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## American Water Charitable Foundation Awards \$400,000 to Support Local Nature-Based Play Spaces

VOORHEES, N.J.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- The [American Water Charitable Foundation](#), a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization created by American Water, the nation's largest publicly traded water and wastewater utility company, has provided three grants to underwrite local nature-based play spaces across American Water's nationwide service areas. The grants are being administered as part of the Foundation's partnership with the [National Recreation and Park Association](#) (NRPA), for the *Building Better Communities* signature grant program. NRPA directly administers the program, with funding made possible by the American Water Charitable Foundation.

The *Building Better Communities* philanthropy initiative is designed to enhance the quality of life in the communities the company serves. The program is initially focusing on parks, as they are critical to preserving natural resources that have real economic benefits for communities. Specifically, the program concentrates on building or enhancing nature-based playgrounds and natural play spaces for children, and will connect and educate people on environmental stewardship practices related to water.

Of the 117 applications received, a total of three projects from within American Water's national service area were selected to receive grants totaling \$400,000. The projects were chosen based on several criteria including play value, education value, proximity to American Water's service areas, relevance of the project to the RFP project parameters, use of natural play materials, opportunities for American Water employee volunteer involvement and construction of an actual children's play area.

The grant recipients are as follows:

- **Magic Island** in Charleston, W.Va. will receive \$150,000 to construct a children's spray and/or splash pad utilizing a recirculating system. This project will introduce an interactive water feature to a park that has its genesis in the natural process of silt deposition at the confluence of two rivers.
- **Washington "Reed" Park** in Gary, Ind. will receive \$125,000 to develop a nature-based playground that integrates educational play about stormwater, as well as functions as green infrastructure to slow and cleanse the water returning to Lake Michigan, Grand Calumet and Little Calumet Rivers.
- **Von Neida Park** in Camden, N.J. will receive \$125,000 to design and construct a natural playscape in the park. The majority of the design will be allocated to personalizing the play area to the community surrounding the park, including developing signage and illustrations that address flooding, stormwater management and stewardship.

"Creating an experience with nature and natural elements that is both fun and educational is a recipe for creating a life-long appreciation for the environment," said Barbara Tulipane, president and CEO of NRPA. "This is always a goal for community parks and recreation, and for these three communities having the support of the American Water Charitable Foundation to create new nature-based experiences will elevate their ability to give more people the chance to interact with nature in a unique and memorable way."

"We are excited to give these three communities an opportunity to foster a greater sense of appreciation for the environment in a fun and engaging way," said Debra Vernon, Manager, Corporate Responsibility and President of the American Water Charitable Foundation. "The projects will not only benefit the children and families in these communities, but they will also encourage the continued viability of and appreciation for our nation's water resources. The *Building Better Communities* program supports American Water's core values of community stewardship and environmental sustainability, and aligns with areas of importance to the company's employees, including child welfare and education."

Each nature-based play space will be developed via a community partnership dedicated to ongoing stewardship. Annually, the program aims to support several of these types of projects through grants administered to local communities. In 2014, four grants were awarded totaling \$384,000. The recipients were [The City of Belleville, Ill.](#), the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority in Scranton, Pa., the Pleasant Valley Recreation and Park District in Camarillo, Calif., and the Brunswick Redevelopment and Revitalization Committee in Brunswick, Mo.

For more information about the *Building Better Communities* program, visit [www.nrpa.org/BuildingBetterCommunities](http://www.nrpa.org/BuildingBetterCommunities).

## About The National Recreation and Park Association

The National Recreation and Park Association is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing park, recreation and conservation efforts that enhance quality of life for all people. Through its network of more than 47,000 recreation and park professionals and citizens, NRPA encourages the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles, conservation initiatives and equitable access to parks and public space. For more information, visit [www.NRPA.org](http://www.NRPA.org). For digital access to NRPA's flagship publication, *Parks & Recreation*, visit [www.parksandrecreation.org](http://www.parksandrecreation.org).

## About the American Water Charitable Foundation

Established in 2010 with a founding contribution from American Water, the American Water Charitable Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that provides a formal way to demonstrate the company's [ongoing commitment](#) to being a good neighbor, citizen, and contributor to the communities where American Water and its employees live, work and operate. The Foundation helps support American Water employee-identified nonprofit endeavors. More information can be found online at [amwater.com/corporate-responsibility](http://amwater.com/corporate-responsibility) or on [Facebook](#).

## About American Water

Founded in 1886, American Water (NYSE: AWK) is the largest and most geographically diverse publicly traded U.S. water and wastewater utility company. With headquarters in Voorhees, N.J., the company employs 6,400 dedicated professionals who provide regulated and market-based drinking water, wastewater and other related services to an estimated 15 million people in 47 states and Ontario, Canada. More information can be found at [www.amwater.com](http://www.amwater.com).

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