



We  parks!

Summer 2026

Take a Walk in the Park 2026

47 passports stamped

7 door prizes awarded

\$600 raised for Eco-Earth



Thank You to volunteers and participants!

Salem Parks Foundation



Ways to Give to Salem's parks



- **Mail** a check to Salem Parks Foundation at P.O. Box 5764, Salem, OR 97304 or **donate online** at www.salemparksfoundation.org.
- **If you are over age 72**, arrange with your IRA custodian to send some or all of your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) directly to Salem Parks Foundation. This is called a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD).
- **Not 72 yet?** You can still make a Qualified Charitable Distribution at age 70 1/2.
- **Make a charitable bequest** in your will to SPF and/or name it as a retirement plan beneficiary.
- **Link** your Fred Meyer Rewards card to **SPF** at www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards.
- **Bottle Drop/Give** Fill pre-labeled blue bags with cans and bottles. Drop them off at a Bottle Drop site. Send an e-mail to info@salemparksfoundation.org We will arrange to get the bags to you. Half of the proceeds from BottleDrop go to the Eco-Earth project.
- **Consider gifting** the park lovers on your list with a donation to Eco-Earth in their honor.
- **Honor or remember** a loved one with an honor or memorial gift.

Summer 2026 Park Heroes Saili Mahanti and Emma Zheng: Working to make parks fun for everybody!



Saili Mahanti and Emma Zheng

Student-Led Effort to Improve Park Accessibility

Saili Mahanti and Emma Zheng, sophomores at South Salem High School, are working to improve accessibility in Salem's parks, starting with a project at Aldrich Park. Their effort began when Saili discovered The Recess Project, <https://www.therecessproject.org/>, an organization that promotes disability inclusion and accessible playgrounds. After connecting with one of the group's board members, she learned more about how to launch a similar effort in Salem.

Community Partnerships and Progress

Emma and Saili networked with community members to connect with staff at the Salem-Keizer School District Facilities, Salem Parks Operations, and the Southeast Salem Neighborhood Association (SESNA). As word spread about their vision, community support began to grow.

In response, SESNA applied for and received a \$5,000 Salem Parks Improvement Fund (SPIF) grant to support the purchase of wheelchair-accessible playground equipment. This grant will be matched by the City of Salem Parks and Recreation Department. Emma and Saili estimate these grants will cover about one quarter of the total cost needed to bring the Aldrich Park project to reality. They continue the project by:

- Working with SESNA to identify the playground equipment the community would most like to add to Aldrich Park.
- Collaborating with the City of Salem's Park Planning and Operations departments to confirm safety and feasibility requirements.
- Planning additional fundraising efforts to secure the remaining project funds.

wheelchair accessible merry go rounds



Why This Work Matters

Saili and Emma were motivated by what they had seen in local parks: families arriving together, but children who use wheelchairs often left watching while others played. They believe this kind of exclusion affects not only the child who is unable to participate, but also the peers and adults around them, shaping how disability is understood in the community. After looking more closely at parks across Salem, they concluded that many still fall short of being truly inclusive and accessible.

To support this project, mark your donation "Aldrich Park Accessibility and Inclusion Project."



Congratulation to the winners!
Salem Parks Foundation's 2026 Neighborhood Park grant award

- **Central Area Neighborhood Development Organization**
 - Marion Square Park - Basketball court restriping \$2,000
- **West Salem Neighborhood Association**
 - College Heights Park - bench and trail map \$5,170
 - Straub Nature Park - trail map \$1,200
- **Northgate Neighborhood Association**
 - Northgate Park - Mural repair and plexiglass \$4,200
- **North East Salem Community Association**
 - D Street Park - one bench \$1,400
 - Geer park - upgrade to 2 kiosks \$1,550
- **Morningside Neighborhood Association**
 - Fairview Park - one bench \$3,500

Eco Earth Update

The City of Salem has received two condition assessments and renovation estimates for Eco-Earth. Both determined that Eco-Earth has deteriorated to the point that repair is no longer feasible and complete restoration is necessary. Both strongly recommend that once repaired, a maintenance plan should be implemented. The estimates are \$1.3 million and \$1.5 million. The lower estimate does not include removal and abatement of the asbestos layer around the globe, but the Salem Public Works Department has stated that the asbestos layer must be removed. Both these estimates are far beyond the \$419,000 raised so far for Eco-Earth. This number includes donations, grants and the City's contribution of \$112,000 in-kind support.

The Salem Public Art Commission, overseers of the Salem Public Art Collection, has unanimously passed a motion encouraging the City to explore all options for the restoration and conservation of the Eco-Earth globe. The City is looking for partners for additional fundraising. Salem Parks Foundation continues to advocate and fundraise for the Eco-Earth restoration project.

We appreciate your support!

To support Eco-Earth renovation, donate all the ways mentioned on page 1 or use this QR code to go directly to our webpage donation site.



Fairview Park: Some history and a look to the future

The future Fairview Park in South Salem is designed to incorporate a significant **History Plaza / interpretive space** as part of its \$19 million redevelopment, specifically aiming to educate visitors on the 26+ acre site's past as the Fairview Training Center. The park, located at 2220 Strong Road S.E., is scheduled to begin construction in 2027.



Fairview Park lies within a region of the Willamette Valley originally inhabited by the Santiam bands of the Kalapuya people. Prior to the arrival of non-native and Euro-American settlers in the mid-1800s, the Kalapuya tended and maintained the Willamette Valley. Methodist missionaries arrived in the area in 1840. The Fairview Park property is part of a 640-acre parcel that was claimed, settled, and cleared for agriculture during this period. Today, descendants of the Kalapuya are primarily members of the federally-recognized Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.

For most of the 20th century, the Fairview Park property hosted the state-operated facility that housed Oregonians with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Center opened in 1908 and housed over 10,000 residents in total by its closure in 2000.

History Plaza & Educational Features

- **Designated History Plaza:** The plaza is slated to act as the educational heart of the park, educating visitors on the site's history as a state-run institution for people with developmental disabilities, which operated from 1908 to 2000.
- **Adaptive Reuse of Materials:** A key feature of the history plaza will be the reuse of red bricks, which were salvaged from buildings on the old Fairview property, to create a tangible link to the site's past.
- **Interpretive Signage & Spaces:** The project includes an "Interpretive Space" that will feature art, historical, and educational components to share the stories of the thousands of residents who lived there, addressing the site's complex history.

Funding for Education: In 2025, Salem was allocated nearly \$825,000 from the State of Oregon for these specific interpretive improvements, supporting the construction of the educational space and associated site improvements.



The history plaza is part of the first phase of development, which focuses on transforming the underdeveloped site into a public amenity, featuring a splash fountain, a dog park, and 8 pickleball courts.

Donations for the Fairview History Plaza are greatly appreciated!

Muriel Meyer, Morningside Neighborhood Parks Chair

To support this project, specify Fairview History Plaza on your check or online form