

illinois

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PARKS AND RECREATION

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



# 2013 Soaring to New Heights Conference Issue

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PLUS: Community Gardening

# Word gets around



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**Take this Issue to Chicago!**

## FROM THE EDITOR

With January's wicked wind chills and snow-packed sidewalks, you're probably not thinking about gardening. But maybe you should be. Agencies around the state are experiencing tremendous success with community gardens, and if yours isn't among them, you can learn a lot from this issue of *Illinois Parks and Recreation*.



Before we explore community gardens, let's consider why they're important. In the United States, food travels an average of 1,500 miles from farm to fork and spends between 7 and 14 days in transit. During that time, up to 50 percent of it is lost to spoilage. Locally-grown food eliminates travel time and waste and saves gardeners between \$75 and \$380 in food costs every season.

The Naperville Park District's community garden plots aren't new. They've been available to residents since the 70s. But the district saw a striking resurgence in 2008 as a result of the ailing economy. Suddenly gardening wasn't just a relaxing hobby; for some, it was a very necessary source of food.

As interest in Naperville's gardens has grown, so too has a renewed sense of community with gardeners generously sharing their harvest with the hungry. In 2012, two tons – yes, TWO TONS – of fresh produce was donated to the local food pantry giving low-income residents easy access to healthy food that is too often cost-prohibitive to purchase on their own. Get the complete story on page 12.

Likewise, in spite of record-high temperatures and little rainfall, an abundance of produce from the St. Charles Park District's community garden made its way to an area food bank thanks to a streamlined donation process. Learn more about their system, as well as what you need to start a community garden, on page 18.

Food can be a powerful teaching tool, and the Joliet Park District uses their organic community garden to teach residents to be stewards of the environment. Without the use of chemicals, gardeners are growing food using eco-friendly, sustainable practices. In partnership with the University of Illinois Extension, they also offer 17 different classes to educate gardeners on topics ranging from plotting and planting through composting and canning. Read more about the impact on the community on page 20.

One last thing – you may have noticed a little extra packaging with this issue of *IP&R* magazine. The biodegradable bags are meant to protect the conference edition of the magazine during the mailing process. We believe bagging this issue of the magazine is the most environmentally friendly and cost-effective solution to keep your conference guide in pristine condition. So please remember to bring it with you.

See you in Chicago!

Best regards,  
— LORI HARLAN



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Peter M. Murphy  
IAPD President and CEO

# New Year Brings New Opportunities and IAPD Celebrates 85th Anniversary

As we greet the New Year, it is a time to look forward to the new opportunities ahead. Without question, 2013 will be a great one for park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies as the services we provide have never been in higher demand or more necessary.

For the membership of IAPD, the year 2013 marks our 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of providing outstanding services and acting as a collective voice in strengthening the park and recreation mission in Illinois. Our system of special districts in Illinois is at its very core the most democratic and American of institutions.

Park districts, forest preserves and conservation districts are led, and their purpose is driven, by men and women who want to improve the quality of life for future generations. Elected locally and serving without compensation, they are a shining example of citizen volunteers.

The history of the pioneers in acquiring open space and the growth of park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies is intertwined with that of the IAPD.

IAPD traces its beginning to 1928, the year Charles Lindbergh was presented the Congressional Medal of Honor for his first transatlantic flight. According to the 1929 president's address of Fred J. Bohn, IAPD's second president and a park official from Chicago's River Park District, the "progressive founders" of the Illinois Association of Park Districts met in the halls of the State Capitol in Springfield as early as 1927. Representatives from the Small Parks Association of Cook County, established in 1922, and park officials from other counties of the state were there seeking legislation to change several laws that affect park districts. (The law enabling creation of special districts called park districts became effective June 1, 1893.)

Bohn says that nothing formal was done, however, until the services of A.D. McLarty, secretary of the Illinois Municipal League, were secured to organize the parks association in 1928. The historian for the Illinois Municipal League paints a

picture of McLarty as entrepreneurial in his interest to start a separate association for park districts. It was difficult to do business at the State Capitol, meeting with a legislator one day wearing a hat for city municipalities and the next wearing one for park district issues.

The year 2013 marks IAPD's 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of providing outstanding services and acting as a collective voice in strengthening the park and recreation mission in Illinois.



Not surprisingly, McLarty's efforts to create a statewide organization of park district officials met with great enthusiasm from leaders of Illinois park districts. McLarty sent a questionnaire to park district officials on March 9, 1928. A summary of the results was published and sent to park officials on March 30 of that year with an invitation to attend an organizational meeting May 17 and 18 in the Rose Room of the Hotel Sherman in Chicago. The State of Illinois' James R. Thompson Center now stands on the site of the Sherman Hotel, which was demolished in 1980.

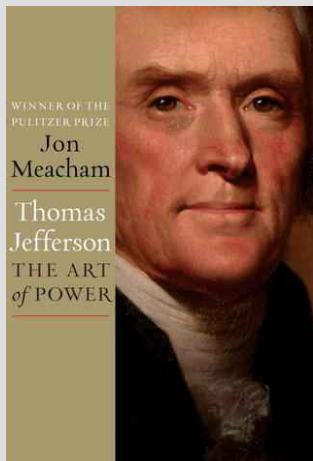
The resolution approved at this meeting called for formal creation of a "Parks Organization Section" of the Illinois Municipal League, with separate officers and committees. The association operated in this way, as a section, for the first two years of its existence.

McLarty became the association's first secretary, a position he held until July 1, 1943, when he resigned to enter the U.S. Navy during World War II. The association's first president, Dr. Joseph Cullen Blair, was head of the University of Illinois Department of Horticulture and president of the Urbana Park District. Blair also served as IAPD's treasurer from 1931 to 1933 and maintained a keen interest in the association throughout his lifetime.

The first annual conference of the newly organized statewide organization was held in Joliet and attended by 38 representatives from 16 park districts. According to a published report from the event, there was “open discussion on problems of park districts, which brought out some interesting facts” plus “valuable time for park district officials to become better acquainted and address legislation.” These components education, networking, discussions among board members and legislative advocacy remain at the core of IAPD's mission and its annual conference. The conference has grown in scope and quality throughout the years, and this year's 2013 annual conference is no exception.

The industry's top presenters from around the nation will be offering 185 educational opportunities, nearly half of which are specifically targeted toward elected officials. Topics range from leadership and boardsmanship to legal issues, partnerships and much more. In addition to the tremendous learning opportunity, conference is the perfect place to network. Whether you reacquaint yourself with lifelong friends or make new ones, don't miss this wonderful chance to learn and exchange ideas with board members from across the state.

