2026 ARPA Awards

Alabama Recreation and Parks Association
Recognizing a Deserving Colleague, Agency, Facility or Program

The Alabama Recreation and Parks Association recognizes and honors individuals, groups, programs, facilities, and agencies each year who have rendered outstanding service to the field of parks and recreation, as well as to ARPA. The Awards Committee of ARPA is responsible for seeking nominations for the various awards presented by the Association.

The Committee studies the qualifications of each individual, group, facility, agency or program nominated using criteria established by the ARPA Board of Directors, and then selects the most deserving nominees. **The winner of the Jim Spain Award will be selected by previous winners of the award.** The awards will be presented during the annual Awards and Installation Banquet held during the 2026 Annual State Conference. Only one award will be given for each category unless noted. The Awards Committee will be accepting nominations for consideration in the following categories:

Professional of the Year in Parks
Professional of the Year in Recreation
Professional of the Year in Therapeutic
Professional of the Year in Aquatics
Outstanding New Professional
Special Achievement Award
Community Service Award
Chester Freeman Park Board Service Award
Retiree Certificate
Outstanding Facility Award
Agency of the Year Award
Innovative Program/Special Event of the Year
Jim Spain Award
Lifetime Achievement Award

For applications and full criteria for each award, please visit the ARPA website at www.arpaonline.org or contact Awards Committee Chair, Mandy Johnson.

Submit Awards by **January 6th at 5pm** to Mandy Johnson
mjohnson@opelika-al.gov • (334) 444-4848 • PO Box 1026, Opelika, AL 36801

ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Professional of the Year in Parks Award

Any member of ARPA who is in good standing may make a nomination for this award. Any ARPA member who has been employed full-time and a member of ARPA for at least 5 years in the field of parks planning, park operation or maintenance is eligible for this award.

Qualifications: One award shall be given to an eligible candidate who has shown outstanding leadership and innovation in the areas of park planning, operations, or maintenance.

Date: _____

Name of Person making nomination: _____

Affiliate Name: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

I would like to nominate: _____

For the 2026 Professional of the Year in Parks Award because:

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Signature of Person Making Nomination: _____

This nomination form must be submitted with all award nominations along with additional requirements as stated in the criteria.

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Professional of the Year in Recreation Award

Any member of ARPA may make a nomination for this award. Any ARPA member who has been employed fulltime and a member of ARPA for at least 5 years in the field of recreation, athletics, leisure services or special event programming and/or leadership is eligible for this award.

Qualifications: one award shall be given to an eligible candidate who has shown outstanding leadership and innovation in recreation, athletics, leisure, or special event programming and/or instruction.

Date: _____

Name of Person making nomination: _____

Affiliate Name: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

I would like to nominate: _____

For the 2026 Professional of the Year in Recreation Award because:

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Signature of Person Making Nomination: _____

This nomination form must be submitted with all award nominations along with additional requirements as stated in the criteria.

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Professional of the Year in Therapeutic Recreation Award

Any member of ARPA may make a nomination for this award. Eligible candidates include individuals who have been employed full-time and a member of APRA for at least 5 years in the field of therapeutic recreation.

Qualifications: One award shall be given to an eligible candidate who has shown outstanding leadership, service and innovation to participants or clients, or to the field of Therapeutic Recreation or state, regional, or national Therapeutic Recreation organizations.

Date: _____

Name of Person making nomination: _____

Affiliate Name: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

I would like to nominate: _____

For the 2026 Professional of the Year in Therapeutic Award because:

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Signature of Person Making Nomination: _____

This nomination form must be submitted with all award nominations along with additional requirements as stated in the criteria.

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Professional of the Year in Aquatics Award

Any member of ARPA may make a nomination for this award. Eligible candidates include individuals who have been employed full-time and a member of APRA for at least 5 years in the field of aquatics recreation.

Qualifications: One award shall be given to an eligible candidate who has shown outstanding leadership, service and innovation to participants or clients, or to the field of Aquatics Recreation or state, regional, or national Aquatics Recreation organizations.

Date: _____

Name of Person making nomination: _____

Affiliate Name: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

I would like to nominate: _____

For the 2026 Professional of the Year in Therapeutic Award because:

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Signature of Person Making Nomination: _____

This nomination form must be submitted with all award nominations along with additional requirements as stated in the criteria.

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Outstanding New Professional Award

Any member of APRA may make a nomination for this award. Eligible candidates include individuals who have been employed full-time and a member of ARPA for 5 years or less in the field of parks and recreation.

Qualifications: One award shall be given to an eligible candidate who has been employed in the field 5 years or less and who has demonstrated outstanding commitment to the profession of parks, recreation, and leisure services and who has been actively involved in ARPA.

Date: _____

Name of Person making nomination: _____

Affiliate Name: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

I would like to nominate: _____

For the 2026 Outstanding New Professional Award because:

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Signature of Person Making Nomination: _____

This nomination form must be submitted with all award nominations along with additional requirements as stated in the criteria.

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Special Achievement Award

Any member of ARPA may submit a nomination for this award. Eligible candidates include political leaders, local, state, or federal employees or leisure service employees from outside the state of Alabama who have significantly assisted APRA in some manner.

