

National Park Service and National Park Foundation Recognize Outstanding Employees, Volunteers and Partners

August 25, 2022

WASHINGTON – A variety of National Park Service (NPS) employees, volunteers and partners were honored yesterday at a ceremony to *Celebrate America’s National Parks and the Dedication of Those Who Serve*. Many of the agency’s top awards were presented at the event sponsored by NPS and its philanthropic partner the National Park Foundation.

“The amazing accomplishments of the award recipients represent the diversity of outreach efforts that are connecting people to their national parks,” **said NPS Director Chuck Sams**. “Throughout the country, we are passionately expanding the national narrative by incorporating new voices and experiences into programs and exhibits. From floating classrooms on the Chesapeake Bay that provide multisensory experiences for inner city youth, to expanding partnerships with Tribes to share Indigenous knowledge and traditions, we are striving to present a more inclusive and complete story where everyone can see themselves reflected in national parks.”

An example of more inclusive outreach is the [Lewis and Clark Trail Junior Ranger Program](#) which was designed by award recipient Caitlin Campbell. The 4,900-mile-long national historic trail follows the route of the Lewis and Clark Expedition across North America and passes through the territories of more than 60 Tribes. Campbell designed the program booklet to begin not with an uncharted wilderness, but with a continent bustling with Native trade, art, and technology. Activities highlight the diverse backgrounds and skills of the Corps of Discovery and the expedition’s reliance on Tribal nations. Accessible, innovative features—including audio described read along videos, a Native names online guide, and tactile maps—boost engagement for all.

“We collaborated with our partners to tell an inclusive history,” **said Campbell**. “We were inspired by the work being done by our peers across the National Park Service to amplify traditionally overlooked voices. These efforts bring greater accuracy, depth, and relevance to our stories.”

“National Park Service staff, volunteers, and park partners work tirelessly to protect national parks and connect people to the wonder of parks,” **said National Park Foundation President and CEO Will Shafroth**. “Their

service inspires people to connect with and protect America's national parks, ensuring more people are able to see themselves in national parks and feel welcome in these places that belong to all of us. Thank you for all you do.”

The event was [livestreamed](#). Deputy Secretary of the Interior Tommy Beudreau gave remarks and presented the awards. Hasan Davis, an author and motivational speaker, provided a keynote address.

Following are the award recipients:

[The Harry Yount Award for Excellence in the field of rangering](#) honors an NPS ranger who consistently excels in the performance of duties that serve park visitors and protect the natural, historical and cultural resources of parks. The award is named after the nation's first park ranger.

- **Grand Canyon National Park Ranger Della Yurcik** has served as a backcountry law enforcement officer and an Advanced Life Support provider, flight medic, short-haul and technical rescuer since 2004. She works regularly at Phantom Ranch, one of the most remote, high traffic ranger stations in the country, accessible only via a long hike through steep, rugged desert terrain, a multiday Colorado River trip, or helicopter. She has also served on high profile search and rescue missions, complex law enforcement cases, and provided life-saving medical care in the remote backcountry of Grand Canyon.

[The Freeman Tilden Awards for Excellence in Interpretation](#) recognize an individual and a team for excellence, achievement, and innovation in the profession of interpretation and visitor engagement. The awards are named for former NPS employee and author Freeman Tilden who was a champion of interpretation.

- **Caitlin Campbell of Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail** designed the [Lewis and Clark Trail Junior Ranger Program](#) to tell multiple perspectives, demonstrate the diverse make-up of the Corps of Discovery, be widely accessible, and engage partners and visitors in the telling and learning of a complex story.
- **Lucas Wescott, Megan Richotte, Karen Evanoff, Kara Lewandowski, Anne Lattka, Tewosret Vaughn, and Monty Rogers of Lake Clark National Park & Preserve** collaborated with the park's cultural anthropologist to integrate Native science and cultural landscapes into interpretive products. The addition of this core philosophy has strengthened relationships with Tribal partners and

ensured content from cultural resource studies and Tribal perspectives would be shared with the public.

[The George and Helen Hartzog Awards for Outstanding Volunteer Service](#)

recognize the exemplary contributions that NPS volunteers make to their park and to their community. Nearly 300,000 volunteers contribute more than 6.5 million hours of service annually in national parks, for a value of more than \$185 million. George B. Hartzog, Jr. served as the 7th director of the NPS and created the Volunteers-In-Parks program in 1970.