I look forward to seeing you at the best conference for parks and recreation in the nation. Happy New Year.



### Recommended Reading

**Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power**  
By Jon Meacham

This political biography is a great look into one of America's most notable presidents. Among Thomas Jefferson's highest political achievements are the drafting of the Declaration of Independence at age 33, and one year later, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom.

At the heart of the book is Jefferson's ability to balance ideals with political reality, reaching out to his enemies and exercising power to accomplish his goals. Meacham writes of Jefferson that he “understood a timeless truth that politics is kaleidoscopic, constantly shifting, and the morning's foe may well be the afternoon's friend.” Meacham also observed that Jefferson “believed in the politics of the personal relationship.” Jefferson is a fascinating individual who sketched the first designs of Monticello when he was 26 and founded the University of Virginia and designed many of its buildings. He died, as did John Adams, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1826. Jefferson's legacy is vast and varied, and the lessons to be learned from his leadership are timeless. This is a great read, and I highly recommend this book to you.

## 2013 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 24-26  
**IAPD/IPRA Annual Conference**  
Hyatt Regency Chicago

April/May  
**Flying 4 Kids Month**

April 30  
**Parks Day at the Capitol**  
State Capitol, Springfield

April 30  
**Legislative Reception**  
Illini Country Club,  
Springfield

May 1  
**Legislative Conference**  
Crowne Plaza, Springfield

May 20  
**Summer Golf Tour Event #1 – Noon Shotgun**  
Palatine Hills Golf Club  
Palatine Park District

**June will feature commissioner boot camps for newly elected and seasoned commissioners in a variety of locations to be announced**

June 10  
**Summer Golf Tour Event #2 – Noon Shotgun**  
Old Orchard  
Country Club  
Prospect Heights  
Park District

**For the most up-to-date Calendar of Events, please visit the IAPD website at [www.ILparks.org](http://www.ILparks.org).**

July 18  
**Legislative Golf Outing**  
White Pines Golf Club  
Bensenville Park  
District

August 17  
**Park District Conservation Day**  
Illinois State  
Fairgrounds,  
Springfield

August 20  
**Summer Golf Tour Event #3 – Noon Shotgun**  
Foss Park Golf Course  
Foss Park District

September 9  
**Summer Golf Tour Event #4 – 9 am Shotgun**  
Prairie Bluff Golf  
Course  
Lockport Township  
Park District

September 27  
**Best of the Best Awards Gala**  
Chevy Chase Country  
Club  
Wheeling Park District

October 8-10  
**NRPA Congress & Exposition**  
Houston, Texas

November 7  
**IAPD Legal Symposium**  
McDonald's University,  
Oak Brook

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# EYE ON THE PROFESSION

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



By Debbie Trueblood  
IPRA Executive Director

## Benefits Abound with IPRA Membership

On behalf of the IPRA Board of Directors and staff, we are eagerly looking forward to seeing many of you at this year's "Soaring to New Heights Conference!" As I am still settling in to my new position as IPRA's Executive Director, I have greatly enjoyed meeting so many people and seeing so many IPRA members in action at educational events, sections, committee meetings and task forces. The conference will be the culmination of all these member efforts and all these members brought together as one community, bound together in our passion for parks and recreation. I can't wait!

This magazine issue is dedicated to Community Gardens. While IPRA does not keep our own community garden, many of the members are involved in these important programs, and you see their value in bringing people together. A community garden is cultivation by a collective, just as an association is cultivation towards our mission by a collection of our members. In both scenarios, we are building communities, bringing people together, helping each other learn new skills and growing together for a better future.

Do you feel that you are a part of this community? In an association, you get what you give. If you put in your energy, your work, your leadership and your commitment, you will reap the benefits in the form of advancing your knowledge, your network and your career. Imagine if you planted seeds in a community garden and then just walked away. Compare that to planting seeds with your colleagues and working together to develop a beautiful and bountiful garden to harvest and enjoy collectively. Associations are the same. IPRA is thriving today because of the continued dedication and commitment of our volunteers. As a growing community, there is always a role for new volunteers. What else can you do to help this garden grow?

Our conference is also an example of a community coming together in a joint effort. The Joint Conference Committee, including IPRA Co-Chair Mike Baiardo at the Alsip Park District and IAPD Co-Chair Jack Schmerer at the Buffalo Grove Park District, along with the Operations Committee and IPRA and

IAPD teams have put together a great conference for 2013. This year, we are continuing the trend begun last year of focusing on high-quality speakers over a larger quantity of programming. And, we have listened to your feedback and brought back the roundtables.

The most exciting park of the conference is sure to be the Closing Social Saturday night at the Art Institute. The Art Institute is under the umbrella of the Chicago Park District, and they are generously sponsoring the event with us this year. This event is sure to be beautiful and memorable. I have many fond memories of visiting the Art Institute as an adolescent, taking in all the history, the art and the creative energy of this museum. Imagine how much better it will be to enjoy it with all of our friends and colleagues together.

If you put in your energy, your work, your leadership and your commitment, you will reap the benefits in the form of advancing your knowledge, your network and your career.



This year's conference will also feature the Closing General Session with Ron Kittle. According to his website, Ron is a former left fielder and designated hitter in Major League Baseball, known best for his home run power. He played for the Chicago White Sox (1982–86, 1989, 1991), New York Yankees (1986–87), Cleveland Indians (1988), and Baltimore Orioles (1990). He also authored, *Ron Kittle's Tales from the White Sox Dugout*. He is a motivational speaker focusing on subjects like "How to Dream Big, Anyone Can Dream Small," "How to Surround Yourself with the Best People Possible," and "When and How to Take Control of Your Choices." I expect sports analogies will abound. You won't want to miss this event. We expect Ron will hit this one right out of the park.



This year's conference will be January 24-26 at the Hyatt Regency Chicago. The hotel is working on some amazing renovations, which will make our conference even better in future years, but this year will be a time of transition. I am sure that park and recreation professionals understand the need to put on our hard hats, and make necessary improvements for our future. We hope you will pardon the dust, and join us in exercising our flexibility and patience.

