



Awards of Distinction

Category:

Outstanding  
Renovated Facility  
(Small District)

# CARPD Awards of Distinction

## Outstanding Activity/Special Event - Nominee



### Outstanding Activity/Special Event - Nominee

**Criteria:** Honors outstanding and unique achievements in program planning, development, and implementation of a District activity or special event.

**Nominee:** Pass Area Youth Baseball & Softball League Transition

**District:** Beaumont-Cherry Valley Recreation & Park District

#### District Submission:



#### Summary of Nomination

The Beaumont-Cherry Valley Recreation & Park District proudly submits the Pass Area Youth Baseball & Softball (PAYBS) League Transition for the 2026 CARPD Outstanding Activity, Program, or Special Event Award.

On January 9, 2026, with just one week's notice, the District assumed full responsibility for a youth baseball and softball program serving over 1,000 participants. Due to the previous organization's inability to fulfill its facility use agreement, the District acted immediately to ensure that the community would not lose one of its most vital recreational programs.

Within days, District staff mobilized to rebuild the league from the ground up. Evaluations were successfully conducted on January 17, followed by the rapid development of team rosters, practice schedules, and game calendars. Simultaneously, staff coordinated uniform orders, secured volunteers, and planned major community events including Opening Day, Picture Day, a Pancake Breakfast, and a community Clean-Up Day.

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All of this was accomplished while maintaining the District’s regular operations and service levels. The success of this transition is a direct reflection of the dedication, adaptability, and teamwork demonstrated by District staff.

Beyond logistics, the District used this opportunity to establish a renewed vision for youth sports—one centered on inclusivity, skill development, and positive character building. The community response has been overwhelmingly positive, with families expressing appreciation for the District’s leadership and commitment to providing quality programming.

The PAYBS transition represents more than an operational success—it is a testament to the District’s ability to respond to urgent community needs, build programs from the ground up, and create meaningful recreational opportunities that will have a lasting impact on local youth.

Thank you for your consideration of this nomination.

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## CARPD Awards of Distinction Outstanding Activity/Special Event - Nominee



### Outstanding Activity/Special Event - Nominee

**Criteria:** Honors outstanding and unique achievements in program planning, development, and implementation of a District activity or special event.

**Nominee:** Forward Ever, Backward Never

**District:** Isla Vista Recreation and Park District

#### District Submission:



#### Summary of Nomination

The Isla Vista Recreation & Park District's annual "Forward Ever, Backward Never" celebration has become a cornerstone cultural event in the Isla Vista community. Now in its fifth year, this special event honors Black history and culture while creating meaningful connections between students, residents, artists, and community leaders. Through thoughtful planning and partnerships, the event has grown into a highly anticipated annual tradition that reflects IVRPD's commitment to inclusive and impactful community programming.

In 2020, the idea for IVRPD's "Forward Ever, Backward Never" event was developed in response to the national movement following the murder of George Floyd and the Isla Vista community's immediate response, which consisted of a peaceful vigil and a mural. In a region where less than 2% of the population identifies as Black, the event was intentionally created to provide a safe, inclusive space to celebrate Black culture and foster community connection. IVRPD General Manager Kimberly Kiefer initiated the program in collaboration with local artist Alla McKeon, alongside partnerships with the UCSB Office of Black Student Development, then led by the late Elroy Pinks, and poet Sojourner Kincaid Rolle. The first celebration was held in Little Acorn Park, and quickly evolved into the signature event it is today.

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Now hosted annually at the Isla Vista Community Center, the free event is designed as a multigenerational gathering where local musicians, art, soul food, and storytelling bring people together to celebrate heritage. With steadily increasing attendance and visibility, “Forward Ever, Backward Never” has become a beloved annual tradition within Isla Vista and the greater Santa Barbara area, and remains the only and longest-running Black History Month celebration in the community.

The program is uniquely shaped through strong partnerships with community and campus organizations. IVRPD collaborates closely with the University of California, Santa Barbara’s Office of Black Student Development and the UCSB Black Student Union to ensure the event reflects and uplifts the voices and experiences of the Black community.

The 2026 celebration marked the program’s five-year anniversary and featured a diverse lineup of performances and activities. Highlights included a reggae performance by Santa Barbara based band Alla McKeon & The Rahkas, spoken word poetry presentations, an interactive drumming workshop, and a DJ performance. Community members also participated in trivia and cultural activities throughout the evening. The program also serves as a platform to honor the legacies of influential community leaders such as Elroy Pinks and poet Sojourner Kincaid Rolle, whose work helped uplift and support the Black community in Isla Vista.

Additionally, the event highlights local businesses and community partners. Guests enjoyed complimentary soul food prepared by locally owned Black business Leylany’s Sweet Treats, demonstrating IVRPD’s commitment to supporting local entrepreneurs.

