

The Joey Pope Award for Parks Leadership

2024 NOMINEE

Black Swimming Initiative

Black Swimming Initiative (BSI) looks to expand meaningful participation in water sports by providing a strong sense of belonging for Black athletes of all backgrounds, abilities, and lifestyles by supporting safe and accessible water safety and swimming instruction. They envision a world where racism is eliminated from aquatics and water sports; where individuals can access bodies of water with confidence in themselves and be welcomed by all.

Advancing Equity, Access, and Cultural Understanding in Recreation

BSI provides an opportunity for the Black community to learn how to swim and offers water safety information. The organization's leadership is informed by the life experiences of its co-founders, Morgan Spriggs and Emily Lighthipe. Both started swimming later in life, growing to become accomplished swimmers and vocal advocates. During the pandemic, Black Swim Initiative provided space for an underserved community that was heavily impacted by the crisis. Free lessons are regularly taught at the Matt Dishman Community Center Pool.



Support this work
and learn more:
blackswimpx.us

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2024 NOMINEE Brown Girl Rise

Brown Girl Rise (BGR) is deeply committed to creating inclusive spaces where historically excluded groups, particularly BIPOC youth and femmes, can access nature, engage in recreational activities, and foster cultural connections. BGR's week-long day camps, Radical Organizing Workshop Series (ROWS), and youth board engagement initiatives provide transformative experiences that blend outdoor education, social justice advocacy, and cultural celebration.

Building Coalitions & Partnerships in Parks and Outdoors

Through a diverse array of community partnerships and coalitions, BGR expands access, education, and advocacy efforts for their participants. These efforts include outdoor skill-building, deepening connection to land and culture, farming and food justice, learning from Indigenous wisdom and practices, and environmental sustainability.



Support this work
and learn more:

browngirlriseportland.org/



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Jamie Newsome

(she/her)

ELSO Inc.

Jamie Newsome is the Program Director of ELSO's Wayfinders Program, an outdoor field trip based STEAM themed day camp for Black and Brown youth in K-8th grade. Under her leadership, she has significantly increased the number of youth engaged and the depths of needs met including food, community, and career training. She also supports ELSO's Tappin Roots Program, an eight-month long internship for Black and Brown high school students, focused on jobs in the green sector, growing professional development and building cultural knowledge.

Advancing Equity, Access, Cultural Understanding in Parks and Outdoors

Under Jamie's leadership, Wayfinders grew in impact, creating more career opportunities for participants, and meeting more everyday needs. To meet these needs, the program provides meals for participants, sliding scale fees, and mindful accommodations to youth with disabilities. Jamie has also shown the initiative it takes to make her programs more equitable by investing time in ongoing training and learning.



Support this work
and learn more:

elsoincpx.org

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2024 NOMINEE Free Arts NW

Free Arts NW, a youth arts organization equipped with a mobile studio, takes therapeutic art around the city to promote creative expression in teens. The goal of Free Arts NW is to increase community relationships, reduce isolation of neighbors, increase child and teen access to their own creativity with culturally based art directives that inspire curiosity, growth and learning.

Innovative Programming in Parks and Outdoors

Free Arts NW is currently working with after school programs in outer East Portland, taking the studio to SUN school programs and to after-school programs offered by Home Forward and other affordable housing providers, providing for primarily low-income youth to create art outdoors. Having partnered with Friends of Gateway Green, they are eager to expand the youth program, including taking the mobile studio to events in Portland's parks.



Support this work
and learn more:
freeartsnw.org

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Brianna Brawley

(they/she)

Friends of Zenger Farm

Brianna Brawley is Zenger Farm's Education Program Manager. Their focus is on building supportive and enriching learning communities for young people and community members. As leader of the Youth Education team, Brianna's work fosters lasting connections between people, food, and the environment by providing meaningful outdoor environmental education and climate action career awareness to East Portland youth.

Advancing Access, Equity and Cultural Understanding in Parks and Outdoors

Brianna and their team administer Farm School to approximately 600 students a year. Under their leadership, Zenger's Youth Education programs have made intentional curriculum shifts to become more inclusive and focus on student-centered programming. This has meant more multi-sensory and hands-on learning activities for a very language diverse student population.