Qualifications: Nominations should be based on contributions to the leisure service, recreation, parks and/or conservation field on the local, state, or national level. These contributions must be perceived as having as lasting effect on the nominator's programs or the Alabama Parks and Recreation Association.

Date: _____

Name of Person making nomination: _____

Affiliate Name: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

I would like to nominate: _____

For the 2026 Special Achievement Award because:

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Signature of Person Making Nomination: _____

This nomination form must be submitted with all award nominations along with additional requirements as stated in the criteria.

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Community Service Award

Any member of ARPA may submit a nomination for this award. Eligible candidates include any person, business, civic club, organization, or agency not officially associated on a professional basis in the recreation, park, or leisure service field.

Qualifications: One award shall be given to an eligible candidate who have made contributions to the leisure service, recreation, parks and/or conservation profession at the local, state, or national level. These contributions should be perceived by the nominator as having a lasting effect on the affiliate's program or the community.

Date: _____

Name of Person making nomination: _____

Affiliate Name: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

I would like to nominate: _____

For the 2026 Community Service Award because:

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Signature of Person Making Nomination: _____

This nomination form must be submitted with all award nominations along with additional requirements as stated in the criteria.

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Chester Freeman Park Board Service Award

Any member of ARPA may submit a nomination for this award. Eligible candidates include any person who has served or is currently serving on a park and recreation board.

Qualifications: One award shall be given to an eligible candidate who has been instrumental in providing the leadership, political advocacy and fundraising needed to create top-level public park and recreation agencies.

Date: _____

Name of Person making nomination: _____

Affiliate Name: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

I would like to nominate: _____

For the 2026 Chester Freeman Park Board Service Award because:

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Signature of Person Making Nomination: _____

This nomination form must be submitted with all award nominations along with additional requirements as stated in the criteria.

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Retiree Certificate

Any member of ARPA may submit a nomination for this award. Eligible candidates include any retired leisure service, recreation, parks and/or conservation professional.

Qualifications: The nominee must have been a member of ARPA for a least 5 years and one who has made significant contributions to the profession on the local level, as well as the Association prior to their retirement.

Date: _____

Name of Person making nomination: _____

Affiliate Name: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

I would like to nominate: _____

For the 2026 Retiree Certificate because:

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Signature of Person Making Nomination: _____

This nomination form must be submitted with all award nominations along with additional requirements as stated in the criteria.

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Outstanding Facility Award

The purpose of these awards is to recognize and honor public parks and recreation agencies within the state for outstanding and unique achievements in the design and development of park and recreation facilities. This award is for either new construction or renovation of an existing facility. Only one entry per year, per agency will be allowed. Facilities being nominated must have been completed or renovated and opened to the public within the past 5 calendar years.

Categories for nomination include:

- Specific Use Facility
- Multiple Use Facility
- Aquatic Facility
- Parks
- Renovations
- Rehabilitation
- Conversion
- Remodeling or Restoration

Awards will be given in each class of population:

- Agencies serving populations of 15,000 or less.
- Agencies serving populations of 15,001 or more.

Nominations for facility awards are very specific and require the submission of a great deal of material. For more information on this award please contact State Office or the State Awards Chair.

Scoring Rubric

Entries will be judged on the following narrative criteria. Please type your narrative using the following criteria as "CHAPTER HEADINGS." Criteria should follow in order of the list below.

1. Project description and purpose.	5 points
2. Degree of community involvement during planning/developmental phases.	15 points
3. Relationship of design to comprehensive open space or recreation master plans or relationship of site elements to each other.	20 points
4. Effective use of material for construction techniques and/or use of plant materials (Include use of color, textures, and shapes).	15 points
5. Efficient and unique use of natural resources and energy, electricity, etc.	10 points
6. Consideration of maintenance and operation in facility design and construction.	20 points
7. Copy of project budget.	5 points
8. Steps toward ADA Compliance.	5 points
9. Statement as to why the facility is worthy of this award including creative and/or unusual features.	5 points

TOTAL 100 POINTS

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Outstanding Facility Award

Agency Name: _____

Agency Director: _____

Application Submitted By: _____

Title: _____ **Phone Number:** _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Award Category: _____

Facility Name: _____

Facility Location: _____

Date Facility Opened: _____

Architect/Landscape Architect of Planner: _____

Population: **15,000 or less**

15,001 or more

This nomination form must be submitted with all award nominations along with additional requirements as stated in the criteria.

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Agency of the Year Award

This award is to recognize exemplary agencies in the state whose primary functions is the delivery of recreation and park services for the public, private and corporate community. Agencies are eligible to receive this award once in a 5-year period.

Any member in good standing with ARPA may nominate any agency (affiliate member) within the state of Alabama, including his or her own.

Qualifications: Any agency (affiliate member) within the state of Alabama whose primary function is to provide parks and recreation programs or leisure related services and has made significant contributions to parks and recreation programs or the leisure services on the local, state, regional or national level.

One award will be given in each class of population.

- Agencies serving populations of 15,000 or less.
- Agencies serving populations of 15,001 or more.

