

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

Many of the nation's largest cities lie along the east and west coasts; the Midwest often evokes images of rural lifestyles and industrial farms and facilities. Yet cities like Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Kansas City, and St. Louis are examples of cities in the region that defy the agrarian stereotype of the mid-continent. St. Louis is home to nearly 3 million people. The metropolitan area features prominent historical relevance to the civil war, the outset of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the themes of Westward Expansion, and is a major regional center of Native American Mississippian culture.

St. Louis boasts attractions beyond those connected to western expansion or Native American culture as well. As host of the 1904 World's Fair, St. Louis is credited with the introduction of the ice cream cone by a Syrian concessionaire. The last remaining site from the Fair—the St. Louis Art Museum—is one of many free major visitor attractions in the city. In fact, St. Louis promotes that, outside of Washington D.C., it offers the most free major visitor attractions in the U.S., helping to make cultural and natural resources more accessible to its population and the 26 million tourists that visit the city each year.

The major attraction in the city is the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial which includes the Gateway Arch and Old Courthouse. The partnership park is full of complex history and also served as the home base for Urban Fellow Tara Rath

during her time in the Urban Agenda pilot program. Rath expressed some of the challenges and outcomes of the pilot in the partnership park. She also touched on her work building sustainable partnerships and institutionalizing the Urban Agenda principles among Jefferson National Expansion Memorial staff.

The Jefferson National Expansion Memorial is one of six partners that make up the CityArchRiver Alliance, a partnership between the city, non-profit organizations and NPS. The Alliance strives to connect the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial with downtown.

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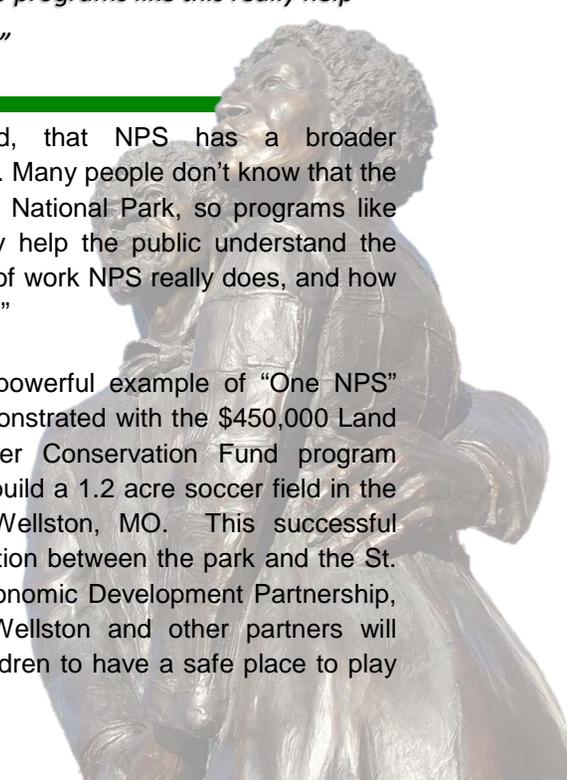
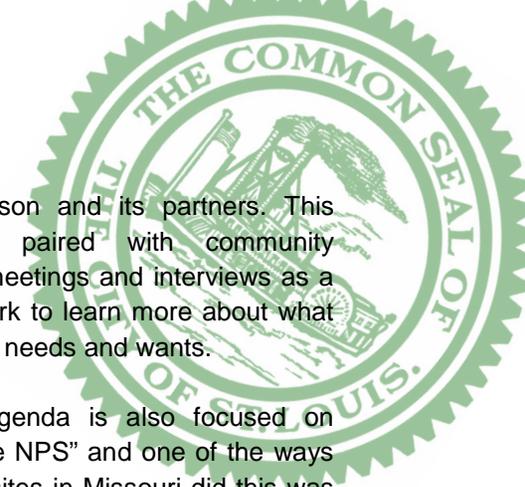
The Urban Agenda is built around being relevant to all Americans and nurturing a culture of collaboration. Building upon these two principles Rath and NPS leaders utilized the Urban Agenda to bring relevancy, diversity, and inclusion training to the staff at Jefferson to improve staff capacity to plan and interpret with a diverse audience in mind. Over 100 people participated in the training, including all levels of Park Service employees as well as partners. Bringing everyone together for this training allowed participants to meaningfully discuss these topics and ultimately led to instilling the ideas of relevance and collaboration in the work of

staff at Jefferson and its partners. This training was paired with community engagement meetings and interviews as a way for the park to learn more about what the community needs and wants.

