

## Hiram M. Chittenden Award for Interpretive Excellence

Nominee: Aaron Boswell

Park Ranger, 0025, GS 9

USACE

McClellan-Kerr Project –Pine Bluff Site Office

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## **Executive Summary**

Mr. Boswell's passion for educating visitors shows in his dedication to tell the Corps story while reaching students and visitors in a variety of venues. These qualities make him an outstanding candidate for the Hiram M. Chittenden Award for Interpretive Excellence. Aaron thinks outside of the box by promoting water safety in outlets outside of typical park settings. His energy and determination in reaching and connecting with all visitors and encouraging life jacket wear is foremost in his career and reflects greatly on the Corps.

## **Narrative Justification**

### **Creativity and Originality**

Mr. Boswell created a partnership with Domino's Pizza in Little Rock, which consists of five stores, to place 25,000 water safety stickers on outgoing pizza boxes. This unique way of reaching customers proved his ability to think outside of the box and to encourage life jacket wear beyond the surrounding lakes and rivers.

Aaron recently completed a five year project of signing the Trail of Tears Water Route (Arkansas River). The water route of the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail was not clearly identified and went unnoticed to the public. He worked with Federal and State agencies as well as the Trail of Tears Association to develop new signage marking the water route that will be placed at 13 boat launch and recreation facilities. He also created nine interpretive panels to educate the public on this historic route and its significance. This trail is significantly important to the Cherokee Nation. Four of the 17 Cherokee detachments followed the water route 1,226 miles west to new territory. Today these water routes look considerably different and leave little room for the public to easily connect with this significant event in American history. Mr. Boswell's diligence and passion for this system has created lasting partnerships and an unmeasurable value to all who visit the sites.

Mr. Boswell partnered with the Arkansas Hospitality Association, Simmons Bank Big Bass Bonanza, Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's to provide inflatable life jackets for the Life Jacket loaner program. This partnership provided types life jackets that anglers were more likely to wear and increased the use of life jackets within Little Rock District's target age group.



### **Made a Positive Experience for Visitors**

Aaron's creative thinking and drive to involve the community in events on the Project site makes a positive experience for visitors. His outgoing personality and ability to interpret and educate, encourages visitors to return to the area parks. Mr. Boswell initiated a youth fishing derby at the Project to encourage urban youth to get outdoors. He engages with the community to support this event and to connect with inner city youth. He uses this event to teach children under 15 about the environment and promote a sense of pride and ownership in the public recreation areas. These children do not have opportunities such as this readily available. Mr. Boswell has also created an outdoor education area at Tar Camp Park. This outdoor seating and learning area was built through the use of volunteers during National Public Lands Day and with the help of Eagle Scout projects. This area is utilized by scout groups and has been a central location for many badge workshops enabling scouts to earn various naturalist badges. He creates a vested interest in local youth by giving his time and energy to provide a positive role model.

## **Enhancement of the Public's Understanding of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Site**

Aaron works diligently to promote water safety and encourage young people to become a Park Ranger. He organized and staffed the following events making contact with 19k people directly. Aaron provided interpretive programs regarding the Trail of Tears and the importance of the Arkansas River as a water route for the trail and westward expansion. This was a two day school program event at the Scott Plantation Settlement. Mr. Boswell has created a partnership with Academy Sports and KSSN 96 radio station to greet customers, provide water safety messages and utilize Bobber the water safety dog to make contacts at the storefront. This outreach location enables Rangers to target the most at risk water safety audience and establish a positive water safety message. He conducted the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Willow Beach Fishing Derby. This event taught children and parents alike the importance of enjoying the outdoors. Mr. Boswell provided lunch and utilized this time to afford a water safety message to all participants. Aaron participated in the Dickey Stephens Park, Arkansas Travelers water safety night at the baseball field. He partnered with Operation Dry Water campaign to place education material at all parks and boat ramps in order to decrease boating under the influence accidents on the Arkansas River. Mr. Boswell participated in the US Coast Guard and Corps Foundation Adult Show and Tell Life Jacket Challenge. He placed flyers and materials at all parks and boat ramp locations within the project to encourage life jacket use among all park visitors. Aaron organized and participated in the Bass Pro Shops District water safety outreach event. This event occurred during National Safe Boating week and consisted of setting up inside of the Bass Pro Shops, Little Rock location to educate visitors on water safety and animal identification. He developed and maintained a partnership with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Delta Rivers Nature Center to participate in community outreach events. In particular, Boo on the Bayou which allows Rangers to make water safety contacts to inner city children. He promoted science and environmental education to Girl Scouts as part of the Girl Fest STEAM event hosted by the University of Arkansas Little Rock Campus. This was the first time USACE had been involved in this event and Mr. Boswell made a positive contact with young ladies that were interested in biological and environmental sciences. Aaron organized District water safety team outreach events such as: Little Rock Marine Expo, Big Buck Classic, Little Rock RV Show and Hot Springs Boat/RV/Tackle Show. These events were all conducted in partnership with Vicksburg District. Mr. Boswell scheduled Rangers from across the two Districts to work these events and ensured each venue was set up and Rangers had needed equipment and handouts to create a professional appearance. He participated in reaching college students with water safety messages prior to Arkansas spring break via the University of Arkansas, Little Rock Trojans basketball game. Aaron worked with students at the university to create posters and social media advertisement to promote water safety to a difficult group to reach. He presented water safety material at the US Coast Guard Auxiliary water safety symposium and training event. This event led to beginning a relationship with the Coast Guard Auxiliary to combine efforts in promoting water safety throughout the state.

## Citation

Mr. Aaron Boswell is commended for his energetic, steadfast commitment to the education and interpretation of the Corps mission. His adaptability and professionalism assures respect from fellow workers and demonstrates his sense of duty to the organization. His commitment and dedication reflects great credit upon himself, Little Rock District, Southwestern Division and the entire US Army Corps of Engineers.