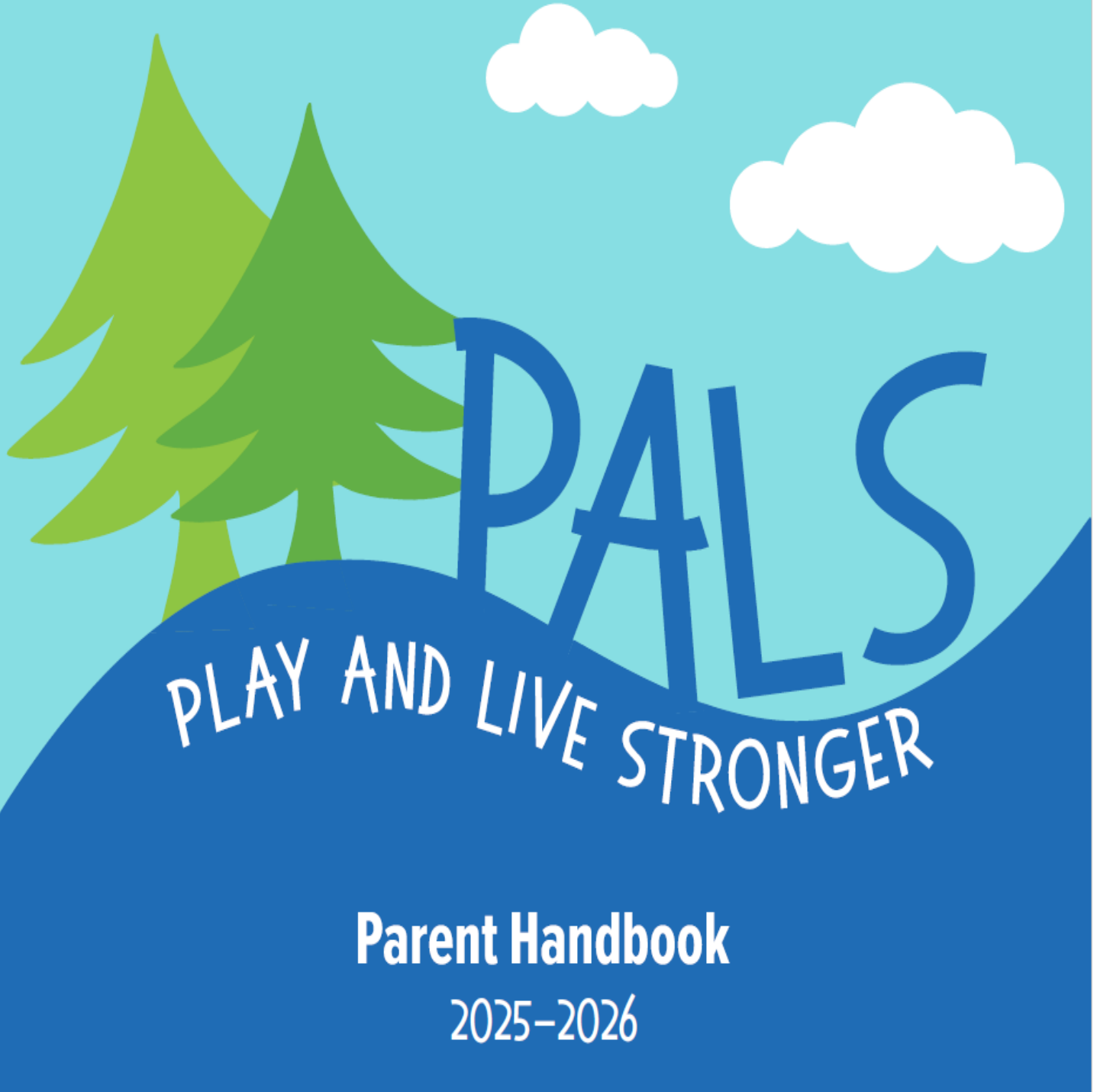


Before and After School Program

Hawthorn District 73 Schools | Grades K-5



Updates will be made to our PALS Afterschool Parent Handbook as necessary as guidelines/recommendations change.
Last Updated: August 13, 2025

Mission Statement

To promote diverse community-based recreational opportunities by providing a variety of programs, services, facilities, and natural spaces to enhance the quality of life for our residents.

Vision Statement

Addressing the lifelong leisure needs of all Vernon Hills residents.

Goals

To provide recreational opportunities that promotes physical and creative experiences outside of the classroom.

To provide a quiet atmosphere and assistance allowing children to complete their homework.

