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P&R

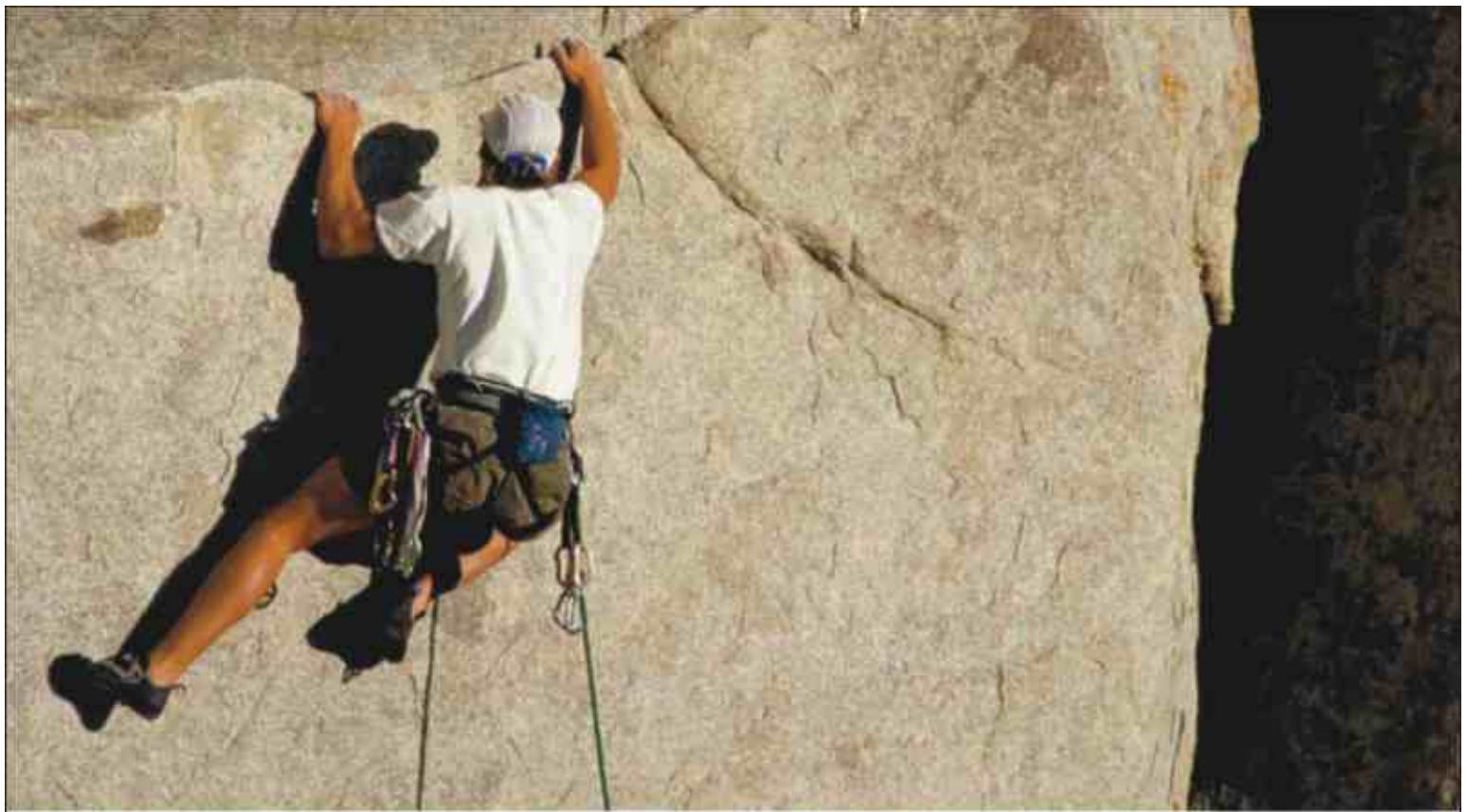
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The magazine of the Illinois Association of Park Districts and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association



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ON THE COVER:

IAPD Legislator of the Year Illinois Governor Pat Quinn addressed the awards luncheon at the IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference on January 30, his first full day as governor. Since becoming the state's chief executive, Quinn has made such park friendly moves as appointing a conservationist to head the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and re-opening seven state parks shuttered by former Governor Rod Blagojevich.

FROM THE EDITOR

Break one nine for the Park and Rec-ies. Park and Rec-ies, you got your ears on, come on? How 'bout it Park and Rec-ies? What's your 20?

If the paragraph above makes any sense to you, then perhaps, like me, you are a veteran of the citizens band radio craze of the 1970s.

While other enterprising fifth graders were busy learning useful stuff, like memorizing the stats on the back of their baseball card collections, I spent hours learning the 10 codes and the other citizens band lingo, which is an even crazier waste of time than it sounds because my family never ever owned a CB.

But then one day it was over. None of my friends spoke CB anymore, and their parents unhooked their receivers and put them on basement shelves (right beside, I like to imagine, buckets full of mood rings and pet rocks).

So forgive me when, for the longest time, whenever people touted this "internet thingy," then the Web, then Web 2.0 and then social networking, I could only half listen because always the words to the song "Convoy" would be running through my head. ("Twas the dark of the moon on the 6th of June in a Kenworth, pulling logs . . .)

But you know what has slowly begun to dawn on me? This Internet doohickey has legs. Heck, now even I follow Twitter postings from my local paper. These direct me to its Web site, where I find updates on the stories covered in the morning edition and breaking news that will be covered in more depth tomorrow.

I value the Web stories, but, unlike some, I don't see the Web version of my newspaper or favorite magazine replacing the hard copy version for two reasons. First, no traditional publication I know of has successfully built an online revenue model based on advertising and subscription income. (Advertisers seem reluctant to pay large sums for non-print ads and people won't plunk down cash to subscribe to anything that pops up on a screen.) Second, having a publication that you can hold in your hand somehow legitimizes it. Subconsciously, you just have the feeling that somebody cared enough to try to make this information permanent.

Back in 2003, *Illinois Parks & Recreation* ran its first WebXtra. These have been infrequent ever since. But they add to the scope and breadth of the paper edition, and I hope that, because they carry the *IP&R* stamp, they stand out on the Web as trusted sources of information. This issue has two very fine WebXtras that I urge you to read (see page 19 for details). You'll see more of these in the future, because I think publishers – *IP&R* included – have come to a collective realization. It's true that the CB could never replace the telephone and it could also never enhance it. And it may be true that Web publications might never *replace* established and respected paper publications. But they can enhance and extend them.

So now the question is: Aside from the WebXtra notices in magazine, how else would you like to be made aware of the WebXtras that are becoming a more integral part of your association magazine? Would you like an e-mail blast with a PDF attached? An e-mail with a hot link? Or maybe a Twitter or some other friendly electronic poke?

Please let me know, and we'll see what we can put together for you. My "handle" is rwhepley@ilparks.org. Or, you can give me a 10-21 at 217-523-4554.

But for now Park and Rec-ies, I'm over and out. Catch you on the flip flop.



— RODD WHEPLEY
Editor

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Dr. Ted Flickinger
IAPD President and Chief
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Welcoming New Board Members

After the elections in April, it may be that you find yourself with a new board member or two this spring. And, as I've said before, if you have just one new board member, then you have a whole new board.

Like spring weather, new board members can bring about an often welcome air of freshness. But new board members – especially, perhaps, those fresh off an election win – also need to be coached on how to fit in with the board's tried and true best practices. A good orientation is key.

Information for the New Board Member

Many agencies find formal orientation programs useful for providing new board members with the information they need to perform effectively. This is usually a one-day or weekend session administered by the executive and the board president with input from the other members of the board.

At least three areas of education should be touched upon in orientation programs for new board members. New board members must learn about the agency, the community and the board itself.

1. **Agency.** Your orientation program should help new board members understand where the agency has been, where the agency is going and why decisions were made the way they were. Hopefully you can show that all decisions have been made in keeping with the strategic long-range plan. Educate the new member on the inner workings of the organization. Provide board members with documentation about staff roles, budget and finances and agency operations.
2. **Community.** Spend some time on the agency's relationship with its community, the unique needs facing your community and how your agency does (or maybe doesn't yet) meet those needs. Inform new board members about any demographic and assessment/needs research your agency may have conducted.
3. **Board.** Naturally, the most salient area for board member orientation is the board itself. When a board member is elected or otherwise chosen to take on the

legal, social and moral responsibilities associated with board service, he or she should be given a clear job description at the very start. Explain to the new member how the board operates, the board's function within the agency and the specific responsibilities and expectations the individual faces as a member of the board.

New board members must learn about the agency, the community and the board itself.



The Board Manual

If your agency has not developed a board manual, or has not reviewed it in quite some time, then I would suggest that this spring is the time to do so.

A good manual delineates and clarifies the working requirements, relationships and responsibilities of the executive, professional staff and the board. It also provides documentation supporting board decisions, especially in policy matters.

An up-to-date manual is crucial for effective boardmanship. Put a system in place to make sure that board members are maintaining their manuals properly. You may want to have the executive or a member of the staff review each board member's book semi-annually to ensure that new or replacement leaflets are properly inserted.

If you have just one new board member, then you have a whole new board.

An effective manual should cover the following topics:

- A description of the agency and its history, by-laws, mission, vision statement, goals and strategies or long-range plans.
- An explanation of the board's legal authority and descriptions of the board's duties and functions.
- A section detailing the board composition and function. Materials in this section could include: A list of board members with their contact information; written descriptions of policies approved by the board; A year-long schedule of meetings, events and work plans for the board; a code of behavior that outlines proper conduct for board members.
- A list and descriptions of the board's standing committees and how they work.
- Demographic information about the community and about agency patrons.
- Current financial information, such as a copy of the current budget accompanied by charts that show the relationships of the park, recreation and conservation functions with the total budget.
- Meeting agendas and minutes from the previous two years.
- Reports on any special projects or ongoing campaigns.
- Copies of any agency ordinances and intergovernmental agreements currently in effect.

