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News Release

For Immediate Release

Parks Director Jodie Adams Announces Retirement

Springfield-Greene County Director of Parks Jodie Adams has announced her intention to retire effective Nov. 10, 2011 after 37 years with the Park Board.

Adams, 54, has served as Director of Parks since January 2006, where she was responsible for supervising more than 100 parks and facilities; 100 miles of trails; more than 2,000 programs; 225 full-time employees and more than 700 part-time/seasonal employees; and a $34 million annual operating budget. She is retiring to spend more time with family and travel after three decades of a self-described "24/7 schedule."

Adams is only the third Director of Parks in the history of the Springfield-Greene County Park Board. During her time in Parks administration, Adams was part of the team that ushered in the 1996 public vote to become a countywide parks system, the creation of a long-range plan for the system two years later, and the passage of two sales tax referendums to execute those plans in both 2001 and 2006. The Springfield-Greene County Park Board system was recognized with the National Recreation & Park Association's highest honor, the Gold Medal Award, in 2000. The system today serves some 6 million visitors and patrons annually through its sites and programs.

She began her career with the Parks Department in 1974 as a part-time employee filling roles such as day camp counselor, tennis instructor and scorekeeper while still a student at Parkview High School. She began duties as a full-time supervisor in 1980 and worked her way through the ranks to become Superintendent of Recreation in 1993. She was named Assistant Director of Parks & Recreation in 2003 under her longtime mentor, Dan Kinney, before succeeding him three years later.

Adams was a budding professional athlete and was recruited to play at various universities after high school, but said she chose to stay in her hometown to play tennis at then-Southwest Missouri State University to be closer to family and focus on a career in public service. She says she is proud of her path through the Parks system "one guided in no small part by her first-hand experience with the power of great public parks."

"I really wanted to stay and serve my hometown," Adams said. "It's because I was that 'park kid' that we see on a daily basis. I grew up in parks. Parks like Doling and Grant Beach were and still are safe havens. They were gathering places for me to meet friends, family and neighbors."

Adams has and continues to serve on numerous boards at the local, state and national level. Some of her noteworthy positions include President of the National Recreation & Parks Association Board of Directors and President of the Missouri Park & Recreation Association Board of Directors. She has received numerous professional honors including the Missourian
Award; the O. Franklin Kenworthy Award for Outstanding Leadership from Leadership Springfield; and the Fellow Award, the highest honor bestowed by the Missouri Park & Recreation Association. Adams has also been inducted into the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame; the International Tennis Hall of Fame; and the American Academy of Parks and Recreation Administrators and Educators.

She is also an active member of the community and is involved in groups such as the Springfield Regional Arts Council; Community Olympic Development Program; Downtown Rotary Club; Friends of the Garden and many others.

"Jodie has had a distinguished career, one that has helped Springfield and Greene County become known nationwide as a leader and innovator in the parks and recreation field," said Park Board Chair Jerry Clark. "We can be proud of her service and the legacy she leaves the community."

Adams said she is most proud of the growth and push toward self-sustainability that has continued to take place under her and Dan Kinney's leadership. Since 2006, through Adams' leadership, the Park Board has acquired, opened, renovated or expanded more than 60 parks and facilities. Highlights include the Springfield-Greene County Botanical Center; the Cruse Dog Park; Dan Kinney Park; Valley Water Mill Park Equestrian Center; Rutledge-Wilson Farm Community Park; Lost Hill Park; continued improvement to Cooper Park facilities and Dickerson Park Zoo; trail development working with Ozark Greenways; and the renovation of historical parks such Sequiota, Fassnight and Doling parks.

The Park system is fully financially sustainable today thanks to revenue from voter-approved countywide parks sales taxes, a plan that was put in place under previous leadership and executed over a period of 15 years, as well as fees, grants and donations, Adams said.

"This all came about through the contributions of many, many past Park Board members, support groups, community leaders, volunteers and our excellent past and present employees who have contributed to the system over the last 100 years," Adams said.

In recent years the Parks system has grown into an economic development driver by bringing in more than 50 state, national and international events each year; up from about 15 annual events a decade ago. These tournaments and events bring thousands of visitors to Greene County and bring millions of dollars into the local economy.

The Parks system has also made strides in the area of environmental stewardship and conservation, with the inclusion of lakes, waterways and stream improvements in the 2006 countywide parks sales tax and a continued focus on preserving green space and trails for generations to come.

Adams said the more than 200 full-time and more than 700 part-time and seasonal employees are the true heart of the parks system, and are why the system has reached a level of national recognition in recent years.
"I've been fortunate to work with some of the top professionals in the parks and recreation industry, and I would put this staff up against any in the country," Adams said. "They're among the most dedicated and passionate group of people that I've seen or worked with. This is an experienced and talented group. The future is very bright for the next century of this parks system."

Both the Park Board and City Manager are in agreement that they will appoint Assistant Director of Parks Bob Belote to act as Interim Director, effective November 11, 2011. The Park Board and City Manager will soon begin developing a plan to conduct a search for a permanent Director.

For more information, contact: Jerry Clark, Springfield-Greene County Park Board Chair, (417) 881-5655 or 894-4080. To schedule an interview with Adams, contact Mike Brothers, Co-Interim Director of Public Information, (417) 864-1119.