To provide quality care and a fun environment.

To promote socialization among the children.

Curriculum

Our curriculum is self-directed using interest and discovery areas. The activities incorporate all aspects of child development: social, emotional, physical and intellectual. Group activities, arts and crafts, gym/outdoor play, and time for homework are all a part of our program each day along with other interesting projects.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Vernon Hills Park District

847-996-6800

Sullivan Center

635 N. Aspen Dr.

Vernon Hills, IL 60061

PALS North, Townline/Dual Language

Nathalie Almora, Site Supervisor

224-361-5848

nathaliea@vhparkdistrict.org

PALS South/Aspen

Melissa Suarez, PM Site Supervisor

224-301-5305

AspenSouthPals@vhparkdistrict.org

Garima Gautam, AM Site Supervisor

224-301-5305

[TBD](#)

PALS Kindergarten

847-989-1637

Garima Gautam, Site Supervisor

[TBD](#)

PALS Recreation Supervisor:

847-996-6805

Anna Swain, Sullivan Center

annas@vhparkdistrict.org

PALS LOCATIONS

PALS North & Townline/Dual Language, AM and PM

PALS for North and Townline/Dual Language is located at Hawthorn Elementary North, 301 Hawthorn Parkway, Vernon Hills, IL 60061.

Both, pick up and drop off, will take place in the vestibule by the main entrance of Elementary North. Please ring the school's bell for Elementary North, located on the right side of the main doors and a PALS member will meet you.

PALS South & Aspen, AM and PM

PALS for South and Aspen is located at Hawthorn Elementary South, 430 N. Aspen Dr., Vernon Hills, IL 60061

PALS AM drop off will take place on the east side of Elementary South, just before the main entrance. The building door number is #2. Please ring the bell for PALS located at the side door.

PALS PM pick up will be by the front main doors of Elementary South, located immediately past the side door. Please ring the school's bell for Elementary South, located on the left side of the doors (white bell) and a PALS member will meet you.

PALS Kindy for Hawthorn School for Young Learners, AM and PM

The PALS Kindy AM program is combined with PALS South, located at 430 N Aspen Dr, Vernon Hills.

The PALS Kindy PM program is located at Hawthorn's School for Young Learners, 637 N. Aspen Drive, Vernon Hills, IL 60061.

For PALS Kindergarten AM please drop your child off at Hawthorn Elementary South. Drop off will take place on the east side of Elementary South, just before the main entrance. The building door number is #2. Please ring the bell for PALS.

Please drop you child off at PALS South no later than 7:30am. At that time our Kindergarteners will be getting ready to board a D73 school bus to drop them off at Hawthorn School for Young Learners.

PALS Kindy PM pick up will take place in the vestibule by the main entrance of the Hawthorn Young Learners Building. Please ring the white doorbell for PALS, located on the left side of the main doors and a PALS member will meet you.

DROP OFF & PICK UP

PALS AM: Hours of Operation are from **6:30am** until about 8am, depending on school start.

Please note that the earliest time to drop-off is 6:30am.

For children attending Aspen School: please drop your children off no later than 7:30am at PALS South since we will be walking students to school at that time.

For children attending Townline Elementary/Dual Language: please drop your children off no later than 8:00am at PALS North since we will be walking students to school at that time.

For children attending Hawthorn School of Young Learners: please drop you child off at PALS South no later than 7:30am. At that time our Kindergarteners will be getting ready to board a D73 school bus to drop them off at Hawthorn School for Young Learners.

PALS PM: Hours of Operation are from school dismissal until 6pm.

For children attending Aspen School: Aspen students will be walked to Elementary South after dismissal of Elementary South to join PALS.

For safety reasons, please wait to pick up your children until they are accounted for and checked in at PALS South.

For children attending Townline Elementary/Dual Language: PALS Townline/Dual Language students will be walked to Elementary North after dismissal at TL/DL is complete, PALS has completed their attendance and all children are accounted for. For safety reasons, please wait to pick up your children until they are accounted for and checked in at PALS North.

ePACT Network and PALS child data forms

All PALS forms such as PALS Data Forms including emergency contacts and authorized pick up, Food Allergy Care Plan, Medication Form and Walking/Biking Waiver need to be completed online via ePact.

After registering, families will receive an email from ePact to set up or reconfirm their child's account.

Please make sure to complete and submit all necessary forms through ePact before the first day of PALS.

This step is required to complete your registration and your child's participation in PALS.

Please contact ePACT directly at 1-855-773-7228 for assistance.