Support this work
and learn more:

zengerfarm.org

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Harper's Playground

The mission of Harper's Playground is to provide inclusive play spaces where children with mobility challenges can interact and play with their peers. Their distinctively designed, nature-inspired playgrounds are meant not just for play, but to be spaces where people of all abilities can come together, thrive, and learn.

Advancing Equity & Access in Parks

Harper's Playground was born out of a personal journey. Co-founders April and Cody Goldberg were inspired by their daughter Harper, who uses a wheeled walker, to create a space where she could play and connect with other children. This personal experience forms the heart of their mission. Their projects seek to be radically inclusive through several levels of inviting: physically, socially, and emotionally. Going beyond structural design, their playgrounds aspire to be well-informed and well-used community assets.



Support this work
and learn more:
harpersplayground.org



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Don Johnson (he/him)

Michael Navarro (he/him)

Kids N' Tennis, Inc.

Kids N' Tennis (KNT) was founded in 1987 by Don Johnson and Andre St. James, who noticed that very few children of color were playing tennis. Over the past thirty-five years Kids N' Tennis has taught tennis to more than 2,000 children. Graduates from KNT include Portland area tennis teaching professionals and numerous college graduates.

Innovative Programming, Advancing Equity in Recreation

Don Johnson and Michael Navarro are two coaches at KNT. Their coaching has rallied tennis enthusiasts of all ages to assist in promoting tennis, mentoring kids and assisting them in achieving their educational and athletic goals, while providing a safe and positive environment for them to build confidence and self-esteem. Former students have returned to become the mentors, a testament to their own mentorship journey.



Support this work
and learn more:
kids-n-tennis.org

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Knott Street Boxing

Knott Street Boxing Club, deeply rooted in North Portland's fabric since 1951, serves as a vital community hub for youth empowerment and development. Their mission is to provide a safe haven where young individuals can find solace, inspiration, and a sense of belonging through the art of boxing.

Advancing Equity, Access, Cultural Understanding in Recreation

At the heart of their boxing program is a profound commitment to mentorship, offering BIPOC youth more than just physical training. They aspire to instill confidence, foster leadership, and equip participants with the life skills needed to navigate the complexities of the world beyond the ring. By embracing diversity as its greatest strength, Knott Street creates a space where BIPOC youth feel seen, heard, and valued.



Support this work
and learn more:

[facebook.com/knottstboxingclub/](https://www.facebook.com/knottstboxingclub/)

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Bea Yeh Ogden

(she/they)

Luminous Together

Bea Yeh Ogden, of Luminous Together, creates supportive and inclusive forest bathing experiences for vulnerable and underserved communities. Her work often happily lies at the intersection of art, nature, spirit, justice, and health. Seeking to make outdoor healing more accessible, Bea's sessions aspired to provide a deeper sense of safety and belonging while cultivating caring relationships with nature for those historically excluded from enjoying public park spaces.

Innovative Parks Programming, Advancing Cultural Understanding

These financially accessible workshops gather small groups over the course of 8 months to benefit from forest bathing's proven effects to calm the body and the mind's stress response. Though tailored to small groups, these sessions create opportunities for more people to become bonded with their parks, create relationships with each other in the parks, and come to see these parks as places of refuge.



Support this work
and learn more:

[instagram.com/luminous.together](https://www.instagram.com/luminous.together)

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2024 NOMINEE Portland Community Football Club

Portland Community Football Club (PCFC) provides access to high-quality, affordable club soccer for low-income and marginalized youth, ages 6-18, including LGBTQIA+, Black, Brown, Latinx, immigrants, and refugees. Their “whole child” advocacy approach supports overall health, offering wraparound services that focus on emotional, psychological, and social well-being including nutrition, mentorship, academic support, and social service referrals.

Innovative Parks Programming and Building Coalitions in Recreation

PCFC embraces a unique Sports-Based Youth Development methodology that uses soccer to provide support and opportunities youth need to be healthy, contributing citizens now and as adults. Their wraparound community support programs include diverse family services, a food pantry, and their Liberate Sports Campaign committed to erasing the gap between privilege and play through a focus on gender, race, and economic equity within sports.



