

MONTGOMERY PARKS

# Access Team Annual Report 2023 *It's All Here!*





## Montgomery Parks Mission Statement

Protect and interpret our valuable natural and cultural resources; balance demand for recreation with the need for conservation; **offer various enjoyable recreational activities** that encourage healthy lifestyles; and provide clean, **safe, and accessible places.**

## Access Team Mission Statement

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Montgomery Parks and Planning Department are committed to upholding the integrity of the **Americans with Disabilities Act** by delivering reasonable services, modifications, and physical accessibility as we strive to ensure social equity and inclusion of all citizens.

## Access Team Vision Statement

Individuals will be afforded respect and dignity while engaging in leisure pursuits to enhance their quality of life in a clean, safe, and accessible setting.

# Access Team SPIRIT Awards 2023



The Parks Access Team established these awards in 2016 to recognize employees who do not work primarily with people with disabilities, but who have demonstrated a strong personal commitment to those individuals, inclusion, accessibility and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in their respective work programs.

**The 2023 SPIRIT Awards were presented on November 8th at the Montgomery Parks CLIMB meeting hosted at Wheaton Headquarters.**

This list of winners are as follows:

**Carter Hughes**, Information Systems Specialist II  
**Christopher Weaver**, Technology Program Manager  
**Dan Daly**, Mason III  
**Jerome Moore**, Senior Trade Shop Supervisor  
**Keith Dorsey**, Park Manager II  
**Jordan Gray**, Marketing & Public Affairs Manager  
**Katrina Fauss**, Park Naturalist II  
**Lynette Lenz**, Park Naturalist II  
**Patricia McManus**, Landscape Architect Supervisor  
**Tiffany Wu**, Senior GIS Specialist  
**Keegan Clifford**, Principal GIS Specialist  
**Tina Stachura**, Park Naturalist II  
**Jenn Simms**, Park Naturalist II  
**Noelia Schmidt**, Natural Resources Specialist  
**Katherine Pauer**, Visitor Services Specialist



# Fundamental ADA Components in Parks



**We are excited to share the 2023 accomplishments of the following pillars of the Access Team:**

- **Physical Access:** Keeping up with ADA standards, take reasonable steps to remove barriers, establishing projects to create equal opportunities within our parks.
- **Web & Digital Accessibility:** Establishing equal access, following Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), and fulfilling reasonable accommodations.
- **Employment Accommodations:** Providing reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities through an interactive process.
- **Program Access:** Providing support services to activities within our parks for individuals with disabilities, maintain effective communication, and promote inclusivity throughout all programs.

# Physical Access



All facilities designed, constructed, or altered by, on behalf of, or for the use of a public entity must be readily accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities.

