Welcome to Kent County Parks Volunteer Services!

On behalf of the Kent County Parks Department staff, we welcome you to our volunteer “team” and want to express sincere appreciation and thanks for the dedication of your time, energy, and expertise to help us preserve and improve green spaces for our diverse and growing communities! Kent County Parks VIPs (Volunteers In Parks) are a critical part of our operations.

This handbook explains our policies as well as the responsibilities and opportunities available for volunteers with the Kent County Parks Department. It is meant to serve as a guide to provide you with a safe and satisfying volunteer experience, but does not constitute a contractual obligation. Policies may change as our program evolves, so feel free to contact the Volunteer Coordinator with any questions.

Thank you again for your participation!

Roger Sabine, RLA
Director of Parks, Kent County Parks Department
Overview of Kent County Parks

Mission
The Kent County Parks Department will enhance the quality of life in Kent County by establishing and maintaining outstanding parks to meet the needs of the county's growing population. The department will efficiently provide recognized recreational, environmental, and social benefits. This will be accomplished through adherence to high standards and coordination with individuals and organizations.

History
Established in 1924, Kent County Parks Department is one of the oldest park departments in the state of Michigan. Over the years, Kent County Parks has grown to include 41 sites covering 6,702 acres, and 28 miles of paved inter-community recreation trails. Our county parks emphasize land rich in natural resources and recreational opportunities.

Contact Information
Kent County Parks Department
1700 Butterworth Dr., SW Grand Rapids, MI 49534
Tel: (616) 632-PARK (7275) Fax: (616) 336-2998
Website: www.KentCountyParks.org

Kent County Parks Foundation
The Kent County Parks Foundation is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, so all gifts are tax deductible as allowed by law. Its purpose is to raise funds to assist Kent County Parks. The Mission of the Kent County Parks Foundation is to preserve green space and improve public parks. By partnering with the Foundation, donors help to acquire land for future parks, preserve and create trails, cultivate and plant seedlings, improve wildlife habitats, and cover expenses for general park operations as well as special programs and events.

Email: info@kentcountyparksfoundation.org
www.kentcountyparksfoundation.org

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Overview of Volunteer Services

Contact Information
Kent County Parks Department, Volunteer Services
1700 Butterworth Dr., SW • Grand Rapids, MI 49534
Tel: (616) 632-7842 • Fax: (616) 336-2998
Email: park.volunteers@kentcountymi.gov
Website: www.KentCountyParks.org
Volunteer Project Cell Number: (616) 826-0438
(The Project Cell number is for use in contacting the Volunteer Coordinator during an on-site project or event.)

KCP Volunteer Services Mission
The Mission of the KCPD Volunteer Services Program is to engage the community by providing opportunities for dedicated volunteers to participate in projects, events and programs that will augment, rather than replace, publicly funded maintenance. Park Volunteers will help support the mission and goals of the Kent County Parks Department by improving the recreational and environmental attributes of our county parks.

KCP Volunteer Opportunities
Volunteer opportunities include park clean up, tree planting; gardening, painting, education, trail guide, photography, invasive species removal, lake and stream clean up, trail patrols, special projects, administrative support, internships, and annual events including Annual Spring Clean, Garlic Mustard Challenge and DISCOVER! Interpretive programs. Although annual special events are pre-scheduled, most of our volunteer opportunities are developed and scheduled according to the individual or group volunteer’s choice of park, the needs of that specific park, and the interests, abilities and availability of the volunteer(s). We also invite volunteers to submit special project ideas that will benefit either the recreational or environmental attributes of a specific park. Project ideas will be reviewed and, if approved, can be planned to fit the volunteers schedule and abilities.

Benefits and Recognition
Benefits of volunteering for the Kent County Parks:
- Making a difference by helping to improve and protect our county parks.
- Recognition in Park Publications, Park Website, and/or Social Media sites for volunteer contributions.
- Appreciation awards based on hours of service.
- Golf volunteers receive rounds of golf at LE Kaufman Golf Course.