If your agency needs to develop or retool its manual, you can contact me at tflickinger@ILparks.org, give me your mailing address and I will send you some examples.

IAPD Boot Camps for New (and Veteran) Board Members

One of the most popular vehicles for training new board members (and for refreshing veteran board members) are the IAPD Boot Camps. Two have been scheduled for 2009:

Monday June 22

Schaumburg Park District
6:00 pm - 9:30 pm

and

Monday, June 29

Decatur Park District
Scovill Golf Course Clubhouse
6:30 pm – 9:30 pm

These workshops will cover:

- How to be an effective board member
- Grass roots legislative advocacy
- Agency finances
- The Illinois Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act

Pricing begins at just \$65 per person if three or more people from a member agency register. Look for registration information at the IAPD Web site at www.ILparks.org in the Calendar of Events section.

IAPD Calendar

May 5

Parks Day at the Capitol
State Capitol, Springfield

May 5

Legislative Reception
Illini Country Club, Springfield

May 6

Legislative Conference
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Springfield

May 18

IAPD Golf Tour – Event 1
Heritage Bluffs Golf Club
Channahon Park District

June 16

IAPD Golf Tour – Event 2
Oak Grove Golf Course
Harvard

June 22

IAPD Commissioners Boot Camp
Schaumburg Park District

June 29

IAPD Commissioners Boot Camp
Decatur Park District

July 23

Legislative Golf Outing
White Pines Golf Club
Bensenville Park District

August 10

IAPD Golf Tour – Event 3
Nettle Creek Golf Course
Morris

August 22

Park District Conservation Day
State Fairgrounds, Springfield

September 11

IAPD Awards Gala
Chevy Chase Country Club
Wheeling Park District

September 22

IAPD Golf Tour – Event 4
Aldeen Golf Course
Rockford Park District

October 13-16

NRPA Congress
Salt Lake City, Utah

November 5

Legal Symposium
Hamburger University
Oak Brook

January 28-30, 2010

Soaring to New Heights Conference
Hilton, Chicago



Peter M. Murphy
IAPD General Counsel

Financial Issues Dominate Springfield Scene

In accordance with the rules of the General Assembly, odd-numbered years are the years where all bills may be considered regardless of their subject matter. (In the even-numbered years of the General Assembly, only matters that are of fiscal or of emergency nature can be considered.) Subsequently, the number of bills is generally greater in odd-numbered years. The deadlines for introducing legislation for this session have recently passed. Representatives introduced more than 4,332 bills in the House, and Senators introduced more than 2,360 bills in that chamber. That number of bill introductions portends an active legislative session this spring.

The Illinois Association of Park Districts' Legislative Platform is contained within this issue of *IP&R* magazine. Note that many of the initiatives this year are focused on providing stable funding for Illinois park districts, forest preserves, conservation districts and recreation agencies.

IAPD Backed Bills Seek to Put a Floor on PTELL Index and Increase Debt Service Extension Base

The Illinois Department of Revenue has announced the Consumer Price Index (CPI) indicator of one-tenth of one percent for the 2010 tax year for those agencies subject to the Property Tax Extension Limitation Act (PTELL) (see page 9 for a more detailed explanation). Coupled with increases in Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund contributions, local governments realize that the economic indicator of one-tenth of one percent will cause hardships across the board for all units of local government.

In response to this, the Illinois Association of Park Districts sought the introduction of **House Bill 2502** by Representative Art Turner and **Senate Bill 2126** by Senator Louis Viverito, which seek to establish a reasonable floor for the consumer price index when used as an economic indicator for PTELL purposes. That floor is 2 percent. This figure was arrived at by an analysis of the CPI over the entire life span of the Property Tax Extension Limitation Act,

which began in 1991. Although there were two low years of 1.6 percent, the average of all of those years is a CPI of 2.67 percent. The 2 percent threshold, therefore, is eminently reasonable and we encourage all of you to talk with your legislators about the importance of this particular piece of legislation.

Note also that the association has successfully sought the introduction of **House Bill 242** by Representative Elaine Nekritz, which would provide that the debt service extension base of park districts be increased each year by the percentage increase for the previous calendar year for the CPI. This legislation will prevent the debt service extension base of local government from continuing to be eroded by the lack of an economic indicator.

"State parks protect some of our most precious habitat and provide opportunities for families to find outdoor recreation close to home. These are the people's parks and the people have the right to enjoy them in good and bad economic times."

—Governor Pat Quinn, announcing the re-opening of seven state parks, February 26, 2009.



Bill Watch

Three House Bills are among those of particular interest to advocates of park, recreation and conservation causes. They are:

- **House Bill 817** – Changes the limiting factor in the Property Tax Extension Limitation law (PTELL) to 5 percent or the increase in Employer Cost Index (ECI), whichever is less, replacing the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is currently used as the limiting factor.
- **House Bill 2295** – Prohibits an individual convicted of any infamous crime, bribery, perjury or any other felony being eligible for election to a park district board.

"An estimated 44 million people visit Illinois state parks and other state sites annually. Those visitors spend an estimated \$500 million in local economies each year. That spending results in an estimated \$790 million in overall economic impact supporting nearly 8,500 jobs throughout the state."

– IDNR release, February 26, 2009.

- **House Bill 2454** – Changes the way in which OSLAD grants are paid out by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in order to expedite projects and relieve the economic burden imposed by the requirement of complete payment prior to reimbursement.

These and a number of other bills that impact the IAPD membership may be reviewed online by going to the IAPD website at www.ilparks.org and going to the Public Policy section.

New Governor Bolsters Department of Natural Resources

As the IAPD membership knows, Governor Quinn took significant steps to re-establish vitality of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources by opening the seven state parks that were shuttered by the previous administration. In addition to his excellent choice of Marc Miller as the new director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (see page 22), Governor Quinn also appointed Jerry Stermer to be his chief of staff. Mr. Stermer served as the president of Voices of Illinois Children for the past 22 years and has state government experience as an assistant to the director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

Governor Quinn also appointed Theodore Chung as his general counsel. Mr. Chung has served as an assistant U.S. attorney and a first assistant corporation counsel for the City of Chicago.

Expect additional appointments to be made in the coming weeks.

National Issues

The final conference report for the American Recovery and Investment Act did not contain language that had been included in the Senate version prohibiting the use of stimulus funds for community parks.

A ripper amendment by Republican Senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma, submitted on February 6, has specified that: “no funds in the bill can be used for any casino or other gambling establishment, aquarium, zoo, golf course, swimming pool, stadium, community park, museum, theater, art center, and highway beautification project.” The Senate swiftly approved the Coburn amendment by a vote of 73-24. Advocates swung into action with an all-out advocacy effort to stop this senseless prohibition from being enacted.

The final conference report language adopted by the Conference Committee states: “None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available in this Act may be used for any casino or other gambling establishment, aquarium, zoo, golf course, or swimming pool.” Thus, the final conference report ensures that funds in this bill will not be denied to park and recreation agencies for spending on community parks.

Consumer Price Index Based Extension Limit for 2009 Decreases to 0.1 Percent

The IAPD has received many inquiries regarding what Consumer Price Index (CPI) “cost of living,” or inflation, percentage to use in computing the 2009 extensions (taxes payable in 2010) under PTELL.

Section 18-185 of the Property Tax Code defines CPI as “the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers for all items published by the United States Department of Labor.” This index is sometimes referred to as CPI-U. Section 18-185 defines “extension limitation” as “the lesser of 5% or the percentage increase in the Consumer Price index during the 12-month calendar year *preceding* the levy year”(emphasis added).

For 2009 extensions (taxes payable in 2010), the CPI to be used for computing the extension limitation is 0.1%. The CPI is measured from December 2007 to December 2008. The U.S. City Average CPI for December 2007 was 210.036 and 210.228 for December 2008. The CPI change is calculated by subtracting the 2007 CPI of 210.036 from the 2008 CPI of 210.228. That amount, 0.192, is then divided by the 2007 CPI of 210.036, which results in 0.09% which is rounded to a 0.1% CPI.

Illinois Department of Revenue History of CPIs Used for the PTELL

Year	December CPI-U	% Change From Previous December	% Use for PTELL	Levy Year	Year Taxes Paid
1989	126.1	--	--	--	--
1990	153.8	6.1	5.0 (5% Max)	1991	1992
1991	157.9	3.1	3.1	1992	1993
1992	141.9	2.9	2.9	1993	1994
1993	145.8	2.7	2.7 (5% for Cook)	1994	1995
1994	149.7	2.7	2.7	1995	1996
1995	153.5	2.5	2.5	1996	1997
1996	158.6	3.3	3.3	1997	1998
1997	161.3	1.7	1.7	1998	1999
1998	163.9	1.6	1.6	1999	2000
1999	168.3	2.7	2.7	2000	2001
2000	174.0	3.4	3.4	2001	2002
2001	176.7	1.6	1.6	2002	2003
2002	180.9	2.4	2.4	2003	2004
2003	184.3	1.9	1.9	2004	2005
2004	190.3	3.3	3.3	2005	2006
2005	196.8	3.4	3.4	2006	2007
2006	201.8	2.5	2.5	2007	2008
2007	210.036	4.08	4.1	2008	2009
2008	210.228	0.1	0.1	2009	2010

Information on PTELL may be accessed through the Illinois Department of Revenue's Web site at www.tax.illinois.gov under the category of “Property Tax.”



IPRA Citizen Volunteer of the Year Rick Kuner of Oak Park (right) receives congratulations from IPRA CEO Bill Wald (left).

Rick Kuner – IPRA Citizen Volunteer of the Year

Back in 2001, officials from the Park District of Oak Park asked Rick Kuner to coordinate the efforts of 20 citizen volunteers to thoroughly assess and inventory all of the parks and facilities owned by the district. The completion of the infrastructure study more than six years ago was the beginning of a whole new era at the district. Since that time, Kuner volunteered his time and expertise in the development of the district's comprehensive master plan and was one of a dozen private citizens who led the effort for the successful passing of the park district's 2005 referendum, the first of its kind in more than 40 years.