Bob Green, Civil Engineer

Wen Huang, Landscape Architect

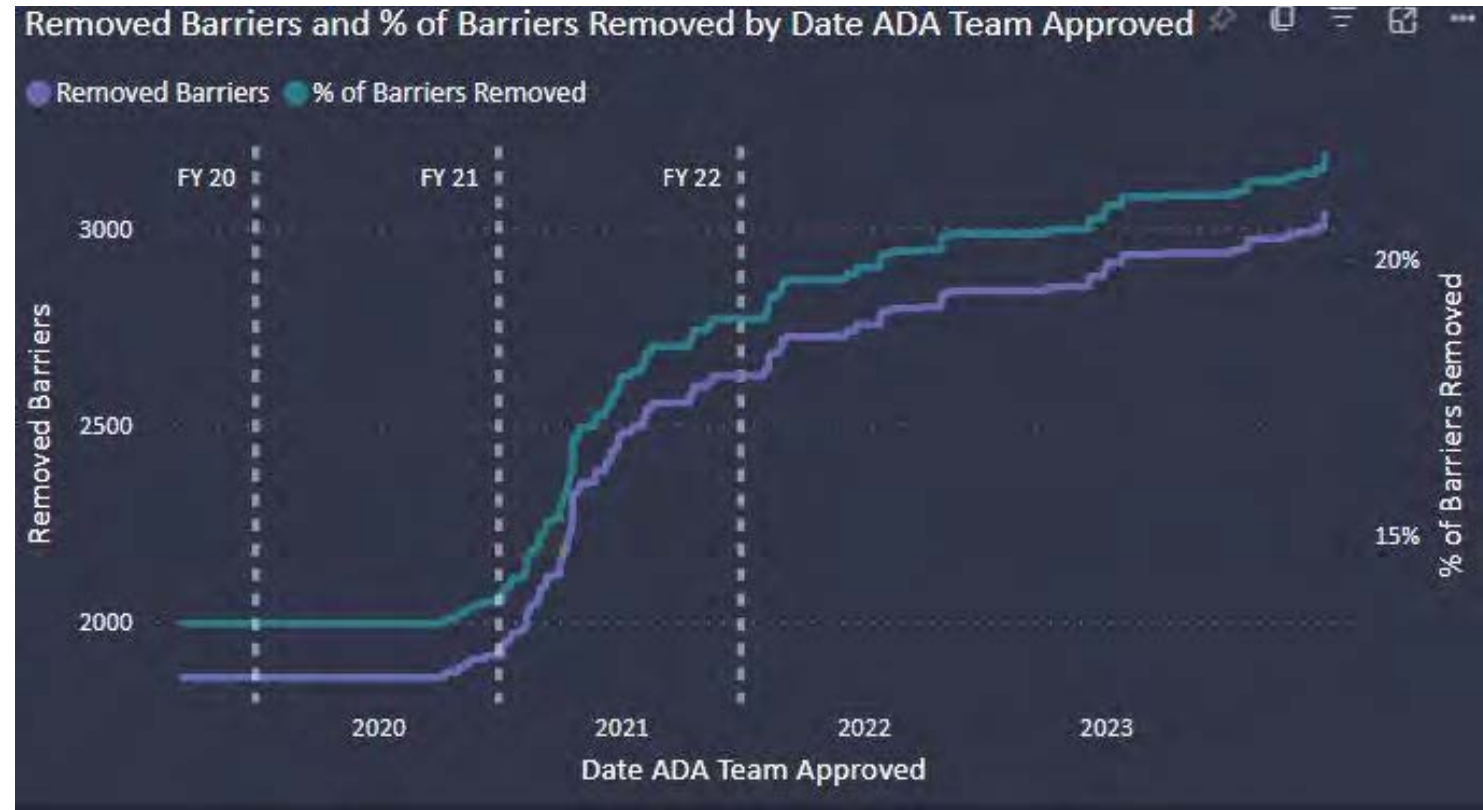
Mike Moxley, Facility Management





# Physical Access Accomplishments 2023

- 36 Parks are now categorized as fully or generally accessible.
- Total of over 3,000 barriers are removed from Parks.
- 9 projects were completed including a new community garden at Black Hill, an accessible Bike Track facility at South Germantown, and the well-used boat landing area at Seneca Landing Special Park.
- Other ADA improvements being done or under construction include restrooms, playgrounds, circulation paths, parking lots, fields, courts, etc. A couple of parks received ADA improvements throughout the park.



# Physical Access Completed Projects 2023



- Black Hill Regional Park – Community Garden
- Druid Neighborhood Park Playground Renovation
- Glen Hills Local Park
- Mount Zion Local Park
- Meadowbrook Local Park
- Meadowbrook Stables Restroom
- Ovid Hazen Wells Baseball field and playground/shelter
- Seneca Landing Special Park
- South Germantown Regional Park Bike Skills Park
- Wheaton Regional Park - Field 3

