



INDIANAPOLIS
PARKS FOUNDATION

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NEWS RELEASE

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Indy Parks volunteer receives Jefferson Award

Brenda McAtee will travel to the national awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., in June

When the staff of the Indianapolis Parks Foundation met Brenda McAtee and heard her story, they knew immediately she was a winner. The volunteer, full-time manager of Indy Parks' Pride Park, 1129 S. Vandeman St., on Indianapolis' near southeast side, was recognized formally on Tuesday, March 2, when she was presented with a Jefferson Award from the awards' local media partner, *The Indianapolis Star*.

The Jefferson Awards are a prestigious national recognition system honoring community and public service in America. Brenda McAtee was one of several local volunteers honored at the awards program at the Murat Theatre Tuesday and one of five winners who will travel to the national awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., in June. There, she will be recognized with Jefferson Awards winners from other states.

The Indianapolis Parks Foundation (IPF) and Dr. Yvonne Kirk nominated Brenda McAtee for the Jefferson Award. "We are pleased to see her formally recognized for her genuine heart and volunteer spirit," says IPF Executive Director Cindy Porteous. "She is a model of community pride and volunteerism from whom all residents of Indianapolis can learn."

McAtee was recognized for her personal passion for community, volunteerism and the small park where she serves as full-time, unpaid manager. A 40-year resident of the Norwood Place community, where Pride Park is located, McAtee has been an enthusiastic and energetic motivator of the adults and youth in her community since losing her full-time job in 2003. She focuses her energy on providing safe activities for children, youth, adults and seniors, and improving community pride and fellowship. Norwood Place is bound by Prospect St., Sherman Dr., Terrace Ave. and Vandeman St. and bordered on three sides by a primarily industrial landscape.

Brenda's passion has resulted in a number of positive changes in the community. Some of her efforts include:

- reopening the Pride Park Community Center in 2006
- encouraging and coordinating an effort by Citizens Energy Group to renovate the community center for free
- bringing a teen program to the park
- running a summer lunch program that provides daily breakfast, lunch and a snack to children during summer
- requesting and succeeding in getting IndyGo to donate a bus to the park so she can transport community members to park pools, the local senior center and other locations
- starting and organizing a summer program for children and teens
- seeking funding for and getting kids involved in making neighborhood signs that promote a sense of community.

In addition to managing Pride Park on a volunteer basis, McAtee also serves as president of the Norwood Community Association, a member of the board of directors for the Southeast Community Center and a greeter at her church.

A ripple effect of increasing personal pride in the community has been increasingly obvious over the past few years. Neighbors are taking better care of their personal property, volunteers help care for empty lots, and youth have been volunteering to help neighbors with snow removal and other chores. The park's community center brings community members of all ages together to do homework, exercise, talk, play games and celebrate personal occasions.

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