

World Park Leaders Grow Here – In a time of crisis (COVID19)

As the world faces its first crisis for this century in COVID19 and that it will touch us all in one way or another, it is important that as leaders in the urban park sector we understand the importance of our role and the contributions that parks will play in the response and recovery. It has been said that the true test of leadership is the response during a crisis.

And leadership is not just the domain of governments; we all have a role to play. We will all experience the exceptional leadership from individuals through our local charity, health worker or school children who provide the strength, happiness and hope during these challenging times.

We have faced many crisis moments before from bushfires to earthquakes to floods and even the long term climate change challenges, however, this public health crisis will highlight the absolute importance of connecting with nature as a way of coping with the social isolation and distancing we all will face during the next six months. With judicious and considered planning and understanding of your government guidelines, your local park, open spaces, streets or even your backyard should provide the daily opportunity for individuals to spend time in the outdoors, even if it is only to sit and contemplate life for 30 minutes.

The value of the local park, the local street will provide moments of stress release and additional health benefits and these are all extremely important in maintaining the body's immune system.

It is important that we respect the guidelines and directives that are being issued by every Government and health organization and ensure that you and your community are safe. If you require further information please refer to your local jurisdiction or WHO <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen>

I have to praise our colleagues who have already proactively been enabling parks to be an important part of the solution from. For example Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and City of Pittsburgh have closed facilities, cancelled programs and special events for the safety of their community, however they have actively promoted and encouraged Pittsburgh resident's to get outside in the parks, with social distancing, to recharge and to maintain emotional, physical and psychological well-being. Media outlets have reached out to park professionals in Pittsburgh to promote the value of residents getting out in parks in every neighbourhood in Pittsburgh during this crisis.

World Urban Parks will advocate with our partners regarding the value of urban parks and as an important social infrastructure to help communities to recover, reconnect and revitalise.

We realise that many of our events will not proceed during 2020 and we are working with our partners on providing clarity shortly. We will be exploring other alternatives that will enable you all to share your experiences and ideas, as we will all be looking for inspiration and ideas regarding the role of parks.

World Urban Parks with its members, partners and supporters will take a proactive approach to support you during these challenging times

Our thoughts are with you at this difficult time.

Neil McCarthy
CEO
World Urban Parks

