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PARKS AND RECREATION

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



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FROM THE EDITOR

It's that time of year again. The mornings are cooler; daylight wanes a bit earlier each evening. The hustle and bustle of summer activities – baseball games, trips to the beach and all the other fun in the sun – have given way to thoughts of fall. The kids have settled into a school routine, making new friends and learning new things.



While I've been out of school myself for a few years (a few more than I care to admit if I were to be *completely* honest), I too am settling into a routine, making new friends and learning new things. I joined the Illinois Association of Park Districts as the director of publications – and editor of this fine magazine – on August 22. And while I don't ride the bus or study for spelling tests, I do feel a bit like the new kid in class this fall.

Luckily, I have a great teacher – a whole team of teachers, actually. The ideal teacher, in my mind, has confidence in your ability and challenges you to excel, but is always willing to answer questions and offer support. That's the kind of teachers I've found in my new 'classroom.'

Every day I'm learning more about the association and its members, about the issues that affect Illinois parks, recreation and conservation and the ways in which IAPD and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association work together to best serve their membership.

Here's something I've learned about IAPD:

The Illinois Association of Park Districts has been serving park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies since 1928. That's 83 years!

While a lot has changed in 83 years, what remains the same is the commitment to the more than 470 member agencies and the 2,100 locally elected and appointed citizen board members. And it's that commitment that has made IAPD one of the most successful statewide associations of its kind in the nation.

That's just one interesting and impressive fact about the association. I have much more still to learn. But as I mentioned before, I have great teachers – many of whom I have yet to meet. So I encourage you, my future teachers, to contact me by email or phone. I would love to hear your thoughts – both what we do well and where we could improve. Just don't throw any spitballs at the new kid in class.

Best regards,
— LORI HARLAN



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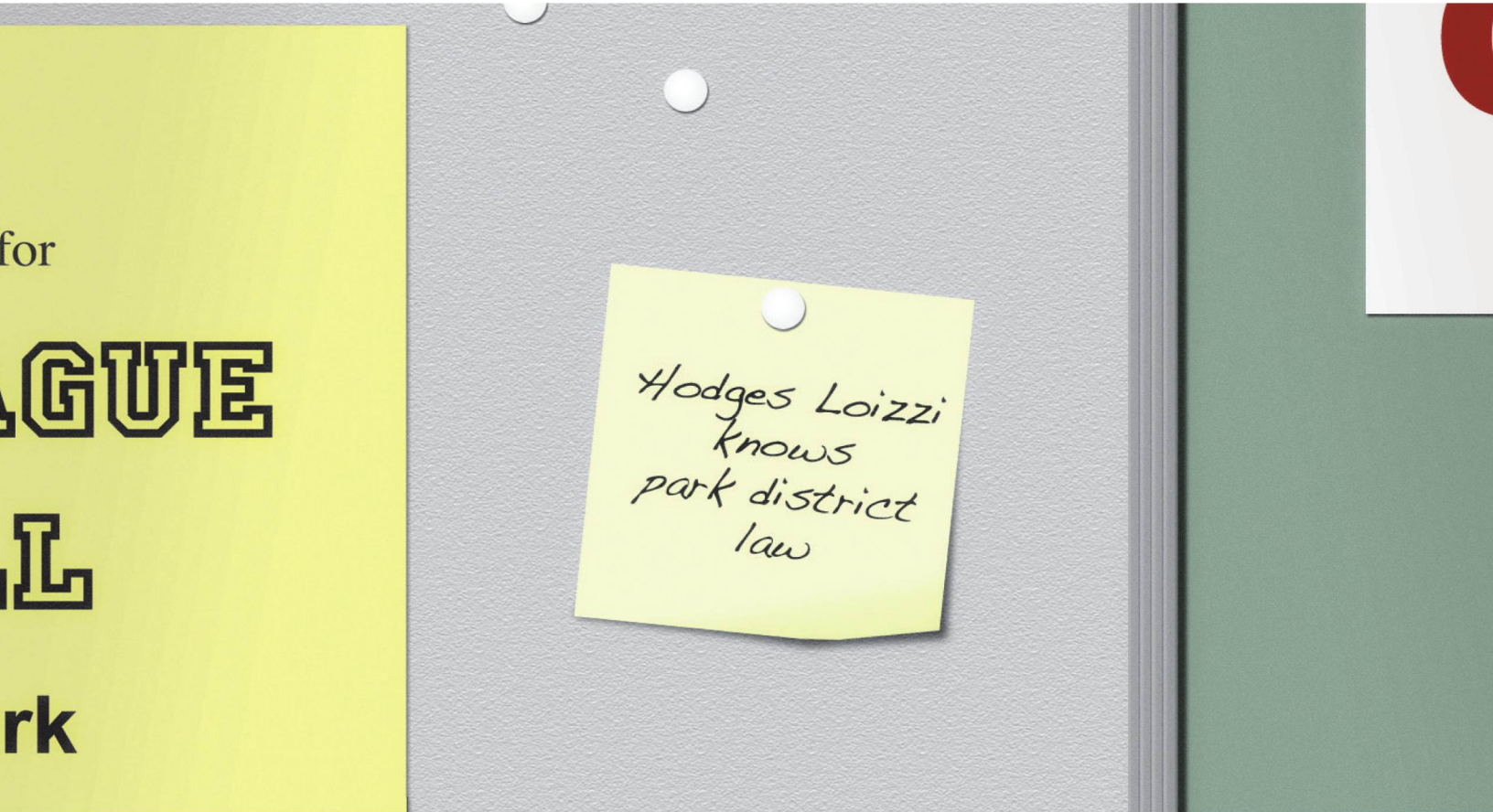
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Peter M. Murphy
IAPD President and CEO

STRATEGIC PLANNING The Key to Success

The key to a successful agency is strategic planning. Ask any high-performing park and recreation agency and they will have a strategic plan and will be implementing it.

A good definition of strategic planning is “A disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization ... is, what it does and why it does it.” (J.M. Bryson)

The strategic plan should answer four basic questions:

- (1) Why does our organization exist? (mission)
- (2) What do we want to be in the next three to five years? (vision)
- (3) What can we do to make that happen? (strategies)
- (4) How can we do it? (goals)

Fundamental to the strategic plan is your mission statement, which has the following key components:

- Mandates those functions and purposes your agency is required to provide.
- Aspirations idealized conceptions of what your agency hopes to be.
- Constituents the organizations and individuals your agency is committed to serving.
- Values the principles and standards your agency strives to maintain and impart.

A mission isn't anything new or unique; most organizations have them, but too often they exist only in a binder on a shelf alongside the strategic plan. While they were probably created in good faith, they've since drifted into a snapshot of the past and no longer have much meaning for anyone in the organization. A good mission statement serves as a dynamic guide to the organization's future. This is the reason to incorporate a review of your mission statement as part of your planning process. While many boards avoid a review of the mission as an arduous task, it is important, nevertheless, and you may find your agency's mission has withstood the test of time and does not need to be altered.

Other than hiring and evaluating the executive director, one of the most important responsibilities for a board member is strategic planning.

A quality plan for your agency gives direction to the executive director and staff. A plan means that your board is proactive rather than reactive, and this helps the board and the agency to develop a pathway to accomplishment. Unless there is a continuing desire by the board and staff for better and better results, few improvements typically occur absent a strategic plan.

Planning for the Future

By giving the executive director the authority to manage the agency, the board frees itself to plan for the agency's future. Strategic planning isn't something to do when you can get around to it – it's one of the most important areas of trust that the board has been given by the public. However, many boards don't do enough of it. It isn't hard to understand why they don't. Given the constantly changing demographic, political and economic picture, some boards simply see strategic planning as an exercise in futility. But change is the very reason every agency needs a plan – so it can anticipate and be ready for whatever the future brings. As a board member, you're expected to be a visionary for your agency. This means that the board needs to be committed to strategic planning.

The most successful organizations are those that see the need for change before it starts to affect them and begin changing before they're forced to.



When planning, the challenge for the board is to paint with a broad brush. The board should look at only the big picture: the demand for increased services and staffing, the need for improved funding, new facilities or capital improvements. This is not as earth shaking as it sounds. In fact, it's a lot easier and saves more time than getting bogged down in the details.

Measuring Results

Once you've crafted a plan, the board should revisit it each year. Why? Because the plan is the board's vision of the future, and that vision may change as the agency's internal resources and external circumstances change.

To carry out the strategic plan, the executive director should come up with a short-range operational plan to implement it. You'll obviously want to monitor progress on the strategic plan – and this is your job. But remember, short-term operational planning is the executive director's responsibility.

Obviously, you can't watch every detail and activity that takes place in the agency. That would be interfering with the executive director's job. Your job as a board member is to monitor the bottom-line results. This, naturally, includes the all-important area of planning.

Since a strategic plan is the agency's blueprint for the future, you must make sure that progress is being made on goals and that the board's actions during the year reflect the direction your plan has set.

The executive director implements the agency's strategic plan, but the board monitors how he or she meets its goals. The simplest way to monitor this is through the executive director's ongoing reports to the board. This report should inform you about progress on the plan's goals and include deadlines met, problems encountered and successes achieved.

In addition to monitoring the executive director's progress on goals, you also need to measure the board's activities to make sure its actions support the direction set by the plan. Remind yourself as a board that every action taken by the board must be with the best interest of these goals in mind.

The following is a checklist for the board and executive director to assess how well they're meeting their planning responsibilities.

I recommend using these questions in board planning sessions.

- (1) Does the agency have a clear mission and vision that is approved by the board?
- (2) Can the board members and staff articulate the mission of the agency?
- (3) Does the board have a strategic plan that's based on the mission and vision?
- (4) Does the board revisit its mission on an ongoing basis to keep it current, making sure that policies and the strategic plan reflect that mission?
- (5) How well has the board identified and described the public's needs? When was the last public interest survey conducted?
- (6) Does the board create long-range goals for the agency based on the strategic plan?
- (7) Have the board and executive director created a plan to accomplish the agency's goals and then measure these accomplishments?

Additional information on the strategic planning process is available for IAPD members at ILParks.org. If you have a resource you'd like to share, please email me at pmurphy@ilparks.org.

New IAPD QR Code is a Direct Connect to Website

What's black and white and read by a smart phone? It's not a joke. It's a QR code, and it provides a direct connection to the IAPD website.

So what exactly are QR codes? In short, QR codes (or quick reader codes) are barcodes that contain embedded information – a website address, contact information or other information about a product or service. You can scan a QR code by using a QR reader on your smartphone.

