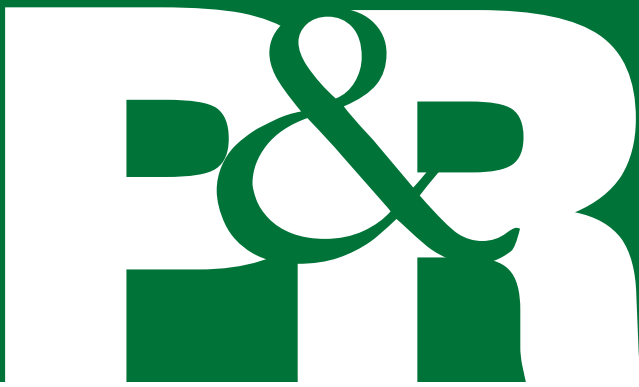


illinois

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PARKS AND RECREATION

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



successful  
**marketing**  
strategies

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PLUS: The 2015 Legal Calendar & Best of the Best Awards Gala Winners

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## FROM THE EDITOR

In this issue of *IP&R* magazine, we discuss successful marketing strategies. What makes a marketing campaign successful? How can you market your agency, program or facilities to your target audience? I know you all want your agencies to be an attraction to residents in your areas and be able to convey the value and benefits your facilities can offer to the community. The big question is how to draw in new users and keep them coming back. The methods may vary since marketing is a multifaceted process. It doesn't stop at getting the word out. Learn the best methods of communication for your message, and then focus on your strengths and the benefits to your potential users. Once you get them there, provide them with such a positive experience, they not only want to come back but they will want to share it with friends and family.



The articles you read in this magazine will provide some insight as to how a few agencies approached marketing on a broad level or how they marketed a specific amenity that was new to their district. These thought-provoking articles may give you some ideas to implement new marketing strategies at your own agency.

Inside, you will also find the 2015 legal calendar which is a wonderful tool to have on hand all year long. This will help you stay on top of legal requirements and deadlines for Illinois laws.

You will also see the 2014 IAPD Best of the Best Gala award winners. Congratulations to all the recipients who have made an impact in the world of parks and recreation. You are the best of the best!



### "Give Us Your Best Shot" Photo Contest Announcement

Do you have a great photo from one of your agency events you would like to share? Enter them in this year's photo contest! You may enter up to five photos in each of the following categories:

- Recreation / People at Play
- Sports
- Wildlife (live animals and insects, etc.)
- Nature / Landscapes (flowers, sunsets, lakes and other landscapes, etc.)

Contest rules and waiver form can be found online at [ILparks.org/PhotoContest](http://ILparks.org/PhotoContest). Please send us your "Best Shots" soon. The deadline for entry is December 2, 2014.

*Rachel Laier*

— Rachel Laier, Editor



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# Congratulations

## Illinois Association of Park Districts' 2014 Best of the Best Awards Gala Winners

IAPD's eighth annual Best of the Best Awards Gala was a night to remember, with more than 250 guests enjoying an evening of celebration and inspiration!

More than 50 awards were presented to board members, agencies, citizen volunteers, businesses and members of the media in recognition of their remarkable contributions to Illinois parks, recreation and conservation. Congratulations to all of the Best of the Best Awards Gala winners!