He has also provided his expertise in developing requests for proposals and continues to play an important role in the selection process for facility and park planners. Currently, he is a member of the working group involved in planning for the future of the district's flagship facility.

With state's new governor in attendance, the IAPD and IPRA honor the 2008 recipients of the associations' major awards at the Soaring to New Heights Conference awards luncheon on January 30 in Chicago.



IAPD Rising Star Suzanne Hart of the Naperville Park District Board of Commissioners (center) receives her award from IAPD President and CEO Ted Flickinger (left) and 2008 Chairman of the IAPD Board of Trustees Mike Krost (right).

Suzanne Hart — IAPD Rising Star

The rising star award recognizes a newly elected board member who demonstrates exemplary performance of duties and responsibilities. This year's honoree is Suzanne Hart, president of the Naperville Park District's Board of Commissioners.

Hart was elected to the board in 2007. During her first month as a commissioner, she attended the IAPD legislative conference. She has remained a strong advocate for parks at the state capitol, serving as her agency's key legislative contact for IAPD. Since the beginning of her board tenure, she has served as co-chair of her agency's legislative committee. She also helped coordinate her agency's first-ever legislative golf outing, which brought together more than 50 elected officials representing schools, forest preserves, townships, city and county governments. And, she has helped her district solidify several intergovernmental agreements.

This past summer, she was elected to the office of park board president. Under her leadership, the park board has approved the district's open space recreation and master plan, has introduced a new indoor soccer program and has led efforts to document and improve green operational practices within the district.



Roselle Park District Director of Parks and Recreation (right) is all smiles after winning the 2008 IPRA Young Professional Award. She receives congratulations from IPRA CEO Bill Wald (left).

Heidi Lapin – IPRA Young Professional of the Year

Heidi Lapin, director of parks and recreation for the Roselle Park District earned the IPRA Young Professional of the Year Award, an honor given to an individual with less than ten years of experience, but someone who shows a great deal of promise in becoming a future leader in the field.

Lapin started with the district four years ago, when she was hired as the superintendent of recreation. While being responsible for developing, administering and promoting recreation programs and facilities, she also directed a community recreation center, designed and helped construct a nine-hole disc golf course and dog park, actively formed relationships with local business owners and leaders, implemented automatic payment plans, and purchased and oversaw the implementation of new recreation software.

Her greatest achievement was being an integral part of the project team for a \$5.1 million park and pool project. Prior to this successful effort, Roselle's community pool had been closed for more than five years, and several referendums had failed. After years of planning and no summer water activities, this park district successfully passed a referendum in the spring of 2006, and the pool's grand opening took place in June 2008.



The 2008 IAPD Honored Professional is Hoffman Estates Executive Director Dean Bostrom (center), shown here with 2008 IAPD Chairman of the Board of Trustees Mike Krost (left) and IAPD President and CEO Ted Flickinger (right).

Dean Bostrom – IAPD Honored Professional

The Honored Professional award goes to an individual who works closely with citizens and IAPD to improve parks, recreation and conservation at the local and state levels. This year's award goes to Dean Bostrom, executive director of the Hoffman Estates Park District.

Bostrom came to the district as a result of the IAPD Director Search Program. Twelve years later, under his direction, the park district has become a national gold medal award finalist two years in a row.

Bostrom encourages commissioners to serve on IAPD's committees and the board of trustees. He makes sure that the park district is represented at IAPD events, including the legislative conference, parks day at the state capitol, the summer golf tour, park district conservation day and the legal symposium.

The past year was an exceptional one for Bostrom. Thanks to his tenacity in fighting the opposition and defeating point after point, amendment after amendment, the state legislature passed a bill that allows Hoffman Estates to receive \$4.5 million over the next 15 years for senior and youth programming. The bill, which allowed construction of a promotional sign, was not an easy one to pass. In fact, Bostrom was told by opposing lobbyists that previous bills similar to the one he backed had never passed.

Bostrom also oversaw the opening of an exciting new park last year. The park, which was created through the redevelopment of a farm and includes the original farm homestead and barn, houses a collection of active resources for education and stewardship. The park provides hands-on, interactive learning experiences for all ages in a predominantly outdoor setting.



IPRA CEO Bill Wald (left) congratulates Arlington Heights Park District Superintendent of Recreation Cathy Puchalski on earning the 2008 IPRA Professional Recognition Award.

Cathy Puchalski – IPRA Professional Recognition

The IPRA Professional Recognition award goes to an individual with more than 10 years of full-time service, a person who has shown excellence in promoting parks and recreation on local and regional levels, a person who has had a profound impact on the field and the agency for which he or she works.

This year's recipient is Cathy Puchalski, superintendent of recreation at the Arlington Heights Park District.

Puchalski has 30 years in the field, has served for eight years as an IPRA board member, served as a member and chairman of the IPRA Finance Committee, spent 13 years on the IPRA Conference Committee and served as a co-chair of the IAPD/IPRA Annual Conference.

Responsible for a budget of \$3 million and a full-time staff of eight, Puchalski has had a profound impact on her agency for the past 20 years. Since she joined the staff, Arlington Heights has won two national gold medals. Puchalski and her staff were instrumental in developing and producing the submissions material in both instances.

As a member of the local senior center board since 1999, Puchalski has been active in helping to raise more than \$350,000 for equipment for the facility.

Recently, she headed up the redevelopment of a unique intergovernmental agreement that includes the park district, the village, the local historical society and the local library.

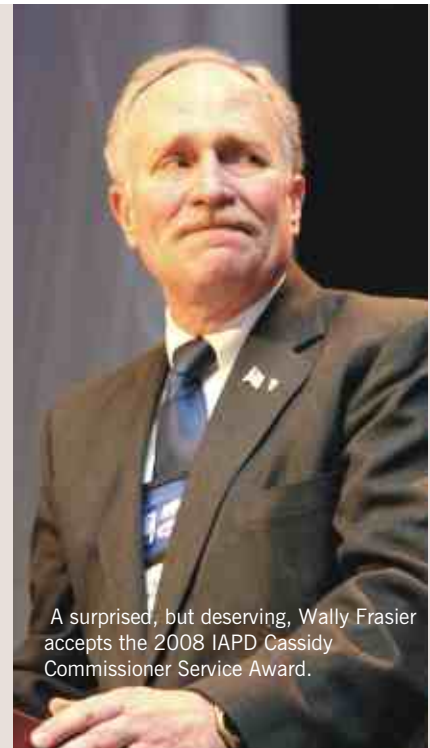
Wally Frasier – IAPD Mike Cassidy Commissioner Community Service Award

Wally Frasier was presented with the Mike Cassidy Commissioner Community Service award, which recognizes commissioners who have demonstrated the highest example of community service, personal integrity and ingenuity. The award pays homage to Freeport Park District Commissioner Mike Cassidy's 35-year commitment to his district, which earned him the nickname: "Mr. Parks."

Frasier is president of the Mundelein Park and Recreation District. He has served in the United States Army and the Illinois National Guard. He has given more than 34 years of service to his local American Legion. He is a fixture at local supermarkets and traffic stops, collecting donations for various causes. He serves in the honor guard at legionnaire funerals and is responsible for raising funds that benefit servicemen and women at the veteran's administration hospital. He is active in his community's rotary and lions clubs, church, little league and girl scouts, to name a few of the more than 30 organizations with which he is or has been involved.

Frasier retired as Mundelein's chief of the police after a 29-year career with the force.

He has been a park district commissioner for more than 16 years, and, under his leadership, the park district has been able to provide even more services to the community in these challenging economic times. In the last five years, residents have saved more than \$1.3 million through partnerships with local and state agencies that provide outside funding and grants.



A surprised, but deserving, Wally Frasier accepts the 2008 IAPD Cassidy Commissioner Service Award.



2009 Chairman of the IAPD Board of Trustees Colette Kubiesa.



2009 Chairman of the IPRA Board of Directors Ron Salski.

Passing the Gavel

For IAPD, January 29-31 marked the end of Mike Krost's term as the 2008 chairman of the Board of Trustees. Krost, a commissioner for the Chillicothe Park District, turned the reigns over to Colette Kubiesa, who has been a commissioner of the Elmhurst Park District since 1997. Kubiesa has a B.S. in park and recreation administration and worked for various park districts for 17 years before becoming a park board commissioner.

The IPRA held a similar changing of the guard at its annual business meeting on January 30. Ron Salski, CPRP, executive director of the Lake Bluff Park District, is the new IPRA Chairman. He succeeds 2008 IPRA Chairman Tracey M. Crawford, CPRP, CTRS, superintendent of development for the Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association.

Steve Persinger – IPRA Robert Artz Distinguished Service Award

This year's Robert Artz Distinguished Service Award goes to Steve Persinger, director of parks and recreation for the Geneva Park District. The award is named in honor of Robert Artz, who tragically lost his life in a plane crash in 1979. The Artz award goes to a person whose efforts have a lasting value.

Persinger has been in the field of parks and recreation for 36 years, 30 of those years have been with Geneva. Persinger is a past president of IPRA and has served on the Joint Conference Committee, the Distinguished Agency Committee, the Joint Publications Committee, the Coordinating Council and has been a member of the Great Lakes Regional Council. He has received the IPRA Fellow Award and the NRPA Citizen Branch's award for professional excellence.

With Persinger's guidance, Geneva has expanded its green space to more than 700 acres. Over his career, Persinger has been instrumental in his agency's applying for and receiving over \$7 million in grant funding from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Working with the local school district, Persinger's park district constructed two shared gymnasiums, which have ultimately cut costs for both governmental units and saved taxpayers millions.



IPRA CEO Bill Wald (left) and Geneva Park District Director of Parks and Recreation Steve Persinger. Persinger won the 2008 Robert Artz Distinguished Service Award.