Support this work
and learn more:
pcfc.co

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Babatunde “Zubbi” Azubuiké

(xey/xem, dey/dem)

“Realize the Root,” a program of Black & Beyond the Binary

Black & Beyond the Binary’s (B3C) mission is to build leadership, healing, and safety for Black - African transgender, queer, nonbinary, two-spirit and intersex (TQN2SI+) Portlanders. Realize the Root, a project of B3C, is a space where youth ages 14-24 can connect through building a decolonized relationship to nature through overnight camping trips in Oxbow Park. The program provides access to all supplies, tools, and space for an outdoor experience that is often economically inaccessible.

Advancing Equity, Cultural Understanding through Innovative Programming in Parks

For Babatunde (xey/xem) and xer community, deep ancestral wounds were borne from the history of slave labor used to build the country. Key recognize that this has resulted in a deep discomfort in how Black TQN2SI+ people relate to nature. Realize the Root seeks to address the needed healing, to change the face of outdoor recreation, education, and to help participants lead their liberation through nature.



Support this work
and learn more:

blackbeyondthebinarycollective.org

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Reclaiming Black Joy Project

Dr. S. Renee Mitchell's Reclaiming Black Joy Project is a parkbased cultural activation and creative placemaking initiative. The project began in 2022, and is designed to improve the Black community's mental, emotional and physical health, and to help participants feel safe, welcomed, fed and respected. These park-based events bring free food, haircuts, braiding, art creation, face painting, giveaways, massages, music, dancing, social services and more to attendees.

Innovative Parks Programming and Coalition Building in Parks

Where some would call this "creative placemaking," Dr. Renee considers it "creative placekeeping," acknowledging that gentrification has led to racially biased displacement of hundreds of Black families. They are pursuing more transformative, vibrant park spaces, so Portland will respect and embrace people who have been forced out of their traditional neighborhood. Through direct engagement, this project saw community members take ownership of their parks spaces and find the confidence to express themselves creatively.



Support this work
and learn more:

www.iammoreresilient.com

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Terrain: A Land Art Exhibition

Terrain: An Interior Land Art Exhibition, is an emerging artist-led engagement to foster meaningful connections with the intersections of land, environment, stewardship, and beauty. It is actively seeking partners to create an immersive, outdoor land art experience to activate underutilized park space. The project is co-curated by Kendra Roberts, Clairissa Stephens and Tammy Jo Wilson.

Innovative Programming in Parks, Arts, and Natural Spaces

Participating artists are invited to integrate new works into nature using found materials in a short on-site residency. As a nature-centered, multidisciplinary exhibition, this project seeks to nurture curiosity and spark environmental stewardship within the broader community. Terrain draws from the success of a past event, Terra Incognita, which provided an opportunity for visitors to experience delight, surprise, awe, wonder and safety within the outdoors while surrounded by artworks and performances rooted (pun intended) in the exploration and stewardship of nature.



Support this work
and learn more:

verdancyproject.com/terra-incognita

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The Kidz Outside

The Kidz Outside (TKO) is a growing effort led by Donovan Scribes, LaQuisha Minnieweather and Mat Randol to reimagine George Park, a 2-acre park surrounded by four schools in St. John's. Working to improve this "forgotten" park, TKO's successful advocacy has helped leverage diverse funding for a park overhaul to revitalize the neighborhood's green space in the face of population overturn and gentrification.

Advancing Equity, Access, and Cultural Understanding in Parks

TKO organizes regular events to activate the park, including an annual holiday food drive and advocacy projects. The keystone to their community organizing is The Kidz Outside Festival, where they gather kids, families, neighbors and the wider community at George Park for a day of family-friendly live music, clowning, food and a robust back-to-school supply drive as part of Summer Free for All.



Support this work
and learn more:
thekidzoutside.wordpress.com/

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Nicole Allen

(she/they)

Through The Trees Collective

Through the Tree Collective's (TC3) vision is to serve as a source of empowerment and connection for BIPOC communities in the Pacific Northwest and beyond. They foster spaces where individuals can reclaim their heritage, find belonging in community, and, most importantly, thrive. T3C exists at the intersection of multiple identities including BIPOC and LGBTQIA+, allowing leadership to tap into the ancestral knowledge of the African Diaspora and beyond, to serve as a facilitator for the next generation of diverse cultural changemakers.