Just go to the application (app) store and search for a QR code reader. You will find several free versions to choose from. Run the app and then hold your phone's camera over a QR code to read it. You will be taken to a web page, blog or other internet communication.



Three easy steps:

- Download a QR reader using your smart phone.
- Scan the IAPD's new QR code.
- Connect directly to our website.

2011 IAPD CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sept 20 Summer Golf Tour Event #4 Bridges of Poplar Creek Country Club Hoffman Estates Park District	April-May Flying 4 Kids Statewide Kite Fly
Oct 14 IAPD Awards Gala Traditions at Chevy Chase Country Club Wheeling Park District	May 1 Parks Day at the Capitol State Capitol, Springfield
Oct 27 Legal Symposium Hamburger University, Oak Brook	May 1 Legislative Reception Illini Country Club, Springfield
Nov 1-4 NRPA Congress & Exposition Atlanta, Georgia	May 2 Legislative Conference Hilton Hotel, Springfield
2012 Jan. 26-28 IAPD/IPRA Conference Hyatt Regency Chicago	July 19 Legislative Golf Outing Bensenville Park District's White Pines Golf Course

For the most up-to-date Calendar of Events, please visit the IAPD website at www.ILparks.org.

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EYE ON THE PROFESSION

A CLOSER LOOK AT TRENDS AND ISSUES IN THE PARK AND RECREATION PROFESSION



Jan R. Arnold
Executive Director, IPRA

IPRA Update for Members

As cooler weather begins to enter each of our communities, it is a great time to reconnect with your professional association. IPRA has been working hard to improve your professional organization as well as your membership benefits. Much of our work has been focused on implementing elements of the 2011-2014 Strategic Plan. I would like use this opportunity to share with you the steps toward success that IPRA has taken and to highlight some of the great things coming your way in 2012:

IPRA General Operations

IPRA Headquarters relocates to the Park District of LaGrange in October. Proposals were accepted during the summer, and the IPRA Board has selected the District of LaGrange as IPRA's new home. We are very excited about the move to our new offices which will provide a permanent location for IPRA. We will be able to host trainings and workshops as well as continue to improve the services that we offer our members. We look forward to a visit from you.

IPRA is getting a new website. This new website promises to be more user-friendly and packed with resources to help you in your job. If there is a specific template, manual or other type of resource that you would like to be added, please let me know. We are also building a survey results tab to provide our professionals with answers to their burning questions. As always, I would love to hear from you if you have resource or survey suggestions.

IPRA is getting a new look and logo. IPRA will be unveiling a new logo and tagline in January. We are excited about the opportunity to rebrand your association and to continue to focus our attention on meeting your educational needs and professional expectations.

Improving the Cooperative Purchase Program. In response to a recent participant survey, co-op purchasing is being refreshed. We will be rolling out a new offering this fall that will include improved customer service such as just-in-time delivery, ability

to order throughout the year, known pricing and more. As soon as the final decision is made, we will contact all previous participating agencies and post information on the website.

IPRA Board of Directors

The **Board voted to create a Membership Council** that will provide an opportunity for the seven sections to work more closely to meet the needs and expectations of our members. Two of the major elements are 1) to improve efficiencies and 2) to reduce redundancies. Brian Meyer, Superintendent of Recreation for the Bolingbrook Park District and Facility Management Section Board Representative, will be working with

2012 renewal letters will be arriving in the mail in October. I encourage you to renew your membership by December 9th to take advantage of the incentive.



a facilitator and the other six Board Section Representatives to create a charter and goals for this group. This is a very exciting time, and I look forward to keeping you posted on their progress.

With the creation of the Membership Council, a new Board position has been also been created: **At-Large Representative**. Applications are being accepted for individuals interested in this position, and the election will take place in November. Make sure that you read IPRA Today as well as check IPRA's website to find out the exact election dates, so that you can cast your vote for the newest addition to the IPRA Board of Directors.

IPRA Educational Offerings

IPRA is committed to providing quality leadership educational opportunities for parks and recreation professionals at all levels. IPRA is currently working with a group of

professionals to establish a series of trainings that will meet IPRA member's educational needs in areas such as leadership, accountability, innovation, finance, governance and more. Please continue to read IPRA Today for updates to our education calendar and for opportunities to provide your suggestions to our topic offerings as well as help us identify exceptional instructors.

2012 State Conference

Based on feedback from the 2011 conference, a few tweaks have been made to the upcoming conference. We have a strong emphasis on providing quality speakers on the topics that our members have requested. You will find included in this issue the pre-conference workshops as well as the session titles and presenters for both Friday and Saturday. The final program for the conference will be available in early January. Remember that you can always find the most current conference information at www.ilparksconference.com. If you need additional information on any of the conference sessions, please contact me or Dina at dina@ilipra.org.

If you have not already done so, please check out the trainings slated for **Professional Development School November 13-15 in Decatur**. This year's line-up promises to provide attendees with exceptional learning opportunities as well as meaningful networking time with fellow parks and recreational professionals.

IPRA Membership

2012 renewal letters will be arriving in the mail in October. I encourage you to renew your membership by December 9th to take advantage of the incentive.

2012 is going to be an exciting year. We have a great conference, great trainings and some new resources in store for our members. As identified in the Membership Survey, meaningful networking opportunities, quality training and valuable resources are three of the most important elements that members expect from their membership to IPRA. I am committed to making sure that IPRA meets and hopefully exceeds your expectations in each of these areas. Over the next several months, IPRA will be rolling out a variety of focus group opportunities as well as a membership survey with the assistance of the University of Illinois. I ask that you participate to help us continue to focus our initiatives on the things that matter most to you and your agency.

Social at NRPA for Illinois Delegates

If you plan on attending NRPA in November and your schedule allows, we would love for you to stop by the IPRA/IAPD Social that will be held on Wednesday, November 2, from 6 to 8 pm at Stats in the Flight Room located at 300 Marietta Street NW in Atlanta. Check our websites for additional details.

If you have questions regarding any of these updates or suggestions on resource or survey topics, please do not hesitate to contact me at jan@ilipra.org.

IPRA is your organization and I hope you will continue to find ways to get involved, whether it is to join a committee, attend a training or network with peers to exchange ideas or to help you as you search for your next opportunity.

Best,
Jan R. Arnold

UPCOMING IPRA EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS

How the New Workers' Compensation Laws Affect You and Your Agency

Date: October 5, 2011 - 9 AM

Performance Management: What You Need to Know and How to Get it Started-An Innovation Renovation Workshop

Date: October 13, 2011 - 9 AM

WEBINAR: Creating New Energy in Your Recreation Programs

Date: October 13, 2011 - 10 AM

CPRP Exam Preparation Course

Date: October 14, 2011 - 10 AM

WEBINAR: Private Sector Funding for Parks & Recreation

Date: October 17, 2011 - 10 AM

Effective Meeting Facilitation from Boards and Staff to Focus Groups

Date: October 21, 2011 - 10 AM

Early Childhood Trends Workshop

Date: November 5, 2011 - 8:30 AM

WEBINAR: Cyber Bullying & Internet Security

Date: November 8, 2011 - 10 AM

Professional Development School

Date: November 13, 2011 - November
16, 2011

FM and REC Joint Section Workshop, Luncheon and Awards Meeting

Date: November 14, 2011 - 9 AM

For the most up-to-date Calendar of
Events, please visit the IPRA website
at www.ILipra.org.



Jason Anselment
Legal/Legislative Counsel

Employee v. Independent Contractor: A Critical Distinction

It is not uncommon for employers to enter into written contracts with their employees, which establish important terms such as the length of employment, job duties and responsibilities, and salary and benefits. Indeed, park districts often have contracts with their executive directors. Where such an employment contract exists, the subject individual is sometimes referred to as a contract employee.

However, I have also heard organizations use the term contract employee to refer to a worker who is actually an independent contractor. Independent contractors are not contract employees of the organization. By definition, they are not employees at all.

The difference in terminology is not semantics, and using the incorrect term can be indicative of a larger problem for the organization. In fact, failing to properly distinguish between employees and independent contractors can have serious financial consequences. Therefore, understanding the characteristics of each of these classifications is critical to an agency's operations.

When the Problem Occurs

The pitfalls to be avoided typically arise when an entity wants to engage an individual as an independent contractor and avoid an employment relationship. Organizations retain independent contractors all the time. But when the independent contractor is a sole proprietor and is not another organization, there is a greater risk of misclassification.

There are numerous reasons organizations sometimes wish to utilize the services of an independent contractor rather than hire an employee. For instance, the services may only be needed on a short-term basis. The agency may be unable to afford the extra costs associated with employees such as pension payments, increased insurance premiums and personnel benefits. The requisite services may be so specialized that it is cost prohibitive for an organization to hire, train and maintain an employee to perform those services. Whatever the reason, if an organization wants to avoid certain financial obligations associated with employees that are not incurred with independent contractors, it is imperative that it take proper steps to establish the appropriate relationship with the worker being retained. It is not enough to merely call a worker an independent contractor.

Treatment, Not Terminology, Is Key

Simply using the wrong term to refer to a worker does not create the issue. The problem arises when there is a difference between the way an organization classifies a worker and the way the organization treats that worker. In other words, if a worker is properly classified as an independent contractor based upon the way the organization treats him or her, just referring to the worker as a "contract employee" may be of little consequence. By the same token, if the organization classifies the worker as an independent contractor but treats the worker like an employee, there is an issue.

Contrary to the belief of many, establishing an independent contractor relationship is not as easy as entering into a contract stating

that the worker is performing the services as an independent contractor and not as an employee. While such language should be included in a contract when appropriate, courts and regulatory agencies such as the IRS have made it clear that stating that an individual is an independent contractor is insufficient to avoid an employer-employee relationship if it otherwise exists based upon the worker's treatment. Therefore, both the organization and the worker must understand the different characteristics between these two classifications to avoid unintentionally triggering an employment relationship.

Why the Distinction Matters

As discussed above, organizations sometimes enter into independent contracts to avoid financial obligations associated with employees. Consequently, if the entity classifies a worker as an independent contractor with the intention of saving these costs but ends up treating the worker like an employee, the entity remains legally responsible.

These financial responsibilities are well known to employers. They include items that are withheld from an employee's paycheck such as income tax and employment taxes, i.e., Social Security and Medicare. Conversely, the worker, not the organization, is generally responsible for these payments if he or she is an independent contractor. For local government agencies, IMRF contributions are withheld from an employee's paycheck but not an independent contractor's.