# Physical Access Under Construction Projects in 2023

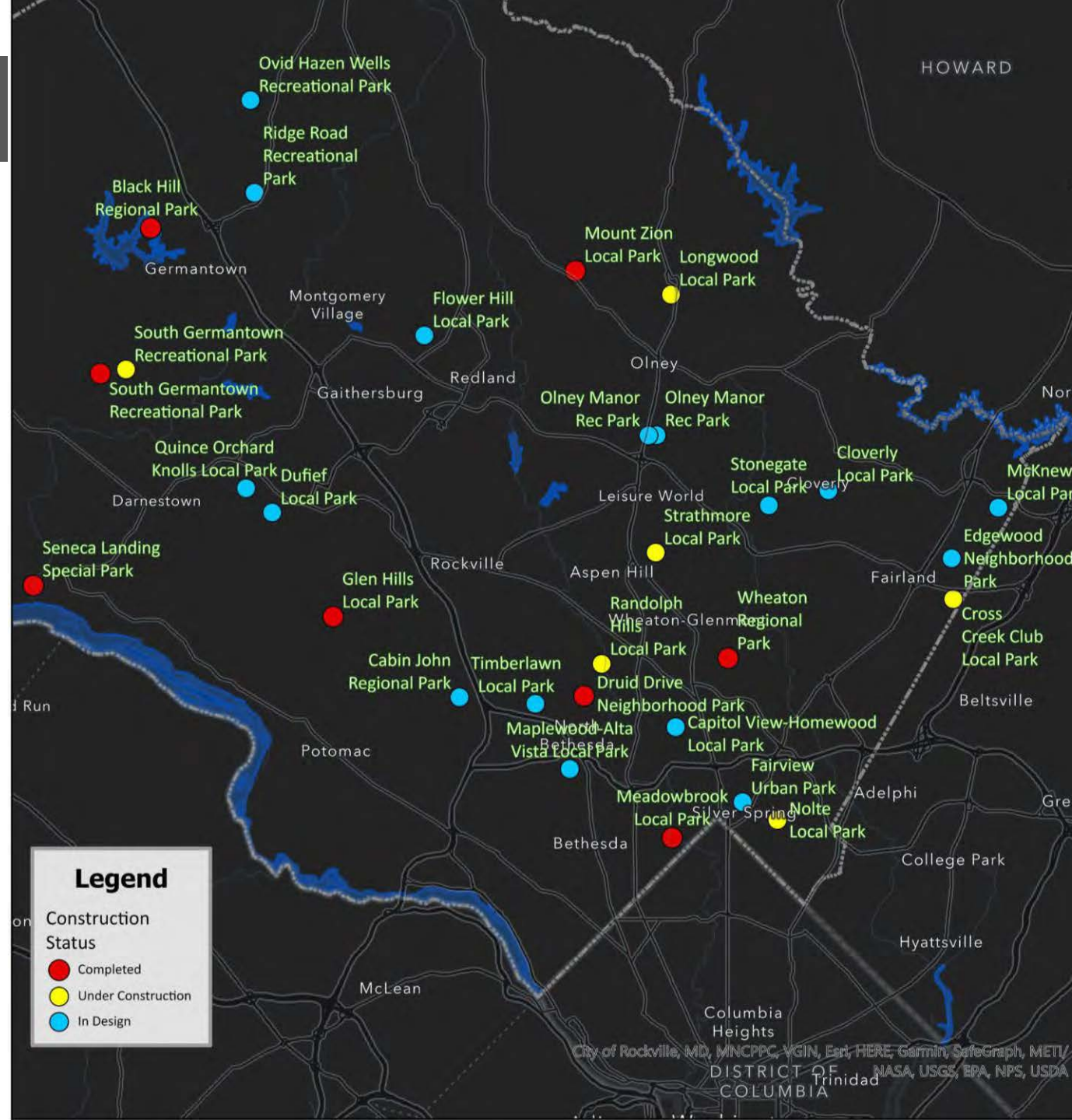


- Cross Creek Club Local Park
- Longwood Local Park
- Nolte Local Park
- Randolph Hills Local Park
- South Germantown Regional Park Field E, Miracle Field parking, & basketball courts
- Strathmore Local Park



# Physical Access In Design Projects 2023

- Cabin John Regional Park
- Capitol View-Homewood Local Park
- Cloverly Local Park
- Dufief Local Park
- Edgewood Neighborhood Park
- Fairview Urban Park – Sensory Trail
- Flower Hills Local Park
- Maple-wood Vista Local Park
- McKnew Local Park
- Ovid Hazen Well Recreation Park
- Quince Orchard Knolls Local Park
- Ridge Road Recreation Park
- Stonegate Local Park
- Timberlawn Local Park



