



# THE PACT:

## THE PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL TRIBUTE NEWSLETTER

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*Says...add these items to every meeting agenda*

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## THE AVALON PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL: A FIRST YEAR OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS & CHALLENGES



Avalon Park, 1215 E. 83rd St., Chicago, IL 60619. Submitted by the Avalon Park Advisory Council.

Prior to forming the Avalon Park Advisory Council (APAC), many residents were complaining about the lack of resources at Avalon Park. Many of our residents go to other parks outside of our district for their programs. APAC is one year old, and one of our main goals is to bring more activities to the park that the residents want. Our mission is to be advocates for Avalon Park and for the residents who utilize its programs, facilities, resources, and natural areas. In our first year, we have had our share of accomplishments, but faced many challenges as well.

In spite of the obstacles, we were very busy in our first year. We attended our first Advisory Council Conference, and collaborated with Friends of the Parks on the Earth Day Clean-Up where our kids cleaned Avalon Park and received several hours of community service for their efforts. We had our ribbon cutting for our new playground and we participated in Chicago Plays! Day in October. Since October is Anti-bullying Month, we

decided that would be our theme and all of the kids in the park took the anti-bullying pledge.

We were also excited to conduct our first workshop, "How to Create a Farmers



Market" (pictured above and top corner). We had a teen summit where we bought in speakers from law enforcement and from the Attorney General's office, and a motivational speaker to talk to our kids. The summit was well received and our kids would like to do this annually.

We also conducted a survey where we asked our teens what kinds of programs they'd like to see in the park. The results were not that far off from what we expected and from what we see other parks offering. We were successful in bringing back arts and crafts to the park, (though not without a challenge).

Our president, Linda Hudson, spoke before her first Park District Board of Commissioners meeting where she presented the Board with the many things needing attention at Avalon Park. Out of our list, we did **(Continued on page 2)** →





**(Continued from page 1)** receive new awnings and gutters. We have been asking for Wi-Fi for over a year and we are waiting for the additional items to be fixed.

Despite our many accomplishments, there are still a slew of obstacles blocking our ability to make our park a safe and active community connector. The body of 21-year-old Laron Brooks, was found in Avalon Park on February 16, 2016.

Mr. Brooks had been missing since December 22, 2015 and the Cook County Medical Examiner said that it appeared that his body had been in the park for some time. We continue to be very concerned about security at the park.

Moreover, we were told early on that PACs are successful if the park supervisor is onboard and if you work with them; we have had our challenges there as well. We were told there are no politics in the park; we have had our challenges there too. For example, Avalon Park does not have outdoor basketball activities for our kids. The basketball hoops have been a continuous problem (especially for new families moving in and wanting their children to participate in basketball), because the nets have been down for almost 5 years (pictured below). There has been no cooperation or willingness shown by the park supervisor, the Alderman, or the Chicago Park District Board, even after a petition was

presented with over 300 residential signatures showing the community's desire for outside basketball. Our kids can't play basketball outside, but if they want to play inside they have to pay \$5.00. If they can't pay the fee, there are forms they are requested to fill out showing a need for financial support. And on top of it all, our latest challenge, being asked to pay for room rental for a healthcare workshop.

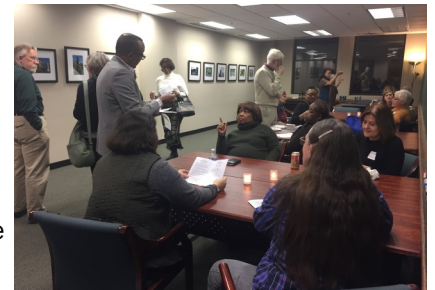
So as you can see, we've had a busy first year and we are up to the challenge the coming years may bring. The very last thing we did at the end of 2017 was have an open house where we were able to give away holiday decorations to all who attended (pictured on the bottom of page 1) and we signed up ten new members at the event (pictured left). We are excited to grow our PAC and to continue to push for changes to ensure our park serves the needs of our residents.

**To learn more about APAC, visit their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/avalonparkadvisorycouncil](http://www.facebook.com/avalonparkadvisorycouncil)**



## PAC AND PPO RESOURCES: THE COMMUNITY LAW PROJECT

In 2017, Friends of the Parks and the Community Law Project (CLP) teamed up to put on a PAC Quarterly Networking meeting series called *Alphabet Soup 101*. The series covered topics such as: To be or not to be a NFPC (Not-For-Profit Corporation) or 501c3; How to be an Effective FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) Requester; and CBAs (Community Benefits Agreements): A Tool to Leverage Local Power. CLP has been a supporter of PACs and other park partner organizations (PPOs) through this work, but they have also made themselves available to PACs that want to become a nonprofit and are considering becoming a 501c3 charity organization. They do provide free legal services to eligible nonprofit organizations that work to improve low-income communities, on nonprofit development and much more. Visit their website at [www.clccrul.org/community-law-proiect](http://www.clccrul.org/community-law-proiect) to learn how they can be a resource to you.



Picture from the 2017 Winter Quarterly PAC Networking Meeting at the FOTP office

THE  
FOTP  
TREE  
SAYS...



...add your Park Supervisor and Friends of the Parks as agenda items during your PAC meeting. At every monthly PAC meeting, have your Park Supervisor or staff present a "Park Supervisor Report." The report can include the following items, if not more!

- Maintenance and work order updates (If your supervisor refuses to share work order info, let us know)
- Program updates and enrollments
- Upcoming events

Don't forget to add Friends of the Parks as an item as well. Update other PAC members on upcoming FOTP events, opportunities and resources.