Payroll deductions are not the only obligations an organization has for employees that it does not have for independent contractors. Illinois law also requires employers to pay workers' compensation and unemployment insurance for their employees. In the case of Social Security, Medicare and IMRF, the organization must also make employer contributions. Again, an organization would not have these obligations for independent contractors.

Failure to properly classify a worker can have consequences reaching back to the start of the relationship. For example, if the IRS uncovers a misclassification for which there is no reasonable basis during an audit, the organization will ultimately be liable for back payments of past due amounts that it failed to withhold or contribute. Similarly, if the IMRF discovers that one of its member-employers has misclassified an employee as an independent contractor, the IMRF will assess that member-employer for all retroactive employer contributions.¹ The employee would be assessed for his or her unpaid employee contributions and would also be required to reimburse the IMRF for any retirement benefit overpayments.

The consequences of a worker's misclassification are not limited to back payments for tax and pension liabilities. The applicability of labor laws relating to overtime and minimum wage depend on whether a worker is an employee or independent contractor, as does eligibility for unemployment benefits and both the benefits and protections of workers' compensation laws. For these reasons, it is imperative that an organization properly classifies the worker from the beginning of the relationship.

Factors Used to Make the Determination

Unfortunately, there is no single rule that applies to every case, and the criteria used can vary based upon the relevant statute. In the absence of a uniform test, arguably the best guidance on this matter comes from the IRS, which applies the common law and will actually make a determination of worker status for purposes of federal employment and income taxes upon request. Because the IRS' decision is binding, organizations and workers may be hesitant to make a formal request. Nevertheless, the published criteria the IRS uses to determine whether a worker is an independent contractor or an employee provide insight that can be used to avoid misclassification.²

The following common law factors the IRS uses are taken from judicial and administrative decisions and fall within three broad categories.

1. Behavioral Control

The behavioral aspects of a worker's relationship to the organization are important to every regulating agency's analysis. This evaluation deals with whether the organization or the worker has the right to direct or control how the worker will perform the work. If the organization has the right to direct or control how the work will be done, then the worker is an employee.

For example, if the agency gives extensive instructions on how, when and where to do the work, the worker is likely an employee. Similarly, if the organization trains the worker on required procedures and methods to perform work in a certain way, the worker is likely an employee. However, if the worker sets his or her own hours, hires his or her own assistants and uses his or her own methods to perform the services, he or she may well be an independent contractor. Note that for purposes of this evaluation the organization does not actually have to direct or control the manner in which the work is performed if it has the right to do so.

2. Financial Control

This category examines whether the worker or the organization has the right to direct or control financial aspects related to the services being performed. If a worker has a significant investment in his or her work, he or she is more likely an independent contractor according to the IRS. So, if the worker provides all the supplies, equipment, tools and materials to perform the services and is not reimbursed for any of his or her expenses, he or she is more likely an independent contractor. On the other hand, if the worker is paid by the hour, has no financial risk beyond loss of salary and is paid regardless of performance, he or she is more likely an employee.

3. Worker and Firm Relationship

The IRS also considers how the worker and organization perceive their relationship. Oftentimes, contract terms are suggestive of one

classification over the other. If the contract guarantees benefits such as insurance and paid leave, the worker is probably an employee. Provisions allowing either party to terminate the relationship without penalty suggest an employment relationship. Although the terminology used to refer to a worker in a contract is not dispositive of the relationship, the IRS has indicated that it can be "very significant" if it is difficult or impossible to determine the worker's status based on other factors.

The permanency of the relationship between the parties and whether the services provided are a key component of an organization's regular business are also relevant. A temporary relationship for services ancillary to an organization's core functions favor classification as an independent contractor.

An individual's activities when not working for the organization can indicate the type of relationship a worker has with an organization. If a worker advertises his or her services and has an established business, the worker is likely a sole proprietorship with independent contractor status. Likewise, if the worker does not work exclusively for the organization but has similar contracts with other entities, he or she may well be an independent contractor. This is particularly true if the worker is not required to get permission from the organization to perform outside services to others.

Criteria Used by Other Regulators

Although there is no uniform test for making the determination under every law, other regulators also appear to apply factors similar to the IRS. For example, the IMRF and the Illinois Worker's Compensation Act appear to follow common law guidelines for determining worker status.³ On the other hand, the Illinois Unemployment Insurance Act presumes that an individual is an employee unless specific facts set forth in the statute are proven.⁴ Another set of statutory criteria for making the determination under Illinois law was recently established for construction industry workers.⁵ Again, while inconsistency in these standards adds to the confusion, the consequences for misclassification are no less severe.

Summary

Misclassifying a worker as an independent contractor can have serious financial consequences that reach back to the beginning of the relationship. Because each determination must be made on a case-by-case basis and the criteria used vary, this column is necessarily limited to providing background on the issue to highlight its importance to IAPD members. As with any matter requiring legal or accounting advice, your agency should consult its local counsel and accounting professional for guidance if there is any doubt about whether a worker is an employee or independent contractor.

¹ See e.g., General Memorandum Number 604 (October 15, 2010)

² See Form SS-8 and Instructions (Rev. 12-2009); IRS Publication 1779: Independent Contractor or Employee . . . (Rev. 8-2008); Publication 15-A: Employer's Supplemental Tax Guide 2011; Topic 762 Independent Contractor v. Employee

³ See 820 ILCS 305/1 *et seq.*

⁴ 820 ILCS 405/212

⁵ See 820 ILCS 185/10

EMPLOYEE OR INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR?

Factors Suggesting . . .

Independent Contractor

Worker uses own methods to perform services
[Worker is paid a flat fee based on project](#)
Worker provides similar services to others
[Worker hires assistants to help with services](#)
Project or services are to be completed by a certain date
[Worker has ongoing unreimbursable expenses](#)
Worker decides where to purchase supplies and materials
[Worker sets his or her own hours](#)
Work performed at worker's location
[Worker supplies own tools and equipment](#)

Employee

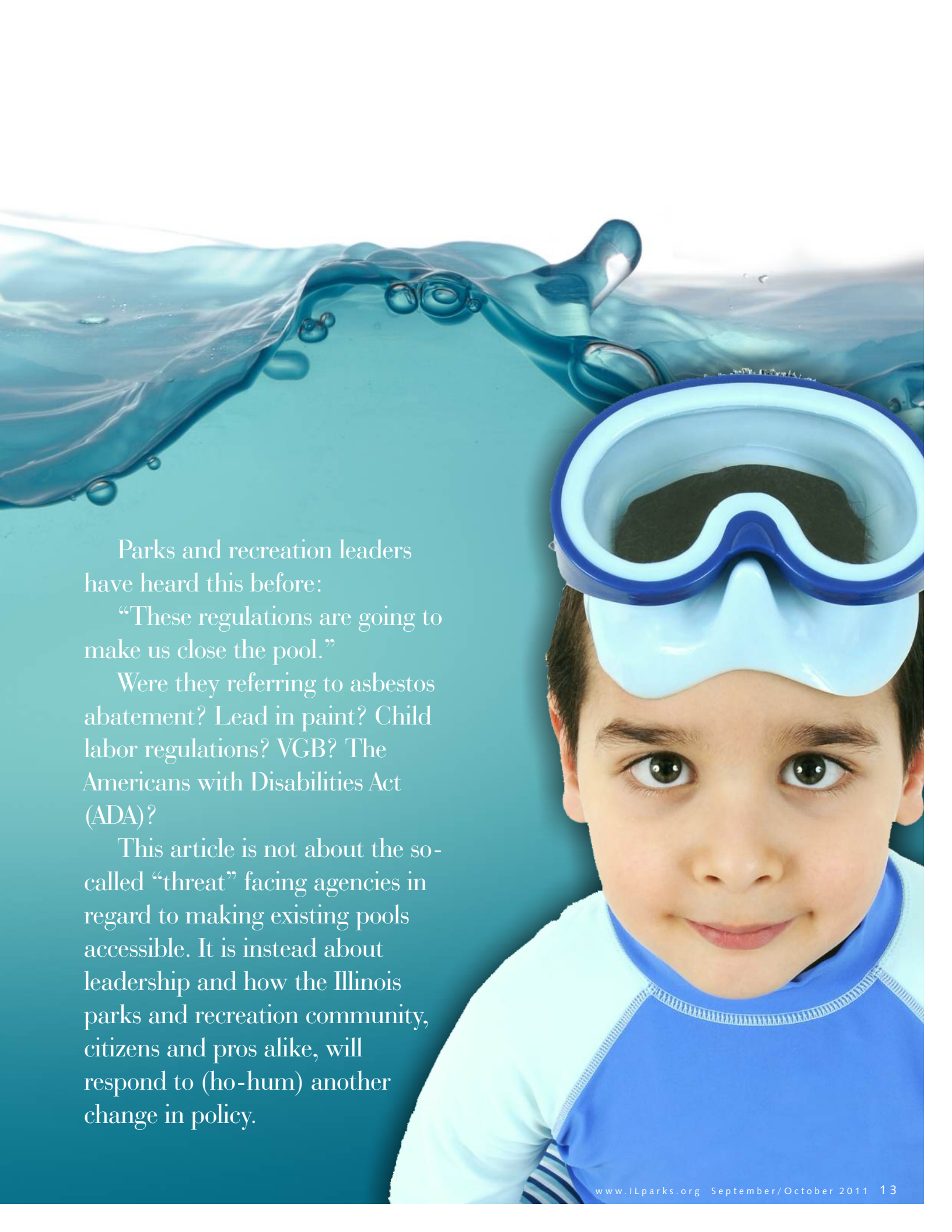
Organization trains worker to perform services in a particular manner
[Worker is guaranteed regular hourly wage with benefits/paid leave](#)
Worker provides services exclusively to organization
[Organization hires additional assistants](#)
Term of relationship is indefinite
[All expenses are reimbursed](#)
Organization provides all supplies and materials
[Organization sets worker's hours](#)
Work performed at organization's location
[Organization provides tools and equipment](#)



Water, Water, Everywhere and I Can Get In...

By John N. McGovern

ACCESS TO PUBLIC AQUATICS FACILITIES HAPPENS EVERY DAY



Parks and recreation leaders have heard this before:

“These regulations are going to make us close the pool.”

Were they referring to asbestos abatement? Lead in paint? Child labor regulations? VGB? The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

This article is not about the so-called “threat” facing agencies in regard to making existing pools accessible. It is instead about leadership and how the Illinois parks and recreation community, citizens and pros alike, will respond to (ho-hum) another change in policy.