# Location Research for Autism Friendly Playgrounds



This task is undertaken at the request of Extraordinary Minds, who are seeking a fully enclosed playground in Montgomery County to serve children with autism. The Physical Access Team is taking this opportunity to explore potential locations for playgrounds that could be adapted into autism-friendly spaces. The criteria include:

- Proximity to public transportation
- Within or close proximity of Equity Focus Areas
- Within half-mile walking distance to a library or recreation center.
- Parking lot availability in the park



# Physical Access Project Highlights of 2023

Seneca Landing Special Park



South Germantown – Miracle Field



Druid Drive Neighborhood Park



South Germantown – Bike Park



Meadowbrook Local Park



Black Hill – Community Garden



# Web & Digital Accessibility



Web accessibility comes down to four main ideas: **Perceivable** (making sure users can see, hear, or touch things on a site), **Operable** (letting users easily interact with the site, even with assistive tech), **Understandable** (keeping language clear and avoiding jargon), and **Robust** (making sure the site works well with different tech choices). These principles help make the web more user-friendly and accessible to everyone.

[Accessibility - Montgomery Parks](#)

Lisa Herman, Marketing & Accessibility Website Manager

## Alternative Format Request Form

Looking for a document or information on this website to be made available in a different format?

"\*" indicates required fields

**First Name and Last Name \***

First Name	Last Name
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

**Phone Number ### ###-#### (optional)**

**Can the phone number provided receive text messages?**

**Provide your email (email-name@domain.com) \***

**What website page is the document on?**

**What format do you prefer to receive the document?**

Options: Larger Print, Accessible PDF, Braille, other?

**How would you like to receive the document ?**

Options: Regular Mail, Text, Fax, Email Attachment, other?

**SUBMIT**

# Digital Communications Accomplishments 2023



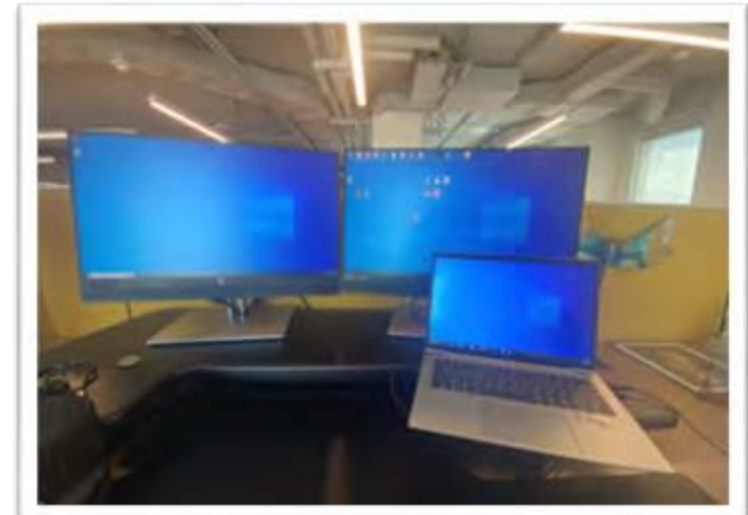
- Close to 100% PDF documents have been addressed
  - Migrated to an online form
  - Remediated for Accessibility
  - Replaced with on-page content
- Website Pages
  - Corrected nonassessable styling
  - Created new accessible layout
  - Building templates for expanded park and trail content
- Troubleshoot Section 508 flags on website
  - Monitor the work of 60 internal web editors
  - Perform Content and Language Reviews
  - Update links and link language

# Employment Accommodations



The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We celebrate a workplace culture of diversity, equity and inclusion without discrimination or harassment based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, genetic information, gender identity, or any other non-merit factor.

Rachel Solomon, Workforce Diversity and Outreach Partner



# Employment Accommodations Accomplishments 2023



- Modified the required staff forms to fit ADA accessibility guidelines
- Promoted accommodations to improve understanding among supervisors and make the process more available to staff
- Easier staff access to MC Pulse digital platform
- Sending the accommodations forms in an email to all HR business partners and division chiefs
- Including a training specific to accommodations during Montgomery Parks Training Week

# Program Access



The Program Access office continues to ensure individuals with disabilities are welcomed to participate in enjoyable leisure-time activities in accessible places and programs provided by Montgomery Parks.