- **Judy Roderiques from New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park** received the Hartzog Enduring Service Award. Roderiques has been a volunteer in the park since 1998 and is an integral part of its award-winning living history program, "Ruth and Abby: the 1850s Ladies." She also played a lead role in scheduling and reorienting park volunteers when the park reopened during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **The Bighorn Brigade at Rocky Mountain National Park** received the Hartzog Park Volunteer Program Award. The group's central mission is to help bighorn sheep cross the road. When not performing that duty, they engage with thousands of visitors sharing important park information. Bighorn sheep must travel down from higher elevations to reach minerals at natural salt licks, and these dedicated volunteers help these animals cross a busy park road. As increased visitation puts additional stress on wildlife, this program helps the bighorn sheep population and reduces the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions.
- **Rob Albercht-Mallinger from Indiana Dunes National Park** received the Hartzog Individual Volunteer Award. He leads the River Restoration Crew that ensures the East Branch of the Little Calumet River in the park is accessible and appealing to paddlers. The volunteer crew focuses on log jam removal, trash cleanup, and creating new boat launches to offer paddlers more than 11 miles of scenic views through some of the most biodiverse habitats in the national park.
- **Sophie Schell from National Capital Parks-East** received the Hartzog Youth Volunteer Award. An eight-grade student and member of Scouts BSA Troop 248 for Girls, she carried out her Eagle Scout project on the George Washington Carver Trail on the Suitland Parkway. She engaged dozens of volunteers to work on trail maintenance, beatification, accessibility improvements, and signage.

- **Chris Allieri and the [New York City Plover Project at Gateway National Recreation Area](#)** received the Hartzog Volunteer Group Award. They educate and engage visitors about piping plovers, a threatened species that nests on the park's busiest beaches. Last summer, the group of 50 Shorebird Ecology Ambassador volunteers, or SEA-VIPs, donated 1,200 hours, made over 7,500 visitor contacts, and launched a new beachfront visitor contact station.
- **Hawai'i Academy of Arts and Sciences Workplace Readiness Program at Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park** received the Hartzog Volunteer Youth Group Award. The program engages developmentally disabled youth in stewardship activities. Working in the rainforest in all kinds of conditions, these stalwart volunteers have removed thousands of invasive Himalayan ginger which has enabled a thriving repopulation of native Hawaiian biota.

[The James V. Murfin Award for Partnerships](#) recognizes individuals who have made significant and lasting contributions throughout their career to strengthen partnerships between NPS and cooperating associations. The award was inaugurated in 1981 and named for the NPS cooperating association coordinator who worked diligently for more than a decade to encourage excellence and innovation in these partnerships.

- **James E. Cook** is the former CEO of Western National Parks Association. During Jim's tenure the mission of WNPA to advance education, interpretation, and research expanded to include community engagement—in recognition of the importance of reaching new audiences.
- **Lyman Hafen** is the retiring President and CEO of the [Zion Forever Project](#), Zion National Park's official non-profit partner. For more than 25 years, Hafen stewarded the organization in its growth as a park partner and rebranding from Zion Natural History Association. Hafen created programs and initiatives designed to support the park and the visitor experience and developed innovative ways to strengthen the connection between public lands and the individuals who cherish them.

[The Wes Henry Excellence in Wilderness Stewardship Awards](#) recognize outstanding contributions by an individual, team, and non-government partner to wilderness stewardship in the NPS. These recipients exemplify the commitment demonstrated by Wes Henry, former NPS wilderness program manager, who was devoted to preservation of wilderness character and

recognized the importance of educating the public about the benefits of these special places.

- **Mark Kinzer** received the Individual Award. He is the NPS South Atlantic-Gulf Regional Wilderness Coordinator and serves as Vice Chair of the NPS National Wilderness Leadership Council. He also leads two work groups that are developing guidance for wilderness operations.
- **Congaree National Park** received the Team Award. They are enhancing wilderness stewardship on multiple fronts, including addressing mobility and other accessibility issues in the park's wilderness area and equipping staff and community partners with essential wilderness ethics, risk management, and first aid training.
- **Jillian McKenna** received the Non-Government Partner Award. She served as a Scientists-in-Parks Wilderness Character Intern and later as a Wilderness contractor in Glacier National Park in 2021. She helped monitor the park's wilderness character, led development of the park's Wilderness Character Baseline Assessment and produced a wilderness character map.

The newly established [Excellence in Education Award](#) recognizes an individual and a team for outstanding contributions to the profession of education and for modeling excellence through thoughtful engagement of education principles, innovation, and adaptation. The awards were created to inspire and recognize outstanding achievements in education through creative thinking, innovation, and adaptation within NPS education programs or projects.

- **Fort Monroe National Monument** received the Excellence in Education Team Award for the launch of a successful partnership among James River Association, Hampton City Schools, and the NPS Chesapeake Gateways Program.

About the National Park Service

More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 423 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Learn more at www.nps.gov, and on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube.

About the National Park Foundation

The National Park Foundation works to protect wildlife and park lands, preserve history and culture, educate, and engage youth, and connect people

everywhere to the wonder of parks. We do it in collaboration with the National Park Service, the park partner community, and with the generous support of donors, without whom our work would not be possible. Learn more at nationalparks.org.