The Urban Agenda is also focused on activating “One NPS” and one of the ways that the NPS sites in Missouri did this was through the creation of the Missouri National Parks Passport. The passport connected the six Park Service units in Missouri, and challenged park-goers to visit every park in the state. Rath indicated that, “The passport helps people understand that all these sites are

connected, that NPS has a broader presence. Many people don’t know that the Arch is a National Park, so programs like this really help the public understand the diversity of work NPS really does, and how large it is.”

Another powerful example of “One NPS” was demonstrated with the \$450,000 Land and Water Conservation Fund program grant to build a 1.2 acre soccer field in the City of Wellston, MO. This successful collaboration between the park and the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, City of Wellston and other partners will allow children to have a safe place to play



outdoors in an area that is underserved by parks. This grant and collaboration allows NPS to show the impact that it can have on a community outside of “parks”.

LESSONS LEARNED

Aligning Methods & Staying Consistent

“I was particularly successful during the pilot because NPS was able to align its mission with those of its partners. We also created and maintained a regular reporting schedule with each other and our partners,” Rath notes. Aligning not only the missions but the method made for more efficient collaboration, allowing staff to stay updated on concurrent work and offer ideas to continue enhancing programs and operations. Ultimately this coordination allowed projects to come together more smoothly, and led to strong partnership-building by reaffirming the Park Service’s strengths in its capacity and ability to convene partners around a central vision.

Plan for Longevity

Sustainability is a key concern expressed by many of the Fellows. Rath affirms that beyond the goal of designing long-term partnerships and projects all programs should be designed “knowing that funding sources will change and there will be transitions in leadership.” To prepare for these inevitable pivots means building in sustainability from the outset of a project and allows successful events to serve as scalable models for other parks/programs.

Know When to Use The Power of the Flat Hat

“There were times when I really wished I was wearing the uniform while gathering people together. It holds weight with staff and partners, and would’ve commanded more attention,” Rath admits, noting that the position was not uniformed. But as recognizable and powerful as the uniform is, Rath also noted that many St. Louis residents are not familiar with the uniform, that it resembles the uniforms of law enforcement agencies. This can and does alienate visitors who don’t know that the Park Service is the management entity and is present at the Arch, or other NPS sites in urban areas. “While familiarizing the public with the true scope of the Park Service, it’s important to remember the negative and positive power in the Park Service logo—for the times that I wished I was in uniform, there were

times I was more effective in finding support without it. I hope that NPS uniformed employees in urban parks can embrace their communities by being in uniform outside of park borders, bringing awareness to urban NPS sites and dispelling negativity about the uniform.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NPS

Rath’s fellowship extends to the end of 2017, unlike many of the other fellowships that wrapped up in July of the same year. Excited to continue implementing the Urban Agenda, Rath offered some broad recommendations for how to expand the pilot principles as the pilot fulfills its mandate. Through the sharing of information across digital platforms, NPS could continue to reach a broad cohort of employees to institutionalize the lessons learned by the fellows and their partners. By illustrating models of Urban Agenda projects through digitally accessible platforms, NPS can offer staff the chance to better engage with the Agenda, and continue to enhance these models for their own parks and partners. In tandem, Rath notes that NPS would only benefit from more regular communication with itself. By not only informing, but giving a voice to staff at all levels while promoting communication across park units and program offices, NPS has an opportunity to build on its strengths, enhance its capacity and visibility as a more unified agency, and provide a diverse pool of voices and ideas to better design new programs.