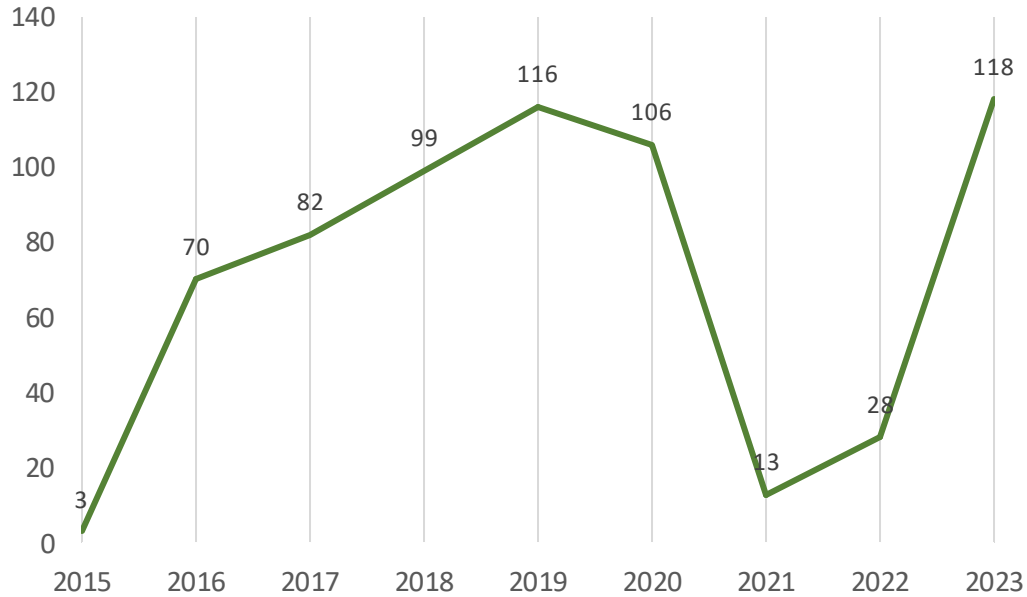




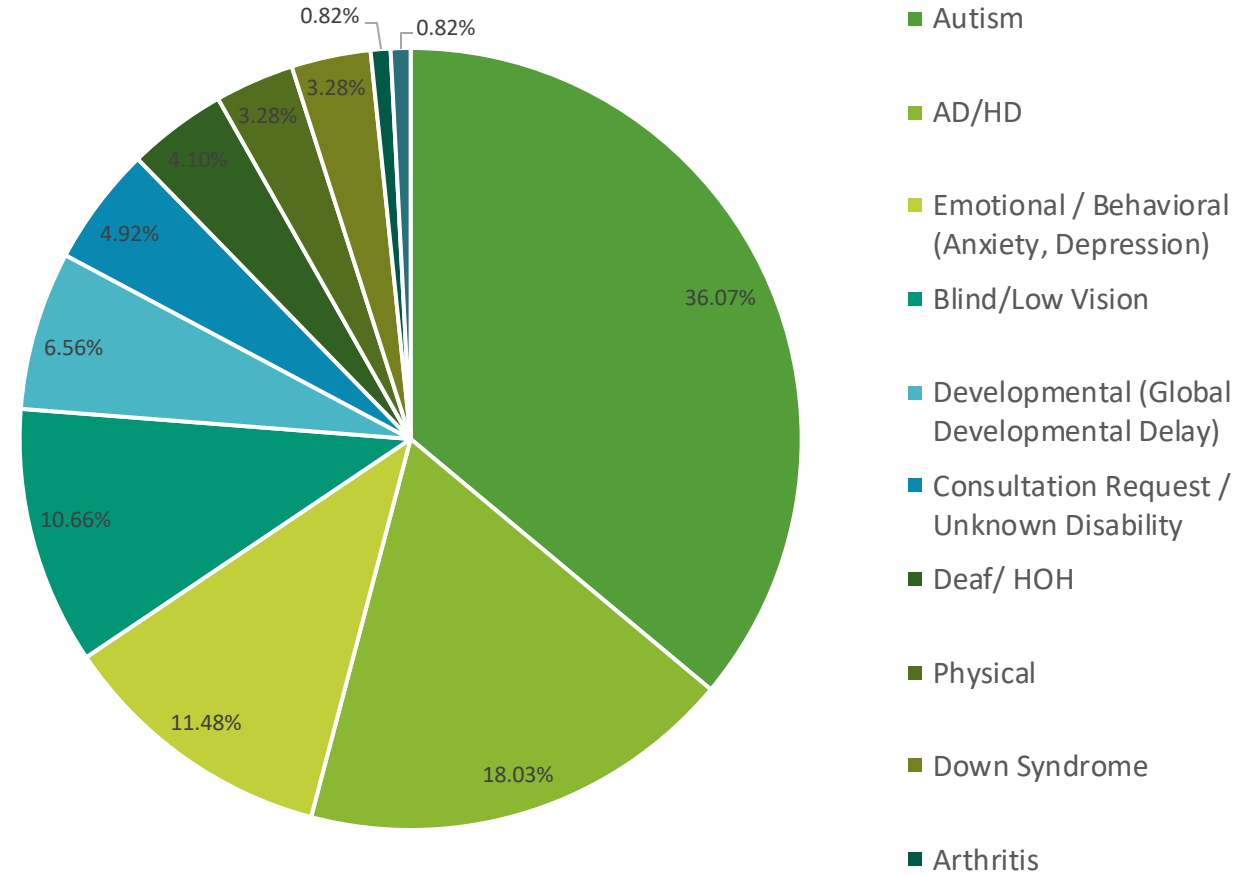
# DATA PRE + POST COVID



### Support Services Per Year



### Disabilities Served in 2023

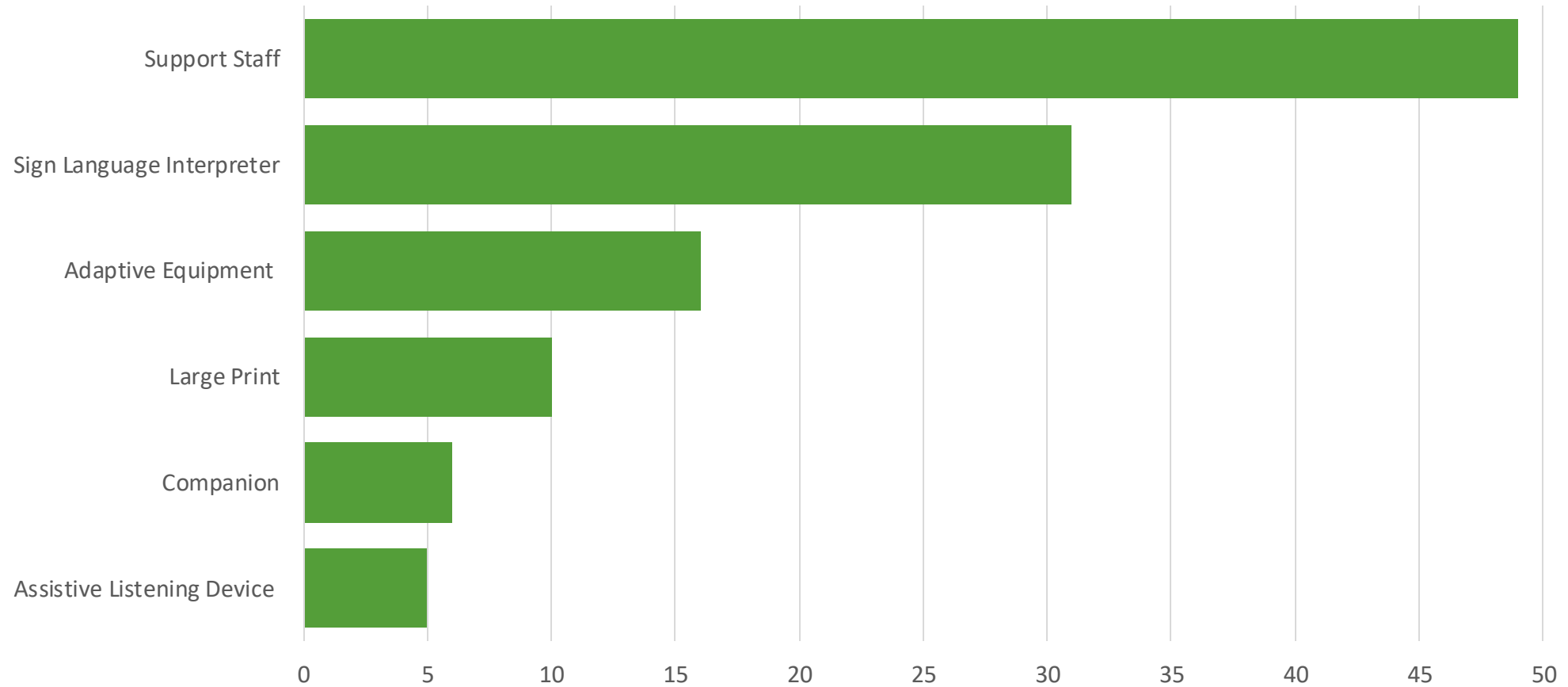


We utilized our inventory of adaptive equipment and trained personnel to provide support services to community members with diverse disabilities, facilitating their participation in the array of programs and events offered by Parks. This year marked a significant achievement, with a record-breaking 118 support service requests fulfilled

# 118 Support Service Requests Fulfilled in 2023



Support Services Provided in 2023



	Assistive Listening Device	Companion	Large Print	Adaptive Equipment	Sign Language Interpreter	Support Staff
Total	5	6	10	16	31	49

# Training & Education



**Over 2,500 career and seasonal staff have been trained.**

**350 in 2023!**

Training	Montgomery Parks Staff Trained
ADA and Program Access (2 Hour and 3 Hour)	228
Sensitivity Awareness & Disability Characteristics	32
Behavior Management and Supports	39
Specialized Recreation / Adaptive Recreation	10
Adaptations and Modifications	14
Documentation, Reports, Assessments	13