### Illinois Parks' Top Journalist

**The News-Gazette** nominated by the Champaign Park District

**The Geneseo Republic** - Lisa Depis and Amy Carton nominated by the Geneseo Park District

**Daily Herald** - Mick Zawislak nominated by the Mundelein Park & Recreation District

**Lake County News Sun** - Dan Moran nominated by the Waukegan Park District

### Best Friend of Illinois Parks – Small Business

**Attorney Michelle Broughton-Fountain**

nominated by the Dolton Park District

**Apex Landscaping** nominated by the Village of Hawthorn Woods Parks & Recreation Department

**JULIE, Inc.** nominated by the Forest Preserve District of Will County

### Best Friend of Illinois Parks – Mid-Sized Business

**Human Kinetics** nominated by the Champaign Park District

**National Bank & Trust** nominated by the Sycamore Park District

**North Shore Gas** nominated by the Waukegan Park District

### Best Friend of Illinois Parks – Large Business

**Stratford Square Mall** nominated by the Bloomingdale Park District

**Belfor Property Restoration** nominated by the Forest View Park District

**Mitsubishi Electric Automation Foundation VISION Committee** nominated by the NWSRA

### Intergovernmental Cooperation

**Forest Preserve District of Kane County** with the Citizens Advocate Team, Community Unit School District 300 and Friends of the Fox River

**McHenry County Conservation District** with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Rockford Park District** with the Winnebago County Regional Tourism Facility Board

**Woodridge Park District** with the Village of Woodridge

### Partnership

**Champaign Park District** with the Champaign Parks Foundation

**Decatur Park District** with Millikin University

**Naperville Park District** with The Naperville Noon Lions Club and Foundation

### Helen Doria Arts in the Park

**St. Charles Park District**

**Waukegan Park District**

**Wheaton Park District**

### Best Green Practices

**Buffalo Grove Park District**

**Carol Stream Park District**

**Oregon Park District**

### IAPD Good Sportsmanship

**John Schmitt** nominated by the Champaign Park District

**Mike Landacre** nominated by the Decatur Park District

**Ralph McLean** nominated by the Waukegan Park District

### Outstanding Citizen Volunteer of the Year

**Beryl Bills** nominated by the Glenview Park District

**Bob Lootens** nominated by the Forest Preserve District of Kane County

**Sheri White** nominated by the Rockford Park District

**Ron Elenbaas** nominated by the Wheaton Park District

### Board Member Service Anniversary Awards

#### 10 Years of Service

**Maureen Crump**, Barrington Hills Park District

**Kathryn Bergholtz**, Burr Ridge Park District

**Robert (Bob) Gelwicks**, Downers Grove Park District

**Michael Kenyon**, Forest Preserve District of Kane County

**Mark Davoust**, Forest Preserve District of Kane County

**Tom Weigel**, Forest Preserve District of Will County

**Margaret Hough**, Lisle Park District

**Dominick Burdi**, Morton Grove Park District

**Don Bohac**, Rolling Meadows Park District

**James Brault**, Wilmette Park District

### 15 Years of Service

**Michael Capizzano**, Addison Park District

**Laurance Garetto**, Alsip Park District

**Rick Drazner**, Buffalo Grove Park District

**Jeff Wilmarth**, Byron Park District

**Jim Eisfeller**, Byron Park District

**Alvin Griggs**, Champaign Park District

**Allen Sheard**, Dolton Park District

**Frank J. Scarpelli, Jr.**, Dundee Township Park District

**Tom Barz**, Frankfort Park District

**Don Cook**, Lisle Park District

**Tom Truedson**, Oak Brook Park District

**Jacqueline J. Petty**, Peoria Park District

**Christine Gentes**, Round Lake Area Park District

**Bob Thomson**, St. Charles Park District

**Marvin Reyes**, Sterling Park District

### 20 Years of Service

**Wes Williamson**, Chillicothe Park District

**Linda Aiani**, Itasca Park District

**Diana O'Kelly**, Lake County Forest Preserve District

**Wallace Frasier**, Mundelein Park & Recreation District

**Dennis McFadden**, Savanna Park District

### 25 Years of Service

**Bill Knapik**, Barrington Park District

**Kevin Caplis**, Burr Ridge Park District

**Ron Parente**, Granite City Park District

**Linda Blane**, Rolling Meadows Park District

**Fred C. Hohnke**, Woodridge Park District

### 50 Years of Service

**Carl (Bud) Schmitt**, Fon du Lac Park District

**Paul Emery**, Harrisburg Township Park District

### Agency Anniversary Awards

#### 50 Years

**Bartlett Park District**

**Carol Stream Park District**

**Hoffman Estates Park District**

**Itasca Park District**

#### 100 Years

**Park Ridge Park District**



Peter M. Murphy  
IAPD President and CEO

## Marketing: It's All About Impact

The mission of the Illinois Association of Park Districts is to help our members thrive and our goal is to do that in a plethora of ways.

