

LAKE COUNTY PARKS

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“The Natural Place For Fun”

FOR MEDIA RELEASE: Robert Nickovich retires from park department after long career

After 43 years with the Lake County Park and Recreation Department, the last 35 as Chief Executive Officer, Robert J. Nickovich retired to spend time with his family. His years of service to the community toward the development and promotion of parks and recreation and quality of life issues for Northwest Indiana have been well recognized. Two of his most recent honors are the John D. Endwright Alumni Service Award for exceptional achievement and service to the profession by the Indiana University School of Public Health - Bloomington alumni in 2015 and the Sagamore of the Wabash, the state of Indiana's highest honor bestowed by Governor Michael R. Pence, presented at his retirement gathering. Additionally, his many accomplishments were read into the Congressional Record proceedings of the 114th congress by U.S. Representative Peter Visclosky in February 2016.

Since Mr. Nickovich began his career at Lake County Parks park land has increased from 400 acres to nearly 7,000. The diverse park system attracts more than one million visitors annually to its parks, nature preserves, historic sites and special event festivals. Wood's Historic Grist Mill and Buckley Homestead, both listed on the National Register of Historical Places, represent the county's strong industrial and agricultural heritage respectively. Gibson Woods Nature Preserve is classified an Indiana State Nature Preserve due to the natural significance of its flora and fauna. Oak Ridge Prairie County Park serves as trail head for the Oak Savannah Trail which is part of U.S. Bicycle Route 36. When dedicated in 1979, the Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park was the forerunner of one of the largest conservation projects in the state of Indiana. The Grand Kankakee Marsh Restoration Project, funded by the North American Wetlands Conservation Act is a partnership that includes almost 30 governmental agencies, not-for-profit organizations, small businesses, and corporate sponsors from throughout Midwest Indiana.

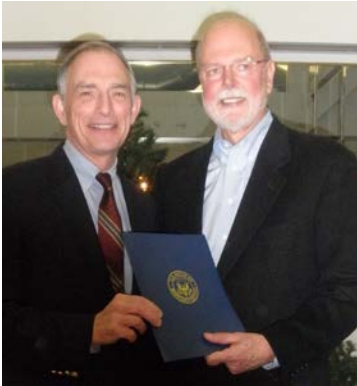
Bob was instrumental in the creation of Deep River Waterpark in 1995. A nationally recognized facility, Deep River Waterpark has been an economic engine for Lake County generating millions of visitors and tourism dollars in its 21 year history. As a leader in innovative recreational opportunities Bob also oversaw the creation of Bellaboo's Play and Discovery Center in 2006. Bellaboo's demonstrates the critical connection between play and early learning. Grounded in research and early learning foundations the award winning Bellaboo's Play and Discovery Center is successfully providing hands-on interaction for children under the age of nine.

Bob's impact extends far beyond one county. Through his work with Indiana Park and Recreation Association, the National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials, the Great Lakes Regional Council and many other professional organizations Bob has been a strong voice in support of P&R for decades. He has been a mentor to dozens of professionals, some of whom began their careers at Lake County fresh from college and have become successful park administrators in their own right. Many professionals and park and recreation departments throughout the state and the nation looked to Bob and the Lake County Parks for leadership and new ideas in providing services to their constituents.

Bob has worked with volunteer organizations, administrators, and political leaders toward the betterment

of parks and recreation, the region, and the state. Each of the parks in the Lake County system is a testament to his leadership. The many friends he has made over the years in the profession are a reflection of his willingness to help where ever he can. He has been a steward of Lake County and represented the state of Indiana with honor and dignity.

Bob sat on several boards and held membership in a number of organizations including the Great Lakes Regional Council of the National Recreation and Parks Association, past board member of The Legacy Foundation, Lake County's Community Foundation, charter member and project manager of the Indiana Grand Kankakee Marsh Restoration Project Steering Committee, and a partner in the North American Coastal Project. The park board named Jim Basala, COO as Bob's successor as CEO.



U.S. Representative Peter Visclosky presents congressional record proceedings to retiring Lake County Parks CEO Bob Nickovich.



Bob Nickovich with Sagamore of the Wabash award bestowed by Governor Michael R. Pence