There are special requirements to adhere to when nominating an agency. For more information on this award please contact the State Awards Chair.

Scoring Rubric

1. Parks and Recreation organization and administration legal structure/financial management (source of operation and capital budget, grants, privatization involvement.	10 points
2. Planning & evaluations: Planning (long-range; surveys, strategic; citizen input) evaluation in all areas.	10 points
3. Program services offered: Diversity-planning process-networking-evaluation procedure.	10 points
4. Facilities, areas: Types-acreage-geographical distribution of recreation sites.	10 points
5. Marketing: Marketing plan-budget-staff-information-distribution procedures.	10 points
6. Professional development and training of staff: Training plan-budget-NRPA/ARPA.	10 points
7. Provide any pertinent items including but not limited to: PowerPoint, news clips, videos, brochures, etc.	10 points
8. List the outstanding accomplishments of your agency for the past 12-month period.	30 points
	Total 100 Points

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Agency of the Year Award Pt. 1

Agency: _____ **Population:** **15,000 or less**
15,001 or more

Parks and Recreation Organization/Administration

Year Established

Board: _____ Legal: _____ Advisory: _____ Other: _____

Budget $_____ Grants $_____ Other $_____

Staff

Full-time: _____ Part-Time: _____ Volunteers: _____

Master Plan:	Yes	No
Evaluation Plan:	Yes	No
Staff Input:	Yes	No
Community Input:	Yes	No
Years Covered:	_____ to	_____

Program Services

Do the following have input in program services?

Community:	Yes	No
Staff:	Yes	No

Program Offered

Youth Adult TR Seniors Other _____

Facilities

Numbers of Parks: _____ Baseball Fields: _____ Swimming Pools: _____
Acreage: _____ Softball Fields: _____ Soccer Fields: _____
Number of Facilities: _____ Basketball Courts: _____

Maintenance Plan? Yes No

Marketing/Promotion

Frequency of Promotion: Monthly Annual
Quarterly Seasonal

Budget $_____

Information Distribution Method:

_____

_____

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Agency of the Year Award Pt. 2

Professional Development/Staff Training
Budget $ _____

Training Plan	Yes	No	
In-House Promotion	Yes	No	
Staff Certification Recommended	Yes	No	
Staff Membership	ARPA	NRPA	Other _____

Please list any additional outstanding accomplishments for the 12-month period January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2024.

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Innovative Program/Special Event of the Year Award

Any individual or agency member in good standing with ARPA may submit a nomination for this award. This award is to honor programs/special events that demonstrate exceptional innovation in design, presentation and implementation in the park and recreation field. Innovative or unique programs/events from all areas of parks and recreation and leisure services are eligible for nomination.

Qualifications: The agency or agency's staff member(s) in charge of the nominated program must be current member(s) in good standing with APRA. The nominated program must be implemented within the past fiscal year (October 1- September 30).

One award will be given in each class of population.

- Agencies serving populations of 15,000 or less.
- Agencies serving populations of 15,001 or more.

There is a special checklist for this nomination. For additional information of this award please contact the State Awards Chair.

Format: List and answer one question per page only, for a total of **eight** pages. Questions can be found in section 2 of the scoring rubric. The pages must be doubled spaced using regular types. (No smaller than 10 font, on one side only.)

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Innovative Program/Special Event of the Year Award

Scoring Rubric

This checklist and the following information must be INCLUDED in your entry:

1. **Complete the attached Award Entry Form** **10 points**
   Fill out completely page 3 of 3

2. **Complete the Narrative** **60 points**
   Narrative should not be more than three typed pages. A page is considered one side of an 8.5" X 11" sheet of paper. All the following must be addressed:

   - Explain the program/event and what makes it unique and innovative.
   - Partnerships (if any)
   - Goals and objectives in developing this program and where they achieved.
   - How does the program/event contribute to the quality of life of the participants served?
   - Interesting publicity and marketing techniques
   - Successes and challenges
   - Plans for the future of this program/event.
   - Any other information that may be needed to fully describe this program.

3. **Prepare a Visual Documentation** **30 points**
   - The visual documentation is considered two-fold. Judges will consider the visual impact of the entire presentation including the cover, as well as the actual visual documentation of the nominated program, which may include photographs, videos (limit to three minutes), tickets, fliers, letters, newspaper articles/ads, and any other visual tools necessary to document the program.
   - Include written captions explaining photos and documents as needed.
   - Please include, as many pages as you feel are necessary to accurately depict the program or event.

Total 100 Points

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ALABAMA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION

2026 Innovative Program/Special Event of the Year Award

Directions: Entry information must be typed. Information requested must be complete to be considered. Every blank must be completed for entry to be judged.

Program Information (10% of Total Score)

General Information

Population: **15,000 or less**
15,001 or more

Agency Submitting Entry: _____

Director: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Agency Phone Number: _____

Program Specifics

Title of Nominated Program: _____

Number of years programs has been in existence: _____

Person in charge of program: _____

Phone Number: _____

Number of Participants: _____

Number of Spectators: _____

Number of Staff: _____

Number of Volunteers: _____

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