



**SAN DIEGO PARKS
FOUNDATION**

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San Diego Parks Foundation Lands Seasoned Nonprofit Pro as First Executive Director

Katherine Johnston to Lead Efforts Including Expansion of Wi-Fi Access at Local Rec. Centers, Bringing Decades of Experience in Public Policy Development, Strategic Communications & Community Outreach to the Public/Private Organization

February 25, 2021 (San Diego) -- Park-loving San Diegans have a new asset to celebrate today as the Chairman of the San Diego Parks Foundation Board of Directors announced Katherine Johnston has been hired as the nonprofit's first Executive Director.

The San Diego Parks Foundation was created in 2018 to bolster the City of San Diego's efforts to build a world-class park system that is relevant, accessible, iconic, sustainable, and equitable for all. Through its volunteer and philanthropic efforts, the San Diego Parks Foundation will focus on bringing needed resources to the parks where San Diegans play – the vast network of hundreds of community and neighborhood parks, recreation centers, and aquatic facilities that are vital to San Diegans quality of life, mental health, and physical well-being.

“San Diego is thinking big, and that includes how we enhance and improve our more than 423 parks across all of our City neighborhoods, particularly in our traditionally underserved areas,” said San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria. “The San Diego Parks Foundation provides much-needed philanthropic support to our parks and recreation department, and I am delighted to see Katherine Johnston, a seasoned professional and long-time parks champion, at the helm.”

Johnston currently serves as the Chair of the City of San Diego's Parks and Recreation Committee and Balboa Park Committee. Most recently, Johnston served as Vice President of Presidio PAG, Inc., where she managed a portfolio of nonprofit and corporate clients.

Prior to her work at Presidio, Katherine served as a senior policy and communications advisor to former San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer. In this role, she managed the development and legislative approvals of the City's annual \$3.3 billion budget, oversaw the administration's economic development and workforce development initiatives, and spearheaded major capital and environmental projects.

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“Bringing Katherine onboard is an important milestone for our organization as we work to ensure every San Diegan has access to a high-quality park and recreation center,” said Michel Anderson, Chairman of the San Diego Park Foundation’s Board of Directors. “Our Board recognized that this hire is likely the most important decision we will make this year, and it is not one we took lightly. We are confident Katherine will lead our organization with purpose and character as we strive to create social equity through a world-class city parks system.”

Since it was established in November 2018, the San Diego Parks Foundation has been the driving force behind public-serving initiatives including:

- **Installation of free Wi-Fi** at 19 of the City’s 57 recreation centers, with a goal to bring access to all locations.
- **Successful renovation of the Southcrest Recreation Facility** by replacing the decades old gym floor and score board, repainting of the facility, and installation of free Wi-Fi.
- **Providing financial support to facilitate the distribution of meals** at local recreation centers amid the COVID-19 crisis. As of December 31, 2020, the program has provided 159,712 meals for kids at 17 Recreation Centers throughout San Diego.
- Embarking on a **tree planting initiative** to help the City of San Diego meet its long-term climate action tree canopy goals.

Current initiatives the San Diego Parks Foundation is working on and seeking support for:

- **Get Kids Outside** is an initiative to bring fun, safe, and free outdoor activities such as movies in the park to recreation centers across the city.
- **Renovation of the former San Ysidro Library** from a vacant city building to a vibrant community center with senior and youth services.

“I’m honored to have the opportunity to serve as the San Diego Park Foundation’s first Executive Director,” said Johnston. “With the continued support of our partners and the City of San Diego, my hope is that together we can build a park system that ensures every San Diegan has access to a high-quality park with meaningful recreation opportunities. Our role is particularly important for neighborhood parks that have been underserved or overlooked in the past.”

Johnston’s first official day on the job was February 8th. The public is encouraged to learn more about the San Diego Parks Foundation and get involved at www.sandiegoparksfoundation.org.

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About San Diego Parks Foundation

San Diego Parks Foundation strives to connect all San Diegans to high-quality parks through philanthropic and volunteer contributions to the City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department, and to support the City’s mission to build a world-class inclusive park system that strengthens communities and provides equitable access to recreational opportunities. Learn more at www.sandiegoparksfoundation.org.