Drop Off & Pick Up

For drop off and pick up, please walk to the PALS entrance and ring the bell; a PALS instructor will meet you.

Pick up will be available once school's dismissal is complete and PALS has completed their attendance and all children are accounted for. Please have your I.D. ready at pick-up. The adult picking up the student must be listed on the student's epact account as an authorized person. Please have your ID available for pick up until we get to know everybody. As the program progresses throughout the school year and staff members become familiar with each adult and their student(s) we will no longer require the I.D. Until that time, please be prepared to show a form of I.D.

We ensure each family a safe and secure environment for their child. Security measures are taken at each facility to protect all the children in our care.

Late pick-up policy

PALS closes at 6:00 PM. While we understand that parents may occasionally run late in picking up their child, PALS faces staffing issues when parents are late. Therefore, after a 5-minute grace period, you will be charged a late pick up fee of \$10.00 for every 10 minutes you are late in picking up your child. This is a per child fee. The late fee must be paid in full before the child can return to the program. If you are later than **30 minutes** after the program ends and the PALS Site Supervisor is unable to contact anyone on your Emergency Contact list, the local police department will be called and you must pick your child up from the police department.

HEALTH POLICY

To maintain a healthy PALS environment, keep your child home if they have experienced any of these symptoms within the past 72 hours:

fever of 100.4 or higher, shortness of breath, muscle aches, loss of taste, headache, chills, sore throat, cough, runny nose, rash, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, earache, or any communicable disease.

All children must be symptom-free for 24 hours without medication for any bacterial infection before being able to return to PALS. To report an absence, contact the PALS Site Supervisor and leave a voicemail or message for the PALS staff. Parents/guardians whose children develop communicable diseases; i.e. chicken pox, head lice, pertussis, COVID, etc. must notify the Recreation Supervisor as soon as the child is diagnosed. The name of the affected child is not released; however, parents are notified of the occurrence of a contagious illness. A doctor's note may be required for your child to return to PALS.

Should a child become ill at PALS, parents/guardians will be notified immediately so that the child can be picked up. Parent/guardian must pick up child immediately after being notified of their health condition, or decide for an approved caregiver to do so. If we cannot reach a parent/guardian, the emergency contact will be called. The child will be quarantined until picked up.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

To maintain a healthy PALS environment, the following safety precautions will be implemented:

Increased handwashing and hand sanitizing (PALS instructors and children).

Should a child become ill at PALS, parents/guardians will be notified immediately so that the child can be picked up as soon as possible. If we cannot reach a parent/guardian, the emergency contact will be called.

NO SCHOOL DAYS

PALS is not in operation during Hawthorn District 73 school institute days, selected holidays and winter/spring break (please refer to Hawthorn District 73 'At A Glance Calendar'). You will not be charged for PALS for no-school days. The Vernon Hills Park District offers a 'School's Out Program' for some no- school days. This program requires a separate registration and fee.

EARLY RELEASE DAYS

Hawthorn School District 73 has early release days every Wednesday. These early release days are included in the PALS fees. **No refunds will be issued for absences!**

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

If Hawthorn School District 73 is closed due to inclement weather, our PALS Program will be closed as well.

Emergency situations may arise requiring the program to adjust their hours of operation or close for the day. Some of these emergencies may include:

- Loss of power in the building
- Temperature problems in the facility
- Weather

Refunds are not issued, as these days are made up during the school year. For a list of School Closing Make-Up Days, please refer to Hawthorn District 73 'At A Glance Calendar'.

FIELD TRIPS AND TRANSPORTATION

PALS does not take field trips as part of the regular program.

BILLING AND START DATE:

The first day of the program is the first day of school, Thursday, August 21, 2025.

Payments will be made month to month.

PALS Payment Schedule 2025/2026

Payment for your child's first month of enrollment is due at the time of registration. The remaining balance will be placed on an automatic payment plan. A credit/debit card is required for the payment plan.

Your credit/debit card will be charged on the first of every month your child is enrolled. Your monthly charge is determined by the number of days your child is scheduled to attend. Your full payment schedule will be located on your enrollment receipt. If you need to make changes to your billing, please contact the Sullivan Community Center at 847-996-6800.

Parents requiring more than one credit card/debit card to be used will need to register in person at the Sullivan Community Center.

ABSENCES

Refunds will not be given for illnesses, extracurricular activities, and disciplinary reasons or for other temporary childcare arrangements. If your child will be absent from PALS, please contact your Site Supervisor immediately. It is your responsibility to inform the Site Supervisor if your child is not attending PALS. If your child will be home due to illness, we ask for your cooperation in notifying us of any communicable illness.