The recent gala held at the beautiful Chevy Chase Country Club and hosted by the Wheeling Park District is a recent example. During this celebratory evening, business partners of park districts, outstanding intergovernmental agreements, pre-eminent citizen volunteers, and agency and board member service anniversaries were recognized on a statewide platform.

The recent research completed by IAPD entitled *Parks & Forest Preserves Bring Value to Our Communities* is also a perfect tool for you to showcase your agency's relevance and importance to your community and its citizens.

The five-panel survey overview was sent to the director of every IAPD member agency with a copy for each elected board member. **The key findings of the survey are extremely important.**

Overall, Illinois residents hold park and forest preserve districts in high regard. Compared to other local taxing bodies, both park districts and forest preserve districts receive the most favorable overall esteem ratings. The ratio of favorable-to-unfavorable responses is roughly 8:1 for both park districts and forest preserve districts. The very favorable opinions of these agencies have held steady since 2002 (virtually no change), while public opinion for other levels of government has measurably dropped during this same period.

The vast majority of those surveyed believe that park districts are good stewards of their tax dollars. **Two-thirds believe their park district spends tax dollars wisely**, and slightly more (seven in ten) believe the portion of their property taxes going to their park district represents an excellent or good value given the level of service it provides in return. In addition, nearly nine in ten agree that parks and open space help improve local property values. These are all significant findings.

Local park district facilities, programs and events are also widely used by Illinois residents. More than four out of five Illinois

households report using a local park district park, program or facility in the past year. Not surprisingly, visitors and users tend to be younger adults and those with children. However, nearly half of those age 60 or older report using a park district facility recently.

In addition to wide usage, **park district facilities, programs and staff earn high scores.** A majority (at least 65%) of park district visitors and program participants are satisfied with the maintenance, safety, staff support and the range of facilities and programs available to them. No more than 15% express dissatisfaction with any one area and satisfaction is highest among the most prevalent users.

Next to doing the right thing, the most important thing is to let people know you are doing the right thing.

- John D. Rockefeller



Those visiting local forest preserve districts also report very high satisfaction. Overall, half of residents who live within a forest preserve district report visiting a district property in the past year. Satisfaction with one's forest preserve district experience has improved significantly in all areas since 2002, especially with the number and variety of forest preserve acres and properties.

From a list of local issues, **residents statewide are most satisfied with the availability of parks, open spaces and recreational activities in their communities**, along with the quality of drinking water. These strong satisfaction scores have held steady since 2002 while other local issues during the same period have worsened and now represent higher priorities. The biggest concern is the level of crime in the community, followed closely by the quality of schools, jobs and economic growth, local government services and property taxes.



## PARKS

*Enrich the Lives of Illinois Residents*

The Illinois Association of Park Districts is dedicated to helping our members thrive through education, research and advocacy.

The information in this brochure is based on a Statewide Survey of Illinois Residents conducted by Market Probe. The data in this study is from 2013.

For more information on IAPD's research efforts, please go to [ILparks.org](http://ILparks.org)



### THE VAST MAJORITY

of Illinoisans believe that park districts are good stewards of their tax dollars.



### 9 out of 10

Illinoisans agree that park districts and open spaces help improve local property values in their communities.



### 7 in 10

believe the portion of their property taxes going to their park district represents an excellent or good value given the level of service provided in return.



### IN COMPARISON

to other taxing bodies, park districts and forest preserves receive the highest esteem ratings.



### 1 out of 2

residents who live within a forest preserve district report visiting a forest preserve in the past year.