Advancing Equity, Access, Cultural Understanding in Parks and Nature

Their diverse offerings meet at the intersections of education, stewardship, and wellness — from tree planting workshop to birding activities and nature immersions in and around Portland. Their events are free, open for all ages, and inclusive of varying abilities. To Nicole Allen, Founder and Executive Director, when we heal communities, we allow for a world that reflects greater innovation, collaboration, understanding, and ultimately abundance.



Support this work
and learn more:
t3collective.com

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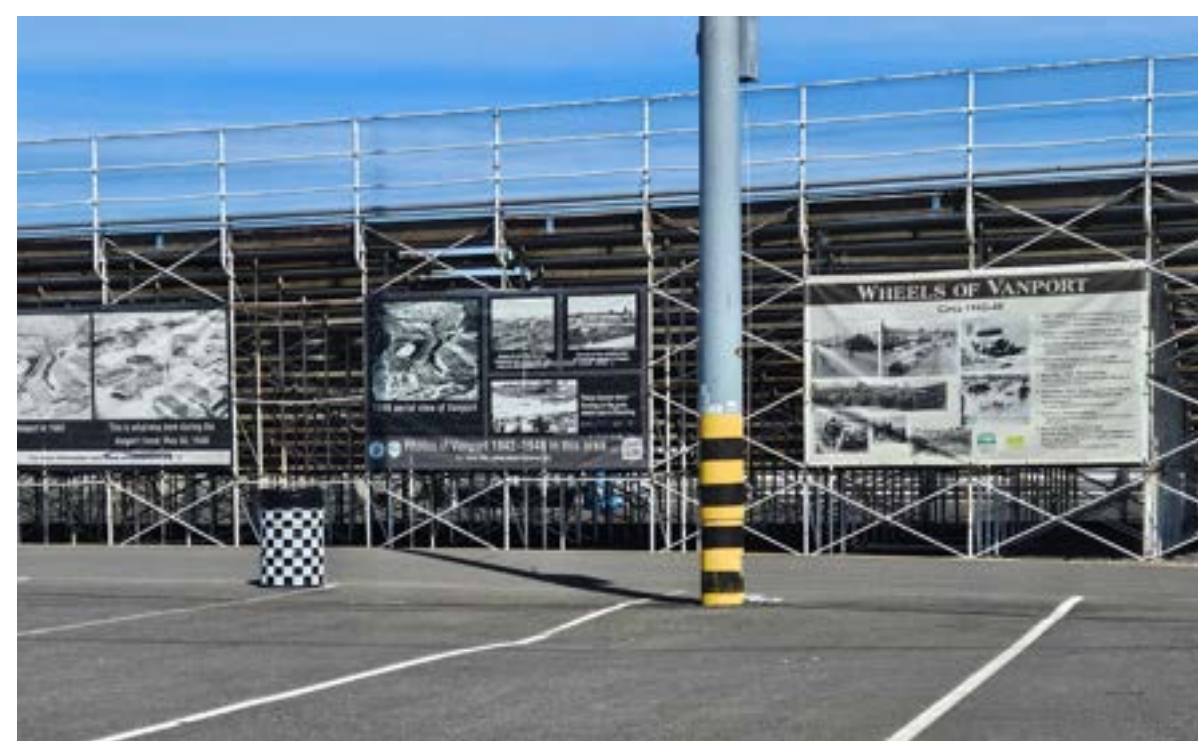
2024 NOMINEE

Vanport Placemaking Project

The Vanport Placemaking Project (VPP) mission is to preserve and protect the heritage of the historic site of Vanport and the histories of the people who have lived there. Vanport was once Oregon's second largest city and the largest housing project in the US. It was completely destroyed in the Columbia River Flood of 1948. Illuminated by this project, historic Vanport is a hidden history of Portland's park spaces, lost on the land we now know as Heron Lake Golf Club, Delta Park; situated between the Columbia River and the Columbia Slough.

Innovative Parks Programming, Building Partnerships & Coalitions

Through extensive partnerships across the city, VPP has successfully created ways for diverse communities to learn about the deep history of Vanport including the creation of historic markers, audio boxes featuring survivor interviews, educational curricula, and developing a virtual reality tour of the site to build local knowledge through accessible storytelling. Recent developments have centered the impact on Native American workers, families, and residents of Vanport, with deeper recognition on Native cultural, historical and territorial ties to the area.



Support this work
and learn more:
vanportplaces.org

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