2008 IAPD Board of Trustees Chairman Mike Krost, IAPD Executive Director and CEO Ted Flickinger, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn, 2008 IPRA Board of Directors Chairman Tracey Crawford and IPRA CEO Bill Wald.

Governor Pat Quinn is the IAPD Legislator of the Year

Judging by the level of applause, the highlight of the IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Awards Luncheon on January 30 was the attendance of newly sworn Illinois Governor Pat Quinn. It was Quinn's first public appearance on his first full day as governor.

Quinn was on hand to accept the associations' Legislator of the Year award, an honor that he was chosen to receive months before his accession to the Governor's Mansion. The award recognized Quinn's continuous support for park, recreation and conservation initiatives, including his work as the Chairman of the Illinois River Council, his service on the Illinois delegation to the Great Lakes Commission and his work with the Illinois Green Governments Coordinating Council. The associations also cited Quinn for organizing a Web-based "Save our Parks" petition drive, which urged the re-opening of seven state parks and 12 historic sites closed by Governor Rod Blagojevich in December 2008.

Before IAPD Board of Trustees Chairman Mike Krost could finish his introduction, luncheon attendees gave Quinn a sustained standing ovation. "That is the kind of welcome I would expect the Illinois Association of Park Districts to give to Pat Quinn on his first day as governor of the state of Illinois," said Krost.

Video footage of the governor's appearance is posted on the Illinois Association of Park Districts' Web site at www.ILparks.org.

Mary Ann Chambers – IAPD Commissioner of the Year

Northbrook Park District Commissioner Mary Ann Chambers earned the IAPD's Commissioner of the Year, an award that recognizes a commissioner who shows outstanding qualities to support and promote parks, recreation and conservation in his or her community and throughout the state. The recipient also must be involved in IAPD.

Chambers was elected to her park district board in 1999 and has served as vice president and president, along with taking an active role on all of her board's committees. This commitment overflows to the statewide level, where she has served on the IAPD Board of Trustees, as well as several IAPD committees.

She supports parks and recreation at every opportunity and is a strong proponent of improving and preserving land for parks. She serves on various community committees and task forces, both as a citizen and as a representative of the park district.

Chambers has worked to develop strong relationships with her park district's legislative representatives at both the state and national levels. Her participation in IAPD's legislative conference, NRPA's mid-year legislative conference and the NRPA Congress are testaments to her drive to become and remain an educated board member.

Her support of Northbrook's staff led to the district's acquisition of more than 65 acres of new park property and the development of an award-winning park. She is generous with her time, her praise and encouragement of others. She is a willing resource and mentor to new commissioners and a receptive sounding board for seasoned commissioners.



Northbrook Park District Commissioner Mary Ann Chambers (center) receives congratulations from IAPD President and CEO Ted Flickinger (left) and 2008 IAPD Chairman of the Board of Trustees Mike Krost (right) upon winning the IAPD Commissioner of the Year Award.



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“To really breathe new life into your pool, creativity is where it happens.”

by **arnie** biondo

breathe **new life** into your pools and water parks

People are naturally attracted to water. Think of it. Lake front homes, beaches, fountains, river walks, on and on. OK, but are they naturally attracted to water when it is in our pools and water parks?

Residents and customers want a fun, exhilarating, clean, safe “swimming” experience from us. But even the coolest, most innovative public water park from five, 10 or 15 years ago may not look so cool to today’s customers. However, pools and water parks that are under a generation old are huge capital investments. They are expensive to maintain and operate. And, they are in high demand, but for only 100 days every summer.

No wonder agencies want to – make that need to – see maximum use and earn maximum revenue. Keeping these facilities fresh would help the bottom line.

Breathing new life into our pools is simple. A \$1 million to \$5 million dollar re-investment every few years can take care of it. Except most park districts and municipalities can’t do that. So, what to do? Read on.

The 3 C’s

First, think differently about your pool. Think of your pool as a recreation center with water. When you do that, an entire new universe of programming, rentals, events and activities opens up. Virtually everything that happens in a recreation center can be adapted to take place at a pool – in the water, on the deck, in the sand or on the grass. Most aquatic operations and staff focus on the “big four”: open swim, swim lessons, swim team and water exercise. These are all great programs and necessary, expected elements of a pool operation. But they are just the basics. To jump-start water operations, we need to go beyond the basics.

To breathe new life into our pools, let’s focus on the 3 C’s:

- **Customers**
- **Cleanliness**
- **Creativity**

Customers

Who are your customers? Who are your potential customers? What do they want from your pool?

Make your customers your focus and examine every aspect of your operation from their perspective. Sounds obvious, but most of us are taught to look at every aspect from a safety perspective. Yes, safety is vitally important. Drowning tends to ruin a customer’s day. Of course our customers want the experience to be as safe as possible, and they take for granted that you have exceptional safety systems. It’s the other aspects that they don’t take for granted.

To start, think about who your customers are. Yes, kids and families. Who else? What congregations or special interests? When we think about the various groupings within our community, we can spot potential new or under-served customers. Here are a few examples: soccer clubs and teams; churches; local businesses; chamber of commerce members; fitness center members; active aging program participants; running or walking club members; unions; home-schooled children; and any and all people who are registered in park programs.

The next step should be just as obvious. Ask people what they want.

Remember, they already expect safety. And they expect lessons, open swim, lap and exercise. So, ask, “What else?” Brainstorm a list and ask what activities sound like fun? What would make the visit more enjoyable? What do they like or dislike? What do they like about other pools in other towns or at vacation spots that they have visited? Are they treated well at the pool? What would make that better?

How are you going to do the asking? A survey is one way. A suggestion box could work too. Why not try a biannual round table with customers? Whether you want to call it an advisory committee, a

focus group, or a public input session, it doesn’t matter. Just find ways to get folks to talk with you. Further, have one group of regular customers and another group that seldom or never visits your facility. Seek out some of those other potential customer groupings. Last suggestion, have someone other than the aquatics manager conduct these meetings. Find someone who doesn’t have her heart and soul wrapped up in the operation. Conduct one such meeting in the middle of summer and another in the winter.

One other fantastic source of information is your employees. Take your guards, attendants, supervisors and cashiers through a short SWOT (strength, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis. They hear visitors talk all summer long. They hear and see things that the full-time staff members never do. They will be eager to tell you what they know when you ask.

Last but not least, swim a mile in your customers’ flippers. There is no better way to find out about your pool than by being a customer yourself. Put your kids in your own swim lessons. Swim laps. Go to several open swim sessions. Bring a friend or neighbor to the pool. Use the showers and the washrooms. If your eyes are open, you’ll be amazed at how much you can improve things just by becoming your own customer.



Cleanliness

When people become parents, they tend to rate restaurants by different criteria. No matter how good the food is, the floor and the washrooms have to be clean to get a high rating. It’s the same with pools. No matter how clean and pure the water is, if the locker room, showers or toilet areas are dirty or seem unclean, you are losing customers. It doesn’t matter if the pool is a state-of-the-art water park or an old depression-era tank, the entire area and its surroundings need to be clean.

Where to start? The parking lot. It needs to be free of litter, pop cans, dirt, cigarette butts, straws, napkins, etc. Why? Years ago a man named Jan Carlzon of SAS Airlines said it was very important to keep the airplanes’ seat trays clean. He reasoned that customers would think, “If they can’t maintain the trays, then they surely can’t maintain jet engines.” That potential thinking drives people to other airlines.

Virtually no one is going to ask to see your pool water readings to see if the pool is clean. If your deck, concessions counter, tables, cashier desk, showers, toilets or locker rooms appear dirty, then customers will assume – consciously or sub-consciously – that your water isn’t clean either, and they will not come back. What’s worse, they’ll tell their friends to stay away.

In a nutshell, consider these aspects of a clean facility:

- Is there a fresh coat of paint on the walls every year?
- Do all the showers work?
- Is the chrome polished?
- Is there clutter at the cashier desk or in the manager's office, or worse, anywhere on deck?
- Are staff members allowed to eat anywhere other than in private or in the designated snack area?
- What does the locker room smell like? (Anything that smells like disinfectant is better than smelling damp, musty or moldy.)
- What are the staff members wearing and how are they wearing it? Consistent, uniform, professional, clean, crisp, new-looking attire communicates volumes about the level of care at the facility.

Hold a staff meeting to brainstorm, "What does clean look (smell, feel) like?" Post cleaning checklists in prominent places and use them. Walk through at least every 15 minutes. Customers notice when you are cleaning.

Be vigilant and be a stickler on cleaning.

Creativity

Creativity is the best of the three Cs and the most fun. This is where you get to think outside the pool, so to speak. There are volumes written and dozens of conferences held on the right ways to run a pool. Not much changes outside of design, guarding techniques and filtration systems. To really breathe new life into your pool, creativity is where it happens.

Go back to what we mentioned earlier about a pool being a recreation center with water. Think about it. Special events, arts and crafts, sports, exercise, music, gymnastics, theater can all be introduced somehow at the pool. When this is suggested, aquatic supervisors everywhere let out a loud, well-deserved groan, "I'm over my head already. How can I do all this other creative stuff?"

Well, they can't. So, start this new "pool as rec center" type programming by requiring that each member of the agency's programming staff plan and conduct at least one program a year at the pool. It's foolish to think that the aquatic supervisor should or could do all the creative new programs. Recreation center directors don't necessarily organize all the programs in the center. Having said that, don't discount all those energetic and creative summer pool staff. They, too, are a great source of ideas and manpower for special events and promotions for the pool.

Also, go back to your customer focus. You have identified your customers and what they want. Aim your new ideas at those targets. Experiment with different ideas. Even if a new program draws little interest, you were probably open and operating anyway. Here are a few other ideas to prime your creativity:

- Celebrate every holiday, including (or maybe especially) dumb ones such as national pickle day. Don't be shy about making up your own holidays.
- Change colors.
- Give time to a trusted community organization to run an event.
- Hold dollar days.
- Decorate with lots of flowers, ornamental grasses, pennants, etc.
- Organize model boat races, or, better, build-a-boat and race it events.
- Put together deck dances.
- Hold a puppet show on deck.
- Have a Grandparents Day: Bring grandma, and get in for free.
- Design an aquatic camp that includes kayaking, fishing, snorkeling, etc., etc.
- Adopt a theme for the summer, or for each month.

