

Featured PaRC Member: Carol Rice

Carol Rice has served on the [Parks and Recreation Commission](#) since its formation in 2009. She began her career with the City of Philadelphia three days after graduating from Penn State University and retired from the Department of Recreation in 1999, after 35 years of service.

We asked Carol to speak to us about her professional work, as well as her role on the Commission.

Tell us a bit about your career at the Recreation Department.

When I first came to Recreation, I was working with the poverty programs, training kids in job placements and using rec centers as places of work. I then went on to do all of the community outreach with day camps and similar programs. In 1994, I was appointed deputy commissioner under Michael DiBerardinis. That's when I became responsible for the Program division--all rec centers, playgrounds, and the Dell—until I left in 1999.

What role do you play on the Commission?

I like to think I have a real understanding of the Department. Even though I was primarily involved with the rec side, we did have parks and we did communicate with Fairmount Park. My background allows me to speak knowledgeably about the different areas of the city and different problems (and resources) those areas may have.

What changes have you seen in PaRC since its formation?

The first couple of years, we were trying to figure out who we were and what our role was, especially because we're different from the old Fairmount Park Commission. We had to identify who we were. We started off with the land ordinance, and that gave us a way to begin to make headway and for people to recognize we were there.

We've been able to get across to the community that we are here, and that they can come in to speak to us. We did this by going into the community [for the Commission's bimonthly meetings]. That has helped. We are now—with the [proposed Temple University] boathouse, with Audubon/Outward Bound [proposed East Park Leadership and Conservation Center]--we are recognized and people want to give their opinion to us. They know they have someone to listen to regarding their concerns.

How do you “park & recreate”? (Do you have a favorite park or facility?)

I raised my family in Mount Airy. My son played out of Water Tower, and he was on all the Father's Day programs, so I'm partial to that area.

But I grew up in West Philly, and Shepard Playground was the closest to us. We used to go to Fairmount Park also because there was a pool there, so I'm very familiar with West Park.

Then on Landsdowne Avenue, there's a playground--Baker Playground—that's named after my father.

So I can't say I have a favorite; I like it all and I definitely used the system when I was younger.

Anything else you'd like to say?

The merger was the right thing to do. I am looking forward to seeing the improvements that will be made because of it. I hope that this merger brings MORE, especially more where people utilize both sides. There's a lot of Fairmount Park area, and people in the inner city need to be exposed to it. We can do that, thanks to the merger: We can use our rec centers to get people into the parks. Kids, seniors... everyone. We can bring them into a different environment so they can see the "country" and get a view of something outside their community.