In addition to the conference, IPRA is busy with many other programs. After the conference, our new board year will begin with Allison Niemela as the 2013 IPRA Chair of the Board of Directors. Allison is already planning a busy year for IPRA. Her energy and enthusiasm is infectious, and we know 2013 will be a year of passionate leadership. We look forward to our January board retreat featuring a challenge course to help us develop our teamwork and trust. We will also be working with an outside consultant during 2013 to help us with board orientation and strategic planning for 2014.

My thanks also to John Curran, our outgoing Chair for 2012. Under John's leadership, IPRA continued its successful transition towards stability, growth and financial health. John can look back at his year and feel assured that IPRA is better and stronger today than when he started. We are thriving! The 2012 Board had many meetings this year and showed a constant commitment to the field and the organization. I thank them for their efforts and look forward to serving in 2013 with our new combination of leaders.

One new exciting part of IPRA's transformation is that the Ethnic Minority Section has been renamed the "Diversity Section." The section's proposal to the IPRA board to go in this new direction was approved. To quote that proposal, "The Diversity Section plans on being the leading source for all aspects of diversity in the park and recreation profession in Illinois and serve as a resource to IPRA members. We would like to tackle topics that face our profession ranging from women in park and recreation, the glass ceiling, same sex households, cultural issues that may affect programs and services, the multi-generation work force, employing individuals with disabilities, celebrating holidays while honoring different religions and ethnicities, changing demographics and diversifying the workforce to name a few." This section is recruiting members now, and all IPRA members can join as many sections as they like with no additional fee. If you're interested in working on diversity issues or learning more about it, please join the section by updating your profile at [www.ilipra.org](http://www.ilipra.org)

Again, my thanks and congratulations to the Joint Conference Committee and the Operations Committee on a successful conference. All your work is going to culminate in a successful conference that we will all remember. I look forward to seeing you all there.

## SAVE THE DATES

### January 2013

January 03  
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM  
Therapeutic Recreation  
Section PSD Meeting  
TBD

January 10  
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM  
IPRA Board Meeting  
University of St. Francis  
500 Wilcox St., Joliet

January 17  
11:30 AM - 1:30 PM  
Recreation Section  
Meeting and Discussion  
Elmhurst Park District,  
Wilder Mansion  
211 Prospect, Elmhurst, IL

January 24  
3 days IAPD/IPRA  
Soaring to New Heights  
Conference  
Hyatt Regency Chicago

January 25  
5:00 PM - 6:30 PM  
IPRA Board &  
Annual Meeting  
Hyatt Regency Chicago

### February 2013

February 07  
9:00 AM - 11:00 AM  
Therapeutic Recreation  
Section Meeting &  
Discussion  
TBD

February 8  
1:30 PM - 3:00 PM  
FM Section Meeting,  
"Kick off meeting with  
brainstorming for  
Conference,"  
Park Ridge Park District  
South Park Recreation  
Center  
833 Talcott Ave,  
Park Ridge

February 13  
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM  
Diversity Section  
Meeting, "Diversity in  
the agency and diversity  
as a profession"  
Salt Creek Park District

February 14  
10:00 AM - 11:00 AM  
Park & Natural Resource  
Management Section  
Meeting & MIPE  
Meeting Discussion -  
"Aquatics" TBA

February 21  
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM  
IPRA Board Meeting  
IPRA Headquarters

For the most  
up-to-date Calendar  
of Events, please  
visit the IPRA website  
at [www.ILipra.org](http://www.ILipra.org).





Jason Anselment  
Legal/Legislative Counsel

## New Year Offers Opportunity to Build Important Relationships with Legislators

As this issue goes to press, newly elected members of the 98<sup>th</sup> General Assembly are participating in new legislator orientation sessions at the Capitol. All 118 representative and 59 senate seats were up for election this past November. Because of retirements, redistricting and even a few losses by incumbent legislators, 40 new legislators will take the oath of office when the 98<sup>th</sup> General Assembly is sworn in on January 9, 2013.

To put this unusually high turnover in perspective, 46 legislators<sup>1</sup> (1 in 4) who took the oath just two years ago in January 2011 are not returning to the 98<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in 2013. Many of these retiring legislators were close friends of the IAPD, and we will miss their steadfast support.

However, it has often been said that change brings opportunity. As we look forward to the 98<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, there will be many opportunities for us to develop new relationships with legislators. The success of IAPD's advocacy efforts depends, in large part, upon these relationships, and we will be counting on you to build alliances with new members of the General Assembly.

### Identifying New Legislators

Fortunately, IAPD recognized the coming changes more than a year ago. Throughout 2012, we closely monitored legislative races and, with the help of the Joint Legislative Committee, developed a strategy to ensure that our legislative efforts do not miss a beat during the transition. As part of this strategy, we have assembled a welcome packet for each new legislator that includes information about park, recreation and conservation agencies as well as the benefits they provide to our state. We are meeting personally with each new legislator to deliver this valuable information.

Your agency also plays a vital role in carrying out our strategy. For instance, IAPD often relies on information about your agency that is contained within our database. Therefore, it is critical that this information is always kept up-to-date. The beginning of the year is a good time for your agency to review the accuracy of its information in IAPD's database. Because of legislative redistricting, this is particularly true in 2013.

<sup>1</sup>The appointments for six of these legislators served at least 3 months during regular session in the 97th General Assembly and were elected to the 98<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in November 2012.

If you have not already done so, please check to make sure that your agency's legislative districts are still accurate within IAPD's database. An easy step-by-step guide for updating this information can be found on the following page. While you are logged into the database, please check to make certain that all your agency's financial, facility and other information is also current as we also rely on that information in our advocacy efforts.

If you are unsure about your current legislative or congressional district, you can locate it by clicking on the link at the bottom left rail of IAPD's homepage under "General Assembly." The Public Policy section of IAPD's website also contains general information about the redistricting process, new legislative maps and members-only spreadsheets that identify members of the General Assembly and their legislative districts. Go to [www.ilparks.org](http://www.ilparks.org) and click on Public Policy – Advocacy Resources – Redistricting Maps to access this information.

### Five Ideas for Building Relationships in the New Year

If history is any guide, many of you have already started connecting with legislators who are new to your agency. For those who may be looking for ways to introduce your representative or senator to your agency or for ways to continue to develop an existing relationship, here are five easy goals to accomplish in the next several weeks.

#### 1. Invite Your Legislator to the IAPD/IPRA Awards Luncheon

The IAPD/IPRA Conference Awards Luncheon is a premier event that showcases the positive impact park and recreation agencies have within individual communities and across the state. The stories and accomplishments highlighted at this event are not only an inspiration to those within the profession; they have an enormous impact on legislators as well. There may be no better occasion than the conference awards luncheon to obtain respect and understanding for the work that you do and for your agency's significance to your community.

