**The Jackson PAC: A Leader of the Pack**

Jackson Park, 6401 S. Stony Island Ave. JPAC pioneers led the way on key park concerns prior to its founding in 1983, when the newly founded JPAC with support from Friends of the Parks, worked with the Park District — which was under a court ordered consent decree to provide funding and services equally to all parks throughout the city — to improve conditions in Jackson Park. In 1965, parkland and trees were being sacrificed to roads. Park activists resisted with civil disobedience. Since the 1970s park activists and volunteers worked to improve this Chicago park gem. These past decades have marked many trials and successes for the PAC: the removal of the NIKE Missile Base; establishing the nature preserve at Wooded Island; planning and informing changes to park and lakefront enhancements; and much more.

But 2015 had not been devoid of JPAC accomplishments. This past year, JPAC helped to start and support SIX new PACs in the smaller, but just as mighty, parks surrounding Jackson Park. JPAC is active and busy working on a 7th.

These Park Advisory Councils aim to give residents local autonomy over their parks. “Great parks make great neighborhoods,” says Louise McCurry, JPAC President. JPAC is visionary in the sense that they believe that the community should be empowered and take ownership of what happens in their parks.

Want to know more about what JPAC had done in 2015? Here’s an impressive and inspirational laundry list: Live Shakespeare in the Olmsted designed Music Court (once an overgrown, garbage filled, illegal parking site); engaging more than 2000 volunteers in service days; providing free reading programs for park kids; free weekly 1893 “White City” Worlds Fair tours, Nature tours, children’s nature walks; contributing to 3 new park playgrounds; tree plantings; the creation of the new sledding hill; free Bike Clinic (JPAC teams with 61st Street Bike Shop, who trains kids in bike repairs and allows them to earn a bike of their own); sponsoring JPAC Park Photo Contests encouraging visitors to take pictures of park nature. Their park advocacy and community organizing with park neighbors continues to make JPAC a leader in the PAC community.

For more information on JPAC, visit their website at www.jacksonparkadvisorycouncil.org or find them on Facebook.
March 4, 2000 marked the second annual Neighborhood Parks Institute held by Friends of the Parks. Twenty-four Park Advisory Councils came together for 3 morning sessions including the nuts-and-bolts of park advocacy, CPD presentations on employee roles and resources, and a PAC discussion of success stories in their parks.

The 6th annual Park Advocacy Conference will be this year on March 5th at Kennedy King College. Originally done in collaboration with the Chicago Park District and Friends of the Parks, the Park District and the Chicago Parks Foundation are now taking charge. We hope it’s another great year and that members from each of the nearly 200 PACs across our city are able to join in the fun!

**PAC Resources: Staples**

In the August issue, we noted that it is possible to obtain donations and sponsorship from your local chain grocery store. Every chain has their own policy for community and event donations. This is true of other chain, big-box stores as well.

*Each individual Staples store manager is able to give $25 gift cards to groups in their community. According to their website, stores are able to, “support non-profit organizations making a positive difference in the local community through We Care gift cards. These gift cards enable non-profit organizations to obtain from Staples supplies needed to make a community event or program a success!” Visit your local Staples and ask to speak to the store manager. They will provide you with information on how to submit a request to their specific store. Think of all the park event and outreach flyers you can print with 25 buckaroos!*

Don’t be shy! Next time you’re visiting your local chain or big-box store, ask to speak to the store manager to find if they have their own discretionary, community donation policies. **The answer is always NO unless you ask!**

**FOTP Archives: Neighborhood Parks Institute**

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