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For Immediate Release

Buffalo Grove Park District Employee Recognized at IAPD/IPRA Annual Conference

La Grange IL– On January 26, 2024, the Illinois Park & Recreation Association (IPRA) honored Debbie Fandrei from the Buffalo Grove Park District with the IPRA Community Impact Award, for her commitment and excellent service to parks and recreation in Illinois. Ms. Fandrei was recognized during the IPRA Awards Program at the IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference held at the Hyatt Regency Chicago.

The IPRA Community Impact Award is presented to a current Illinois park and recreation professional who has made a significant impact in the community they serve through their involvement with local, community, non-profit, and business organizations or government agencies. This award celebrates those professionals who are not currently executive directors, recognizing their important impact to our field.

Debbie Fandrei's legacy in Buffalo Grove is profound, having dedicated over 25 years to the Buffalo Grove Park District. As the Museum Curator, she not only shared local history within Buffalo Grove but extended her impact to the regional and statewide levels. Over the past seven years alone, Debbie's history programs reached more than 34,000 students across 10 area school districts, while her commitment to the community is evident through awarding over 3,200 Scout badges and teaching adult ESL classes.

Beyond her museum role, Debbie's vision for an educational garden space in Buffalo Grove became a reality with grants she secured, totaling over \$400,000. The resulting Educational Gardens in Mike Rylko Community Park now serve as warm and inviting spaces for learning about historic plants, native plants, sensory gardening, and accessible gardening. Debbie's leadership extends to her role as the Secretary of the Illinois Association of Museums, where she spearheads their awards program and contributes to projects bridging mental health issues and museums, showcasing her remarkable positive impact on diverse communities.



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‘Congratulations to Debbie for being recognized by her peers with this award for her service and commitment to her community and to the profession,’ Suzi Wirtz, IOM, IPRA Executive Director. ‘It is so inspiring to see the impact one person can have and IPRA is proud to have Debbie as an exemplary member, leading by example.’

A complete list of IPRA award winners is available on the IPRA website, ILipra.org.

Established in 1944, the Illinois Park & Recreation Association (IPRA) serves nearly 3,000 park, recreation, and conservation professionals throughout the state, and is a national leader in providing premier education, networking, and resources. For more information about IPRA, its board and mission, please visit the IPRA website: www.Ilipra.org.

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