteers and staff was never more evident as they rose to the challenge of providing safe, welcoming places for people in need. So while it appears likely that gathering for a large banquet in one central location will once again prove impossible in 2021, the Foundation believes the gallant efforts of these selfless people deserve recognition.

And if we can't bring them to us, the awards will come to them!

2021 – The 50th Anniversary of the Environmental Rights Amendment Ratified May 18, 1971

The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people.

Pennsylvania Constitution
Article I, Section 27
Natural Resources and the Public Estate

The words of the ERA were never more evident than they were during 2020. Pennsylvanians instinctively knew that their right to clean air; pure water; and the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of their environment would see them through these difficult times. Let us celebrate both the anniversary of the ERA and the contributions of the people who made this possible with the 2021 COVID Champions.

Beginning next Spring, members of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation board and staff will travel the Commonwealth to recognize our COVID Champions. These individuals or groups should be congratulated for their perseverance in the face of unprecedented use and difficulties.

Nominations are encouraged for awards to volunteers, Friends Groups, organizations, parks/forests staff members, business owners, medical providers, or elected or appointed officials who:

- Went above and beyond to improve the visitor experience and create a welcoming environment;
- Created or continued an innovative program or project for user comfort, safety, or enjoyment;
- Worked to highlight the ongoing needs of our parks and forests even before the onset of the pandemic and the overwhelming use it brought to our public spaces; or
- Showed unusual leadership or creativity in support of their park or forest, or the outdoors in general.

Thoughts to keep in mind:

- The awards are open to anyone of any age – a business owner, a campground host, volunteers or staff, perhaps a local medical professional who “prescribed” the outdoors for health during the crisis or an elected or appointed official who made it easy to engage in the outdoors.
- Did you have an experience or hear of an instance where someone went above and beyond to address visitor concerns or make them feel welcome?

The Foundation’s ongoing focus on the needs of the state parks and forests (to the tune of over \$1 billion in funding) means that recognition of these innovative thinkers and leaders will offer a new and exciting cadre of supporters of this cause. It will be our pleasure to join with local citizens and park/forest users; legislators and elected officials; the media; and the winners’ families in saluting 50 COVID Champions in 2021.

Nominate a Champion through submission of attached form or online at the PPF website (<https://paparksandforests.org/news/2021awards/>).

The deadline for nominations is December 31.



COVID-19 CHAMPION NOMINATION FORM

I. Details of Nominator

Name: _____

Business or Organization: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ **Email:** _____

II. Details of Nominee

Name: _____

Business or Organization: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ **Email:** _____

III. Details of Nomination

Where did the potentially award-winning event or action take place?

In a state park or forest

Not in a state park or forest

If applicable, the state park or forest involved: _____

Nominee's role in the state park or forest:

(Please choose the category most closely associated with the Nominee's role in a park or forest):

Volunteer

Friends group member

Campground Host

Concessionaire

Staff Member

Local Business Owner

Local Medical Professional

Local Community Member/Neighbor

Elected or Appointed Official

Please provide a short statement that demonstrates why the nominee deserves the award. Limit statements to less than 1,000 words.

Please feel free to email up to four pictures to PPFFAwards@paparksandforests.org. Award winners will be asked to supply additional images for promotion.

Return to: Marci Mowery, President
Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation
704 Lisburn Road, Suite 102
Camp Hill, PA 17011
Email: PPFFAwards@paparksandforests.org

Deadline for nominations is: December 31, 2020