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Contact: Shon Sylvia, Director of Recreation & Community Services, 253-305-1072;

shons@tacomaparks.com

Nancy Johnson, Communications Manager, 253-305-1092; cell: 253-226-4530

nancyj@tacomaparks.com

Senator Murray to Lead Hearing at STAR Center; Exploring How the Military, Veterans, Business, and Non-profit Communities Can Work Together to Improve the Transition Home for Servicemen & Women

(Tacoma, WA) Metro Parks proudly welcomes the United States Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs' Field Hearing, "**Washington's Veterans: Helping the Newest Generation Transition Home**" to STAR Center, 3873 South 66th Street , on Wednesday April 4, beginning at 10:30am.

This official U.S. Senate field hearing will explore how the military, veterans, business, and non-profit communities can work together to improve the transition home for those returning to Washington state. In particular, the hearing will focus on improving mental health care, employment opportunities, and community outreach for returning veterans.

STAR (South Tacoma Activity & Recreation) Center, which will celebrate its Grand Opening on the SERA Campus in South Tacoma next month, was selected from a pool of 24 possible venues for the hearing. Field Hearings are rare, happening only a few times annually from the entire senate. This marks the second such hearing which Senator Murray has hosted during her 18 years in office.

"We're honored by the committee's selection of STAR Center as the venue for this important public hearing," said Jack C. Wilson, Metro Parks Tacoma Executive Director. "Hosting this national event as our staff prepares for the center's grand opening next month, demonstrates the value and need for this facility in serving our community. STAR Center on the SERA Campus is already becoming a hub for our servicemen and women, along with their families and the broader community, to explore life-enriching experiences."

The selection committee cited the center's "compelling vision to serve a transitioning community, with a focus



on those seeking adaptive recreation opportunities” and proximity to Joint Base Lewis-MCChord (JBLM) as key points for hosting the hearing at the new community center.

Metro Parks’ Adaptive Recreation program, which is based out of STAR Center and the wealth of programs offered at STAR Center to serve the broad community, have already proven beneficial for service members, veterans and their families as they transition back into their communities. The Adaptive Recreation program integrates civilians, as well as veterans and injured active-duty soldiers from Warrior Transition Battalion from JBLM.



Two Warrior in Transition Battalion members traveled with their civilian teammates from the Tacoma Titans, to compete at the Paralympics just last week, where they finished 18th in the country during the National Championships.

“We are the only Paralympic Sport Club in the South Sound Region,” said Parker Ayers, Metro Parks Tacoma Adaptive Recreation Specialist. “Our partnership with Joint Base Lewis McChord Warrior Transition Battalion enables us to serve many of the active-duty and veteran soldiers¾-two of whom play for the Titans¾-who have been wounded in combat.”

Background:

STAR Center is co-located on the SERA Campus with the Boys and Girls Clubs’ Topping Hope Center and Tacoma Public Schools’, Gray Middle School. Working collaboratively, the partnered agencies share programming space to maximize community benefits derived from the public funds invested in each of the facilities. In addition to serving as a valuable community gathering space, STAR Center provides a wide range of community programs for people of all ages, including wellness, performing and visual arts, and day camps.

STAR Center will celebrate its grand opening to the public on Saturday May 19, with an adventure fun run beginning at 9am, followed by a free sampling of classes and activities available on the campus from 10am-3pm.

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