Responsibilities of Volunteers
Kent County volunteers are expected and required to follow rules of conduct that will protect the interests and safety of all volunteers, the organization and the public whom we serve. It is the duty and responsibility of every volunteer to be aware of and abide by existing rules, policies and procedures while working on behalf of the County, and while off duty if such conduct significantly affects the best interests of the County and the public. The following rules of conduct are not to be construed as a contract between the County and its volunteers. These rules are provided as a guide to the daily conduct of volunteers. The list is not exhaustive and does not include any and all actions which may subject a volunteer to corrective measures or termination.

A Kent County Parks Department Volunteer can expect:
- To be given assignments that are beneficial to you, the environment, the Parks Department, and/or the public we serve
- To receive sufficient training and/or supervision for the tasks you perform
- To be treated with respect and dignity
- To be recognized for your contributions and commitment
- To be included and involved with programs and special events
- To be made aware of all information that directly affects your areas of responsibility as a volunteer
- To be given opportunities to grow and develop skills in pursuing assignments with a higher level of responsibility
A Kent County Parks Department Volunteer is expected:

- To complete all required documentation and conduct volunteer activities with integrity and professionalism
- To honor all time commitments as agreed upon
- To be considerate and respectful in all interactions with Parks Department staff, volunteers, and the public we serve
- To maintain confidentiality of privileged information relative to the Parks Department, including planning, staff, volunteers, and the public we serve
- To be familiar with and follow the policies and procedures of the Kent County Parks Department and the Volunteer Services Program.
- To contribute your knowledge, skills and dedication for the maintenance and improvement of our Kent County Parks with integrity and enthusiasm!

Volunteer Services Procedures

**Recruitment**
We invite all interested groups and individuals to support Kent County Parks Volunteer Services, and always appreciate if our active volunteers help recruit other volunteers!

**Application**
A potential volunteer can call or email Volunteer Services and submit contact information so that an initial interview in person or by email or phone can be conducted. The potential volunteer is required to sign a waiver and may be subject to a background check and motor vehicle record check depending on project responsibilities. Once this documentation is completed, a meeting can be set at the Kent County Parks office, by phone, or at a designated county park where the volunteer will receive more information on specific volunteer projects.

**Liability Waiver/Background Check**
Every volunteer must sign and submit a liability waiver prior to becoming an active volunteer. Individuals age 18 and over are required to sign the Adult Waiver and those under the age of 18 must have a parent or guardian sign and return the Minor Waiver.

No exceptions will be made. Failure to complete the liability waiver will result in the inability of that individual to provide volunteer services with the Kent County Parks Department.

All volunteer candidates except those volunteers who work under the authority and supervision of Kent County Park staff, or an organized community/school/corporate group, are subject to a criminal background check and motor vehicle record check prior to becoming an active volunteer. This information will be made available only to the managers of the KCP Volunteer Services, unless circumstances dictate otherwise, and will remain confidential.

**Training**
Specific training may be required for some types of projects. Most training can be done on site just prior to start of a volunteer project; however, some activities (i.e. Invasive Species Removal) may require some specific information or knowledge prior to the project. Volunteer Services can supply information resource sites for volunteers.

**Record Keeping**
KCP Volunteer Services requires that all volunteers submit their contributing hours after each event, or if they volunteer on an on-going basis, that the hours be submitted at the end of each month.

**Communications**
Volunteers will be notified of Volunteer Opportunities through email and occasionally by phone contact. Opportunities and recognition of volunteers will also be posted on the Kent County Parks Volunteer Services Facebook page. In addition, the Kent County Parks Department news and updates will be sent by email to all volunteers. Volunteers can contact the Volunteer Coordinator (park.volunteers@kentcountymi.gov) to sign up for scheduled events, plan a volunteer project, request more information, ask questions, or update their account information. A Website Volunteer Management system is in the planning stages that will allow volunteers to sign up for posted events online – all volunteers will be notified when this site becomes available.
**Dress Code /Weather**

Please check the weather report and dress safely and appropriately for your volunteer activity. Normally, it is advisable to wear long pants and long sleeved shirts during most volunteer activities.