CANCELLATION/CHANGE POLICY 2025/2026

Registration for PALS is for the entire school year.

If you need to **CANCEL** PALS, please submit the *PALS Cancellation/Change Form*. Please fill out the form at least seven (7) days before the cancellation is to become effective.

For any **CHANGES** to your PALS registration, please submit the *PALS Cancellation/Change Form* at least seven (7) days before the change is to become effective.

Changes will be subject to PALS Supervisor approval. A fee of \$10 per child will be charged for any changes to enrollment.

ONE WEEK GRACE

A one week waive of fees will be given to those that provide at least one weeks' notice of a student missing a week of PALS.

Each student in the program will be given one week to use through the school year in case of vacation, sickness, etc. This one week must be used within 5 consecutive days. The days may not be dispersed throughout the school year. If a student does not attend full time (5 days a week) the same procedure applies to those that attend part time (less than 5 days a week).

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Check-In Procedures

Near the end of the school day the Site Supervisor will check the school's absence and pick up list. When a child who is scheduled to attend PAL does not arrive and the program has not received an absence call from the child's parents and/or the school, the Site Supervisor together with the school will institute an immediate search.

An unaccounted absence will initiate the following actions:

The child's school will be contacted to see if the child was absent or dismissed from school.

Each parent's cell phone will be called. Messages will be left if no one is available.

The child's home will be called. A message will be left if no one is home.

The child's parents will be called at work. Messages will be left if no one is available.

If a child's parents cannot be contacted, someone on the child's emergency contact list and/or the Vernon Hills Police Department will be sent to the child's home.

PROGRAMMING

Child to Staff Ratio

The ratio of children to staff is 20:1 or lower, providing the individual attention a child may need.

Staffing

PALS Instructors are all caring professionals who are committed to the development of children. All PALS Instructors are CPR & First Aid certified. Staff is also encouraged to continue their independent educational development.

All staff members at the Vernon Hills Park District are Mandated Reporters. If staff members suspect possible abuse (physical, sexual or emotional), the staff must notify the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). All procedures by DCFS will be followed.

Snack

PALS does **not** serve snacks at PALS. However, we offer snack time at the beginning of PALS, giving PALS students time to enjoy their own snacks, brought from home.

Children are free to get water from the drinking fountains as they please. Please promote the use of reusable water bottles to be filled at the touchless water bottle refill stations.

Outdoor play

Playing outside is very important to the health and physical development of children. Therefore, it is very important that your child is always dressed appropriately for the weather. This may include: snow boots, mittens or gloves, hat and snow pants/suit. The children will be outside. In the winter months, children will not go outside when the temperature is 20 degrees or below, incl. wind-chill factor. If your child is not well enough to participate in outdoor activities, then a written note from your physician must be provided.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Children are discouraged from bringing any personal items to the program such as toys. The Vernon Hills Park District takes no responsibility for any lost or stolen items.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCHOOL RULES, WE DO NOT ALLOW THE USE OF ELECTRONICS SUCH AS CELL PHONES, VIDEO GAMES, CAMERAS, LAPTOPS, ETC. AT ANY TIME DURING OUR PALS PROGRAMS.

Should you need to get in touch with your child, please contact the Site Supervisor by phone, text or via email. Chromebooks, supplied by the schools, may be used for homework only.

COMMUNICATION

Keeping parents informed is an important aspect of PALS. We feel that the exchange of information between parents and staff provides insight for both. Knowing what your child is doing during the day helps to reinforce and encourage the same topics and activities at home. Our staff can better provide for a child's needs if they are aware of situations at home.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Involvement of parents in our programs is essential. Your cooperation with all policies and procedures is extremely important to us. Take every opportunity to talk with the PALS Site Supervisor about your child. Ask your child about their time spent in our program each day.

ADJUSTING

Each child will react differently to new situations. Sometimes a child does wonderfully on their first day because everything is new and exciting, but may become anxious the second day when he or she realizes that this is going to be a new routine. Most children need two or three weeks to adjust fully to a new environment. The best support a parent can give is to be enthusiastic, encouraging and patient. If you need suggestions for helping your child feel comfortable, please talk with your PALS Site Supervisor. They are there to help support you and your child.

MEDICATION FOR YOUR CHILD

Please fill out our Medication Dispensing Information Form and Permission to Dispense Medication Form in ePact. No medication will be given to a child in our program without these forms. Please also contact the PALS Site Supervisor if medication is needed.

