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Hillsborough parks reopen playgrounds, soccer fields; earn state honors

Florida Recreation and Park Association tabs county for community building.



Hillsborough County is again allowing soccer and lacrosse games to be played on county fields, which had been shut down because of the coronavirus pandemic. [DOUGLAS R. CLIFFORD | Times]

By [C.T. Bowen](#)

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TAMPA — Hillsborough County Parks & Recreation department earned two top honors from the Florida Recreation and Park Association.

The county won a 2020 agency excellence award in the community building category for its 166 parks, 118 playgrounds, 53 community centers, and nearly 50 sports complexes. The department also manages 55 youth sports organizations that served 26,439 youth participants last year.

The department's accomplishments include transforming Lucy Dell Pond park from an overgrown water basin that attracted illegal dumping to an attractive pond featuring an LED-lit boardwalk and native landscaping. The department also led the creation of Carrollwood Village Park, which turned a decommissioned wastewater treatment facility into a park with an amphitheater, fitness challenge course, skate park, dog park, splash park, inclusive playground, and 24-hour gym for county deputies.

The state association also named Nature Program Specialist Brad Lympany as the 2020 rising star for his work developing and implementing Parks & Recreation programs and building relationships with the community.

Lympany is involved with several of the department's most popular programs, including hiking spree, Senior's Outdoor Active Recreation (SOAR), and eco-adventure camp. Lympany works with a wide variety of community groups, including Outdoor Afro, which is dedicated to getting members of the Black community out on hiking trails, and the **Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network**.

The honors were announced the same week the county reopened its playgrounds and splash parks that had been shuttered by the coronavirus pandemic. Additionally, the county said this week it again would allow soccer and lacrosse competitions to return to its fields.

Youth and adult soccer and lacrosse leagues must apply to Hillsborough County for permission to resume games and tournaments. Teams have been allowed to use fields for practices and conditioning for several weeks, but games and tournaments have not been permitted since late March.

To receive permission to resume games, each league can submit a plan, that must be approved by Hillsborough County Parks & Recreation, detailing plans for social distancing, sanitation, scheduling, and other measures to assure the safety of players, volunteers, and fans. See PRK-Fields@HCFLGov.net to submit plans or to seek more information.