The Infrastructure

Aquatics facilities come in different sizes, shapes and styles. Park districts, recreation departments and other local governments offer the size, shape and style their communities want ... or they lose customers.

Some customers enjoy lap swimming. It's a great way to build cardio-vascular endurance and one of the reasons pools open at 5 or 6 a.m.

Others want to sit in shallow water and play with their young children. As agencies reach out to families, this is a common scene in the summer.

Still others want wave action. Though few and far between, wave pools excite young and old swimmers.

Many want water exercise opportunities. Stiff joints and weakened limbs regain some motion and strength in the water. As our communities age, this demand will rise.

Zero depth entries remain popular. Lazy rivers attract young and old alike.

For the thrill seekers, diving boards are still popular, and the always crowded water slides have been a fixture at family aquatics parks since the late 80's and 90's.

For those relaxing after swimming or working out, a spa or hot tub is a great venue.

And let's not forget age ... of the pool that is. We will discuss how to treat existing pools and how to make sure new pools are accessible.

The New-but-Not-New Design Standards

In the mid-1990s, the US Access Board commissioned research at the Indiana University National Center on Accessibility. The purpose of the project was to identify the ways people with disabilities could most effectively enter the water in an aquatics facility.

There were not many surprises. Pool lifts were already in use and these proved to be effective.

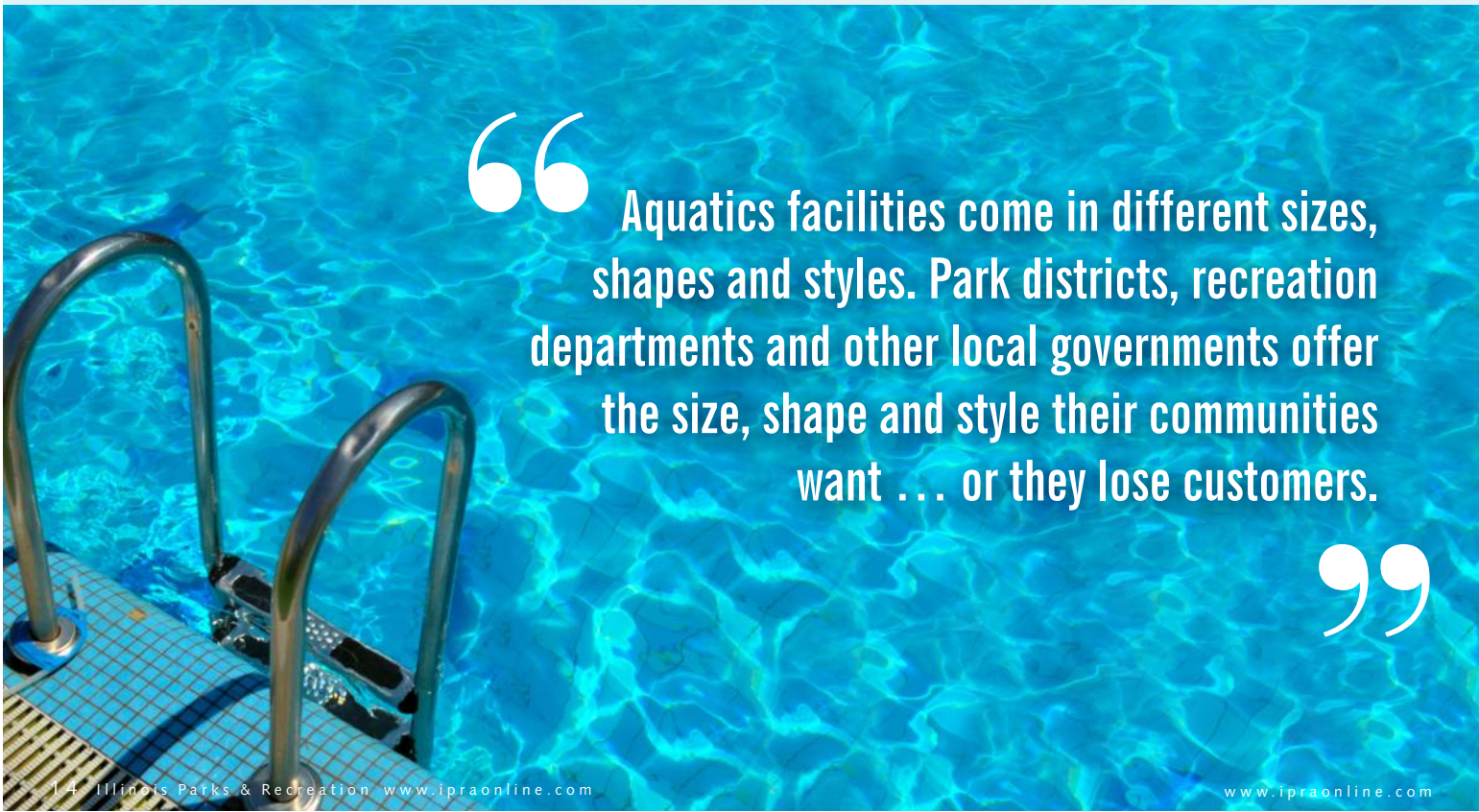
Sloped entries, whether in the form of a ramp or a zero depth pool, made the list. Transfer systems and transfer walls were cited. Pool stairs also were suggested as some pool users with disabilities have enough mobility to use pool stairs with enough support, like a narrow handrail configuration.

Also noted were moveable pool floors. Although not common, these are found in a small number of public pools.

Perhaps one surprise was that no one method of water entry worked best for a majority of aquatics facilities visitors with disabilities. That's an important issue that is reflected in later requirements.

The US Access Board is the small federal agency charged with the development of access guidelines for all environments, from pools to playgrounds to offices to parking lots to restaurants to locker rooms. The Access Board, from 1998 through 2000, sought input from the public. The "public" included swimming pool designers, safety experts, people with disabilities, pool operators, local governments, risk management cooperatives and more. In fact, many Illinois agencies weighed in on what works best in this area.

The Access Board digested every word and published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for Recreation environments in 2000. It again invited comment, and finally, two years later in 2002, published a recreation final guideline that addressed pools, golf facilities, fitness facilities, sports fields, sports courts, boating areas, fishing areas and amusement parks.



“Aquatics facilities come in different sizes, shapes and styles. Park districts, recreation departments and other local governments offer the size, shape and style their communities want ... or they lose customers.”

“ These policies recognize that not every unit of state and local government has the resources to change every non-compliant aquatics facility, not to mention playground, golf course, fitness facility, sports field, sports court, boating area and fishing area. ”

That was nine years ago.

These Access Board final guidelines were eventually published by the US Department of Justice in September 2010 as a final regulation, word-for-word. A few in the aquatics industry have tried to paint the accessibility requirements as a surprise. **They are a surprise only if you are a parks and recreation official who doesn't get out much.**

The design requirements have been discussed at state and national conferences, aquatics management schools, webinars, agency in-services, risk pool seminars, aquatics design firm staff meetings and more for ten years. The requirements are simply stated:

Have a big pool? That's one with 300 linear feet of pool wall or more. Then you need two means of water access (see 242.2 of the 2010 Standards). Have a small pool, and one means of access is required.

In section 1009 of the Standards, the ways to make water access occur are clearly described. Pool lifts and sloped entries are found at 1009.2 and 1009.3 respectively, and a pool must have one of these in place. These primary means of access are commonplace in our industry.

Transfer walls are found at 1009.4, transfer systems at 1009.5, and pool stairs are at 1009.6. These secondary means of access can be effective, so long as the pool has either a lift or sloped entry.

There are exceptions for wave pools, lazy rivers and sand bottom pools. And in a rare departure from the principle that public spaces will be accessible to people with disabilities, vertical access is not required to water slide platforms or to diving boards.

The Policies

The Department of Justice (DOJ) is the key agency here. Title II of the ADA applies to state and local government aquatics facilities. The DOJ published the new title II regulation September 2010. It became effective March 15, 2011 (see 28 CFR Part 35). It requires:

- **New construction** (pools designed or constructed March 15, 2012 or later) must adhere to the 2010 Standards (see 35.151);
- **Existing aquatics facilities must be evaluated** against the 2010 Standards and access deficits identified and solutions recommended (35.105);
- However, not every existing facility necessarily requires an accessibility retrofit (see 35.150(a)(1));
- Agencies should use the various methods for determining which aquatics facilities will be made accessible that are described in 35.150(b); and
- **Make access retrofits occur as soon as is possible.** The DOJ staff has hinted this could be an early deadline ... arguably by March 15, 2012. For most readers, that's a deadline that is impossible to meet. We think a phased approach, as long as the parks and recreation agency is working in good faith toward access, will be sufficient in the event a complaint is filed.

These policies recognize that not every unit of state and local government has the resources to change every non-compliant aquatics facility, not to mention playground, golf course, fitness facility, sports field, sports court, boating area and fishing area.

It is important here to clarify that the aquatics facility restroom, locker rooms, concession stands, parking, entry and showers were to meet the access standards published in 1991, which became effective in 1992. **In other words, if your agency designed or built a pool since 1992, those elements should already be accessible.** All that was missing from the 1991 Standards was an accessible means of water entry.

Applying the Program Access Test to Existing Aquatics Facilities

How does an agency determine whether Greenacre Pool requires retrofit for access ... or gets a pass?

Think of this as a planning exercise. The DOJ regulation regarding existing sites was established with the notion that local government services and opportunities shall be made to be accessible. To solve this riddle, ask a series of questions like the ones below:

Have one pool? Retrofit that pool unless it is not technically feasible to do so.

Have two pools? Retrofit at least one pool unless it is technically infeasible to do so. When choices are available, pick the pool with the greatest number of amenities (sand volleyball, concessions, zero depth lap pool and slide) instead of a box-in-the-ground pool.

Have six pools? Retrofit at least one unless it is technically infeasible to do so. Again, when choices are available, pick the pool with the greatest number of amenities.

In applying this test to agencies with more than three aquatics facilities, we believe one retrofit is not an adequate number. Where possible, we urge agencies to select one of three of similar sites (aquatics facilities, golf courses, sports fields, playgrounds, sports courts, fitness facilities, boating areas, fishing areas and so forth).

What is meant by the phrase “technically infeasible”?