The Outstanding Legislators of the Year are also recognized during the Awards Luncheon. The winning legislators are always appreciative of sharing the occasion with as many of their peers as possible, and the prestigious award is an achievement for which many legislators eagerly strive.



*Representative Daniel Biss accepts the 2012 IAPD Legislator of the Year Award from Chairman of the IAPD Board of Trustees Wally Frasier and IAPD President/CEO Peter Murphy at the IAPD/IPRA Conference Awards Luncheon.*

If you have not already done so, make a lasting impression by inviting your legislator to accompany you to the IAPD/IPRA Conference Awards Luncheon on January 25, 2013.

## 2. Join Your Legislators at a Legislative Breakfast

The Joint Legislative Committee coordinates the Legislative Breakfast program to provide a venue for member agencies to hear from legislators, deliver positive messages about their agencies and discuss the IAPD/IPRA Legislative Platform. Like the Conference Awards Luncheon, these events are always well received by those legislators in attendance.

As in the past, more than a dozen events are scheduled for non-session days during the months of February and March. The breakfasts are held in many different regions in order to attract as many agencies and legislators as possible. Event details will be distributed at the conference, so find a Legislative Breakfast location near you and encourage your legislator to attend.

The legislative breakfasts are some of my favorite events of the year. It is always gratifying to see so many IAPD members with legislators back within their legislative districts. I hope you join us.

## 3. Raise Awareness of Your Agency

Although rudimentary, always remember that the citizens who use your services are also your legislator's constituents. Because your agency provides so many programs and services, it is possible that your representative and senator may not be aware of all that your agency does to improve the quality of life within your community. As previously mentioned, IAPD has developed a welcome packet with useful information about the benefits of parks and recreation, but your agency may want to consider developing its own packet specific to your agency.

One of the best ways to raise awareness of all that your agency offers is to give your legislator a personalized tour of your facilities. This would afford you the opportunity to explain the programs you offer and the vital role your legislator can play in helping you to deliver these services to your constituents and theirs.

## 4. Make Sure Your Mailing List Includes Your Legislator

An easy way to stay in regular contact with your legislators and make them aware of all that your agency does within the community is to add them to your mailing list. I am constantly amazed with the quality of materials that IAPD receives from its member agencies. I am certain that legislators would be similarly impressed and appreciative of receiving this valuable information.

## 5. Make Sure Your Legislator Has Your Event Calendar

Legislators welcome information about events within their legislative districts. Make sure your legislator receives your calendar of events and, when appropriate, invite them to attend. Your events typically provide the perfect setting to cast a positive light on your agency and the profession.

## Resolve to Start Today

Relationships must be nurtured and can take many years to fully develop. Part of IAPD's proud history is the strength of its grassroots advocacy program. To continue this tradition, it is important that each new member of the General Assembly understands the positive impact that park, recreation and conservation agencies have within the communities they represent.

IAPD is counting on you to develop new friendships with each of the 40 new members of the General Assembly as well as those seasoned legislators who may be new to your particular agency. Do not wait to start this process. Our collective legislative success depends upon each of you!



## Updating Your Agency's Profile Is Easy!

- Go to IAPD's website at [www.ILparks.org](http://www.ILparks.org)
- Sign into the website using **the agency's** username and password
- Click on "Manage Profile" on the right-hand side
- Under the "Information & Settings" section, click on "Edit Bio"
- Please remember to complete all fields
- Click on "Save Changes" at the bottom

***Accurate information about your agency plays a vital role in IAPD's grassroots advocacy efforts.***



# Growing a Community Gardening Program

By Sameera Luthman

Virtually anyone who has ever planted a seed and watched it grow and develop into a beautiful flower or delicious food can attest to the tremendous sense of satisfaction that gardening can bring. Since the 1970s, the Naperville Park District has offered its Community Garden Plots program to provide a place for people to exercise their love for growing plants and food. And, through this program, something else has emerged and grown – a whole community with a passion for sharing its abundance.

Originally located on the property adjacent to Naperville's Springbrook Golf Course, the plots were moved in the early 1980s to the more centrally-located West Street, just outside of the heart of downtown. This 13.5-acre property is owned by the City of Naperville and leased by the Park District. A total of 527 plots are available for rent.



“It's fun and rewarding to help other gardeners. Part of that pleasure comes from passing along knowledge and teaching someone else how to garden. That's really where the community aspect comes in.”

Although Naperville's Community Garden Plots always have enjoyed a following of gardeners who rent and tend a plot – sometimes the same one year after year – in 2008, the Garden Plots experienced resurgence directly attributable to the declining economy. In a survey of Garden Plots renters conducted at the end of 2008, “source of food” was the primary reason that they participated in the program. This increased interest in community gardening also provided an opportunity for the Park District to expand the choices available to gardeners based on their suggestions. Improvements made in recent years include:

- The availability of half-size plots since not everyone wants or needs a large plot
- The addition of organic-only plots (43 full-size; 2 half-size)
- Seven raised ADA plots added to provide for wheelchair access
- Additional water spigots to provide gardeners with closer and easier access to the water source
- A partnership with the University of Illinois Extension office to provide a demonstration garden as well as master gardeners to assist other gardeners on site

Naperville Park District board member and master gardener Ron Ory is pleased to see gardening coming back into popularity, particularly at the Park District's Garden Plots.

“The Community Garden Plots is well-named because community is such an important part of this program,” Ory explained. Ory began gardening in the late 80s following his retirement, and he pursued an Associate's Degree in horticulture.

“It's fun and rewarding to help other gardeners. Part of that pleasure comes from passing along knowledge and teaching someone else how to garden. That's really where the community aspect comes in.” Ory also is proud to see a new generation learning about gardening.

In 2012, the Park District created its Green Thumbs program for preschoolers. Students in the preschool program started the garden before summer break. Then, the children in the Green Thumbs summer camp took over and began to enjoy some of the harvest. Finally, the preschool students starting the new school year in the fall completed the harvest and closed the plot for the season.

“The Green Thumbs program was very successful in its first year,” explained Brad Wilson, director of recreation. “Kids like to dig in the mud and most love the outdoors, so what better way to teach them a skill like taking care of a garden while they're having fun? We look forward to continuing to offer this program and helping create tomorrow's gardeners.”

