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Ijams Nature Center Announces Leadership Transition

(KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE, 3/23/2026) – The Board of Directors of Ijams Nature Center announced today that Ijams President & CEO Amber Parker will conclude her service with the organization on Aug. 14, 2026, after nearly a decade of leadership that has helped guide the organization through a period of significant growth in conservation, education, and community engagement.

The Board has begun a search process to identify the organization’s next leader.

“This is a planned transition designed to ensure stability, continuity, and long-term success for Ijams Nature Center,” Ijams Board President Carl Van Hoozier Jr. said. “Amber has provided substantial advance notice and is fully engaged in supporting an orderly handoff. The Board is confident in the path ahead and committed to a smooth leadership transition.”

Parker has led the nonprofit nature center since 2017. During her tenure, Ijams has added land, greatly expanded conservation and education programs, strengthened community partnerships, increased visitation, and crafted a comprehensive Master Plan.

“I have long believed that a leader should choose to step away when an organization is at its strongest. Ijams Nature Center is in a position of strength, with an exceptional staff, an engaged board, and a clear vision for the future,” Parker said. “It has been an honor to lead Ijams, and I am deeply committed to supporting the organization through this transition and ensuring that the next CEO is well-positioned for success.”

Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon praised Ijams Nature Center as one of the city’s most beloved community resources.

“Ijams Nature Center is one of Knoxville’s greatest treasures,” Mayor Kincannon said. “For generations, it has provided a place where people of all ages can connect with nature, learn about the environment, and enjoy the outdoors right here in the heart of our city. I’m grateful for Amber’s leadership and the incredible work of the Ijams team. I have every confidence that the Board will find a visionary leader who will continue to grow this remarkable community asset.”

Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs emphasized the organization’s impact across the broader region.

“Ijams Nature Center plays an important role in the quality of life we enjoy in Knox County,” Mayor Jacobs said. “Its work in conservation, outdoor recreation, and environmental education helps ensure that our community remains a place where people and families can thrive. I appreciate Amber’s service and dedication, and I’m confident the Board will identify a strong leader to carry this mission forward for the benefit of the entire county.”

Van Hoozier said the Board has established a CEO Succession Committee and has a timeline for the search and onboarding process. Parker will continue to serve with full authority through Aug. 14 to ensure continuity in operations, donor relationships, and strategic initiatives.

“The mission, values, and day-to-day work of Ijams Nature Center remain unchanged,” Van Hoozier said. “Our focus is on continuity, stability, and selecting a leader who will build on Ijams’ strong foundation.”

Founded in 1975, Ijams Nature Center is a 320-acre nonprofit educational center in the heart of Knoxville and serves visitors of all ages, stages, and abilities. Its mission is to encourage stewardship of the natural world by providing an urban greenspace for people to learn about and enjoy the outdoors through engaging experiences. Ijams features 14 miles of hiking and mixed-use trails, a public access river dock, swimming, boating, biking, and so much more. Hundreds of world-class educational programs and events are coordinated and offered annually. Ijams’ grounds and trails are open every day from 8:00 a.m. until dusk. For more information, visit Ijams.org or call 865-577-4717.

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