



Mike Griggs

Director, Columbia
Parks and Recreation
Department

PHOTO BY ANTHONY JINSON

JOB DESCRIPTION

Managing and overseeing all parks and recreation services offered by the City of Columbia in order to meet the recreational needs of city residents. Directing the city's long-range parks and recreation services development and capital improvement planning while ensuring compliance with all relevant regulations.

HOMETOWN

Columbia.

YEARS LIVED IN COLUMBIA

59 years.

QUOTE YOU LIVE BY

"Every time you are able to find humor in a difficult situation, you win."

FAVORITE VOLUNTEER OR COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

Years ago, it was coaching my two sons in a variety of youth sports, and now it's the Roots N Blues N BBQ Festival. What a great event for Columbia!

FAVORITE RECENT PROJECT

That's like picking my favorite son! I love the partnerships we developed in working on the MU Health Care Pavilion at the farmers' market, the Gans Creek Cross Country Course, and the sports fieldhouse. »

A CITY OF COLUMBIA EMPLOYEE YOU ADMIRE

John Glascock and I spent a lot of time together when he was the public works director and when he was deputy city manager. During all this time, I admired his honesty, desire to do what's best for all of Columbia, and his strength in making the hard decisions. (Wish I could have answered this before he was promoted to city manager, because now it sounds a bit self-serving!)

WHY YOU ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT YOUR JOB

I have the best job in Columbia and truly feel honored to represent our department. We provide parks, trails, facilities, and recreational programs and events for Columbians of all ages. Whether you enjoy taking nature strolls on trails and greenspaces, watching the Fourth of July fireworks, or participating in competitive or recreational sports, we have something for you. I recently met a woman a few years older than me who had recently lost her husband. She told me she didn't know what she would do if it wasn't for the staff and programs offered at the Hillcrest Community Center. That's why I'm passionate about what I do.

WHY YOU ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT COLUMBIA'S PARKS

Columbia doesn't have an ocean or a beach, a theme park, a major water park, mountains, a marina, or a pro sports team. But thanks to citizen support, we do have a beautiful park and trail system to distinguish our city and help draw families to want to live here. Our park system is an integral part of our community, as can be seen by how often parks are featured in our local newspapers and news channels. We receive about 200 requests a year from our citizens to host special events in our parks, from weddings to major music concerts. It's hard to imagine Columbia without its parks, and I am so happy to play a part in it.

WHAT PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR PROFESSION

The positive impact that a parks and recreation agency can have on its community by supporting economic development, strengthening safety and security, fostering human development, increasing cultural unity, protecting

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environmental resources, strengthening community image and sense of place, providing recreational experiences, facilitating community problem solving, and promoting health and wellness is often undervalued and underestimated. Thankfully, that's not the case in Columbia, which makes me so proud to work in and be a part of this community.

IF YOU WEREN'T DOING THIS FOR A LIVING, YOU WOULD . . .

I started off in journalism before switching to parks and recreation, so an ideal job outside of the work I do now would be a sports writer.

THE NEXT CHALLENGE FACING YOUR DEPARTMENT

Overall, the City of Columbia has funding needs, as sales tax is not collected fairly between local stores and online retailers. For our department, we have numerous employees that will be retiring over the next three to five years, and being able to recruit quality candidates and train new staff is a priority. We want the next generation of employees to uphold the high standards established many years ago.

YOUR NEXT PROFESSIONAL GOAL

As I will likely be one of those retiring in the next several years, my goal is to develop a comprehensive succession plan for not just my position, but for all other positions in our department. We want passionate, dedicated public servants to carry on our tradition of excellence.

MOST PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE THIS ABOUT COLUMBIA'S PARKS

In our last parks and recreation citizen survey, it was revealed that 92% of Columbia households use our parks and 82% use our trails. How many businesses or services can say they serve that large of a portion of our community?

HOW YOU WANT TO IMPACT THE COLUMBIA COMMUNITY

I want to continue the high standards and quality of services that were established by former directors Dick Green and Mike Hood.

FAVORITE COLUMBIA RESTAURANT AND A DISH YOU'D RECOMMEND

I've been going to Tony's Pizza since high school. You can't beat their gyros.

WHAT YOU DO TO RELAX

I love exploring our local and state parks.

WHAT YOU DO FOR FUN

Anything related to sports.

FAVORITE OUTDOOR ACTIVITY IN THE SPRING

Riding our bikes on MKT Trail to the Forum 8 movie theater. The bike ride justifies the insane amount of popcorn I eat.

FAVORITE PLACE IN COLUMBIA

While I love several of our parks, from Cosmo to Stephens Lake, my favorite, full-of-memories (good and bad) location is MU's Memorial Stadium.

ACCOMPLISHMENT YOU ARE MOST PROUD OF

I believe our department has a good reputation with the citizens and visitors to Columbia. This is because we honor our promises to voters in regards to the commitments made in the park sales tax renewal ballot issues. Our staff works hard in soliciting public input and listening to what people want, thus we're able to develop parks and projects that people want and are willing to support. Finally, we strive to be excellent stewards of the resources entrusted to us.

A SURPRISING FACT ABOUT YOU

I think people would be surprised to know that I have an extensive baseball card and comic book collection. My parents didn't throw them away!! 📖