### VERY STRONG SATISFACTION

is reported by those visiting local forest preserve districts.



### MOST ILLINOISANS

would support paying more in property taxes to improve existing park district facilities, acquire more open land for trails and protect natural areas and wildlife habitats.

#### IMPROVE EXISTING FACILITIES

- 26% Strong Support
- 43% Support
- 22% Undecided
- 9%

#### ACQUIRE OPEN SPACE FOR TRAILS

- 23% Strong Support
- 37% Support
- 24% Undecided
- 16%



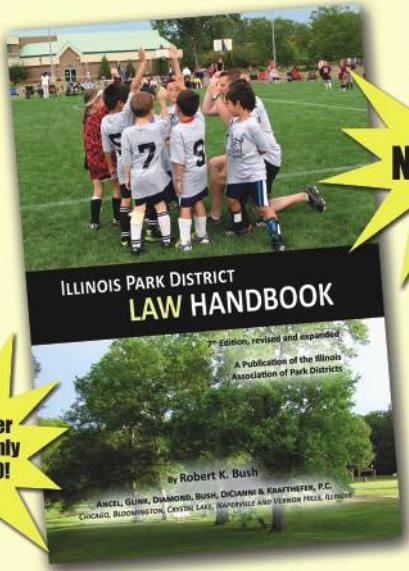
The IAPD membership of park districts, forest preserves, conservation districts, recreation and special recreation agencies provides solutions to these pressing issues.


Just a few examples include park district before-school and after-school programs, youth sports and non-sports programs which provide a safe environment for young people and an alternative to gangs and/or drugs. Frequent partnering with other agencies (local government, public schools) to deliver recreation is a great value for one's tax dollar. And, offering seasonal or part-time employment opportunities to residents, including high school students and young adults, represent a source of jobs, income and involvement.


A final important key finding is that **residents portray a strong willingness to pay for certain park district priorities and initiatives.** A majority of residents statewide would support paying more in property taxes to improve and maintain existing park district facilities (69%), acquire more open space for trails (60%), or to restore and protect natural areas and habitats (57%).

Without question, this survey reaffirms the tremendous benefits that parks, open space and recreational opportunities contribute to the quality of life in Illinois. This is a great piece to market the impact of your agency. If you would like additional copies, please don't hesitate to contact us at the IAPD offices at 217-523-4554 or at [iapd@ilparks.org](mailto:iapd@ilparks.org).

## PURCHASE YOUR COPY TODAY!







THIS IS A GREAT RESOURCE TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND THE LAWS THAT APPLY TO PARK DISTRICTS IN ILLINOIS.

This Handbook Includes 25 Downloadable Forms That Can be Customized to Your Agency!

Order Online at [ILparks.org](http://ILparks.org)



By Debbie Trueblood  
IPRA Executive Director

## IPRA Markets to our Members and Markets our Members to the Public

This magazine issue is dedicated to marketing and communications in the world of parks and recreation. At IPRA, we are of course, busy with marketing our own programs for professionals in the field, but we're also taking on a new role educating the public about the values of parks and recreation through marketing to the public.

First, we just rolled out a new program called our, "Community Calendar." This is a calendar of events geared towards the public. It is on our website and will allow you to publicize your upcoming community events to public attendees. We know that you already communicate your programs to your immediate community, but this will allow you first, one more way for them to find you through a web search, but it will also allow you to pull in people from surrounding areas who might not know about your programs. Also, it is a way to build tourism dollars for your community by sharing with people who might be traveling into your area and attending your public festivals. To participate, go to <http://www.ilipra.org/community-calendar> to post your events. This is a member-only opportunity to post your events, but once posted, they will be visible publically.