PLEASE NOTE: PALS does not have access to the school's nurse's office for any medications and/or epi pens that are kept at the school.

Regulations for medication

Medicine must bear a current prescription label with child's name, date, directions for administering, physician's name, prescription number, and name of drug store or pharmacy.

Over the counter, non-prescription medication may only be administered when accompanied by a signed physician's note on letterhead and a completed Medication Authorization Form.

Note: Failure to comply with the regulations above will result in medication **NOT** being administered. In such case, parent will be notified to come to the program to administer the medicine.

Special Medical Conditions

For the safety of the children and the staff, any medical condition that requires blood testing and or administration of medication by non-routine medicines, must be treated in a private area not located in the classroom or in the presence of any children. This does not apply to the administration of medication in emergency situations (e.g. epi pen for severe allergic reactions.)

Allergies

We request the cooperation of our parents to partner with us in promoting a safe environment for children with food allergies. Our PALS Site Supervisors and instructors will attempt to accommodate each program participant who has such an allergy and has identified the following operational practices for everyone to follow:

Parents with children who have a food allergy should identify the child's specific allergy in their registration packet and on their PALS Data Form in ePact and notify PALS as soon as possible concerning the details of the allergy.

Once a severe or life-threatening allergy is identified, the parents or treating physician of the allergic child must complete a Food Allergy Action Plan for review and comment by the Site Supervisor.

PALS will do their best to monitor foods that may pose a potential harm to the allergic child. However, since many items may be without their original packaging (or since trace amounts of an allergen may not even be disclosed on a list of ingredients), it is impossible to inspect every food item from every child to ensure compliance.

Parents should promptly notify the PALS Site Supervisor of any change in their child's allergic condition.

PLEASE NOTE: PALS does NOT have access to the school's nurse's office for any medications and/or epi pens that are kept at the school.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

In the event of a medical emergency, every effort will be made to notify the parents immediately. In the event the parent/guardian cannot be reached, we will contact the emergency contacts listed in ePact.

911 will be called for medical emergencies before we contact parents. The parent or guardian of the child is responsible for any costs associated with the emergency. All emergency procedures and first aid will be followed regardless of religion.

PALS will administer first aid to a child on a limited basis for minor accidents. In ePact you will be asked to sign permission for PALS Site Supervisors and instructors to administer first aid regardless of religion. All PALS Site Supervisors and instructors are trained in First aid and CPR.

An accident report for injuries will be completed by PALS.

DISCIPLINE AND BEHAVIOR

We use large amounts of positive reinforcement and redirection and encourage problem solving through discussion in a group setting or individually. Our goal is to encourage self-discipline within each child. After several attempts have been made to meet the child's individual needs, if the child still demonstrates an inability to benefit from the program or whose presence is detrimental to the group, the child shall be discharged from the program. The goal will be to meet the needs of the child. In the event that a child's behavior progresses to the point that he or she poses a threat to himself or others, parents will be contacted and will need to pick up their child. If a child and or a parent are at risk of harming themselves or others, or fail to follow the rules and regulations of the program, the child will be withdrawn from the program. Courtesy towards the PALS Site Supervisors, instructors, parents and children is expected at all times from the child and parent. Corporal punishment and or verbal abuse of any kind are not permissible.

DISMISSAL

Dismissal from the program occurs if a child is not ready for the group experience. The program supervisor will give the parent notice of dismissal. Other reasons for dismissal include but not limited to: unpaid tuition and fees, consistent late pick up time, failure to comply with other program policies including the behavior policy.

CODE OF CONDUCT

All PALS Instructors are required to follow a Code of Conduct. Parents must also adhere to these procedures while participating in a Park District program.

Parents should not abuse children or PALS Site Supervisors and instructors, including but not limited to:

Physical abuse—strike, spank, shake, slap;

Verbal abuse—use of profanity, humiliate, degrade, threaten;

Sexual abuse—inappropriate touch or verbal exchange;

Mental abuse—shaming, cruelty.

Any type of abuse will not be tolerated and may be cause for immediate dismissal.

Parents will respond to staff with respect and consideration and treat everyone equal regardless of sex, race, religion or culture.

The police will be called for anyone attempting to pick up a child while possessing or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. Smoking or using tobacco in the presence of the children enrolled is not permitted.

Profanity, inappropriate jokes, sharing intimate details of one's personal life and any kind of harassment in the presence of the children is prohibited. Parents will portray a positive role model for youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, tact and maturity while on park District property.