



NEWS RELEASE

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Wake County Launches Park Program for People on Autism Spectrum

For many people, a day at the park is fun and enjoyable. But for others, such as those on the autism spectrum, the same experience can become overwhelming.

That's why Wake County Parks, Recreation and Open Space has launched a new program, "Everyone's Welcome," to make all visitors feel included and comfortable. Historic Oak View County Park is piloting the program.

"Our park is here for everyone, but there can be certain barriers, particularly for people who have sensory processing disorders like autism," said Abby Jones, assistant park manager for education at Historic Oak View. "We're trying to remove the barriers and make our park more accessible to new and broader populations."

There are a few different ways visitors can take advantage of the program:

- **"My Oak View" Visual Schedule:** Download, print and complete the schedule before visiting the park. It includes a visual checklist with location and communication cards that

will help you and your child design and prepare for your visit.

- **“My Oak View” Park Pack:** Check out this kit when you arrive at the park. It includes a customizable visual schedule, maps, sensory-seeking toys, noise-reducing headphones and suggestions for making your visit an enjoyable experience.
- **Sensory supports:** Borrow noise-reducing headphones and various sensory-seeking toys any time during operating hours.
- **Social narratives:** Get an overview of what to expect in both pictures and words. The narratives are geared toward different ways to experience the park—whether you’re visiting as a family, for a History Hike or as part of a school field trip.
- **Online information:** Find tips and resources to prepare for a successful visit—including which areas tend to be noisy and which places are quieter.

“Everyone’s Welcome” is part of a larger plan to explore accessibility at Wake County parks and expand offerings in the future. Park staff hope to make additional resources available for people with low vision, blindness, hearing loss and deafness.

“We want everyone to be able to take advantage of all that Wake County’s parks and preserves have to offer,” said Chris Snow, director of Wake County Parks, Recreation and Open Space. “We’re always on the lookout for new, innovative ways to improve our visitors’ experiences, and Wake County is dedicated to making sure everyone feels included and welcome.”

More information about the “Everyone’s Welcome” program at Historic Oak View County Park can be found [here](#).

About Wake County Parks, Recreation and Open Space

[Wake County Parks, Recreation and Open Space](#) strives to provide outdoor recreation and educational opportunities while promoting environmental and cultural stewardship through a managed system

of parks and open spaces. In 2018, more than 1.3 million people visited Wake County's 10 parks and nature preserves.

To learn more about [Wake County Parks, Recreation and Open Space](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) at @WakeGovParks. You can also check out each of our parks on [Facebook](#).

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