Using your creativity is all about making it more enjoyable for your customers. Have fun. If the staff is enthused and the customers are enthused, it's going to translate into more attendance and more revenue.

New Thinking Leads to New Water Play Experiences

It's possible to keep your pool fresh, new, inviting and attractive regardless of how much money is available for major features. It takes thinking differently and not doing business as usual. Begin by concentrating on the 3 Cs and move on from there. Perhaps the best sources are your colleagues, either in aquatics or not. Get a bunch of recreation professionals talking about the possibilities, and the ideas flow. You can, indeed, breathe new life in to your pool and water park, without millions.



Stuck? Then Steal These Ideas.

Up for grabs are these real programming ideas from real practitioners! These ideas came from participants at Aquatic Management School, Illinois State Conference and Athletic Business Conference.

- Country Music Day
- Underwater Christmas Tree Decorating
- Chalk Art on Deck
- Wine and Cheese Deck Party for pass holders prior to opening
- Underwater Egg Hunt/ Floating Egg Hunt
- Teen Splash Night (same for 5th-6th graders)
- Expanded times for Mom and Tot Swims
- Caribbean Night
- Sand Castle Building (contest)
- Red Suit Free Admission day
- Floating Fourth of July Fireworks party
- Elvis Day
- Deck Karaoke
- Scout Days
- Scout merit badge events
- Over 50 Swim
- Clip, Chip & Dip (craft, snack, swim)

This is just a partial list. Sharing ideas at the aforementioned conference sessions has generated more than 100 program ideas for pools!

Arnie Biondo is the executive director of the Carol Stream Park District, winner of the 2008 NRPA Gold Medal. You may reach him at arnieb@csparks.org.



Playing with Your Food A Guide to Choosing a Food Service Vendor

by David J. Gilbert, C.P.O.

Sweet treats, crunchy snacks, healthy options and thirst quenching drinks are all part of the operation of any entertainment venue, whether it's a water park, sports complex, stadium, golf course or even a theatre. Many large-scale venues are able to have a dedicated full-time food and beverage professional with years of industry training and expertise, but what happens when your facility isn't able to support such a person or your agency needs someone to take the food service to that next level?

Most park and recreation agencies will look to a vendor (a food service consulting company or a concessionaire) as a solution. So how does an agency know a vendor is able to handle its service needs and fit into the budget?

This WebXtra:

- Shows you how to analyze costs of in-house versus vendor-provided services
- Reveals the four criteria on which to judge potential food service vendors
- Provides tips on how best to operate food services using a food service vendor or consultant

David J. Gilbert, C.P.O. is the regional director of Illinois, Backyard Grille. He has worked in the private and public recreation field for the last seven years, especially in family entertainment venues such as water parks and arcades. You may reach him at 847-721-1752, or at: david@backyardgrille.com.

The Economics of Free – Making Giveaways Work for Your Pool and Your Agency

by Mary Priller

Along with going “green” and “sustainability,” good, old-fashioned “free” may just be the new buzz word. Once a marketing ploy, free is now its own economy.

To attract new customers, boost customer loyalty and ensure community goodwill, many park agency pools and waterparks are offering freebies, from free admissions, to free special events to behind-the-scenes tours.

Mary Priller of the Mundelein Park and Recreation District reveals the rationale behind that agency's decision to embark upon a strategy of providing free offers to patrons at its most popular facilities throughout the summer season.

Read this story to learn how one agency is rolling out the freebies and evaluating their effectiveness.

Mary Priller is the marketing specialist at the Mundelein Park and Recreation District. To learn more about the Mundelein Park and Recreation District, call 847-566-0650, or visit www.mundeleinparks.org.

Read the Full Story on the Web

At the IAPD Web Site (www.ILparks.org) ...

Roll to the “Publications” tab on the left side of the home page. Click on the “Illinois Parks and Recreation Magazine” option to take you to the magazine pages. You'll find links to all Web Xtras on the bottom of the page.

At the IPRA Web Site...

www.IPRAonline.com/resources/publications

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PEOPLE & PLACES



IAPD President and CEO Announces Retirement

Illinois Association of Park Districts President and CEO **Dr. Ted Flickinger** will retire effective January 31, 2010, after heading the association for 30 years.

Flickinger made his announcement at the association's annual business meeting held on January 31, 2009 in Chicago.

With his retirement, Flickinger puts a cap on a 50-year career in the field of parks and recreation, which started in 1959, when, at the age of 16, he became a life guard at his local park agency in Ohio. In his career, Flickinger has been a park agency director, a professor of parks and recreation at The Ohio State University and a state parks association president and CEO. Flickinger oversaw the Bexley, Ohio Parks and Recreation Department that won the National Recreation and Park Association Gold Medal in 1972.

Flickinger received his Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees in park and recreation management from Southern Illinois University and his Ph.D. with a specialization in natural resources management from The Ohio State University. He is a Certified Park and Recreation Professional and Certified Association Executive.

He has served in various capacities for many professional organizations, including president of the National Recreation and Park Association, the Illinois Society of Association Executives and the American Park and Recreation Society.

Specializing in legislative advocacy, leadership training and board development, Dr. Flickinger has 45 years of experience in working with boards, both as a chief executive and as a board member. A nationally recognized authority on boardmanship, he travels the

country helping boards learn the keys to working together as a team and achieving their goals. He has written and published hundreds of articles for professional magazines and newsletters. He has given keynote speeches at numerous state and national conferences on the subject of boardmanship and legislative advocacy and has conducted conference sessions, workshops, seminars and keynote speeches in 27 states and at more than 20 national conferences. He is the author of *Are You On Board?* and *Get on Board*, two books on the subject of leadership for chief executive officers and policy-making boards.

His tenure as the Illinois Association of Park Districts' chief executive began in 1980. Since that time, the association has grown from 223 member agencies to more than 415 agency and associate members. Flickinger has prudently managed the association's \$2.035 million operating budget, which has never shown a deficit the entire time he has been director. The association purchased its current headquarters at 211 East Monroe Street in Springfield in 1987 and paid the mortgage three years later.

Flickinger facilitated 56 board self-evaluation retreats and performed more than 90 director searches for Illinois park, recreation and conservation agencies in his last five years as president and CEO of the IAPD.

The Illinois Association of Park Districts Board of Trustees has a succession plan in place. The board expects to announce Dr. Flickinger's successor during the association's annual Legislative Reception and Conference, held in Springfield on May 5 and 6, 2009.



Governor Taps Environmental Policy Advisor as New IDNR Secretary

Governor Pat Quinn announced the appointment of natural resources professional and conservationist **Marc Miller** as director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources on February 5. Miller had been senior policy adviser and liaison to the Illinois River Coordinating Council for the Office of the Lieutenant Governor.

"Marc Miller is an expert in managing and protecting our state's precious natural resources and will run a very professional agency," said Governor Quinn. "In addition, Marc is an avid outdoorsman dedicated to promoting the public's safe use and greater understanding of our state's parks, waterways and other natural resources."

Miller, 39, joined then Lt. Governor Quinn's staff in June 2004. Since that time, he was instrumental in the development and implementation of such environmental programs as the Dam Safety Initiative and the Mud-to-Parks program, which promoted the beneficial reuse of river sediment.

Miller has a master's degree in environmental administration from the University of Illinois at Springfield. Prior to joining Lt. Governor Pat Quinn's staff, he was a watershed organizer for the Prairie Rivers Network and an intern and volunteer for the Illinois Environmental Council.

In making this appointment, Governor Quinn stressed the key role the state's natural resources and parks play in promoting tourism and growing the Illinois economy. Governor Quinn also urged everyone to take advantage of the great outdoors.

"Everybody should get out and enjoy our state parks and other vast natural resources," said Governor Quinn. "This is especially true of our children. We want no child left inside."

Mokena Park District Earns Homefront Hero Award

The **Mokena Community Park District** received the Homefront Hero Award from then Lt. Governor Pat Quinn in a ceremony on November 23, 2008 at the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago. The district was honored for its "Stockings for our Troops" event. Mokena Park Board Vice President, **Mary Beth Windberg** was in attendance to receive the award.

Homefront Hero Awards were presented to 18 individuals and organizations that have made a special effort to help service members, military families and veterans.

The **Stockings for our Troops** event was held on Veteran's Day, November 11th. Park District volunteers sewed holiday stockings. The community was invited to decorate a stocking and donate stocking stuffer items. Each stocking also included a personal note thanking the service person for his or her dedication to the country. Volunteers created 133 stockings during the two hour event. Stockings were then sent to service members via Operation Care Package.



Mokena Park District Board Vice President Mary Beth Windberg receives the Homefront Hero Award from then Lt. Governor Pat Quinn during a ceremony on November 23, 2008.

Hanover Park Park District Hires New Athletic and Aquatic Supervisor

Robert Hammon joined the Hanover Park Park District as the new athletic and aquatic supervisor in November 2008. Hammon has years of experience in the aquatic and athletics fields. He previously worked for the City of Farmington, New Mexico and the Village of Lake Zurich, Illinois. His responsibilities at the Hanover Park Park District include adult and youth athletics, as well as running the aquatic facility, its events and programs. Hammon is a Certified Aquatics Facility Operator. He earned a master's degree in recreation administration from Aurora University.



Get Your People and Places in PEOPLE & PLACES

Please submit items of interest from your agency to Rodd Whelpley at rwhelpley@ILparks.org for possible inclusion in PEOPLE & PLACES.

Stories should be no longer than 300 words. Also send color Jpegs that are 300 dpi when reduced to about 1 ½ inches tall.