Although the most obvious direct result of gardening is plants or produce, the many benefits realized through the Garden Plots program seamlessly tie back to the mission of the Park District to “enrich the quality of life for the community.” Additionally, participating in the Garden Plots program provides gardeners with a whole host of physiological, psychological and social benefits including:

- Providing a venue for the development of gardening skills
- Being accessible to individuals with special needs
- Creating an activity that promotes exercise
- Providing a means to grow healthy food at a low cost
- Preserving green space within the community





Perhaps one of the best loved aspects of Naperville's Garden Plots program is the fact that it's something that can be experienced and enjoyed by people of all ages. With 507 of the 527 plots rented in 2012, it was estimated that more than 1,000 individuals participated in gardening in some way during the season.

"Gardening is a family affair," explained Wilson. "Parents, kids and even grandparents are out there any day of the week tending to their plots and enjoying the experience with one another. Gardening is a very social activity."

The Garden Plots also are like a neighborhood, and there's good and bad that can come with that.

"The gardeners get to know one another over the course of a season or after several years of tending the same plot," said Wilson. "Most of the time it's fine, but there are times when the 'neighbors' don't necessarily get along. Sometimes we need to step in and help settle disputes about maintenance, encroachment and other issues."

One of the ways that the Park District has made improvements to settling some of these neighborly issues is through their volunteer program, which has grown tremendously in the last few years. It also has become a great asset to the Garden Plots program. In 2011, the Garden Plots Ambassadors program was created using volunteers who were passionate about gardening. These volunteer gardeners monitor the condition of the plots, answer gardeners' questions and work with District staff to resolve maintenance issues.

"We're always looking for new and better ways to do things and creatively use our volunteers," explained Lynnette Hoole, volunteer

coordinator. "In 2012 we created the 'Weed Mob' – a group of gardeners that go through the plots and help the gardeners weed. The idea is that these volunteers will assist in keeping the maintenance under control for gardeners who need help. Hopefully that will lead to fewer abandoned plots while minimizing issues between gardeners."

Volunteers help once the gardening season gets underway, but the District's Parks Department is an integral part of the process, getting the plots ready in the pre-season and closing them down following the harvest. In early spring, the plots are disked through a contract with a nearby farmer. Then, the Parks staff takes over tilling the plots and marking and staking the individual plots. Throughout the season, the staff mows the aisles and the spaces around the gardens. They also mow over approximately 8% of plots each season that have been abandoned by renters.

"Garden plot abandonment isn't a huge problem," Wilson explained, "but it's still an issue that needs to be resolved on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes the gardener has things that come up in their personal life, and they just can't stay on top of their gardening maintenance. Other times, the job is just too big for them to do."

Another important aspect of Naperville's Community Garden Plots is the way it helps give back to the community. Several years ago, a food donation kiosk was added onsite where gardeners can donate extra produce to benefit the individuals and families who use the services of local food pantry Loaves & Fishes. Donations have increased significantly over the past few years, and in 2012, gardeners donated more than two tons of food, which had a positive effect on the food pantry.

“We appreciate the partnership of the Naperville Park District, and we are immensely grateful to the wonderful gardeners,” explained Jody Bender, community relations director of Loaves & Fishes. “Their dedication in ensuring Loaves & Fishes receives this food speaks to their true community spirit. We emphasize access to fresh, nutritious foods, so these donations of fruits and vegetables help our families live healthier lives.”

Further enhancements to the Garden Plots program are planned in the coming years, integrating more involvement of the University of Illinois Extension.

“The plan is to continue to develop learning centers with more demonstration gardens to give people the tools to tend to their own yards and gardens,” Ory explained. Future demonstration gardens could include shade gardens and tree and shrub gardens.

“If I were to sum up the benefits that the Community Garden Plots provide the community, it comes down to economy, ecology, environment, beauty and the satisfaction of doing it yourself.”

#### About the author

**Sameera Luthman** is the director of marketing and communications for the Naperville Park District with responsibility for managing all district communications as well as overseeing the organization's brand. She can be reached via e-mail at [sluthman@napervilleparks.org](mailto:sluthman@napervilleparks.org).

### Thinking about starting a garden plots program?

Although providing space for community gardening might sound rather simple, there are several issues that need to be considered. Once the challenges are understood, your agency can establish processes and guidelines to manage the program effectively:

- Develop a registration process.
- Implement a communications plan aimed at keeping gardeners informed nearly all year long.
- Monitor the status of the garden plots throughout the season.
- Plan for and make staff available to maintain the perimeter of the plots throughout the season.
- Determine the guidelines and expectations for plot maintenance and communicate these to the gardeners. Likewise, be prepared to manage abandoned plots.
- Understand that garden plots most likely will never make money. Adopt a philosophy that they are provided as a community service, and any associated revenues will not offset all program costs.

### Naperville Park District's Community Garden Plots By the numbers:

- Full-sized plots are 19'x30', and half-sized plots are 19'x15'
- Total number of garden plots: 527 comprised of 462 full-size and 58 half-size and 7 ADA plots
- Total number of organic plots: 43 full-size and 2 half-size
- Over 500 plots are rented each year
- Approximately 93% of renters are Naperville residents



# WebXtra



## Rescue 911 — An Emergency Mutual Aid Plan

When a storm raged through Reed-Keppler Park last summer, Jesse Felix, Superintendent of Parks for the West Chicago Park District, had an emergency plan in place. But the execution of his plan required additional manpower and equipment to deal with the aftermath of the powerful storm – more than 160 trees uprooted or snapped in half. Find out how multiple agencies came together to secure the area, clear away the debris and save as many trees as possible.

Would your agency participate in a Regional Natural Disaster Plan if one was implemented in your area? Visit our website to read more about the West Chicago Park District's response to the storm and their plan for coordinating regional and statewide disaster plans.

