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ST. CHARLES COUNTY PARKS STAFF TOPS IN RODEO COMPETITION

ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO – When it comes to backpack blowers, zero-turn mowers, skid loaders, truck and trailer driving, and irrigation assembly, the maintenance crew of the St. Charles County Parks Department is number one. No, really!

In the first-ever Park Maintenance Rodeo, held Dec. 18 at the St. Charles County Family Arena and sponsored by Region 4 of the Missouri Park & Recreation Association (MPRA), the County's crew took home an overall first-place trophy. What does that mean for St. Charles County residents? Your parks are carefully and expertly maintained!

Eight teams from across Region 4 competed in the event along with St. Charles County: St. Charles City, St. Louis County, Washington, Des Peres, Webster Groves and two teams from Sunset Hills. The crews were put to the test with timed events that had them maneuvering through mazes of orange cones topped with tennis balls.

The St. Charles County team of Roger Jonas, Dustin Ferrell, Bob Branstetter, Jimmy Clemonds and Alan Emge brought equipment know-how to the rodeo with their over 40 years of combined experience working for the County.

"We were surprised to learn we won first place," says team member Dustin Ferrell. "Despite not finishing first in any one event, we scored high enough in all events to give us the overall win."

There was a close call for first place, though. Emge lost a first-place win in the zero-turn mower obstacle course by a mere six seconds. Parks Department crew member Jonas just might have had the most difficult task of maneuvering a tennis ball through a course with a backpack blower, but when it came to steady turns



The St. Charles County Parks winning team, left to right: Alan Emge, Bob Branstetter, Dustin Ferrell, Jimmy Clemonds and Roger Jonas.

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Rodeo, page 2

and expert braking, the most impressive showing might have been from Ferrell. Driving a truck and trailer, not only did he have to maneuver the cones and tennis balls, but he had to drive smoothly enough not to knock a tennis ball off a cone placed *inside* the truck.

Extra points were given to the teams who could back up the truck and trailer to within 6 inches of a cone without hitting it. Ferrell stopped his within an inch.

“Everyone definitely had fun,” Ferrell says, “but once we won, it became more exciting.” The team received t-shirts, lunch and a first-place trophy, and will be presented with the award at the MPRA conference at Lake of the Ozarks in February.

And then, there’s next year.

“We’ll be back next year to defend our title,” Ferrell says. “And, we hear there may be a state championship as well!”

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About St. Charles County Parks & Recreation

The St. Charles County Parks & Recreation Department was created in 1997 after voters approved a local use tax with the sole purpose of park land acquisition, development, operations and maintenance. The department’s mission is to preserve natural and historic features in areas throughout the county for the use of future generations. Today, the department operates 15 parks and consists of 3,643 acres of acquired park land. From historic homesteads to a youth skate park; from camping, hiking, biking, and fishing to weddings and educational classrooms, there’s something for everyone in St. Charles County Parks.

For more information and specifics about each park, amenities, trails, and more, visit stccparks.org.