Total Communication (Occupational Sign Language)	14

# Accessibility at Special Events in 2023



**Appropriate adaptive equipment and sign language interpretation is available on-site at larger events.**

Our high demand services this year were the Sensory Retreat Tent and the Accessible Shuttle Cart. Taking in account cancellations due to weather, the **Sensory Retreat Tent was available at 9 events and the Accessible Shuttle Cart was used at 17 events.**

Other services provided are as follows:

Sign Language Interpretation

EnChroma Color Blind Glasses

Wheelchairs/Walkers

Ramps

Alternative Surfaces

Water bowls for service animals

Assisted Listening Devices



# NEW Adaptive Equipment



## EnChroma Color Blind Glasses

EnChroma's patented Color Blind sunglasses are scientifically proven to stimulate the brain's color processing center and enhance color vision.



## Adaptive Paddling Equipment

In collaboration with Team River Runner, a non-profit organization, Parks can provide users with a **seating system** that provides additional support and balance where needed; **stabilizing outriggers** that mount to the back of a boat to provide extra balance and buoyancy and; **paddle pivots** that provide a pivot point around which the paddle stroke can happen and allows one handed paddling.



# NEW Adaptive / Therapeutic Recreation Programs



## Adaptive Paddling

Tailored for individuals with disabilities and their accompanying family or friends, this program offers an inviting and accessible experience.



## Trail Trekkers

This free program, designed for individuals with disabilities and their friends, family, and community members, takes place at various accessible trails within Montgomery County, providing participants with the opportunity to immerse themselves in diverse natural surroundings and engage in conversations with fellow trekkers while creating long-lasting friendships.



# 55+ Programs in 2023



## Beginning Recreational Kayaking for Older Adults

Participants learned basic strokes, entries and exits, boat control, and more, taught by certified American Canoe Association instructors.



## 55+ Lake Tour by Kayak

Participants embarked on a leisurely kayak tour of Little Seneca Lake. All supplies were provided including adaptive equipment.



## YogaDance

YogaDance is a practice that incorporates the benefits of yoga and dance with a touch of brain stimulation for fun.