Section 106.5 of the 2010 Standards includes the definitions for terms used in the Standards. Technically infeasible is defined as: “With respect to an alteration of a building or facility, something that has little likelihood of being accomplished because existing structural conditions would require removing or altering a load-bearing member that is an essential part of the structural frame, or because other existing physical or site constraints prohibit modification or addition of elements, spaces or features that are in full and strict compliance with the minimum requirements.”

Instead of making every pool accessible, agencies may use the methods described in 35.150(b). Can the agency offer swim lessons at a pool that is accessible and also at a pool that is not accessible? Can the agency relocate a program, SCUBA lessons for example, from a pool that is not accessible to one that is accessible? Does the agency plan to build a new pool, which will be accessible, within the next three years, thereby allowing continued use of the inaccessible existing pool?

Where does your agency fit in this discussion? If there is only one existing aquatics facility, don't delay any longer. Complete an access audit. Ruthlessly identify every access deficit. You'll be surprised at how many you'll discover.

Then, where changes are technically feasible, make a phased plan, starting with the simple tasks (signs at parking stalls, doors, locker replacement and so forth) and finishing with the complex tasks (renovating the entire shower and restroom area). Somewhere between the simple and the complex, remember to purchase a portable pool lift and train staff on use protocols, such as setting it out in the morning for independent use by facility visitors.

Have more than one aquatics facility? Take the same steps and exercise your cognitive abilities to determine which amenities at which sites will be made accessible. Then, let your community know about these improvements.

What is a common error in existing facilities? ***It is the lack of accessible lockers.***

Designate at least 5% of the lockers as accessible with a logo with the wheelchair icon. No color is required. Pick something that matches the décor. Make certain hooks and shelves in the locker are a maximum of 48" high and that the locker mechanism is able to be opened without tight pinching, twisting or grasping.

Most importantly, add an accessible bench that serves the lockers. It should be 17" to 19" above the floor, 48" long, 24" deep and be affixed to the wall or have a back.

“ A smart practice is to make certain that requests for proposals and bid specifications require design professionals to describe access features to the agency. ”

New Aquatics Facilities

What is a new facility?

It **was** one designed or constructed after January 26, 1992, the effective date of the original title II regulation. The new definition is one that is designed or constructed after March 15, 2012. That facility, whether a family aquatics center or a wading pool or a lap pool, must meet the requirements in the 2010 Standards.

A smart practice is to make certain that requests for proposals and bid specifications require design professionals to describe access features to the agency. Failure to do so places the agency at risk. It is, unfortunately, not uncommon to see existing aquatics facilities built after 2002 that did not meet the requirements published by the US Access Board in 2002.

There is a brief period of time between this article's publication and March 15, 2012. During that window, if an agency is designing or constructing an aquatics facility, it has the choice between the 1991 Standards (which do not have entry into the water requirements) and the 2010 Standards (which do have entry into the water requirements).

If an agency, for whatever reason, chooses the 1991 Standards, it must then apply the program access test discussed earlier to that facility, and treat it as an existing facility. As a result, the agency could have to go back and retrofit for access this "new" aquatics facility. That does not make sense ... change orders are less difficult to manage than is an existing facility retrofit.

As a smart practice, use the 2010 Standards. They are more complete than the 1991 Standards.

Leadership and Smart Practices

Private aquatics facilities, such as swim clubs, nonprofits (Y, Boys and Girls Club) and businesses (Bally's, Lifetime, Six Flags) must meet the same requirements for new construction. These entities, though, have a much easier test to meet regarding existing aquatics facilities. Change need only be made if it is readily achievable, which is loosely defined as cheap and easy to do.

States and local government do not enjoy that approach, as Congress wanted governments to do more regarding access, and do it sooner.

Accept that difference, and in fact, embrace it. This will remain the approach, and the 2010 Standards will govern aquatics facility design for the next two decades. Get out in front of the wave.

An agency we know is now requiring design professionals to submit an AX sheet that describes access features at an aquatics facility. Along with electrical, mechanical, plumbing, and everything else, this will help greatly.

Many agencies we know are rejecting bids if the submitter has not agreed that all designs and construction will meet or exceed the 2010 Standards.

Many more agencies we know are out in the field this fall, with their own staff or with consultants, evaluating aquatics facilities and other parks and recreation infrastructure sites.

Is your agency one of them? Or is your agency waiting for a call from area code 202?

This is a critical issue. As mentioned earlier in the article, do not wait any longer and conduct an access audit of the agency aquatics facilities. **Failure to do so will cause a storm worse than VGB.**

Resources

For policy advice regarding existing aquatics facilities, call the DOJ hotline at 202/514-0301.

For interpretation of the 2010 Standards, call the Access Board at 202/272-0080.

For advice or information about aquatics access audits, call John McGovern at 224/293-6451.

John N. McGovern was a fixture at Illinois special recreation associations before leaving in 2008 to start Recreation Accessibility Consultants LLC (RAC). RAC is one of the companies in the family of companies at W-T Engineering, Inc., in Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Formed in 1971, W-T offers one-stop shopping to parks and recreation agencies: land surveying, engineering, communications, aquatics design, architecture, landscape architecture, construction management, and accessibility consulting. RAC specializes in the application of the Americans with Disabilities Act to public parks and recreation. Reach RAC President John McGovern at 224/293-6451 or john.mcgovern@rac-llc.com. Or visit their website at www.rac-llc.com.



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Changing Our Culture

**TO PLAY IT SAFE AND PROTECT OUR
YOUTH ATHLETES**



By Dr. Hunt Batjer



In many ways, 2011 has been the “Year of Concussion Awareness.” The growing incidence of concussion in youth sports is now a major public health priority. A perfect storm of several simultaneous events has brought us to this point. There is clear evidence that youth athletes who sustain repetitive head trauma can develop long-term damage that impedes their development and ability to learn. Also, the latest studies show that over 60% of our returning soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan have symptomatic post-concussive brain problems. There has also been a steady stream of media reports showing the impact of concussions on a number of professional athletes – most recently the late Dave Duerson of the 1985 Chicago Bears.

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that alters the way the brain functions. Concussions range in severity, but they generally disrupt the way the brain normally works. Shaking the head violently as can occur with athletic impacts causes these changes. The youth athlete may report symptoms as minor as a headache, a little bit of dizziness, or a sense of being “dinged.” More significant impacts can lead to impaired memory. Less than 10% of all concussions actually result in loss of consciousness. Regardless, young people in particular are at very high risk of secondary complications if a second concussion occurs before he or she has recovered from the first impact.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently revised its estimate of concussive injuries in the U.S. It is now believed that on an annual basis, 3.8 million sports-related concussions are suffered and 1.1 million mild traumatic brain injuries are treated and released from hospital emergency rooms. A large population is at risk from these injuries, as more than 38 million young people play youth sports. Also, from a public health standpoint, concussions are age indiscriminant and gender indiscriminant. In the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), female athletes appear to be at a higher risk than males from concussive injuries. Perhaps most alarmingly, a recent study shows that more than 40% of high school athletes return to participate in school athletics before fully recovering from the concussion they sustained while practicing or playing.

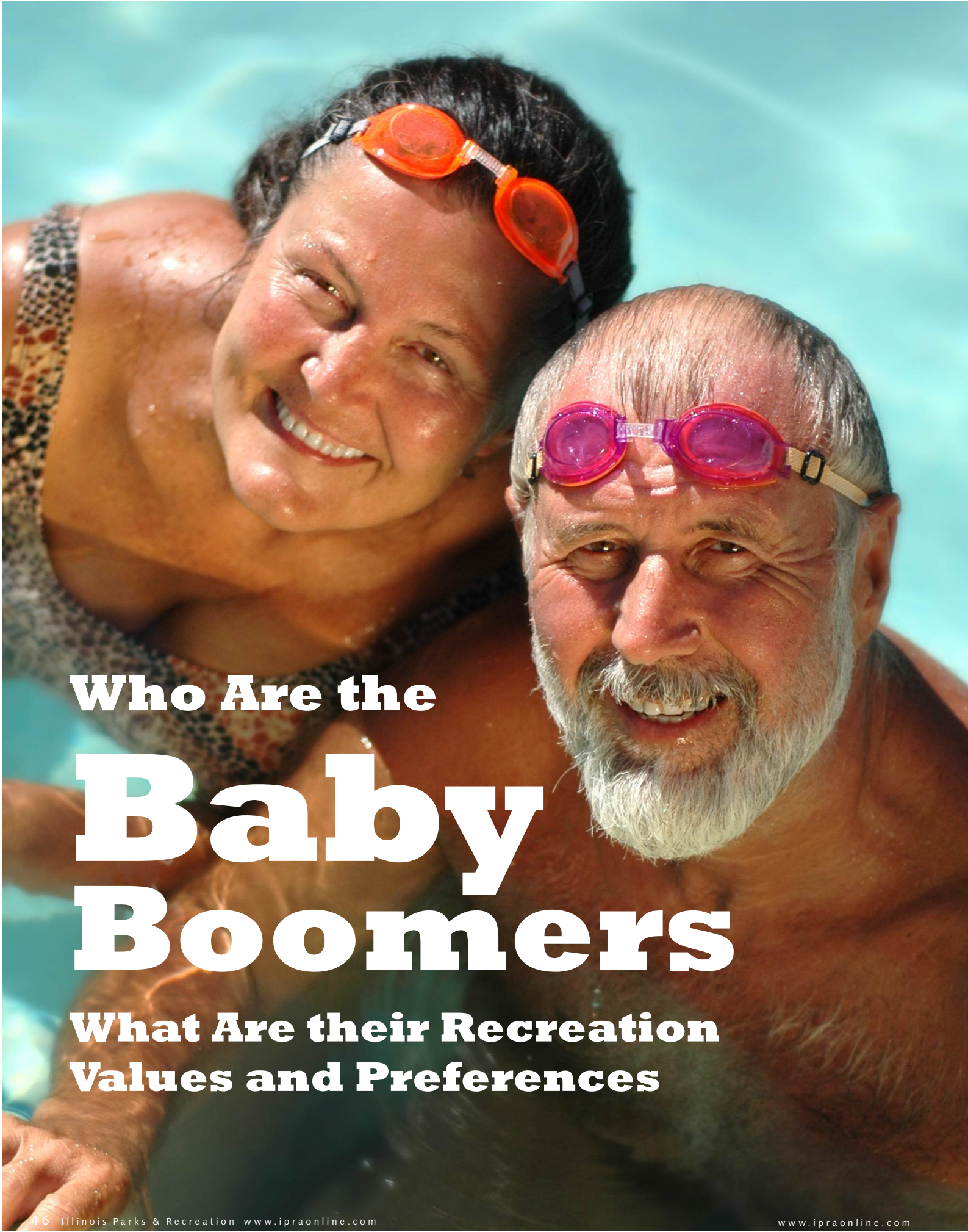
My dedication to helping raise the public’s awareness to incidence of untreated concussions is many fold. I have practiced Neurosurgery for nearly 30 years and am a former athlete myself. I sustained a few concussions on the playing field which were not managed. I feel strongly that athletics are a vital element of our society and culture that enrich our young people and can put them on a path to greater success. The lessons learned on a playing field simply cannot be taught by parents and teachers. My recent appointment as a co-chair to the National Football League’s (NFL) Head, Neck and Spine Committee along with my colleague, Dr. Richard Ellenbogen of Seattle, gives me the opportunity to wed my passions for athletics and neurosciences. Our goal is not to eliminate sports but rather to make youth sports safer.

