

PORTLAND BROWNSTONE QUORUM WINS 2018 CONNECTICUT RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION
SELECTED ORGANIZATION AWARD



The Brownstone Quorum was presented the 2018 Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association Selected Organization Award at a Luncheon Tuesday, November 20th. The awarded goes to an outstanding voluntary organization that has contributed to the field of public recreation and parks, significant enough to have had a stimulating effect on recreation at a town, city, state or national level, the Brownstone Quorum is responsible for the development of the Portland Riverfront Park and securing the Brownstone Quarries a National Historical Landmark.

The 40 acres of wooded area that many years ago was were the unusable Brownstone slabs were placed has now become a very active and passive recreation area, mainly due to the efforts of the Brownstone Quorum, a group of dedicated volunteers for almost 20 years. Through the early years of the Quorum, they help the town purchase Quarries and land along the Connecticut River and established the Quarries as a National Historical Landmark. The brownstone from the quarries has been used all around the world. The quarries stopped its operation after the storms of 1936 and 1938, but Portland Brownstone history was solidified in our history.

By the Mid 2000's, the Brownstone Quarries became the Brownstone Exploration and Discovery Park and the Brownstone Quorum found a new goal and vision, to turn the 40 acres of wooded overgrowth into a beautiful riverfront park for the community and region. The task was never easy, working with

town and state officials; they were able to gain grants to help with projects to improved infrastructure and amenities in the park. But before any of this could happen, they need to start to clear the park, most of the work done by them, the volunteers. Not long, there was an area of grass along the river that was the turning stone that made this dream possible.

In the early days, the Brownstone Quorum had small events to bring awareness and families to the area. Canoe Day on the Quarries and the September Brownstone Festivals, those events were just a sample of what was to come. Through there tireless efforts and continue drive to make this a park for everyone, 2018 brought on a very successful year. The current amenities are a pavilion, bathrooms, band shell, parking area, story book walk, and picnic area next to the river, outdoor volleyball court, benches, and a blazed trail system. Our events in 2018 included rentals at the pavilion almost every weekend, four weddings, a family Aerial Circus Extravaganza, Youth Service annual Little Hikes walk and lunch, 5K Come on Over Zombie Run, our 7th annual concert series that brought over 3000 people to watch our 5 shows, and Brownstone Quorum own two events Music and Arts Festival as well as the hugely popular Haunted Trail Walk.

As the Brownstone Quorum looks ahead into the 2019, there are two potential new additions, a labyrinth and a gazebo. The labyrinth has been a long time goal for the Quorum and with their commitment to the park; I would not be surprise to see it soon. Almost 20 years is a long time for a volunteer group to stay together, their bonds have formed many friendships and the park they help create will allow people to have many memories. To this day, they still do a work party once a month. My favorite memory this summer was during a walk through for a weekend rental, I asked the gentleman if he had been to park before. He told me about an eagle scout project he did years ago when the park was in its early development, thus one of the first eagle scout projects. This is a great example of how long the Brownstone Quorum has been committed to park, years ago an Eagle Scout completed his project as a rite of passage in the scouts and years later, he and his friends celebrate as he gets ready for another rite of passage, his wedding.

Congratulation to the Brownstone Quorum and THANK YOU for everything you have done to create the Portland Riverfront Park.

Sean Dwyer

Director of Portland Parks and Recreation