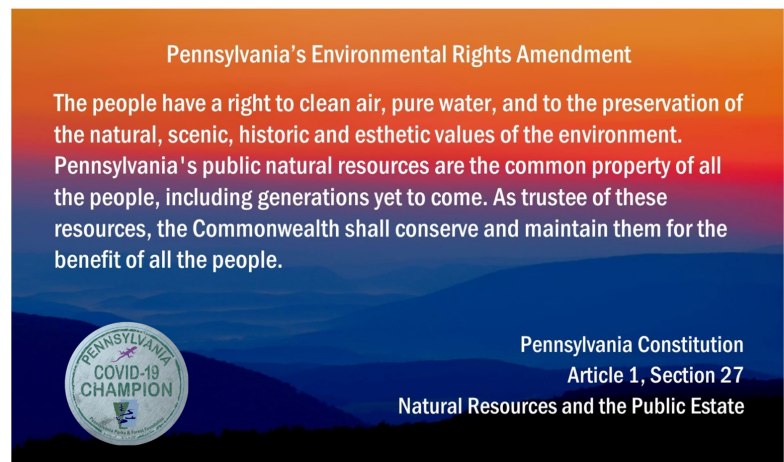


Celebrate the Work of COVID-19 Champions during the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation Virtual Awards Ceremony

Meet those who rose to the challenge during an unusual time last year to ensure a safe and positive experience in the outdoors.

CAMP HILL, PA, UNITED STATES, May 5, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF), the official nonprofit organization for Commonwealth's state parks and state forests, invites you to celebrate the work of park and forest staff and volunteers across the state who worked to ensure people had safe ways to engage in the outdoors during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will gather virtually on May 12 at 6:30 pm to hear their inspiring stories.



Join us in celebrating the champions--ensuring stewardship and access to the outdoors.

For instance, you will learn about Brandi Aulston, who started “Hike and Heal” to show how all women in Philadelphia can safely share time in nature, and Gary Kirk, a volunteer at the White Clay Creek Preserve who repaired bridges and cleared ditches on an almost daily basis to ensure cyclists and hikers could safely use the trails. All told, nineteen awards will be given to individuals and groups in the categories of communications, public safety, education, stewardship, and ambassadors. Other award winners include:

- Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Communications Team
- The Friends of Beltzville State Park
- Hannah Wilson, Ranger 1 formerly at the Colonel Denning State Park Complex
- Cody Miller, Maintenance Supervisor at the French Creek State Park Complex
- All 232 state park and state forest rangers statewide
- The members of the DCNR Bureau of Forestry Incident Response Team
- The 30+ members of the “Mask Brigade”

- Mike Teeter, volunteer at numerous state parks
- Angelina Capozzi, Recreation Program Coordinator for Upper Gwynedd Township
- Donnolee Jensen, Program Manager at Kings Gap State Park
- Duke Miney and Georgetta Frederick, volunteers in Forbes and Gallitzin state forests
- Amanda Galvan, volunteer at several state parks and state forests
- Ryan Beltz, Executive Director of the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy
- Aelin Compton, Community Initiative Specialist for the Philadelphia Department of Parks and Recreation
- Cindy Hogeman, volunteer for the Capital Area Greenbelt Association
- The Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Watershed Partnership
- And the Friends of Trough Creek/Warriors Path state parks

The award ceremony will also be a time to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the [Environmental Rights Amendment](#) to the Pennsylvania Constitution, which states that “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 people.”

“While we will once again miss the camaraderie and celebration that we experience each year at our awards banquet,” said Marci Mowery, President of PPFF, “we are excited to get together virtually to celebrate some amazing individuals and organizations who dealt with a year like no other, where state park visitation rose an unprecedented 23%, and challenges related to large crowds, excessive littering, and confusion about what was and wasn’t open in any given week, was frequent. These champions exemplify what it means to be an ambassador for Pennsylvania’s outdoors.”

Participants will also hear from keynote speaker, Dr. Michael Suk, who is System Wide Chairman of the Geisinger Musculoskeletal Institute for the Geisinger Healthy System. He is one of the country’s earliest and leading proponents of the health benefits of nature, and will speak to some of those benefits, particularly during a global pandemic. The virtual ceremony is sponsored by Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI).

The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation encourages all citizens of the Commonwealth, as well as out-of-state visitors to our state parks and forests, to attend the virtual awards presentation. It will be live-streamed on the PPFF [Facebook](#) Page and YouTube channel. And while there is no fee to attend, participants are asked to consider “registering” for the event as they would the traditional PPFF banquet, by making a suggested donation of \$50 – the traditional cost of a seat at the banquet and a salute to the ERA’s 50th anniversary. For the option registration for the event, visit <https://ppff.events/202-awards-presentation>.

Marci J Mowery
Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation

+1 717-236-7644

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