

# Reflecting Our Values in the Community

By Carrie Williams

**A**merican Water has long believed in the importance of being a good neighbor and good steward of the environment. Its customers are at the center of everything the company does and every decision it makes.

With a primary responsibility of delivering clean, affordable, reliable water and wastewater services, American Water knows that “how” a company operates is just as important as “what” a company does. The company believes in doing well by doing good. It is imperative to be an integral part of the communities we serve.

The American Water Charitable Foundation, the charitable arm of American Water, has partnered with NRPA for the past seven years to bring nature-based and water-play amenities to communities across the country through its Building Better Communities Grant Program.

Through our work, we have found that splash pads are a wonderful way to ensure water access for all while

supporting our conservation focus and engaging community members in environmental education. With aging community pools and a desire to create new public spaces, many agencies are looking to splash pads for creative water-play opportunities in their parks. These splash pads can be designed to be all-inclusive, providing every age and ability the opportunity to recreate and escape from the summer heat.

We understand conservation can mean a variety of things to park professionals. Whether it’s focused on the daily operations of your agency or large overarching sustainability plans, each conservation practice is important to the community you serve. Most of these topics may be technical and serious, however, splash pads spark joy.

Although a splash pad may not immediately cause you to think of water conservation, it should. Design elements can include a recirculation system to reuse water after it goes through a treatment system, very much like a pool, or programmable low-flow elements to ensure the splash pad uses less water. Many of our projects have included green infrastructure to further promote conservation practices to address runoff and storm-water management. These spaces have included native pollinator gardens, bioswales and permeable surfaces. By incorporating these features and other environmental and water stewardship practices, we can ensure communities understand the importance of water and help protect this vital resource.

NRPA also supports our grantees’ professional development through the NRPA Splash Pad Certification courses ([nrpa.org/SplashPad](http://nrpa.org/SplashPad)). This online certification provides the knowledge and skills required to create and implement a splash pad, with a focus on the expertise needed to plan, design, operate and maintain these spaces.

The American Water Charitable Foundation proudly supports American Water communities across the country in partnership with NRPA. This helps families not only enjoy the wonders of water, but also learn how every drop counts in ensuring we are stewards of this precious commodity. 

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