Board Member Development Program Award Recipients

The IAPD Board Member Development Program gives recognition to local board members who consistently go above and beyond the call of duty through committee involvement, attendance at continuing educational opportunities and achievements at the local, state and national levels. Participants accumulate "Board Development Units" (BDUs) yearly from October 1 to September 30 for park district, forest preserve, conservation and recreation-related activities. Notable Board Members have accumulated 100 units. Distinctive Board Members have accumulated 400 units, and Master Board Members have accumulated 750 units. Master Board Members retain their status through the accumulation of maintenance units each year.

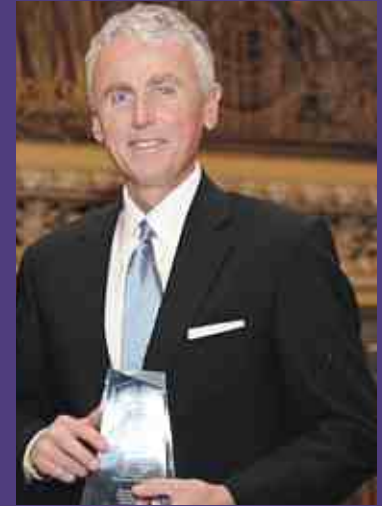
The following achieved recognition through the Board Member Development Program in 2008:

Notable Board Members

Dan Bird, Carol Stream Park District
Brenda Gramann, Carol Stream Park District
Donna King, Foss Park District
Kingston Neal, Foss Park District
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Carl Schultz, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County
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Carolyn Ubricco, Elmhurst Park District
Lawrence Wade, Foss Park District



Marianne Cordell of the Bartlett Park District earned Master Board Member status in 2008.



David Fairburn of the Mount Prospect Park District earned Master Board Member status in 2008.

Distinctive Board Members

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Master Board Members

Marianne Cordell, Bartlett Park District
David Fairburn, Mount Prospect Park District



Alice Eastman



Doug Kettel

Bolingbrook and Schaumburg Superintendents Earn Environmental Design Accreditation

Alice Eastman, Bolingbrook Park District's superintendent of natural resources, earned the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Accredited Professional (LEED AP) status this past December. She is one of the few people outside the design and construction field to have earned the LEED AP certification.

Those who have earned this designation have demonstrated a thorough understanding of green building techniques, the LEED Green Building Rating System and the building certification process. The LEED AP program consists of an examination and 30 hours of biennial continuing education credits. The program is administered by the Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI), which was established with the support of the United States Green Buildings Council (USGBC).

Eastman is in the final planning stages for the opening of the district's new Hidden Oaks Nature Center. The center, expected to open June 20, has been designed to meet LEED Platinum standards, the highest level of green building design.

Schaumburg Park District's **Doug Kettel** has also achieved LEED AP status. Kettel serves as Schaumburg's superintendent of facility services. "We've always got work and repairs to do on our various facilities, and this ensures that what we're doing is sustainable and follows all LEED guidelines," said Kettel. "Achieving the LEED AP designation allows me to better serve the park district and advance buildings that are environmentally responsible, economical and healthy places to live and work."



Laura Clark



Beth Martens



Paula Spaniol



Mary Sirotzke



Stephanie Logan

New Hires at the Bartlett Park District

Laura Clark is the new aquatic manager at the Bartlett Park District. She is a graduate of George Williams College with a bachelor's degree in recreation, and she earned a master's degree from National-Louis University. She is a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional, a Certified Aquatics Facility Operator, an Ellis Lifeguard Instructor and has been active in both IPRA and NRPA. Her previous aquatic management experience includes positions at the Hanover Park, Wheeling and Bensenville Park Districts.

The district's new assistant aquatic manager is **Beth Martens**. Martens took a bachelor's degree from Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa. Prior to coming to Bartlett, she worked in a variety of aquatic management positions with YMCAs, the City of Elgin Parks and Recreation Department and the South Barrington Park District.

At the district's business services department, **Paula Spaniol** has been promoted from payroll clerk to accounting manager. She has been with the district seven years.

Two new employees at the business services department are **Mary Sirotzke**, who serves as payroll clerk, and **Stephanie Logan**, the district's new cash management specialist.



2009 IAPD Board of Trustees Chairman Colette Kubiesa (left) and 2008 IAPD Board of Trustees Chairman Mike Krost (right) thank staff members from Thompson Dyke & Associates for their support of Friends of Illinois Parks.

Friends of Illinois Parks Recognizes Donors at Conference

Many of the vital programs offered by the IAPD could not occur without assistance from corporations and businesses. The following corporations recently were recognized for their generosity towards the IAPD through support of Friends of Illinois Parks:

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Shannon Ridgeway



Jordann Tomasek



Kent Anderson



Ethan Williams

Four New Hires at Arlington Heights

Shannon Ridgeway is the new superintendent of marketing and communications for the Arlington Heights Park District. She oversees all marketing functions, sponsorship/partnership strategies and initiatives, the production of program guides, advertising, promotions, special events, district-wide communications and public relations. She holds a master's degree in corporate communication and a bachelor's degree in communication, both earned at DePaul University. She worked previously as the senior marketing director for The Glen Town Center and as the marketing director for Westfield Old Orchard Shopping Center.

Jordann Tomasek is the district's new graphic communication specialist. She worked previously as the marketing and communications coordinator for the Carol Stream Park District. She earned a bachelor's degree in mass communications-advertising from Towson University and also holds a graphic design/web design certificate. Tomasek compiles, proofreads and designs the

district's program guides, flyers, posters, banners and any other design-related projects.

Kent Anderson is Arlington Heights' new assistant golf operations supervisor. He previously was a golf operations intern at the district. He helps manage the daily operations, restaurant rentals and banquets at Arlington Lakes Golf Course, Sunset Meadows Driving Range and Nickol Knoll Golf Course. Anderson graduated with a bachelor's degree in recreation management from the University of Wisconsin-Lacrosse.

Ethan Williams recently joined the district as the new recreation supervisor for Camelot Park Community Center. Previously, he worked part time for the district's Olympic indoor swim center for five years. Williams oversees the day-to-day operations at Camelot Park and creates recreational programs. He graduated from Northeastern Illinois University with a bachelor of arts degree.



Kristen Mattes



Patrick Griffin

Northbrook Hires Two Supervisors

Kristen Mattes is the Northbrook Park District's supervisor of early childhood programming. She received a bachelor's degree in recreation and business management from Elmhurst College and a master of human resource management degree from the Keller Graduate School of Management in Oak Brook.

Mattes has been working for park districts since she was 16 years old, doing such jobs as refereeing volleyball, mowing lawns and working at a driving range. She has worked for the Des Plaines, Crystal Lake and Glenview Park Districts, as well as the Villages of Lincolnwood and Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin.

Patrick Griffin is the district's new supervisor of aquatics and youth basketball. Prior to joining the Northbrook staff, Griffin managed aquatics and fitness programming at the Rolling Meadows Park District and worked in aquatics positions at the Palatine Park District. Griffin received a bachelor's degree in recreational administration from Eastern Illinois University, where he was a distance and "fly" swimmer on the men's swim and dive team.



Fund Development Coordinator Hired at SRA

Lisa Rasin recently accepted the South East Association for Special Parks and Recreation's fund development coordinator position. Rasin just completed a six-year term on the board of the Downers Grove Area Chamber of Commerce, serving two years as its chairman. She has also served on the board of directors of the Indian Boundary YMCA. She is a member of the Downers Grove Kiwanis Club, which sponsors two of SEASPAR's largest special events. For two years she chaired the Downers Grove Relay for Life for the American Cancer Society.

She has been recognized by the *Business Ledger* as an "Influential Woman in Business," by the Downers Grove Chamber of Commerce as its "Outstanding Volunteer Award" and by the Village of Downers Grove as its "Citizen of the Year."

WDSRA Hires Inclusion Coordinator

Amanda Miller is the newest member of the Western DuPage Special Recreation Association (WDSRA) inclusion team. As inclusion coordinator, Miller is responsible for staffing inclusion programs in Naperville, observing participants and evaluating staff and programs.

Miller is a recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and has a degree in therapeutic recreation. Prior to coming to WDSRA, Miller completed her internship in a community setting, working with adaptive services in Eugene, Oregon.



Tri County SRA Hires Program Coordinator

Kathy Ochromowicz is the new program coordinator for the Tri County Special Recreation Association, which services parts of Cook, DuPage and Will counties in the southwest Chicago suburban area.

Ochromowicz's responsibilities include recruiting, training and evaluating part-time employees and volunteers; program development; budget preparation; production of seasonal program guides; and assisting with fundraising, community and special events.

Ochromowicz has worked at the Wheaton Park District, where she oversaw the operations of the community center, fitness center and two aquatic facilities. She has also been the superintendent of recreation for the Warrenville Park District. Previously, she worked in the special education department for the West Chicago Community High School, where she

assisted in teaching biology and physical science. She continues to coach the girls' badminton team there.



Jen Tiltges



Joan Grzesinski

New employees Join the Morton Grove Park District

Jen Tiltges has recently joined the Morton Grove Park District as a recreation Supervisor. She oversees two outdoor pools, facility rentals, teen programs and community special events. Tiltges worked previously with the Northbrook Park District, the Waukegan Park District and the Arlington Heights Park District. She has a bachelor's degree from University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh.

Joan Grzesinski is the district's new assistant facility manager. She was previously the assistant general manager at Equinox Fitness in Highland Park. At Morton Grove, she oversees the district's 5,000-square-foot Club Fitness and Prairie View Community Center, its aquatic facilities and its fitness programs. Grzesinski has a bachelor's degree from Ripon College.



Chuck Sabey



Anna Soloff



Kevin Adams

Park Forest Announces Staff Changes

Park Forest Recreation and Parks has made several staff changes.

Former program supervisor **Chuck Sabey** is now the cultural arts supervisor. In this position, he books groups for the adult, senior and children's series at Park Forest's Manilow Theater, and he is responsible for the annual summer Main Street Nights series, which takes place on the Village Green in Downtown Park Forest. Sabey is a graduate of the University of Illinois-Chicago.