I am pleased to have been able to partner with Northwestern Memorial Hospital, the Illinois Association of Park Districts, the Illinois High School Association, the Chicago Bears, the NFL and others to advocate for HB 200/SB 150 - the Protecting Our Student Athletes Act. Earlier this year, our partnership helped enact similar legislation in Chicago. This important legislation will help raise awareness to the incidence of and problems caused by youth sports related concussions, eliminate catastrophic second impact events and make our youth athletic programs safer. Similar legislation has been passed in approximately 10 other states, and anecdotal evidence suggests that these new laws are achieving their goals.

Ultimately, the goal of our legislative efforts is to reinforce the necessity for a culture change in youth sports. The concept of “play through pain” provides a valuable life lesson but simply does not pertain to injuries to the brain or spinal cord. We can play through injuries to an arm or a thigh, but not to the brain. We must create an athletic culture in which all players and supervisors know that any symptoms of a brain injury will result in removal from play.

Hunt Batjer, MD is chair of the department of neurosurgery at Northwestern Memorial Hospital; Michael J. Marchese professor of neurosurgery and chairman of the department of neurological surgery at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. Dr. Batjer also serves as the co-chair to the National Football League's Head, Neck and Spine Committee.

“The growing incidence of concussion in youth sports is now a major public health priority.”



Who Are the

Baby Boomers

**What Are their Recreation
Values and Preferences**

By Katherine Broughton, M.S. & Laura L. Payne, Ph.D. **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,** **Office of Recreation and Park Resources (ORPR)**

Introduction

Everyone is talking about the Baby Boomers since they are our nation's largest age cohort, comprised of approximately 76 million people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In 2011, the leading edge of the Baby Boomers turns 65 years old. This generation, born between 1946 and 1964, has witnessed (and some have been involved in these innovations) space flight, the civil rights and women's movements, gender equity in education (and sports) via Title IX, the advent of the computer and digital generation, development and use of wireless technologies, major advancements in public health and medicine, and much more. This group of older adults (if we dare even use that term with them!) are much different in terms of demographics and leisure/recreation interests and preferences than those who reached 65 twenty years ago. The Baby Boomers are a diverse target market with great potential for parks, recreation and leisure service agencies. They have significantly influenced society as they have aged, and this remains true as they approach retirement. In this article, we describe the demographics (e.g., social, economic, ethnicity, health) of the Baby Boomer generation, discuss Boomers' leisure/recreation values and preferences and offer some suggestions for professional practice.

Profile of the Baby Boomers

While the Baby Boomers are a large generation, estimated to represent roughly 33% of the U.S. population (Willis & Schaie, 2006), they are also very diverse in terms of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, education and health status. There are slightly more females (50.9%) than males (49.1%) in this cohort. Illinois has the second largest regional percentage of Baby Boomers, with the highest concentration (1,337,165) residing in Cook County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Specifically, northern Illinois has the highest proportion of Boomers, and they are also clustered near the Interstate 55 corridor between Chicago and St. Louis, with Boomers accounting for about 25% to 29% of residents in these areas. In terms of ethnicity, 11.6% are Black and 10.3% of Boomers have Latino origins. The proportion of the population who are Latino will increase with future age cohorts to as much as 20% who are members of the Generation Y cohort. Divorce rates among Baby Boomers are somewhat higher than other generations. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2006), 17% were divorced, compared to 10% of the WWII generation born before them.

The Baby Boomers are a highly educated age cohort with 29% who earned a bachelor's degree or higher and 29% who completed some college. Although highly educated, this generation will face more health issues than previously projected. It is estimated that 17.3 million Boomers report a disability (CDC, 2009). Arthritis is the leading cause of disability, followed by back/spine problems, heart problems, mental health issues, lung problems and diabetes. Since 1 in 5 Baby Boomers has a disability, most likely related to arthritis (e.g., reduced range of motion, mobility, pain), it will be important to provide programs that reduce impairment, optimize functioning and increase overall health and quality of life. In fact, in a recent article in U.S. News and World Report (based on an exercise study published in the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*), older adults (including Boomers) mentioned improved function and ability as being more important than looking better. This conclusion is reinforced in a 2008 *Newsweek* article in which Baby Boomers were interviewed about their physical activity goals and behaviors. One Boomer stated, "It's more about enjoying life. It's, 'I want to feel good about myself, and I don't want my back to hurt when I'm running around with my grandkids,'" (2007, p. 63).

Besides health, the employment profile of Baby Boomers is also diverse. Members of this generation are less likely to completely retire from work and have positioned themselves to have adaptable careers (Landau, 2010). In fact, fewer people in this cohort than previous generations have pensions to finance their retirements. Also, many Boomers aim to transition to work that has significantly more positive social impact than their previous careers. For example, many switch from paid work to volunteering or work with non-profit social service organizations. This phenomenon has been called an "encore career" which combines maintaining an income with contributing to the social good (Landau, 2010). Landau emphasizes that people in this generation want to do work that is meaningful and has a positive impact on society.

In regards to socioeconomic status (SES), according to findings from the Retirement Confidence Survey conducted by the Employee Benefits Research Institute, "American's confidence in their ability to afford a comfortable retirement has dropped to its lowest level" ever, down from 41% in 2007 to 20% in 2009 (Helman, Copeland, & VanDerhei, 2009, p. 4). This drop in confidence is likely explained by the recent economic crisis and recession in the U.S. and has resulted in many Baby Boomers delaying their retirement by several years. In

“The Baby Boomers are a diverse target market with great potential for parks, recreation and leisure service agencies.”

their chapter on retirement in the 21st century, Hawkins and Moody (2010) examine SES and divide people into three groups: 1) the set for life group, the 2) might be OK group, and the 3) anxious and struggling group. These changes in SES will definitely impact the availability of time for recreation and leisure, may produce higher stress levels and negatively affect discretionary income of Baby Boomers. Implications of these factors are discussed in more detail in the next section of this article.

Boomers' Leisure Values and Preferences

Boomers will be considered older adults, but have different leisure values and preferences than previous generations. Playing bingo and shuffle board are a stereotype of the past. This new generation of older adults is seeking active leisure pursuits and is interested in engaging leisure activities, rather than standing on the side watching. They grew up with playgrounds, parks and programs as a regular feature of community life, and they have high expectations for leisure activities in retirement. In a study profiling older adults' leisure preferences, researchers found that the Boomers are more physically active and more likely to choose outdoor leisure activities, sports and aquatics as their leisure preferences (Sperazza & Banerjee, 2010).

This cohort was also the first generation to have physical education in schools, and they were the first group to place an emphasis on working out and physical fitness. This group has realized they are not in their mid-twenties anymore, but also understand that staying in shape and being physically active can improve overall health and well-being. Leisure activities that are easy on the joints but can still increase core strength and balance are pursued by the Baby Boomers (Carmichael, 2007). The "use it or lose it" belief is prominent among members of this generation, and they actively seek activities and programs to help them maintain and optimize their health. In fact, the city of Grand Prairie, Texas recently opened a 60,000 square foot recreation facility that caters to Baby Boomers. The facility includes a café, indoor track, theater, infinity pool, lap pool, exercise vortex, hot tub, sauna, banquet rooms, gymnasiums and more. As you can see, Boomers demand the latest recreation, fitness and strength training equipment and want safe places for walking and bicycling. Sports are also popular among Baby Boomers, and ones on the rise in popularity include kickball, pickle ball, softball and tennis.

Hobbies are also important among members of the Baby Boom generation. Hobbies such as travel, food/cooking and healthy living (e.g., fitness, homeopathy, complementary and alternative medicine, nutrition) and intellectually stimulating (e.g., history, genealogy, art, music, culture) activities are important to them. As a group, Baby Boomers are avid readers and have adapted to the latest technologies such as social media and digital books/readers and other electronics.

Implications for Program and Facility Planning

Recreation agencies need to offer a variety of programs and activities for the aging Boomers because as part of their values, they have been looking forward to this stage in their lives and will demand leisure services. A key aspect for the practitioner is to anticipate the needs and wants of this active, financially conscious cohort. It is also imperative to not only understand the Boomers and what they like to do and when they like to do it, but also why they like to participate in certain activities. Practitioners need to prepare facilities and programs for this increase in the older adult population. Sperazza (2010) outlines three steps for practitioners to enhance the delivery of recreation programming for the Boomer generation. First, practitioners need to become Boomer savvy. Understand not only which activities this cohort participates in, but why they choose to engage in particular

leisure activities. Provide them information about programs and events through a variety of media outlets (e.g., Internet, print materials, radio, etc.). Boomers access their information through traditional means such as newspapers and television, but as previously mentioned, they have adapted to new social media outlets such as Facebook.

