



### NEWS RELEASE

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### Local Resident Receives Prestigious Statewide Award

Paul LeSage is being honored by the California Park & Recreation Society (CPRS) for his lifelong dedication to the betterment and growth of several park and recreation agencies. Mr. LeSage will be presented with the Professional Awards of Excellence – Honorary Member. This prominent award is presented to, a “retired park and recreation professional for outstanding contributions to the parks, recreation and/or human services profession through service to CPRS.”

During his 45-year career, Mr. LeSage has mentored many park and recreational employees, and helped pioneer advocacy for social and cultural equality. Mr. LeSage started his career in San Bernardino and gained first-hand experience with low-income demographics and varied cultures. He developed activities that encouraged relationship building while providing equal access to parks and recreation programming. Regardless of the participants’ ethnicity, gender, or ability to pay, all could participate.

Mr. LeSage moved to the Central Coast and became the Superintendent of the Santa Maria Recreation and Parks Department. His experience helped develop several initiatives including the first youth soccer program that has grown to over 1,300 participants, building the first new recreation center in 20 years, and a senior center. He spearheaded the movement to acquire the County-owned Veterans’ Memorial Center. He turned the Center into a cultural hub that hosts community events and meetings. As Director at the San Luis Obispo Parks and Recreation Department, he developed the Damon Garcia Sports Fields with 20 acres of turf-based sports venues for soccer, rugby, football, and lacrosse. He renovated the Ludwick Community Center, built a Parks and Recreation office in downtown, implemented the Park Ranger Program, and maintained 3,000 acres of greenbelt.

After retiring, Mr. LeSage taught at Cuesta and Allan Hancock Colleges. He created an event, Splash N’ Dash 500 yard swim and 5K run, with the Santa Maria Recreation and Parks Department and YMCA. The event was coordinated by his students to provide hands-on event planning experience.

Mr. LeSage has built a legacy dedicated to strengthening and growing the park and recreation profession, which is honored by his award from CPRS.

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Mr. LeSage will be presented his award on March 7, 2014 in Ontario, California.

CPRS is a non-profit professional and public interest state-wide organization that supports and advances California's park and recreation profession. CPRS is the largest society of park and recreation professionals in the United States.

Questions may be directed to the Recreation and Parks Department, 925-0951 ext. 260.

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