### Read the Full Story Online

Visit IAPD's website, [ILParks.org](http://ILParks.org), and from the left column, select Publication / IP&R Magazine / WebXtras

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# COMMUNITY GARDEN PLOTS

PROVIDE PRODUCE FOR FOOD BANK

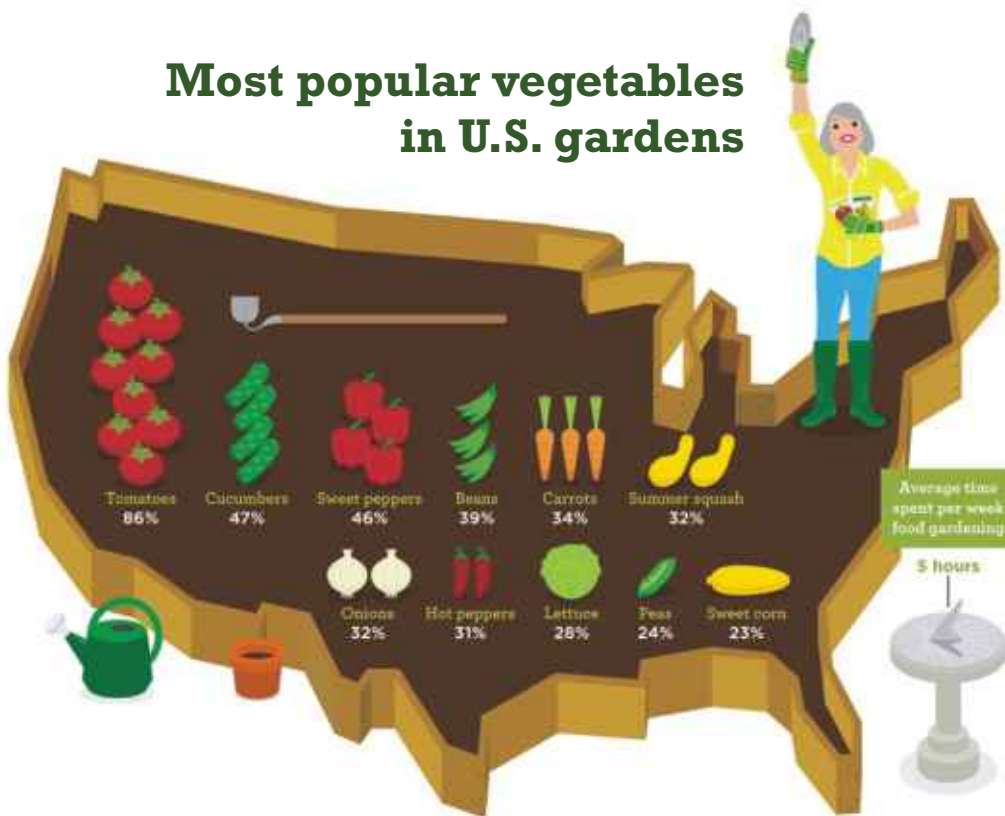
BY ERIKA YOUNG



Although last summer's record high temperatures and low rainfall amounts made gardening a challenge, the green-thumbed gardeners at the St. Charles Park District's community garden plots found a novel way of dealing with extra vegetables they harvested. Faced with too many tomatoes or a plethora of peas, gardeners donated their surplus produce to those for whom fresh vegetables are a mealtime luxury.

Through a unique cooperative program between the Park District and the Northern Illinois Food Bank, excess crops were donated to the NIFB's Geneva office for distribution through various programs that deliver food to the area's hungry.

## Most popular vegetables in U.S. gardens



Located at both Primrose Farm Park and James O. Breen Community Park, nearly 500 garden plots are available for use by private individuals. At each site, the Park District installed informative signs describing the program and provided baskets where donations could be deposited. Produce was collected every Tuesday evening and safely stored inside Park District facilities in food-grade-approved containers donated by community gardener Sue Davis, of Jersey Mike's Subs in Lake-in-the-Hills. Park District staff delivered the donated goods to the NIFB every Wednesday morning.

"We usually have an abundance of food in our gardens that we are not always able to harvest, so this is such a great way to give the extra produce to someone who really needs it," says Davis. "I love knowing that our harvest went to a local food bank, run by volunteers who distribute it into the local area – our community!"

Inspired by the national "Plant a Row for the Hungry" campaign, a public service initiative launched in 1995 by the Garden Writers Association Foundation, the Park District contacted those individuals maintaining community garden plots and encouraged them to plant extra rows of peas, onions, potatoes or beans that could be harvested and donated throughout the summer to the NIFB. Gardeners who did not wish to specifically plant an additional row of crops for this cause were invited to donate whatever excess vegetables they produced.

"Obtaining fresh, quality produce for the more than 60,000 hungry neighbors Northern Illinois Food Bank serves each week can be challenging. We are extremely grateful to the gardeners who were gracious enough to share their abundance. The donations we received helped provide quality nutrition for our hungry neighbors who may not otherwise have been able to enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables," said Steve Ericson, Director of Food Procurement for the Northern Illinois Food Bank.

For more information on the St. Charles Park District's Community Gardens donation drive, contact Pam Otto at 630-513-4399.

### About the author

**Erika Young** is the Public Relations and Marketing Manager of the St. Charles Park District.

## Considering offering garden plots? Here's what you need:

### Good Water Source

Placing water hydrants with spigots strategically between plots is essential. The use of a watering can is highly recommended to conserve water and get extra exercise. In an effort to reduce the amount of wasted water, it is recommended to discourage or disband the use of hoses or sprinklers.

### Ample Parking


Gardeners need to haul plants, tools and equipment to and from their sites, so it is important that they be allowed to park in close proximity to their plots or have driveway (gravel or grass) access along roadways.

### A Plan

Spring is the perfect time to rototill and prepare the plots for planting. Gardeners like to have plenty of time to grow all of their goodies. Weather permitting, an April 1 start date is suggested. It's also recommended that your organization take the responsibility of rototilling in the spring and fall for the opening and closing of the growing season.

### Staff Involvement

Communication is key. One staff person should be dedicated to handle any concerns or questions regarding the program. Occasional, and sometimes frequent, reminders are needed. For example, 'You are sharing this space with others who have your same passion. Please keep landscape waste to a minimum.'



“The Joliet Park District Organic Community Garden offers a place for our residents to be stewards of the environment while providing fresh and healthy food for families.”

**Joliet Park District Takes**

 *Organic* 

**Approach to Community Gardening**

**By Kristen Gurnitz Bernier**



Today, more than any other time in our history, Americans have lost our connection to where our food comes from and how it's grown. On average, food travels 1,500 miles from the farm to our dinner plate. Most of the food found at typical chain grocery stores is grown using pesticides, herbicides and fungicides. These conventional methods cause damage to our air, soil and water quality, not to mention our health.

The Joliet Park District Organic Community Garden offers a place for our residents to be stewards of the environment while providing fresh and healthy food for families.