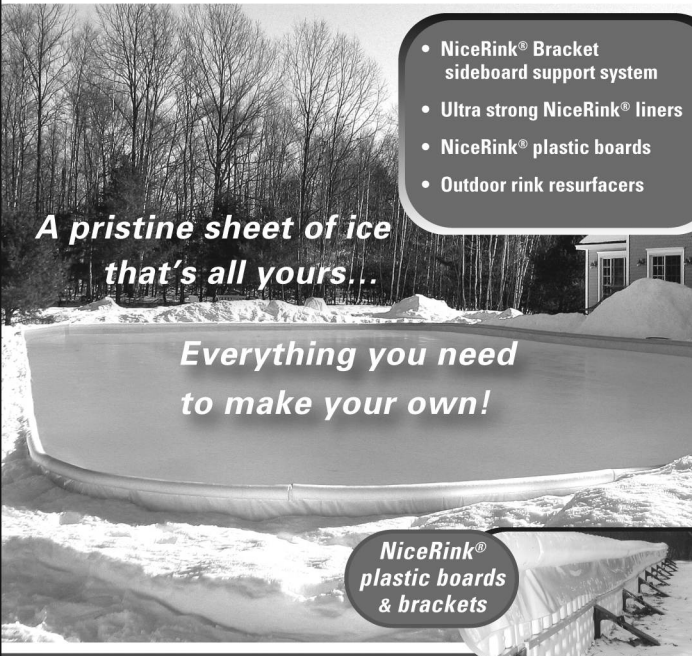
Secondly, it is important to adopt a Boomer lens. Envision Baby Boomers walking through your facilities and participating in programs; examine what modifications can be made in program design, logistics or facilities to best serve this group. Thirdly, Sperazza encourages practitioners to write and implement a Boomer blueprint. Examine the social and demographic profile of your community's Boomers, assess their needs through surveys and/or focus groups and consider their input into your agency's programs and facility plans. This group will soon be a large portion of the population over 65, so it is important to create programs that are attractive to them. Because this is such a large portion of the population, it would be a missed opportunity if a facility does not cater to them.

This cohort is different than previous generations and a new approach must be used for agencies to continue their success meeting residents' needs and preferences. Leisure professionals will have to change their programs and facilities to cater towards this population. The profession will be managed by members of Generation X and Generation Y who will have to be educated on how best to serve this population including a good understanding of who they are, their values and their expectations.

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ACCREDITATION: Ready ... Set ... Go!



By Maddie Kelly and Mike Clark

“Yes, accreditation is a lot of work. But after you’ve completed the process, you will know that you have enhanced the performance of your park and recreation services by setting goals to accomplish best practices standards.”

We all know that becoming accredited brings your agency to a whole new level of excellence. We know that complying with best practice standards will enhance the performance of your staff and services. And we know that participating in the process will be rewarding for your agency, your staff, your commissioners and your community.

So you’ve bitten the bullet and applied to become an Illinois Accredited Agency. Now here’s how to get started:

The initial self-evaluation and pre-visit documentation

- First, applicants need to verify that they have downloaded the most recent edition of the standards and related evidence of compliance requirements. Note that changes are reviewed and made annually and posted to the Illinois Association of Park Districts’ web site at www.ILparks.org located within IAPD Programs.
- Second, at the initial meeting with the mentor, verify your self-assessment of where you are in the process of meeting the required standards.
- Next, during this same meeting with your mentor, the agency reviews the legal section requirements as these are mandatory and any evaluation cannot proceed without all legal requirement standards being fully met. Also, the key and heavily weighted standards and those with long lead time to implement need to be reviewed and deciphered as to level of readiness early on in case deficiencies are present and need to be developed.
- Always remember to ask questions. No question is stupid or not relevant. If you go on a hunch or an assumption and don’t address it early before the actual evaluation, you may find yourself in trouble.
- When gathering information for your self-evaluation, make an effort to provide every piece of standard criteria suggested. If you have alternate evidence, be sure to clearly justify how the alternate evidence meets the standard.
- Clearly mark each standard and supporting criteria. A coinciding numbering system helps. Each standard should have a coinciding folder assigned to it. The folder should contain the number and description of the standard and an explanation of the documentation that is being provided to prove that the standard has been met. All back-up documentation should list the standard number and a corresponding letter or number that coincides with the explanation.

Example: If the back-up documentation states that a copy of a degree is used to prove the standard, the documentation will list it as “A. Copy of Marketing Degree” and the copy of the degree will be included and marked as “A”.

- When organizing the files, make it as simple as possible. **More is not necessarily better!** Stick only to the evidence needed to support the standard in question. Do not add extraneous evidence that does not support the file. This only makes it more difficult for the reviewers to wade through all the documents in order to find what is relevant.
- The best file is one that a reviewer can pull out, read how the agency feels it has done, see the evidence listed and then view the actual evidence.

So now you’ve spent the last few years preparing your staff and files. All of the necessary documentation has been submitted and you are anxiously awaiting evaluation day. You know that a team of professionals and board members will come out to your agency to look at every file, process and policy to determine if you’ve met the necessary criteria.

But are you really ready for your visit? That day is fast and furious, so you want to make sure everything goes as smoothly as possible. The following are some tips derived from Distinguished Agency mentors that can help you shine on the big day:

Evaluation Day

- The review room should be large enough for 5 to 7 reviewers to spread out files, manuals, etc. next to their computers.
- All files should be located in a private area that allows the team to freely discuss the files.
- Provide notebooks, pens/pencils as needed.
- Make sure the room is stocked with water and refreshments throughout the day. Provide a breakfast and lunch.
- Have a staff person designated as the point person. This person should be readily accessible to answer questions, contact the appropriate person who can answer a question, help make copies, find missing documentation and help with the general logistics of the visit.
- Don’t take personally requests for more information or evidence. If a team member can’t find a piece of evidence or wants more supporting documentation, find it quickly.
- Make sure key staff are prepared to work late to find missing evidence or to accommodate the team if they need more time with the files.

Yes, accreditation is a lot of work. But after you’ve completed the process, you will know that you have enhanced the performance of your park and recreation services by setting goals to accomplish best practices standards. You now have earned the title of an Illinois Accredited Agency!

Maddie Kelly is the Executive Director for the Oak Lawn Park District and Mike Clark is the Executive Director for the Batavia Park District.

Web Xtra

How Far is Des Moines?

By John N. McGovern

Des Moines is known for many things. The Iowa State Fair is held in Des Moines. The Iowa legislature meets and works in Des Moines. It is a city known for its rural roots and can argue it is the farming capital of the United States. The Iowa State University produces scholars, researchers and wrestlers. On March 2, 2011, the City of Des Moines added to its fame.

On that day, a Wednesday, the United States Department of Justice published a Project Civic Access settlement agreement with the city in regards to compliance with many and recently changed requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

From the IPRA Web Site
(www.ipraonline.com)

Check out www.ipraonline.com/resources/publications.

Read the Full Story Online

From the IAPD Web Site (www.ilparks.org) ... Scroll 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 page. You'll find links to all Web Xtras on the bottom of the page.



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PEOPLE & PLACES



IAPD Welcomes New Publications Director

The Illinois Association of Park Districts recently named Lori Harlan as publications director. Lori began her new role on August 22, but she was introduced to the association and many of its members on Park District Conservation Day at the Illinois State Fair on August 20. As publications director, Lori will be responsible for the IAPD/IPRA magazine, Illinois Parks and Recreation, and the annual Buyers' Guide, as well as writing and editing newsletters, books and other communication for the association.

"I was impressed by the caliber of the association's publications, as well as the enthusiasm and dedication of the entire IAPD staff, so I'm proud to join their ranks," Harlan said. "I'm looking forward to meeting more members and finding new ways to improve communication with them."

Prior to joining IAPD, Lori served as Communications Manager at Memorial Health System where she managed internal and external communication, media relations and video production for the health system's 6,000 employees. She also has more than 10 years' experience in freelance writing and has been published in a number of newspapers and magazines locally and nationally. Lori holds a Master's degree in English, as well as a Bachelor's degree in journalism, both from the University of Illinois at Springfield. She lives in Sherman with her husband, Jeremy, and their four-year-old daughter, Addison.



Karasek Celebrates 45 Years as Commissioner in Berwyn

The Berwyn Park District has been a member of the Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) since 1929. Edward A. Karasek has served as an elected commissioner more than half that time.

During his 45 years of service to the district, Karasek has served as board president twice and currently serves as board secretary, a position he has held for many years. Within the committee structure set forth by district ordinance, Karasek currently serves as Chairman of the Building & Grounds Committee and is a member of the Finance committee. He regularly attends all other committee meetings, even if he is not an assigned member, and offers valuable experience and guidance. He previously served as the voting delegate for the former Suburban Risk Management Agency and subsequently the park district Risk Management Agency until a few years ago.

Karasek continues to make measurable differences in the quality of life of the residents of the Berwyn Park District and the City of Berwyn through his dedication and commitment to public service.

Mark Your Calendar: IAPD's Best of the Best Awards Gala on October 14

Don't miss the red carpet event of Illinois parks, recreation and conservation! The Illinois Association of Park Districts will present the fifth annual Best of the Best Awards Gala on Friday, October 14 at Wheeling Park District's Chevy Chase Country Club.



The awards gala is an opportunity to thank board members, citizen volunteers, businesses and media who have committed their time, talents and resources to help strengthen and further the park, recreation and conservation mission. Board member service anniversaries and agency anniversaries are also celebrated at the event.

This black-tie optional evening will begin with a cocktail reception at 6:30 p.m., followed by dinner and the awards program from 7 to 9:30 p.m. A professional photographer will be taking pictures of attendees. Reservations will be accepted at www.ILparks.org until October 7.

Overnight accommodations are available at the Westin North Shore in Wheeling at a discounted rate of \$99. When making the reservation, ask for IAPD's room block. Rooms must be reserved by September 23 to secure the discounted rate.

Make your reservations today, and prepare to be motivated and inspired by stories of heartfelt commitment to Illinois parks, recreation and conservation.

Best of the Best Awards Gala
Friday, October 14, 7 – 9:30 p.m.
Wheeling Park District's Chevy Chase Country Club

Put the FUN Back in Fundraiser ... Donate to the Wall of Wines!

IAPD is currently seeking donations of bottles of wine with a value of at least \$15 per bottle for the Best of the Best Wall of Wines fundraiser.

Gala guests will purchase an opportunity to pull a bottle of wine from the wall. All bottles will be individually wrapped, so when the guest pulls a bottle, they will unwrap a surprise bottle of wine.

All proceeds from this special fundraiser will go to Friends of Illinois Parks and the Power Play Beyond-School Grant Program. Please call Sue Triphahn at (847) 496-4449 to find out how to donate a bottle of wine.

A Century of History in Champaign Parks

Champaign's parks have been a part of the city nearly as long as the city has been in existence. The land for Champaign's first park was made available in 1854. The property was originally laid out as a public square; however, in 1859, the 12.7 acre property became the first park in Champaign County, White Park, named in honor of the man who donated it. Known as the "Commons," the park was used by settlers as a cow pasture in 1861 when the city council adopted a motion "to permit calves to be turned into the City Park at 35 cents per month."

The Champaign Park District organized as a township park district in 1911 with the first tax levy collected in 1913. At that time, the District had limited taxing power and depended on donations of land to establish the park system. In the mid 1920s, parks that were owned by the city of Champaign were transferred to the park district. Since then all public parks have been held by the district.

