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For Immediate Release

Milwaukee County Parks Wehr Nature Center Director Honored by Department of Defense Agency

Milwaukee, WI (Nov. 20, 2015) – Wisconsin Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense agency, announced today that Debra McRae of the Milwaukee County Parks Wehr Nature Center has received the Patriot Award in recognition of extraordinary support of Maj. Howard Aprill, a staff naturalist who serves in the U.S. Army Reserve.

The Patriot Award was created to publicly recognize individuals who provide outstanding support and cooperation to their employees who have answered their nation’s call to serve. The prestigious award puts the Milwaukee County Park System into the running for the State Pro Patria Award, the highest level award that may be bestowed by a state ESGR committee.

McRae has been Director of Wehr since 1999. McRae is no stranger to the concerns of military families. Her husband is a Vietnam Veteran, and her son is a Naval Reservist. Her son and Aprill served in Afghanistan at the same time. Aprill nominated McRae for the award.

Aprill has been a Combat Engineer since he joined the U.S. Army Reserve as a commissioned officer in 1992. One week after joining the Reserve, he began work with the Parks Department. He has served on military tours to Iraq (2003-04) and Afghanistan (2014-15), and has had shorter deployments to Germany and Belize.

“Supportive supervisors are critical to maintaining the strength and readiness of the nation’s Guard and Reserve units,” said Mike Williams, chair of the Wisconsin ESGR.

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Earlier yesterday, Parks Director John Dargle, Jr., a former commissioned officer in the U.S. Army, signed a Statement of Support. The statement confirms the Parks Department's commitment to fully recognize the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-Employment Rights Act; to provide tools to supervisors to manage employees serving in the Guard and Reserve; to appreciate the values, leadership, and unique skills service members bring to the work force; to encourage opportunities to hire Guardsmen, Reservists and Veterans; and to recognize and support the service members and their families in peace, in crises, and in war.

“By meeting the Statement of Support criteria, the Milwaukee County Parks System pledges to stand proudly with its Guard and Reserve employees, who continue to answer their nation's call to defend our way of life. Mr. Dargle is sending a clear message to the employees of the Parks System that while they are serving their country they do not have to worry about their civilian jobs. Their personal sacrifices are essential to the strength of our nation,” said Williams.

For more information about ESGR Outreach Programs, contact:

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