Further, we have engaged in a multi-year plan to market the value of parks and recreation to the community. Internally, this is called our Community Campaign and we have a Community Campaign Task Force taking the lead on this. The Task Force is chaired by Allison Niemela, Executive Director at Batavia Park District and Jarrod Scheunemann, Community Services & Education Coordinator at the Office of Recreation & Park Resources (ORPR) at University of Illinois. They have a large task force who has been meeting, including marketing professionals, graphic designers, and academic researchers, who are putting their heads together to come up with the best way to educate the public about the value of parks and recreation- what to say, what the statistics are, and how to best present it so that it resonates with the public. We are still in the planning stage, but we will be rolling it out in pieces over the next several years. The current "draft" name of the campaign is "Unplug Illinois" and we hope to build it with partnerships with outside groups so that it develops into something truly visible in the public eye. The name will be finalized after we have established a trademark.

As a part of the community campaign, we plan to roll out a secondary website entirely focused on educating the public. This separation will allow our website to stay focused on serving park and recreation professionals and posting events, networking, and the job board for professionals, while creating a website branded under Unplug Illinois, to serve the public with high level information. The community calendar will eventually move there, statistics and research will be available, and we can help encourage the public to utilize the services that you offer, both in parks and recreation. We will also have an Unplug Illinois social media presence again encouraging the public to get out and enjoy their local parks and recreation opportunities.

"At IPRA, we are of course, busy with marketing our own programs for professionals in the field, but we're also taking on a new role educating the public about the values of parks and recreation through marketing to the public."



Finally, our one additional piece of marketing the value of parks and recreation to the public, will be ongoing press releases. We have begun doing these this year and have started building relationships with the media. We hope to build this over time to include press releases on agencies when they win awards, new research identified on value of parks and recreation, professionals who have been recognized for their work, etc. In the past, we haven't had sufficient staff support to take this on, and even now we will need to build this slowly over time, but it is all a part of the total effort described above, which is all coming from our five year strategic plan.

Throughout that campaign, we of course won't lose sight of serving you, the professionals in the field. We were ready to roll out our new on-line communities program earlier this year, but we were forced to delay due to some unforeseen technologies conflicts. We are preparing now to roll out this program in the



coming months. Many of you have used online communities through NRPA or other groups. When the technology is advanced (and we have ensured we have the most appropriate software to serve our members' needs), these online communities can be hugely beneficial to you, the members. I use them myself through my membership with an outside group of association professionals. Have you ever had your board say something like, "Well, find out what other park districts are doing"? This is your solution. Our online communities will be set up to so that you can either view the conversations simply by going to a website, where it will be searchable and achievable, or you can have it set up to send emails to your inbox showing all the recent conversations. When you send a question like, "Does anyone here have a policy on harassment in the work place" or "Do any of you have a volunteer coaching manual" or any question you might ask, the email is sent to everyone in the online community, making it easy for them to respond to you either one-on-one or to the group. As the conversations build, the achievable feature will allow you to look up a subject to see if it's been addressed before. We can form as many online communities as we like, such as on specific topic areas like Aquatics, or for certain positions like HR Managers, to be able to streamline the information so you don't have to waste your time reviewing a lot of emails that don't apply to you. The emails can also be set up to only send you a digest once a day or once a week so your email box isn't flooded and you can review the conversations at your leisure. Again, I have found these online communities to be extremely beneficial for finding out if others like me have solved my challenges in the past and getting samples of draft forms, policies, manuals, etc. so that I don't have to recreate the wheel. Additionally, research shows that online communities not only engages members online, it actually drives up engagement by members in person by 40% because it allows you, the member, to better connect with people from the field from a wider scope and background. Watch for more information coming soon.

Finally, another program we are rolling out and marketing to our members right now is our new on-line schedule builder for conference. This program will be available at the conference website at [www.ilparksconference.com](http://www.ilparksconference.com). It allows you to search through the sessions by topic or speaker to select the conference breakout sessions you want to attend. Then, it will put it together with general session events and networking receptions to give you your personalized schedule for conference which you can print out, or add to your Outlook calendar to make conference just a little easier for you. The Hyatt Regency tower, floor/level, and room name will be listed for each session so you can easily find your way around.