Always consider bringing sun screen and bug spray and wear sunglasses and/or hats. In cases of extreme weather, volunteers may decide to cancel or re-schedule volunteer hours. If you decide to cancel, as a courtesy, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator with as much advance notice as possible. Safety first!

**Media Relations**

To ensure that day-to-day information provided to the media is consistent and accurate, volunteers are not authorized to make statements to the press relating to the Kent County Parks, officially or unofficially. Consistency of information is crucial to the promotion of the Kent County Parks. As a volunteer at the Parks, it is your duty to inform the Kent County Parks Department of any media (including television, radio, Web, or newspaper reporters and photojournalists) you may encounter in the Parks, particularly if they appear to be working and are unescorted by park management.

Although your willingness to be helpful to visitors is always appreciated, it is important that all media are handled by Park management in order to avoid any inaccurate or confusing publicity for the Parks. If someone from the media approaches you in the Parks, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Use the following statement in a courteous manner, to address ALL questions concerning general park matters: “I’m afraid I may not be the appropriate person to answer your questions. Please allow me to contact the Kent County Parks Department for you.”

- Use the following statement to address ALL questions about an emergency: “I’m afraid I don’t have all the information, except that we are taking precautions for everyone’s safety. If you have additional questions, please contact the Kent County Parks Director.”

**Safety Guidelines**

We want you to enjoy a safe and healthy volunteer experience, therefore volunteers are expected to following these safety and security guidelines. Please note the procedure for accidents, injuries, loss or damage of property, and safety guidelines:

All volunteers and volunteer groups are voluntary and as such are responsible for any and all of their own injuries resulting from accidents. Please take all normal precautions to protect your personal belongings.

For record keeping purposes, a volunteer must report any accidents, injuries, or loss of property while on Kent County Parks property or while performing volunteer duties for the Parks Department. An Incident Report should be completed and submitted to the Parks Department within 24 hours of the incident. **Contact KCP Volunteer Services if an Incident Report form is needed.**

In the event a participant is injured or is affected by an illness during a program or on park property, please contact 911 or, for non emergencies, contact project supervisor. **Contact 911 immediately in the following situations:**

- The injury or illness requires care greater than you are able to provide
- You feel uncomfortable with the situation. If any doubt exists, it is recommended to err on the side of caution and contact the local paramedics who can use their advanced medical training to determine what treatment is needed.
- A head injury has occurred. Many people suffering from head injuries are not capable of making sound decisions regarding their own medical treatment.
- If the injured or ill person is unable to drive themselves and a relative or friend cannot be reached, under no circumstances do park volunteers transport participants or patrons to a medical facility, to their home, or any other location.
The following are guidelines for volunteer project safety:

**Do:**
- Dress appropriately for the weather
- Wear insect repellent, sunscreen, sunglasses and a hat as appropriate
- Wear boots/closed-toed shoes and work gloves at all times
- Take or carry with you any personal medications, including treatments for asthma or allergies that may be triggered by working outdoors
- Use all tools safely and appropriately. Rakes, shovels etc. should be kept below shoulder level and always pointed down to prevent injuries
- Obey all Park Rules and Regulations and stay within designated boundaries
- Work only during park hours and work with a partner when possible
- Carry a small first aid kit
- Drink plenty of water
- Lift all objects with your legs, not your back
- Supervise children at all times
- Be cautious of insects as well as poison ivy and other irritants
- Tie bags tightly
- Wash your hands thoroughly when done
- Handle sharp objects with care – children should NOT pick up broken glass
- Make sure all volunteers in your group are familiar with these safety guidelines
- Provide a cellular telephone for the group leader
- Contact Parks Department staff at (616) 632-PARK (7275) immediately if you notice a safety hazard or suspicious behavior, and for concerns needing emergency attention call 911.

