



THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS
MICHAEL B. COLEMAN, MAYOR

RECREATION AND PARKS
DEPARTMENT

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Columbus Recreation and Parks Department Receives two OPRA Awards of Excellence

Columbus Recreation and Parks Department is proud to be the recipient of two Awards of Excellence bestowed by the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association (OPRA). The Strawberry Food Truck received a first place award in the category of Health and Wellness and the Kwanza Playground at English Park received second place in the category of Capital Improvement Projects-Up to \$1.0 Million. The Strawberry Food truck will be judged along with all other first prize winners in consideration of the Governor's Award.

"These awards reflect the values and commitment of our strong team of professionals who work to find innovative and excellent ways to serve our diverse and growing community," said Tony Collins, Director of Columbus Recreation and Parks. "I am proud of our Department and community, which is comprised of staff, volunteers and community members. These awards are for them."

About the Strawberry Food Truck:

For over 40 years, the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department has been serving healthy, nutritious meals to children during the summer months when school is not in session. In 2014, we served over 630,000 meals at over 230 safe building based locations, but unfortunately, only reached 15% of the students who qualify for free or reduced meals during the school year. To help bridge the gap in accessing healthy meals, the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department purchased a food truck in early 2015. This strawberry-themed wrapped vehicle, debuted this summer, was able to drive into neighborhoods, deliver meals and provide physical activities for children who did not live close to one of our building sites and helped Columbus become a leader in solving this national problem.

About Kwanza Playground:

English Park, located just east of downtown Columbus, is the home of the Kwanza Playground. Developed in 1994 as a joint effort between the community and the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department, it incorporates Africentric artist elements into the playground to give children of the neighborhood a sense of pride and exposure to cultural heritage. However, after twenty years of exposure, it was in need of restoration. In 2012, a steering committee was formed consisting of neighbors, original artists and the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department, with the primary

purpose of renovating and expanding the design of the park in order to return it to its role of providing a safe place for children to play as well as encouraging cultural and artistic expression. After months of collaboration, the newly restored and designed park opened in the fall of 2014.

Awards will be presented at the Annual OPRA Conference in February.