

March 6, 2009

News Release

For Immediate Release

The Missouri Park and Recreation Association will honor Springfield next week with two local awards for service in the parks and recreation industry. The awards will be given at the Association's annual conference Opening Session at 8:30 a.m., Wednesday, March 11, at the Hyatt Regency Crown Center, Kansas City, Mo.

Springfield's Friends of the Garden, Inc. (FOG) will be honored with MPRA's 2009 Citation Award for a Non-Profit Organization and long-time Springfield-Greene County Park Board employee Leon Henderson will be awarded with the 2009 Citation Award for Support Staff.

FOG is receiving the award because of its exceptional and tireless dedication to establish and facilitate a Botanical Center, gardens and arboretum at Springfield's Close Botanical Gardens, Lake Drummond, Nathanael Greene Park and Mizumoto Japanese Stroll Garden.

Through private fundraising and support from its members, FOG has provided more than \$60,000 a year, since its inception in 2000, in cash, plants and volunteer hours. The group also played a key role in the overwhelming passage of both the 2001 and 2006 Springfield-Greene County ¼-cent sales tax for parks, open space and greenways, acting as an advocacy group in promoting the importance of the ballot issue.

As the group enters its next chapter with the Springfield community, nine years of hard work come to a high point as the Springfield-Greene County Park Board recently announced the Botanical Center construction to begin in summer 2009.

Henderson, a 35-year employee of the Park Board, will retire later this summer from his role as the current Park Operations Supervisor. He is recognized for providing a systematic approach in developing numerous standard operating procedures and best maintenance practices, and for contributing years of general expertise with the direction of maintenance and operations of 92 Springfield-Greene County park locations.

Since his start with the Park Board in 1973, Henderson has been involved with the development of 40 parks. He also assisted in developing divisions of construction, turf management, and landscape/forestry within the department, along with guiding the maintenance practices at the Park Board's Dickerson Park Zoo. His exemplary service also includes leadership and direction to a crew of nearly 100 full-and-part-time maintenance, turf, and construction employees.

Henderson is credited for his commitment to sustainable practices, such as LEED certification, energy conservation, and water quality management, which have helped to save department funds, capital, staff hours, and environmental resources. He also recently played a critical role in the city-county cleanup after the ice storms of 2007 and 2008 in southwest Missouri.

For more information, contact: Jodie Adams, Parks Director (417) 864-1329; or George Deatz, Friends of the Garden, (417) 840-5472.