**Don’t:**
- Don’t overexert yourself. Take breaks and drink liquids to stay hydrated
- Don’t bring small children along on projects unless they can be closely supervised
- Don’t bring pets along on projects
- Don’t leave children or pets locked in the car at work locations
- Don’t stomp on bags. Injuries may occur from broken glass or sharp objects.
- Don’t enter river, ponds or lakes, including creek banks, without prior permission from Parks Department staff
- Do not work in the streets. Use caution and wear reflective safety vests when working near streets and traffic areas
- Don’t trespass on private property
- Do not apply any pesticide, herbicide, or other chemicals without prior permission from Parks Department staff
- **Under no circumstances should you pick up any materials you suspect may be hazardous.** Please alert the group leader and others in the area immediately. Call Kent County Parks Department staff at (616) 632-PARK (7275) and give the precise location of the material. **Concerns needing emergency attention call 911.**
  - **DO NOT PICK UP:** Hypodermic needles, medical waste, latex items, dead animals, or chemical containers

**Stay Safe and Have Fun!**

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**Termination/Resignation**

Failure to comply with the policies, instructions, or safety procedures set in this handbook or by Parks Department Staff may result in the termination of the individual’s volunteer service. Policies and procedures exist for the comfort and safety of our volunteers, employees, and the public we serve.
If you choose to end your volunteer involvement or your “Active” volunteer status, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator park.volunteers@kentcountymi.gov. You can change your status to “Inactive”, “Archived” or you can request that your contact information be deleted from our database. (See below for Status information)

**Volunteer Status**

“Pending” – Pending status is for those individuals or groups that have expressed interest in volunteering but have not completed all of the documentation required. They will begin receiving all email communications regarding volunteer opportunities and updates.

“Active” – Active status is for volunteers who have completed all required documentation, including submission of the signed waiver. They will receive all email communications regarding volunteer opportunities and updates and can sign up for scheduled projects or submit requests for a project tailored to their interests and abilities. The Volunteer Coordinator may contact an Active Volunteer by phone for specific projects or events that match the volunteer’s interests.

“Inactive” – Inactive status is for those volunteers who have not contributed hours within a twelve month period, or for those volunteers who do not have current documentation. Volunteer opportunities will continue to be sent by email, but the Volunteer Coordinator will not contact an Inactive Volunteer by phone for a project or event. This status can be requested by a volunteer for those who do not want to actively volunteer, but would like to receive volunteer opportunity updates.

“Archived” – Archived status is for those volunteers who no longer are active, and do not want to receive email notification of volunteer opportunities or updates; however, they will still receive updates from the Parks Department unless we receive a request to have your contact information removed from our database.

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**Volunteer Services Policies**

**Equal Opportunity and Diversity**

We accept volunteers based on a number of criteria, including your interests, skills, availability, interview, and compliance with Kent County policies. The County will not tolerate discrimination against any applicant because of race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, gender, age, veteran’s status, disability, or any other protected class status. In order to promote equal opportunity and diversity, the County actively attempts to identify and recruit qualified applicants from protected status groups. All County employees involved in recruitment, selection, and/or administration of the relationship between the county and any and all of its volunteers are expected to demonstrate good faith compliance with these policies. Volunteers must also adhere to these policies.

Encouraging workforce diversity is essential to the County’s ability to attract, recruit and retain qualified volunteers. Ensuring diversity fosters greater innovation and creativity among volunteers and enhances communication and relationships with the community we serve.

**Confidentiality**

The protection of confidential information is vital to the interest and success of the Parks Department. Such confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- Privileged information about financial, salary or personnel data
- All of the Parks Department’s mailing lists
- Pending projects and proposals

While on Park property, volunteers must not discuss the practices, procedures or organizational decisions or plans of the Kent County Parks Department with our visitors.


**Drug and Alcohol Free Policy**

In order to provide a safe and appropriate environment for all, Kent County is a Drug Free Workplace. As a Drug Free Workplace, Kent County maintains compliance with the federal Drug Free Workplace Act. Any violation of the following sections of the Kent County Drug Free Workplace policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of volunteer status.