By the middle 1950s, it became evident that due to the growth of the community and the limited taxing powers of the township park district, the current structure was inadequate to meet the needs of residents. Therefore, in 1957, the district was reorganized as a general park district by a referendum of voters. The Champaign Park District has since been a local unit of government with its own legal and financial responsibilities.

Today, the Champaign Park District offers the community 63 parks totaling over 653 acres.

The premier parks, West Side, Hessel, Dodds and Centennial, consisting of more than 124 acres host thousands of visitors each year. Visitors come from all over to play sports, attend special events, enjoy picnics in the park, pet the animals at Prairie Farm or simply spend the day at the Sholem Aquatic Center.

Over the past five years, the Champaign Park District has added four new parks, including the district's first natural area park and a dog park, adding an additional 70 acres. Major renovations have been completed on several parks, bringing a rain garden and accessible fishing pier for everyone to enjoy.



Marion Park District Announces Director of Parks and Recreation

Stan Motley was named the director of parks and recreation for the Marion Park District through the Illinois Association of Park District's Director Search Service. He joined the Marion staff in May 2011. Motley says he is excited to be part of the new team.

Motley's career encompasses 30 years of service in parks and recreation. It includes leadership roles in Illinois (Oak Brook Park District), Missouri (Jackson County), New York (Westchester County) and Florida (Hillsborough County).

Under his leadership, those organizations received numerous awards including: Excellence in Aquatics, Best Film Promotion Recreation, Best Recreation Catalog along with Area and Facilities awards.

Motley has a Bachelor's degree in parks and recreation administration and a Master's in public administration. He is also a certified park and recreation professional through the National Parks and Recreation Association.

Want to Read More?

Keep up with the latest milestones, new hires, promotions and award-winners in the Illinois park and recreation industry online. Visit our website, www.ILparks.org, and click on the Publications tab on the left. Select IP&R Magazine and then People and Places.

Want to submit news from your agency for People & Places?

E-mail information and jpegs editorialdept@ILparks.org. Jpegs should be 300 dpi at about 2 inches tall.

Give Us Your Best Shot!



Enter by December 5, 2011.

Show off your agency and its visual images with "Give Us Your Best Shot," a photo contest sponsored by the Illinois Association of Park Districts and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association. Photos submitted may be used in future editions of Illinois Parks & Recreation magazine and other IAPD/IPRA projects.

Enter as many times as you like in four categories: **recreation, sports, wildlife and nature/landscapes.** All entries must feature Illinois scenes. Awards will be given for 1st place and 2nd place in each category. Winning entries will be published in IP&R magazine and displayed as part of a special showcase at the IAPD/IPRA Conference in Chicago in January. Winners will also receive an award presented at their agency. Photographs will be judged on the basis of exposure, clarity/focus and subject matter relative to category.

For complete guidelines and an entry form, visit www.ILparks.org and select Publications / IP&R Magazine / Photo Contest.

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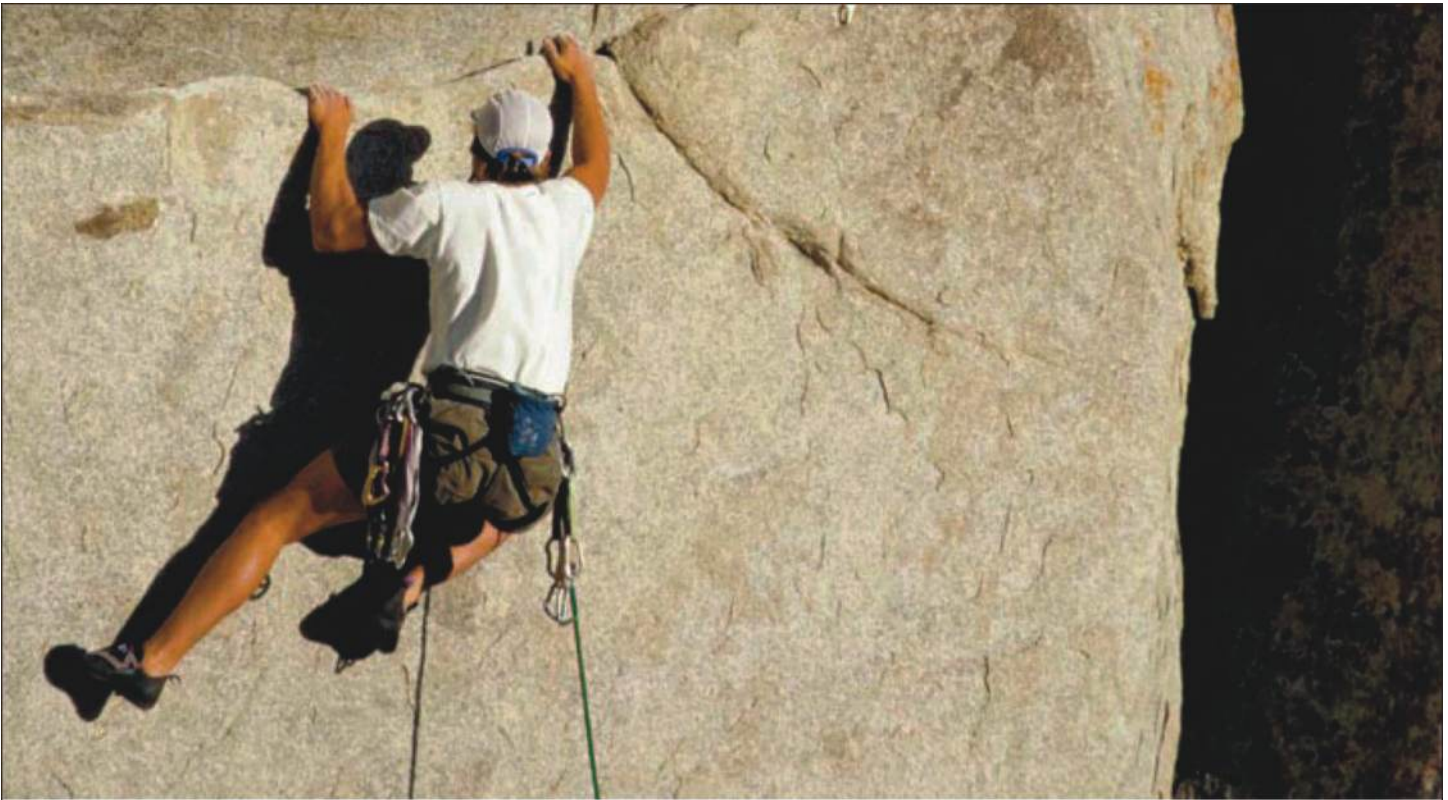
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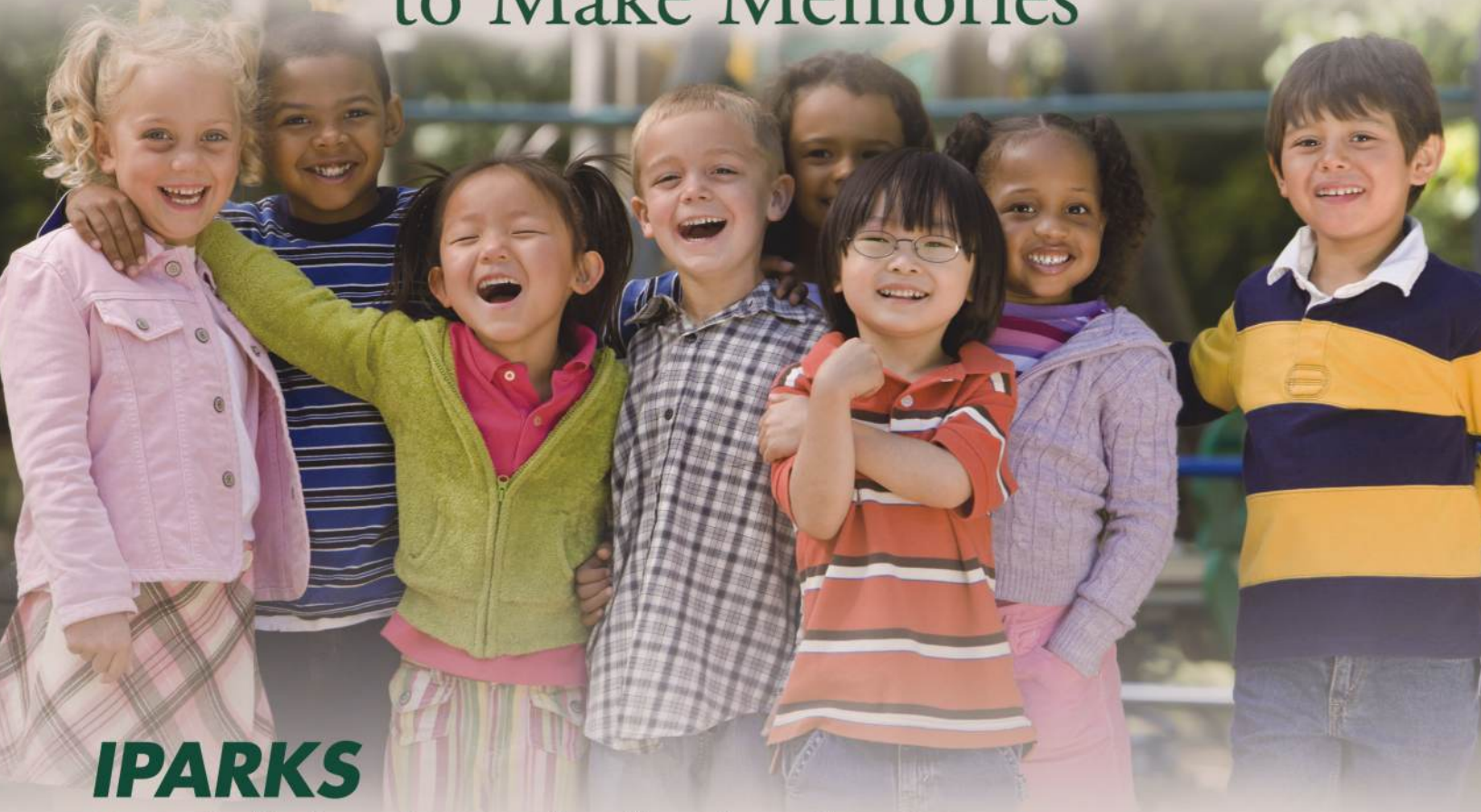
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