In 2011, nearly 74 acres of land were acquired from the state, and while 20 acres were used for a soccer complex for youth sports, the remaining 8-acre parcel was approved as the area's largest community garden. The decision to operate as an organic garden grew out of concern for the gardeners, surrounding residents and the earth itself.

The Joliet Park District Organic Community Garden provides the opportunity to educate gardeners and the greater community about where food comes from and how it can be grown without the use of chemical and synthetic pesticides, fungicides and herbicides.

When the program launched in 2012, the response was overwhelming. More than 130 families from Joliet and surrounding communities took advantage of 169 plots. The park district established funding for a water source through gardening classes, plot fees and some small corporate donations.

The community garden is about more than just plots. The Joliet Park District, in partnership with the University of Illinois Extension Services, also hosted 17 garden-related classes last year. Classes such as Composting 101, Canning Basics, Plotting Your Plot and Dirt 101 created learning opportunities for many of the gardeners.

Currently, the Joliet Park District is pursuing additional funding in order for the Organic Community Garden to become and stay sustainable. The first priority is an underground well. Additionally, we would like to build a roofed garden structure to allow for classes, presentations, lectures, social gatherings and special events to be held, regardless of the weather.

Also on the list of future purchases is a cistern to catch and store rainwater. Not just a source of water at the garden, a cistern also provides an opportunity for gardeners and residents to learn about water re-use and rainwater harvesting systems.

Based on the interest and enthusiasm in the first year, we expect continued growth in the years to come.



"I had the opportunity to meet some of the gardeners, and I've learned so much," says Pat Bell, a local resident and gardener. "I have to say the garden was my 'peaceful place' and I'll be thinking over the winter about what I'm going to plant next season."

**About the author**

*Kristen Gurnitz Bernier is the Organic Community Garden Coordinator and a Graphic Designer at the Joliet Park District as well as a first-time gardener. She also teaches raw food classes at the park district.*

## PEOPLE & PLACES



### St. Charles Park District Appoints New Commissioner To Fill Empty Seat

Long-time St. Charles resident **Jean Cabel** was sworn in as Commissioner by the St. Charles Park Board to fill the opening left vacant by the passing of John "Jack" Kerr. Jean is currently employed by Community Unit School District 303 as Assistant Principal of Haines Middle School.

"I'm passionate about the youth in our community and any services,

facilities or programs that we can provide to support their growth and development," she said. "I'm also interested in supporting activities for active adults and seniors to enhance their quality of life."

Jean's term will run through April 2013.



### In Memoriam

Coloma Township Park District Commissioner Leo J. Nardini, 76, died Dec. 9, 2012, at the University of Wisconsin Hospital in Madison. Elected in 1971, Leo served more than 41 years as a member of the board, including many years as its president. Executive Director Mike Sterba describes Leo as "an amazing man who was very accomplished and well-respected in the community."

His restaurant, Gig's Pizza, was a popular family destination following local sporting events and a fixture in the community from the 60s through the 80s. Leo was passionate about all aspects of the park district while always cognizant of the taxpayers. "He was tremendously community oriented, and while he never sought the limelight himself, he wanted the park district to be recognized for its accomplishments," Sterba said. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made in Leo's name to the Coloma Township Park District.



Naperville  
Park District

### Naperville Park District Earns State Accreditation

The Illinois Distinguished Park and Recreation Accreditation Committee recently voted unanimously to confirm the **Naperville Park District** as an Illinois Distinguished Park and Recreation Accredited

Agency. The committee's announcement at the November 19 meeting was the final step in a nine-month evaluation process that involved staff in all areas of operations.

"We are extremely pleased to have achieved state accreditation as well as national accreditation," said Executive Director Ray McGury. Approximately one year ago, the Naperville Park District became one of only two park districts in Illinois to have earned national accreditation through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA).



### Bloomingdale Names Director of Parks and Planning

The Bloomingdale Park District welcomed **Joe Potts**, director of parks and planning, in October. Joe has a varied background in both parks and recreation services, and most recently, he served as director of development and

communications for Blue Ridge Conservancy in Boone, North Carolina. Previously, he was Executive Director at the Allegheny Wellness Center in Sparta, N.C. and Superintendent of Operations in Urbana.

### 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](http://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 to [editorialdept@ILparks.org](mailto:editorialdept@ILparks.org). Jpegs should be 300 dpi at about 2 inches tall.



### Superintendent of Recreation Services Joins Crystal Lake Park District

**Kim Buscemi** joined the Crystal Lake Park District as the new Superintendent of Recreation Services. Her responsibilities include the supervision of four full-time Recreation Supervisors, as well as the planning,

organization and delivery of recreation services and programs for the Crystal Lake Park District. Kim has a Bachelor's Degree from Eastern Illinois University in Recreation and Business. She brings more than 22 years of experience, most recently as the Superintendent of Facilities at the Elk Grove Park District. Prior to that, she served as Superintendent of Recreational Programs for the Elk Grove Park District.



### Two Agencies Earn CAPRA Accreditation

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) announced that the Chicago Park District and the Waukegan Park District became two of only 17 park and recreation agencies accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) this year. This distinguished accomplishment was announced during the 2012 NRPA Congress and Exposition held in Anaheim, CA.

National accreditation through CAPRA is an extensive multi-year process, which includes the completion of an application and detailed self-assessment report, a site visit by a committee of experienced park and recreation professionals, and a final assessment completed by the agency and the Commission. Accreditation requires agencies to respond to 144 standards representing elements of effective and efficient park and recreation operations. To become accredited, agencies must fully meet 36 standards deemed fundamental to a quality agency and at least 92 of the remaining standards.

CAPRA accreditation is the only national accreditation for park and recreation agencies, and is a measure of an agency's overall quality of operation, management and service to the community. Accreditation is valid for a period of five years. Congratulations to both the Chicago Park District and the Waukegan Park District on this outstanding accomplishment.



### Champaign County Forest Preserve District Names Site Superintendent

The Champaign County Forest Preserve District named **Doug Sanders, CPRP**, as the new site superintendent for the Lake of the Woods, River Bend and Sangamon River Forest Preserves. Doug earned

his degrees at the University of Illinois and is a Certified Park and Recreation Profession. He is a member of the National Recreation and Park Association and the American Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. He has served in a number of recreation positions throughout the Champaign community, including positions with the Urbana Park District, the Champaign Park District, and the Champaign County YMCA.



### Skokie Names Assistant Superintendent of Recreation

**Jon Marquardt, CPRP**, was recently named the new Assistant Superintendent of Recreation for the Skokie Park District. He was promoted to this position after six years as the facility manager for the district's Weber Leisure Center.