# 55+ Programs in 2023



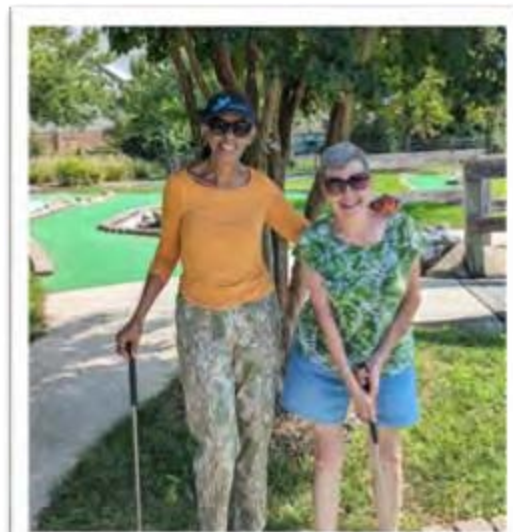
## Montgomery Explorers

This program, designed for residents 50 and better of all fitness levels and abilities, encourages participants to maintain a healthy way of life, explore unique areas of our beautiful county while engaging in a walking challenge!



## Socials for 55+

Participants are encouraged to embrace their youthful spirit while connecting with like-minded individuals in an outdoor setting.



## Strong & Fit (55+)

In partnership with “Age Well Senior Fitness” to promote physical fitness and wellness, participants will utilize our beautiful open space, trails, and outdoor fitness equipment to improve their balance, muscular strength, and flexibility while enjoying the benefits of exercising in a natural environment by instructors have specialized training .





# NEW Events in 2023



## Birdability Week Kick Off Event at Ray's Meadow Local Park

This event celebrated inclusivity in birding for all abilities. Participants enjoyed activities like Nature On Wheels, bird-themed crafts, and flat birding to inspire curiosity about birds. Program Access Office showcased free adaptive equipment, including EnChroma glasses.



## With Parks in Mind: Mental Health Month

Participants Germantown Town Center Urban Park celebrated mental health awareness event with Montgomery Parks Program Access and EveryMind. It aimed to connect people, promote mental well-being, and fight mental health stigma, kicking off the "Every Mile for EveryMind" mental health hike campaign. The event included mindful activities, resource discussions, speeches, exhibitors, yoga, art therapy, and Chalk Riot's unique art installations.



# NEW Partnered Programs in 2023



**Kids in Action: Fishing at Black Hill**



**Better with Age Comedy Show**



# Program Access Awards



## The Arc Montgomery County Community Inclusion Award 2023

The Community, Staff & Volunteer Awards Ceremony provides a formal way to recognize outstanding staff and volunteers, as well as to recognize members of our community who support The Arc Montgomery County mission.



## Maryland Recreation and Parks Association Raising Up Award 2023 for Shine Brighter Together

Presented to public departments/agencies for partnering or collaborating with another city, county, state or national agency to create a unique and creative recreation program for the enhancement of the community.



# HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE MONTGOMERY PARKS ACCESS TEAM



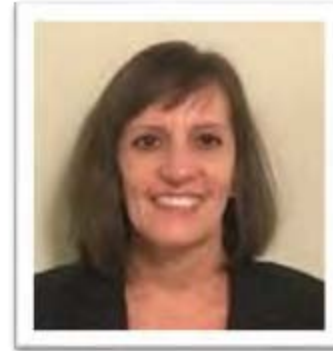
**Bob Green**  
Senior ADA  
Compliance Manager



**Wen Huang**  
ADA Landscape  
Architect



**Mike Moxley**  
Administrative  
Specialist III



**Lisa Herman**  
Marketing & Accessibility  
Website Manager



**Rachel Solomon**  
Workforce Diversity  
and Outreach Partner



**Jennene Blakely**  
Program Access  
Manager



**Ashlyn Thompson**  
Inclusion & Community  
Outreach Specialist



**Amanda Espinoza**  
Inclusion & Adaptive  
Sports Specialist



**Saron Tewolde**  
Inclusive Programs  
& Events Assistant



**Carl Morgan**  
Montgomery Planning