The event’s impact has also been recognized through regional media coverage that noted the event’s interactive programming, encouraging attendees to engage directly with the celebration. Participants have described the experience as “moving” and “uplifting”, reflecting the meaningful role the event plays in cultivating connection and cultural pride within Isla Vista. The continued growth of “Forward Ever, Backward Never” demonstrates the power of culturally responsive programming in building stronger communities. By honoring history, uplifting artists and community leaders, and creating a welcoming space for dialogue and celebration, the Isla Vista Recreation & Park District has developed a program that celebrates Black culture and strengthens the sense of community in Isla Vista.

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## Outstanding Activity/Special Event - Nominee



### Outstanding Activity/Special Event - Nominee

**Criteria:** Honors outstanding and unique achievements in program planning, development, and implementation of a District activity or special event.

**Nominee:** Trunk or Treat

**District:** Rio Linda Elverta Recreation and Park District

#### District Submission:



#### Summary of Nomination

The Rio Linda Elverta Recreation and Park District host a number of Special Events annually. What we have witnessed during the past two years is a large increase in Community participation and attendance. This has been most prevalent with our Trunk or Treat (hosted the Friday prior to Halloween) and our Breakfast with Santa (hosted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of December).

Since the COVID-19 pandemic the annual Trunk or Treat has become more popular in the community. The event has expanded from 18 community members displaying trunks to a full parking lot with 35 trunks decorated in 2025. The groups who work on their trunks to display have also become more inventive with their decorations. All participants chase after the coveted "Best Decorated Trunk" award annually. In 2025 we saw a full mockup of Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory, complete with Oompa Loompas; a scene from Wicked; the Scooby Doo Mystery Van; and much more, including our local FFA group recreating a barn scene to tie into their farming theme.

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What has been more impressive is the growth of the program from our Community. In the past our Recreation staff was ecstatic when we had around 500 children show up for the event. After years of steady increases in attendance, we are proud to say that there were more than 1,750 children in attendance with their families. We also had more than 1,000 people visit our haunted house located just beside the Trunk or Treat parking lot.



The haunted house is decorated by our local high school drama club. The students with one of their teachers also act as the cast of zombies and ghosts in the facility. The haunted house is in its third year of existence and has gotten more elaborate each year.

This event has become a cornerstone event for the Rio Linda Elverta Recreation and Park District. When we have staff out in the community, we hear people comment all the time that “this is the same group that hosts the trunk or treat.” People talk about the fun they had for months on end and exclaim that they cannot wait to see the next year’s version.

Special Events are a key component of any Recreationally based program. In the Rio Linda and Elverta communities, we are witnessing that these events are wanted and needed by a very tight knit community and we are proud to produce them and watch their growth throughout the years.

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# CARPD Awards of Distinction

## Outstanding Activity/Special Event - Nominee



### Outstanding Activity/Special Event - Nominee

**Criteria:** Honors outstanding and unique achievements in program planning, development, and implementation of a District activity or special event.

**Nominee:** Full STEAM Ahead Summer Program

**District:** West Side Recreation Park District

#### District Submission:



#### Summary of Nomination

The Full STEAM Ahead Summer Program represents what we believe youth programming should look like when a community comes together with purpose, hands-on, and built around creating real opportunity for kids.

At the West Side Recreation and Park District, we serve a rural community where access to enrichment programs is limited for many families. Full STEAM Ahead was created to meet that need, and over the past two years, it has grown into a program that now serves over 400 students each summer across multiple school sites.

What makes this program truly special is how it continues to evolve. We have intentionally expanded beyond traditional programming to incorporate hands-on STEM experiences that expose students to new possibilities. Students are working with drones, learning coding fundamentals, exploring journalism and media, and engaging in creative problem-solving activities that make learning exciting and relevant.

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At the same time, we never lose sight of the importance of community. Over the past two years, we have incorporated back-to-school backpack giveaways into the program, ensuring that students not only leave with new knowledge and confidence, but also with the tools they need to succeed when the school year begins.

A major strength of Full STEAM Ahead is our team. We have made a commitment to building a strong staffing model by hiring young adults from our community, including local athletes, high school students, aspiring teachers, and college students, alongside experienced and certificated educators. This creates a powerful environment where students are supported by mentors they can relate to, while also benefiting from structured, high-quality instruction.

More than anything, this program is something we are proud of. It reflects our belief that every child deserves the chance to learn, grow, and feel supported. It reflects our commitment to doing the work the right way. And it reflects a vision that we will continue to build on for years to come.

Full STEAM Ahead is not just a program—it is an investment in our community’s future.

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