I hope among all these new programs that you see something that will help you do your job easier or will benefit the programs that are dear to your heart in your community. In marketing, we all walk that fine line of serving those who need multiple reminders as well as those who wish to avoid duplicative emails or mailings. Our goal at IPRA is to serve you, our members, and to provide for you tools and resources that will make it easier for you to be successful. If you have suggestions, I am always open to hear them. Email me any time at [debbie@ilipra.org](mailto:debbie@ilipra.org) and best of luck in your own marketing campaigns.

## IPRA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November 1, 2014

### **Early Childhood Trends Workshop**

Kindergarten Readiness and Common Core: What every preschool teacher needs to know and do to prepare preschoolers for kindergarten.

November 18, 2014

### **Leadership Academy**

November 18, 2014

### **Athletics Committee Meeting**

December 3, 2014

### **The Benefits of IGFOA Membership & the GFOA Budget Award**

IGFOA membership includes weekly email newsletter, weekly jobline newsletter, the on-line Membership Directory, access to the Members Information Exchange, exchange of documents used by government finance professionals in the Resource Center, the Financial Services Directory, discounted seminar and conference fees, chapter membership, advocacy on financial and technical issues of importance to IGFOA members, numerous opportunities for professional skill building and networking and a resource for information on hot topics.

December 3, 2014

### **CPRP Prep Course**

The CPRP Preparation Course is a review and discussion of the national Certified Park and Recreation Professional Certification test.

November 9-12, 2014

### **Professional Development School**

Professional Development School (PDS) is the longest standing educational and networking opportunity offered by IPRA. The tradition of Illinois park and recreation professionals attending Professional Development School goes back many years creating thousands of PDS graduates.

November 13, 2014

### **Maintaining Those Stormwater BMPs the Consultants Thought Were a Great Idea**

The use of Stormwater Best Management Practices has skyrocketed in our parks. During this session we will begin with how do we choose the right BMP for the right location, delve into basic design considerations and then focus on how to best improve and maintain them.

November 13, 2014

### **School Age/Day Camp Committee**



**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

## IAPD's Resources and Events Keep Members Current on Ever-Changing Laws

The New Year is just around the corner, and that means that many new laws are set to take effect. Others were effective immediately when the Governor signed them earlier this year but will not impact agencies until 2015. As those of you who closely follow IAPD's Legislative Updates are keenly aware, many of these new laws impact the day-to-day operations of park and recreation agencies. Fortunately, IAPD offers several resources to keep you up-to-date on these new requirements.

### **IAPD Legal Calendar Contains Many New Updates**

One of IAPD's most widely used resources is contained in this edition of *Illinois Parks & Recreation*. Many use the IAPD's Legal Calendar as a step-by-step guide for key dates and milestones each year. For others, the Legal Calendar serves as a checklist to remind them about annual and bi-annual requirements and as a tool to remember to review recurring legal obligations.

While the 2015 IAPD Legal Calendar is easy to recognize because of its branded design, rest assured that this version contains more than just new dates. As always, we have incorporated many legal changes that impact member agencies, and some are highlighted below.

#### *Open Meetings and FOIA Requirements*

- Many new park commissioners and forest preserve board members will take office after the April 7, 2015 Consolidated Election. A couple years ago, newly elected and appointed board members were required to begin completing Open Meetings Act training within 90 days of taking office and to file a copy of their certificate of completion with their agency. Next year, for the first time, these officials will be able to satisfy that requirement by attending a live, in-person course offered by IAPD in lieu of the electronic training currently offered. This option was the result of our advocacy efforts in passing Public Act 98-0900, an IAPD platform initiative.
- No later than April 1, 2015, all local governments with Internet websites must post an email address that can be used to email their elected officials. The new law also requires local governments with websites to post a hyperlink on their homepage to allow the public easy access to this contact information.