Anna Soloff has joined the department as a program supervisor, working specifically with youth programs, summer camps, various classes and special events. Soloff served four years as the assistant program coordinator for Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center in Park Forest, where she got experience planning large events and writing grants. She is a graduate of Southern Illinois University.

Kevin Adams also recently joined the department as a program supervisor. Adams is in charge of youth and adult athletic programs, summer field scheduling and management of the department's Forest Trail Recreation Center. Adams has worked in education, college admissions and sports management. He attended Langston University in Langston, Oklahoma, majoring in business and organizational management.

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The Economics of **FREE**

Making Giveaways Work for Your Pool and Your Agency

by Mary Priller

Along with going “green” and “sustainability,” good, old-fashioned “free” may just be the new buzz word. Once a marketing ploy, free is now its own economy. From “free-to-try,” “buy-one-get-one” (BOGO) offers, to free Google® searches and other no-cost offers on the Web, free is successful. But, just how can we give things away and still be viable in this economy?

The downturn in spending resulting from consumers finding themselves with less or no discretionary income means it’s time to be creative. For aquatic parks, beaches, golf courses and more, this means looking beyond the budgets and margins to find the merits of “zero” and “savings” as selling points. The results may not only be good for your bottom line, but may also add to the goodwill your agency enjoys in the community.

The Rationale of “Something for Nothing”

“We need to become a ‘caring brand’ if you will, and embrace sensitivity and the changing needs of our residents and that includes from a financial standpoint,” said Margaret Resnick, Director of the Mundelein Park and Recreation District. “We are a long-term partner in the community. People are staying close to home, saving on travel and utilizing opportunities at their park districts, libraries and more. We need to offer things

that are a great value and great experience. That includes affordability and free.”

“Free” has been very much on the minds of commissioners and administrators at the Mundelein Park and Recreation District, which serves a community of more than 30,000. At a recent board meeting, park district commissioners asked just what was planned for this season at Barefoot Bay Family Aquatic Center. The six-acre, nautical-themed aquatic park for all ages

doesn't generally need an offer to get lines forming. Opened in 2006, this award-winning water thrill is quaintly tucked behind the park district's community center. Its many amenities, including 33-foot tall water slides, a 740-foot lazy river, zero-depth pool and floating "water walk," keep people coming. So, why offer for free something that's already selling well? It's simple. Those hot, hazy days will be here and so will those wanting to enjoy this great facility. But, who knows what's ahead with the economy and how many will decide to spend – or not. Why not help make that decision-making process a bit easier? One positive free experience coupled with the benefits of word-of-mouth and neighborly "viral marketing," can mean two or three paying customers right around the corner.

Rolling Out a Series of Free Offers

Consumers are wise enough to know that most often free offers are, at least in part, marketing tactics to get them through the turn styles. But consumers are also sensitive enough to lose any feelings of goodwill they might have felt about receiving a free offer if they suspect that the offer was simply a one-time gimmick, solely for the purpose of goading them into the park. So, to keep the interest and the goodwill going, the district decided to roll

out a series of free offers this summer, called "Summer Splash" days at Barefoot Bay.

The campaign includes a series of free and low-cost activities for families, kids and all ages. It kicks off in May with a free behind-the-scenes tour of Barefoot Bay. This popular, "dry" event (an evening for landlubbers) gets people up

close to all those exciting things that make the bay waters churn, including the two-story pump room that keeps all things running. Next, guests tour the site and try their luck at guessing how long it takes to get down the water slides (like a nano-second) and sample all the great food and snacks in the concession area. Waterpark mascot Leroy the

Lobster greets the young ones and poses for free photos, while others enjoy the free crafts and sidewalk art contests. June promises more fun with a "coupon-less" free day. No need to download or make a carbon footprint for this offer, just come the first Wednesday after 3:00 p.m., and it's free. Children ages two and under are free every day at the site (but they must bring their parents for the fun, too). And, there are a number of "Barefoot Bay Float Nights" scattered throughout the season. People float along the lazy river, with kids receiving a free root beer float. The ice cream alone has them lining up.

Spray Park, adjacent to Barefoot Bay, has its own special appeal and brand of stimulus offers. Geared especially for the young ones, this land of larger-than-life spraying flowers, water cannons and interactive sand area is free every day from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., perfect for parents to meet up on their way home from work or for an after-dinner treat. Daily, the price is just a \$1 for



Mundelein Park and Recreation District's Spray Park

Freebies Everywhere

Free offers aren't exclusive to water attractions at Mundelein and likely should not be at your agency either.

For example, at Steeple Chase, the district's championship golf course, juniors can learn the game or fine tune their skills for free every Sunday through Thursday after 4:00 p.m. with a paying adult. A popular loyalty program at the course lets golfers earn points for free golf. There are special rates for twilight, senior golfers and ladies on Mondays.

Of course, there are the traditional freebies that you may want to tout in your marketing efforts to the public. In Mundelein, there are 33 parks, 23 playgrounds, 11 basketball courts, 20 tennis courts and miles of trail for hiking and biking – all great, free ways to have fun and be healthy. It never hurts to remind the public of the un-programmed amenities that are always available for their use. This fact might require more attention in your general advertising or in your seasonal brochures.

residents, and this year, the district's new multi-use punch card offers a discount for 10 or 20 visits.

Diamond Lake Beach, the district's scenic waterfront offers lake swimming, boating, a boat launch and soft sand. The district has priced this attraction at \$12 for a season pass for residents with an early bird pass. Ages two and under are free every day with a paying adult. "Summer Splash" days will also be offered on select weeks at Diamond Lake, and the season will officially kickoff May 30 with the Annual Diamond Lake Beach Wakeboard Competition, an event where beachgoers enjoy a free day at the beach with wakeboard demos, as novice and semi-pro boarders compete for prizes. Then, on August 8, the season winds down as the park district partners with the Village of Mundelein, to host a Centennial Celebration at Diamond Lake Beach. The free, daylong event includes live music, sandcastle building, contests, picnicking and a nighttime regatta with decorated boats parading the lake.

Evaluating the Impact of Free at the Water Attractions

So, really what's in these freebies for your agency and what about return on investment?

Every agency is different with its own personality. Your strategies, goals and reasons for implementing a free campaign should reflect those qualities. The goodwill aspect could be endless, its intrinsic value going on for seasons to come. Same with your return on investment, if reaching your audience, creating a favorable impression and building your customer base were the reasons you "invested" in this plan in the first place. As for the real numbers and balance sheet at your waterpark, you'll have to evaluate that at season's end.

The variety of Mundelein Park District's water attractions and the unique programming for the broad brushstroke of ages we serve at those sites facilities is why we chose to market "FREE" at the water attractions and throughout the entire district.

The giveaways introduce (and, in some cases, reintroduce) the community to even more exciting opportunities while letting residents save and stretch their dollars. A great experience can lead to a happy customer. A happy

customer is often a repeat customer. Repeat and loyal customers support your programs, fill your concession stands and are your champions in the community. They are there for the long haul. Including them in all you offer and getting you both to "Point B" during these financially unraveling times, is a smart idea.

Will "free" work? It will if you remember the strengths of your agency and what appeals to your market. Giving away free swim at 7:00 a.m. on a Saturday won't bring in the crowds as much as "2-for-1" in mid-afternoon. And, a "two-for" promotion generates revenue – a win-win situation. There has to be value for everyone and that can go beyond price, too. Convenience is another important component. A great time to promote for busy schedules and working families can be just after dinner or on the way home from the office.

Obviously, time will tell how the use of "free" will impact programs and the bottom line, but if smiles and happy faces are any indication, the market will be looking up.

Smart Free Offers

Determining How, When and Why to Give Things Away

Car dealerships, restaurants, retail shops, park districts – all industries of different shapes and sizes, but all facing the same challenging economy with common needs. All these business need to use their floor space and move their products. In an agency's case, "floor space" can mean a sports field, pool or gym and the "product," a program, tee time, swim lesson or paid admission. And, all of these need to be revenue generators.

So, is there a "best practice" or smart way to offer free? Again, think about your agency and what makes it unique and successful. Then, work together a plan that maximizes these assets while minimizing your financial exposure. Here are a few things we are trying at the Mundelein Park District.

Sponsorships

It's all in relationship marketing. Think of every time you are communicating with someone as another opportunity to work together. Perhaps there is a service you can barter for or a product someone wants to share. Need giant inflatables for a program? Why not "barter" a deal and trade free advertising space in your next park district brochure? After all, you are reaching thousands of homes with potential buyers. What about sampling and partnering with your beverage suppliers? The free "float night" at Barefoot Bay with free root beer floats is all about partnering. The sponsor gets to pitch its product. It is a fun event for guests, and comes at no cost to the agency.

The adage used to be "cash is king." Yes, cash is great, but very hard to find in the realm of sponsorships lately. In-kind sponsorships and donations have taken a leading role. Be sure to look at the benefits of in-kind donations. See how you could use these donated items or services, now or for later use. If it's a non-perishable, store it and defray next year's costs. If it's a media buy or donation, work with your media representatives to maximize the deal with such things as inserts, preferred page placements, open-ended plans (using unused space for next season's programs).

And, think outside the box for sponsors, and ask them how they would like to get involved. They might see opportunities at your facilities you're not thinking of. Remember that wall space in your gym area that is rather vague or non-descript? That might be perfect for a shoe company pitching new cross trainers. They'll sell athletic shoes and you'll get paid advertising space.

Co-Op Agreements

Like sponsors, your vendors and suppliers might have money to share to help offset the costs of your "free" initiatives through their company's co-operative budgets. Most often used with advertising, these budgets have dwindled in recent years. If money can be found, it's usually on a first-come basis. So, partner with your vendors and suppliers early on and see if things like putting their logo or company name in your next advertisement would qualify for co-op dollars. Even small amounts can go a long way.

