

Updates | Special Events

Programing | Sports | Tournaments

Lakes | Parks | Trails



Recreation Services Newsletter

824 E. Gurley St. Prescott, AZ 86301

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



CELEBRATING THE OVER THE HILL GANG

By Kristy Diaz-Trahan - Recreation Services Director

We have something pretty special to celebrate!

The City of Prescott's Over the Hill Gang has been named the Arizona Parks and Recreation Association's Volunteer Program of the Year, recognizing an incredible group of people who give their time, talent and plenty of sweat to care for Prescott's trails and natural parklands.

Led by Trails Manager Chris Hosking, the Over the Hill Gang includes more than 100 volunteers who contribute thousands of hours each year maintaining trails, clearing vegetation, improving drainage, addressing erosion and tackling the countless behind-the-scenes projects necessary to keep our trail system safe and enjoyable.

And there is plenty to keep them busy! Recreation Services manages approximately 146 miles of trails and thousands of acres of natural areas, welcoming more than a million trail visits each year. The Over the Hill Gang greatly extends what our Trails and Natural Parklands Division can accomplish and has played an important role in the growth and stewardship of Prescott's trail system.



At Recreation Services, we often talk about how parks and recreation connects people to people, people to nature, and people to community. The Over the Hill Gang embodies all three.

They connect people to people through friendship, teamwork and a shared sense of purpose. They connect people to nature by creating and caring for the trails that allow all of us to experience Prescott's incredible outdoor spaces. And they connect people to community by giving back to a place they clearly love.

The APRA award recognizes an outstanding volunteer program, but for those of us fortunate enough to work alongside this group, it recognizes something even bigger — the people behind it. Congratulations to the entire Over the Hill Gang. This award is well deserved, and Recreation Services is incredibly proud to call you part of our team.

Thank you for building trails, building friendships and building community — 1/4 mile at a time.



Over The Hill Gang

FEATURED PARK:

CARRYING ON A PRESCOTT LEGACY: BILL VALLELY FIELD

By Sam Rice - Recreation Coordinator

For generations, Bill Vallely Field has been more than a place to play baseball and softball. It is part of Prescott's recreational history—a place where athletes have competed, families have gathered, and community members have shared a love of sports.

The field honors Bill Vallely (1926–2004), a longtime Prescott resident whose life was deeply connected to the community. Vallely founded Prescott Little League in 1950, the first league in the state of Arizona, and served as the Parks Superintendent for the City of Prescott. His story reflects a time when community athletics played an important role in bringing Prescott residents together.



Bill Vallely, shown on the right, with his 1966 Little League team.

Today, that legacy continues through the City of Prescott Recreation Services Department and the people dedicated to providing recreational opportunities for the community.

One of those people is Mattie Smith, Recreation Coordinator, a born-and-raised Prescottonian who brings a lifelong connection to the community to her work. Smith, who also happens to be Bill Vallely's granddaughter, holds a Master's degree in Education, a Bachelor's degree in Parks and Recreation Management, and is a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP). For Smith, being part of Prescott Recreation Services is more than a career—it is an opportunity to contribute to the place she has always called home.

Through her work with Recreation Services and volunteering with local youth sports organizations, Smith represents the next generation of recreation professionals carrying forward the values that have shaped Prescott's parks and recreation system: community, accessibility, healthy activity, teamwork and creating opportunities for people of all ages.

Bill Vallely Field continues to serve as a gathering place for athletes and families, including Yavapai College Softball and Prescott Little League. As new generations take the field, the connection between Prescott's history and its future remains strong. From Bill Vallely's contributions to community athletics to the Recreation Services professionals serving Prescott today, the legacy continues—one player, one game and one generation at a time.



Smith and her family at Bill Vallely Field in 2022.

PROGRAMMING

DISCOVER PRESCOTT'S POLLINATORS: JOIN THE PARKS FOR POLLINATORS BIOBLITZ!

By Mattie Smith - Recreation Coordinator

This month, our programming team is inviting the community to slow down, look a little closer, and discover the incredible pollinators that call our parks and open spaces home.