Volunteers who use drugs or work while under the influence of drugs or alcohol present a safety hazard to themselves, to fellow volunteers and staff, and to visitors. Volunteers are prohibited, while on duty, from being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. Moreover, volunteers may not possess, use, sell, transport, manufacture, solicit or receive illegal drugs while on duty or on Park property. Violation of this policy will result in immediate termination.

**Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment**

Kent County strictly prohibits the harassment of any and all County volunteers and of members of the public by County staff or volunteers. Harassment by a volunteer or staff person based on sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, height, weight, marital status, sexual orientation, handicap or disability will not be tolerated in any circumstance.

Harassment consists of conduct which interferes unreasonably with an individual or creates an intimidating or hostile environment. Harassment may also consist of conduct which adversely affects an individual or an individual’s environment, such as slurs, jokes or belittlement directed at a person because of his or her sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, height, weight, marital status, sexual orientation, handicap or disability. Incidences of harassment should be reported immediately to the Volunteer Coordinator or other Parks Department staff.

Sexual harassment is a violation of federal and state statutes as well as of County policies and procedures. The County will investigate any and all complaints of sexual harassment received. Anyone determined to have violated the prohibitions against harassment shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination of employment or volunteer status.

**Smoking**

Kent County is a smoke free workplace. The smoking or carrying of any lighted pipe, cigar or cigarette is strictly prohibited in all County owned or operated facilities and vehicles. Additionally, we encourage volunteers to refrain from smoking at all times while on duty through the Kent County Parks Department.

All County owned or operated facilities located within the City of Grand Rapids shall comply with the City of Grand Rapids Clean Indoor Air Ordinance. To be in compliance, smoking shall be prohibited within ten (10) feet of any entrance, window or ventilation system. All smoking receptacles shall be placed outside of the no-smoking area, and all entrances shall designate the building and area as smoke free. Any violation of this policy shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of volunteer service.

**Grievance**

If you feel for any reason that you have been unfairly treated, or that you have been subjected to sexual or other harassment, contact the Volunteer Services Coordinator or Kent County Parks Director. All safety and security incidents should be reported to the Volunteer Services Coordinator or Kent County Parks Director immediately.

Thank you for your participation in the Kent County Parks Volunteer Services program!
Regulations for Use of Kent County Parks

The Park Manager is an authorized agent of the Kent County Parks Department and is in control of the park.

1. Within the park limits, we do not allow:
   - Intoxicating spirits *
   - Sale of Merchandise
   - Drunkenness
   - Mechanical or other concession
   - Rowdyism
   - Hunting or trapping
   - Posting of signs
   - ATV & mountain bike use at Luton Park
   - Ponies or Horses
   - Gambling or gambling devices
   - Dogs on beach
   - Dogs at Millennium Park
   - Smoking on any beach
   - Unleashed animals - must be a 6’ leash

*Beer and Wine are allowed on Memorial Day Weekend and from June 15 through October 31. Beer and wine are allowed prior to June 15 with any reservation. We do not allow alcohol in the beach area at Millennium Park.

2. Persons destructive to trees, buildings, equipment, signs, flowers, lawns, shrubs, etc., will be prosecuted and held liable for damages.

3. All papers, cans, rubbish, garbage and other camp or picnic refuse must be placed in receptacles provided for that purpose. Please help us keep the parks clean.

4. All County Parks shall close at dusk, with the exception of enclosed shelter reservations. All park users must leave at closing time.

5. All picnic tables/furniture MUST remain inside the Enclosed & Open Shelters.

For a complete listing of the park rules visit:
www.accesskent.com/YourGovernment/CountyClerk/pdfs/Parks_Ordinance.pdf
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<th>Fishing and Angling</th>
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* Official Name of Pickering Lake is Fred Meier Nature Preserve  
** Unofficial name  
*"A" indicates facilities that are accessible (barrier free)