Timing is Everything

Remember back in high school when you used to ask your dad for the car keys? Your success was all in the timing. The same strategy applies here. There's no need to offer free at peak times, since you're already having success with an audience that's willing and happy to pay at this premium time. So, capitalize on the value of free at non-peak or near-peak times. This helps fill in those "open" slots while still keeping the offer attractive (value-centered) for your customers. And getting people in the facility earlier or getting them to stay longer can help with staff scheduling problems. Offerings for off-peak times also avoid a potential increases in staff and material costs that could be needed if you offered a bonus during your busiest times.

The Mundelein Park District was sensitive to timing when planning its "Summer Splash" days of free water thrills after 3:00 p.m. This feature is expected to be the ideal solution for residents who want to have the hottest ticket in town this summer without breaking the bank. The community is also already enjoying the benefits of early bird discounts, with savings tied to early registrations for

summer passes. The campaign or idea of driving responses to a timed discount isn't new, but the value of these offers can be re-emphasized with earlier and more aggressive marketing pitches.

Bundles and Packaging

A sleeve of golf balls might not be selling, but put them individually in a jar on the counter, and someone just might buy four (and at a higher cost per each). Sometimes, it's not what you sell or market, but how you do it.

We're trying "bundles" this year, which started with our agency's winter/spring brochure. Similar programs are bundled or packaged together with an attractive discounted rate when you sign up for two or more. This helps fill programs (particularly new ones) and passes along savings to mom and dad that just might translate into additional program registrations.

Mary Priller

is the marketing specialist at the Mundelein Park and Recreation District.

To learn more about the Mundelein Park and Recreation District, call 847-566-0650, or visit www.mundeleinparks.org.

Playing with Your Food

A Guide to Choosing a Food Service Vendor

Sweet treats, crunchy snacks, healthy options and thirst quenching drinks are all part of the operation of any entertainment venue, whether it's a water park, sports complex, stadium, golf course or even a theatre. Many large-scale venues are able to have a dedicated full-time food and beverage professional with years of industry training and expertise, but what happens when your facility isn't able to support such a person or your agency needs someone to take the food service to that next level?

Most park and recreation agencies will look to a vendor (a food service consulting company or a concessionaire) as a solution. So how does an agency know a vendor is able to handle its service needs and fit into the budget?



Where to Start

Before an agency can determine whether a food service vendor is right for its situation, it needs to look at the current financial reports of its operation.

The first step is to look at the direct costs associated with its operations: equipment costs, payroll, food costs, paper goods and office supplies. Once the agency has clearly determined those costs, it needs to look at the indirect costs of the facility in the areas of utility percentages,

insurance, payroll related taxes and policies, managerial support and finance department support.

When all these figures are finalized the agency needs to compare them to the sales from the site to evaluate the site's profitability. This will allow agency officials to determine the base line payments expected from any vendor selected to operate the site.

For example, a typical financial statement for a site may look like the one below.

Now that the agency has reviewed this statement, managers can see that the minimal annual expected payment from a vendor should be \$5,000. At this point the agency has a means for evaluating the financial component of any bid or proposal a vendor would submit. Remember though that financial return from a vendor is just the first line of evaluation and should not be the end of the evaluation because the financial component of any bid or proposal can be negotiated.

Barnacle Bill's Hamburger Oasis				
Income statement for the 2008 Waterpark Season				
Total Sales				\$100,000
Less Expenses				
	Direct Expenses			
	Payroll	\$35,000		
	Food Costs	26,000		
	Paper Goods	4,500		
	Office Supplies	4,000		
	Equipment Purchased (less annual depreciation)	2,000		
	Equipment Rental Fees	2,500		
	Sales Tax of Items Sold	7,000		
	Total Direct Expenses		\$ 81,000	
	Indirect Expenses			
	Percentage of Facility Manager's Salary	\$4,500		
	Percentage of Accounting Staff Salary	6,000		
	Percentage of Utilities	3,500		
	Total Indirect Expenses		14,000	
				95,000
	Net Profit (Loss)			\$ 5,000 *
* Represents a five percent profit rate				

Which Vendor Should I Pick?

Among the many factors that help determine whether or not a potential vendor is a good choice for your agency are the following:

- The vendor's payment structure
- The services the vendor offers
- The menu options the vendor offers, and
- How the vendor operates its sites.

After you have compiled this information, you will be able to get a picture of what your relationship with this vendor could be. But to complete the evaluation is to speak to the vendor's references. The references your agency should be most interested in are from the agencies that most closely match yours. Then you can see how easy the vendor is to work with and decide whether pursue the company as your vendor.

Getting the Check – The Vendor's Payment Structure

There are three types of payment structures that your agency may enter into with your vendor. Each has its benefits and deterrents, so you should be prepared to consider carefully each of them.

Renting

The easiest to manage option is a rental agreement. Under this structure, the vendor pays your agency a monthly rent for the use of your agency's food service site. While this system ensures the agency a reliable and steady amount, it also affords the agency the least amount of control over the vendor, since the vendor is leasing the space and not partnering with the agency.

Profit Sharing

The second plan is a profit sharing system. In this system the vendor pays the agency a set percentage on the site's profits. That percentage can vary from 5 to 40 percent depending on the vendor. While this structure can be more beneficial for the agency, it is also the hardest payment system to manage because the agency has no control over the vendor's expenses, which can leave the agency receiving little to no payments in a worst case scenario.

Payment Based on Gross Sales

Under this payment structure, payment is made to the agency based on a percentage of the vendor's gross sales after taxes, not on net profit. Typically, this percentage runs from 1 to 10 percent of the monthly gross sales of the site. While this structure allows for the agency to be the most involved with the vendor, the downside of this arrangement is that the payments will vary with the sales volume.

Picking the Right Payment Structure

When considering the vendor's payment structure, the agency needs to be assured that the vendor provides full financial statements for review and allows an impromptu audit of the site's books with 48-hours' notice. Also, when working on payment plans, the agency needs to think of the length of the contract. A three to five year contract with a food service vendor allows for the agency to evaluate the vendor by witnessing the trends of the customers and payments.

Services: What Does the Vendor Offer?

Each food service vendor will offer your site a variety of different options and services, so the agency needs to know during contract negotiations what ser-

vices it will need. While management of the site in question is always the first service provided to the agency, you should also think about what other services you may need, including: catering, event management and snack and beverage machine vending.

Vending Machines

The simplest item on the list is vending. Many agencies have separate vending and food service contracts, which increases the work of the person overseeing these vendors' operations. When looking for a food services contractor, you want to enquire whether the company can also assume any pre-existing vending machines when that contract expires. Having one outside vendor handling food service and machine vending should streamline your oversight responsibilities.

Catering

Catering is a more difficult function for most food service managers. So, you need to discover whether the food services vendor that you are investigating can handle the site's catering demands or whether you will need to hire another company for that function. All food service vendors should be able to handle feeding groups of 200 or less with the food offered at the concession stand or café on site. If your agency has large scale corporate or group rentals that require food service of more than 200 on a regular basis, consider a vendor that is geared up to meet this demand along with the daily site operations.

Event Management

Finally the last service item the agency needs to look at is event management. Can a potential food services vendor handle your birthday parties and special events at the site, and are they willing to expand their services to

other sites as the need arises? A good food vendor will want to work with your agency in all of your special events and birthday parties year round. This way, the guests are receiving a consistent level of quality, and again, this arrangement would reduce the administrative work of the staff member overseeing the contracted vendors.

The Menu – Making a Taste Sensation

With childhood and adult obesity rates at an alarming level, many agencies are moving toward offering healthy alternatives to traditional high-sugar and high-fat concession menus. But these healthy alternatives must still taste good and be delivered quickly to the customers.

Being conscious of these demands, menu selections from food service vendors must be a concern for any agency looking into contracting out its food services because healthy items will need to be integrated into the traditional food selection your guests have come to expect from you venue. Finding a balance for these food selections with a vendor may be difficult, but it will show you which food services vendors are in line with your agency's objectives.

Know what you want, but test a potential vendor's expertise as well. For example, a vendor may be willing to stock carrots and protein bars at your ball park. But a responsible vendor will likely balk if you ask it to pull hot dogs and Cracker Jack off the shelves, because what is a ball game without those items? Gauging a potential food vendor's flexibility and resolve will give you a guide for how a working relationship with the vendor will be. Additionally, if the site is using fresh cooked food, such as grilled hamburgers and chicken, the agency may want

to schedule a tasting at one of the vendor's other sites to evaluate the operations, as well as the taste of the food the agency have at its site the following season.

How Do They Operate?

The last step of your evaluation is the simplest: How will a potential food service vendor operate your site?

When evaluating a potential vendor, you need evaluate what type of staffing it will offer your agency.

As an agency you need to ask such questions as:

- Will you work with the staff we employed last year?
- How will the site be managed?
- What is the chain of command with in your organization?

Regardless of the operation the food service vendor should have a full-time person available to your agency and on property a minimum of one day a week. Additionally, you want to ensure the site has a managerial staff person (a high school graduate, at least) who is also at least a part-time or seasonal worker, to oversee the day-to-day operation of the site. Many concessionaires end up providing part-time high school students to run your site without the benefit of a full-time adult to evaluate and manage the site or work with your site's managerial staff.

In building this relationship, your site managers should be prepared to meet on a weekly basis with the food service vendor to review site events, issues, concerns and any basic site operational changes that may impact the food service operation. (For example, if a cheerleading camp has booked the facility for the next two weeks.)

Above all, you must never forget that, as the agency acquir-

ing a vendor, you must be prepared to manage the food service vendor by holding it accountable to the expectations set by the contact.

Picking a Winner

Finding a good food service vendor can be challenging for any agency. As you move toward selecting your vendor, remember that a partnership in which both parties benefit is the ideal arrangement. Keeping open communication and stating your agency's expectations are the best methods for evaluating whether this potential vendor is the vendor for your agency. And, as long the food service provider can make the selections healthy, fast and fun, you can't help but win.

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