

Private-public cooperation

Awarded to a partnership between one or more public and private sector entities that demonstrates cooperative work in achieving a worthwhile public policy goal.

**Government/School District Nominated**

Milwaukee County Parks and Village of Hales Corners

**Program**

Friends of Hales Corners Park & Pool

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**Submitted by**

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**Please describe your nomination below. Your description should, at minimum, include the following:**

1. Evidence of teamwork between one or more public sector and private sector entities in addressing a mutual problem or improving performance in a specific service or program area.
2. Evidence of measurable success in implementing the cooperative approach.
3. Lessons learned that may be relevant for other governments seeking to establish public-private partnerships.

Sixteen years ago in 2003, the residents of the Village of Hales Corners and surrounding areas were faced with the possible closure of the Hales Corners Pool at Hales Corners Park, along with plans to demolish the pool house. To help keep the pool open, a group of citizens in 2003 formed the Friends of Hales Corners Pool, a non-profit organization, with the mission of keeping the pool open to benefit the families and youth from all communities in the area. The citizen group, led by Village of Hales Corners resident and Village Trustee Donald Schwartz, were successful in keeping the pool open and have taken on many projects to improve the pool, including painting the entire pavilion, inside and out, which hadn't been done since President Johnson was in the White House, and have either purchased, received donations, or been the beneficiary of Eagle Scout projects, for pool equipment, toys, picnic tables, deck chairs and tables with umbrellas.

In 2009, the Friends group established a community wide recycle program in 2009 with dozens of businesses, citizens, and community organizations in the Village of Hales Corners. Friends President Donald Schwartz formed partnerships with several businesses and community organizations in the Village of Hales Corners to have them place recycling containers at their business or organization for residents to drop off their aluminum cans. The cans are collected and taken to a recycling center, where the Friends group receives payment, and that money is earmarked towards continued fundraising efforts for projects the Friends are involved with.

Because of the success of the group and the continued relationship of the group with the Village, County, the Hales Corners Chamber of Commerce, and local businesses and community organizations, Friends President Donald Schwartz led an effort in 2012 to expand the mission of the group to not only include support for the Hales Corners Pool, but also the entire park, therefore having the group renamed to the Friends of Hales Corners Park & Pool.

The expanded mission of the Friends group took a giant step in 2013, as Donald Schwartz led the effort to begin plans to build the Alyson Dudek International Ice Center in Hales Corners Park, with the addition later on to build the Jerry and Dorothy Holz outdoor shelter. The Center is named in honor of lifetime Hales Corners resident Alyson Dudek to recognize her achievements in speed skating and winning the Bronze Medal at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. The outdoor shelter is named after the foundation who made a substantial donation that was secured by Mr. Schwartz. The goal is to build a 100 x 200' outdoor ice rink and a 22 x 49' outdoor pavilion with restrooms, concession area and storage. The ice rink will be open to the public free of charge during the winter months, weather permitting, and will be located northwest of the Hales Corners Park parking lot, south of the kiddie pool. As President of the Friends group, Donald Schwartz has worked tirelessly with Milwaukee County Parks to get the project approved, an effort which took several years. In addition, Mr. Schwartz has met with

Plunkett Raysich Architects (PRA) and Hunzinger Construction, who have been valuable partners with this project. The Center will stand among other community treasures, including the pool, the Veterans Memorial, Jake's Rock, basketball courts, picnic areas and softball fields.

The Friends group has been working to fundraise to have the Center built in its permanent location since plans began in 2013 and is almost at its goal. The money raised for the project would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of Friends President Donald Schwartz, who has applied for and been awarded grants from local foundations. While this has been a huge undertaking, Mr. Schwartz has maintained focus on other areas of the park and pool for continued maintenance and improvement. This has included the addition of a 50 x 80' sand volleyball court that was constructed in 2015 to expand the recreational offerings of the park and to offer sand volleyball leagues as an additional method to raise funds for the Friends group. In the winter months, the volleyball court is converted to a temporary ice rink until the permanent structure is in place. The temporary rink is assembled, maintained, and disassembled by Friends volunteers. Donald Schwartz also supported a suggestion from a fellow Friends member to install a large screen television, complete with cable and internet, in the pool house. This made it possible to host community events inside the pool house, including NFL Draft parties, Packer game viewing parties, and a Road Rally as additional fundraisers. At the time of installment, it was the only Milwaukee County park that had a large screen television as an amenity in one of its buildings.

Since the Friends group began, the group works diligently each spring to clean the building and locker rooms prior to the opening of the pool. In its early years, the group was small in numbers who would attend the spring cleaning of the pool. In an effort to increase numbers in participation, Friends President Donald Schwartz reached out to other members of the community for their assistance, who have positive relationships with community organizations, and have them become members of the Friends group. Today, the number of volunteers has increased to three-digits, to include not just residents, but members of community organizations and school groups who volunteer at the cleanup.

With the efforts of the Friends group and the continued partnership with Milwaukee County Parks, the Village of Hales Corners, and area businesses and community organizations, the result is an approximate \$1.7 million positive economic impact in Hales Corners Park, and when the Alyson Dudek International Ice Center and Jerry and Dorothy Holz outdoor shelter projects are complete, the impact will exceed \$2 million.

So how did a group become so successful and continues to do so, where another community can learn from in order to start up and maintain a public-private partnership? It all begins with having the right people who follow their actions, which also happens to be their passion. Donald Schwartz has been President of the Friends group since its inception, and one of his passions in life is to bring people together who have a common vision and goal to work together with government, businesses, community and other organizations, to implement public-private partnerships where appropriate, to achieve those objectives. This is all meant to maintain and enhance the quality of life in the community. Mr. Schwartz continues to actively seek out people who share that vision to work with him in the Friends group on projects and continued fundraising.

Having the right people in place also involves being able to form positive relationships and partnerships with key stakeholders. Donald Schwartz has been able to achieve that as part of his involvement as a Village Trustee, and as a Past President of the Hales Corners Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Schwartz has made many connections in the community, ranging from residents, to business owners, and leaders of

other community organizations. Being able to have a positive partnership with stakeholders certainly has helped Mr. Schwartz and the Friends group follow their actions with their passion.

Lastly, being able to continue to work in partnerships, even if the vision does not agree at times. Donald Schwartz has spent many hours representing the Friends group at meetings with Milwaukee County Parks to gain their approval on continued maintenance and future projects. With the ice center project, there have been “road blocks” at times, but Mr. Schwartz effectively used his network of resources to continue to work with the County, architect, and construction company to work on solutions that all parties can agree to. This proves how a leader follows their actions with their passion, and Donald Schwartz will do everything he can to not let his passion die.

Overall, the Friends of Hales Corners Park & Pool has been a very successful group which began with being challenged with a political issue in their community, and continues to work today to maintain the quality of life at Hales Corners Park by assisting Milwaukee County Parks with maintaining and expanding park amenities. With that, this group, along with Milwaukee County Parks and the Village of Hales Corners, is very deserving of recognition for public-private cooperation with the Wisconsin Public Policy Forum’s Salute to Local Government award, and can serve as a model for other local governments and community organizations.