

Tuesday, Oct 11, 2016

OUCARES' collaboration with Oakland County Parks wins national award

The Oakland University Center for Autism's Outreach Services (OUCARES) was recently honored with a 2016 Removing Barriers Special Award from the **National Association of County Parks and Recreation Officials**. The recognition was for a program that allows OUCARES summer camp participants to engage in activities such as fishing, boating, rappelling and climbing at Independence Oaks Park in Clarkston.

"The mission of OUCARES is to improve the quality of life of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders," said Kristin Rohrbeck, director of OUCARES. "When OUCARES' summer campers are at the park, they show more positive emotion, engage more with their peers, and learn to follow directions in order to participate in all of the fun activities — all things that can improve their quality of life. OUCARES is proud to have this strong relationship with Oakland County Parks that helps us fulfill our mission."

The program, which is in collaboration with Oakland County Parks (OCP), also involved providing training to OCP staff members and those at other parks throughout Michigan.

During the training session, OCP supervisors learned to recognize common characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and how to communicate effectively by breaking information down into simple steps, keeping verbal statements short and maintaining a low voice, among other strategies.

OUCARES Program Coordinator Stephanie Laubach was instrumental in developing the training.

"It has been an honor to work with not only the Oakland County Parks, but also with the Michigan Recreation & Parks Association to assist in developing inclusion & accessibility within their parks," Laubach said. "Educating park personnel about autism and successful strategies in working with a person on the spectrum will broaden the understanding and acceptance of Autism Spectrum Disorder."



From left: Gerald Fisher, Oakland County Parks Chairman; Kristin Rohrbeck, Director of OUCARES; Sandy Dorey, Oakland County Parks Therapeutic Recreation Supervisor; and Dan Stencil, Executive Officer of Oakland County Parks.

Founded in 2004, OUCARES provides a vast array of programming for individuals with ASD and other developmental disabilities, including sports, social clubs, summer camps and employable skills training.

Learn more about OUCARES at oakland.edu/oucares.