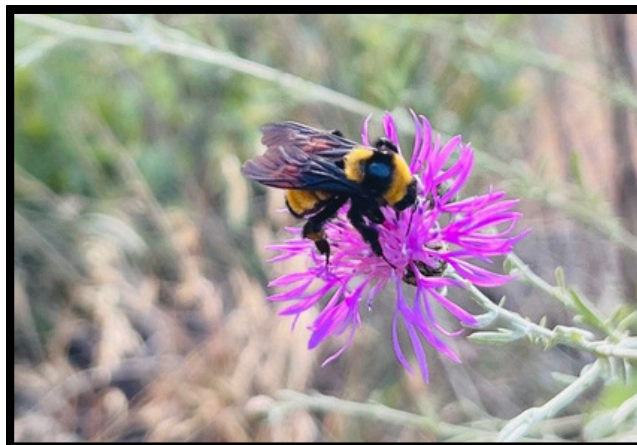
Pollinators are an essential part of healthy ecosystems. Bees, butterflies, moths, bats, hummingbirds, beetles, and other animals help plants reproduce as they move from flower to flower. Protecting pollinator habitat is an important part of protecting the broader ecosystems we enjoy throughout Prescott.

The Parks for Pollinators BioBlitz here in Prescott is a fun opportunity for people of all ages to explore the outdoors and document the plants and pollinators they discover. Observations made anywhere in Prescott and throughout Yavapai County in the month of September will count toward our BioBlitz.



So what's a **BioBlitz**, you ask? Coined in the nineties, this term describes a community-powered effort to document as many living species as possible within a particular place and period of time. You don't need to be a biologist or an expert on insects and plants to participate. In fact, part of the fun is discovering what you can find!

To participate, simply download the **iNaturalist app**, join the City of Prescott's Parks for Pollinators project, and start exploring! When you spot an interesting pollinator—or even a plant—simply take a photo with your phone. iNaturalist can help identify what you've found with assistance from its online community. Every observation can help us learn more about the incredible biodiversity in our community.



We'll wrap up the month with a free community event at **Watson Lake Park** on Wednesday, **September 30th**, from **9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.** The final event will be a celebration of everything we've discovered throughout the month.

Participants can join us as we tally our pollinator observations and enjoy educational classes from local experts and naturalists, plus enter to win giveaways and prizes! Bring your curiosity, your phone or camera, and a willingness to explore.



Spot a butterfly resting on a flower? *Take a picture.*
A bee you've never seen before? *Take a picture.*
A wildflower covered in insects? *Take a picture.*

Your observations can help us better understand the plants and pollinators living in our community while becoming more connected to the natural spaces we share. Join us on for the City of Prescott Parks for Pollinators BioBlitz on September 30th and come **bee part of the buzz!**

PARKS | LAKES | TRAILS

WATSON LAKE PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENTS

By: Adam Camacho - Recreation Services Superintendent

Exciting improvements are underway at Watson Lake! The City of Prescott Recreation Services Department is replacing the existing playground structure, which has served the community for approximately 20 years, with a new and updated playground designed specifically for children ages 5–12.

The new playground will provide more opportunities for active, imaginative play and exploration. Features will include a new playground structure, swing bays and a zipline, giving children more ways to move, play and enjoy the outdoors. The updated design will encourage kids to challenge themselves, build confidence, develop coordination and enjoy active recreation in one of Prescott's most scenic settings.

The improvements don't stop with the playground equipment. The City's Parks Maintenance team is also completing enhancements around the playground perimeter to create a more comfortable, accessible and family-friendly space. Planned improvements include new sidewalks, a shaded bench area and a drinking fountain, providing families with additional amenities while they enjoy time together at the park.



These upgrades are part of the City's continued investment in Prescott's parks and recreation facilities. Replacing aging equipment and improving surrounding amenities helps ensure that community spaces remain safe, attractive and enjoyable for residents and visitors. The project also provides families with a refreshed destination where children can be active, socialize, explore and create lasting memories.

And there's more to come! Additional improvements are planned as the City continues working to enhance the Watson Lake recreation area and expand opportunities for the community to connect with nature, stay active and enjoy Prescott's beautiful outdoor spaces.

We appreciate the community's patience and understanding during construction and look forward to welcoming families back to a new and improved Watson Lake Playground. The finished project will provide a modern, inviting space that supports healthy play and outdoor recreation for years to come.

More play. More possibilities. More reasons to enjoy Watson Lake!