Jon graduated from Elmhurst College with a Bachelor's Degree in kinesiology. He is a certified park and recreation professional (CPRP) and serves on the National Recreation and Park Association's CPRP exam committee. He also holds certifications in sports administration, sports first aid, coaching principles, personal training, CPR, and AED (automated external defibrillator) instruction.



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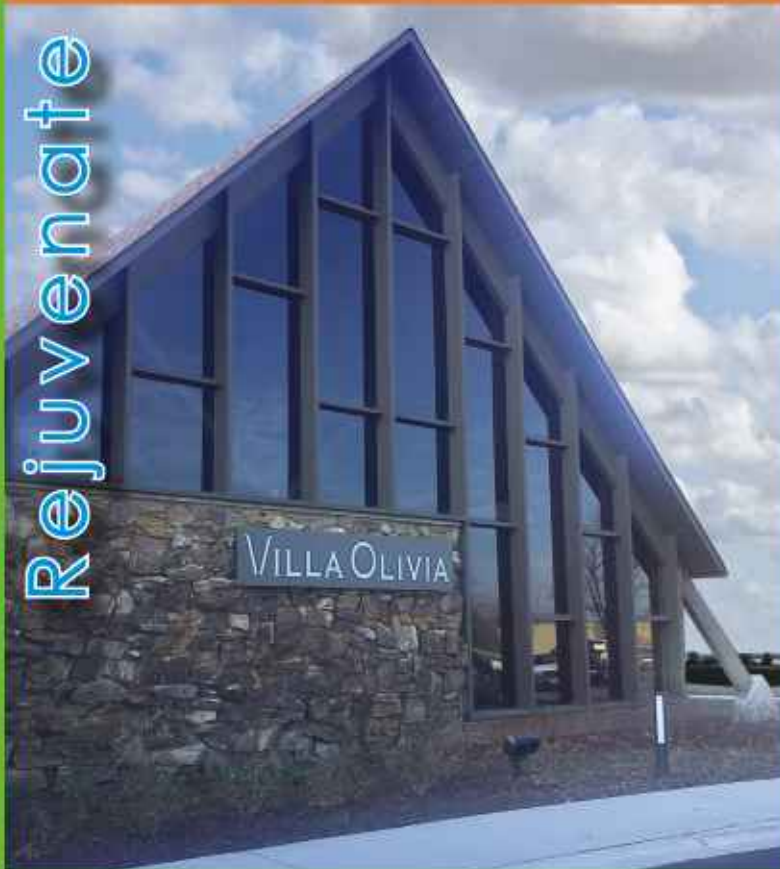
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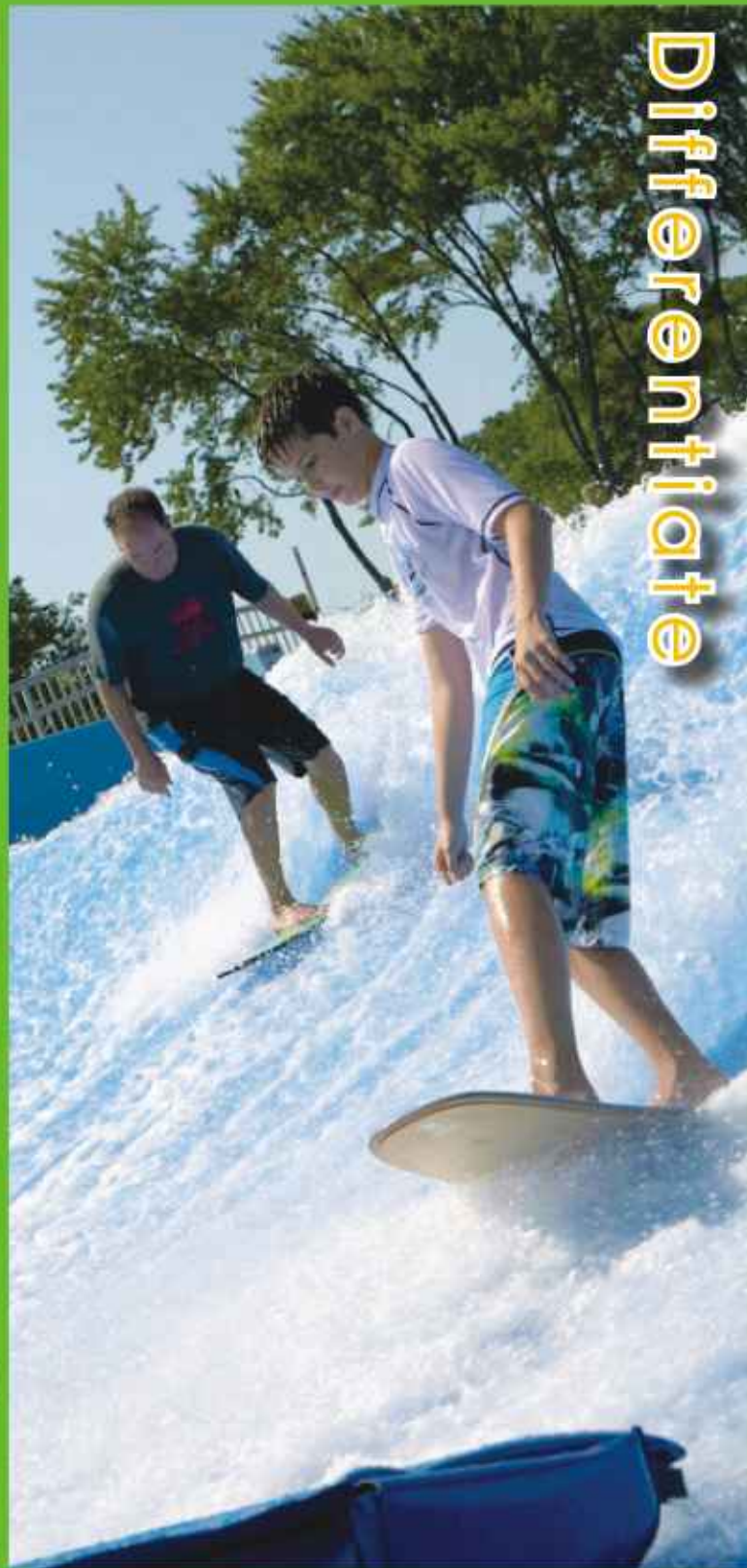


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