#### *Prevailing Wage Updates*

- Beginning this year, public bodies are no longer required to file certified copies of their prevailing wage rate determination with the Illinois Secretary of State. Instead, the public body only needs to file the document with the Illinois Department of Labor before July 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Until recently, public bodies were only required to maintain the certified payrolls submitted to them by contractors and subcontractors for 3 years. Pursuant to Public Act 98-0328, public bodies must maintain these records for at least 5 years but now have the choice to store the records electronically or to continue to keep paper copies.

#### *Treasurer's Report and Audit Requirements*

- Hopefully, agencies that conduct annual audits are aware that they are no longer required to publish their annual Treasurer's Report in the newspaper as long as they publish a much shorter notice of availability of their audit report that includes the time period covered by the audit, the name of the firm conducting the audit, and the address and business hours where the audit may be publicly inspected. In case you missed this recent change that resulted from IAPD's advocacy efforts, there is a reminder in the Legal Calendar. Information on these requirements and a sample Notice of Availability of Audit Report can be accessed through the Legal Assistance / Member Resources section at ILparks.org.
- Pursuant to newly enacted Public Act 98-1019, beginning in fiscal year 2016 those governmental units receiving revenue less than \$850,000 for any fiscal year will need to begin presenting copies of their annual financial report (AFR) to their governing board of elected officials during a public meeting and have it approved by a 3/5ths majority vote. Otherwise, that unit must cause an audit of its accounts to be made once every four years in addition to filing the AFR with the Comptroller.
- The 2015 Legal Calendar also contains a reminder that audit reports and AFR's must now be submitted to the Comptroller electronically unless the governmental unit provides the Comptroller's Office with sufficient evidence that the report cannot be filed electronically and the Comptroller waives the requirement.

### Additional Reminders about Posting Requirements

- Beginning January 1, 2015, all employers must post a notice concerning an employee's rights under the Illinois Human Rights Act as developed by the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR). This notice must be posted in a conspicuous location where notices to employees are customarily posted at the employer's premises and must also be included in any employee handbook. Samples of these required notices will be available on the IDHR's website.
- Although posting requirements relating to employee compensation have been in effect for a few years now, the 2015 Legal Calendar provides an annual reminder because changes in employee compensation often coincide with the approval of a district's budget. Remember, employers must post on their website or at their principal office the total compensation package of employees with a total compensation of \$150,000 or more per year at least 6 days before the employer approves the total compensation package. The employer must also post the total compensation package within 6 business days after approving their budget for employees with a total compensation package in excess of \$75,000 or more. Also, should the earnings of an officer, executive or manager increase by more than 12%, the employer must obtain a "Pension Impact Statement" from the IMRF which states the effects of the salary increase on the employee's pension benefits.

These are just a few of the changes that have been added to the IAPD Legal Calendar recently. Because we often see the IAPD Legal Calendar posted in offices and on bulletin boards during our agency visits, a printable version is easily accessible through both the Public Policy and the Legal Assistance sections of the IAPD website at [ILparks.org](http://ILparks.org).

### New Law Handbook Is a Must-Have Resource

Because it is so succinct, the IAPD Legal Calendar often helps function as a "to-do" list. However, many laws are not tied to specific dates. IAPD offers many other essential resources that address an agency's legal obligations. Our most popular publication is the Park District Law Handbook, which provides an in-depth discussion of laws governing park districts. Just last month, IAPD released the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the Park District Law Handbook. There have been thousands of new laws since IAPD published the 6<sup>th</sup> edition in 2010. Many of these legal changes impact the day-to-day operations of park and recreation agencies, so it is critical to have the latest version.

The Park District Law Handbook contains the answers to nearly every question relating to the laws governing park districts. Every park commissioner or park and recreation professional should have their own copy to use when questions arise. Visit [ILparks.org/lawhandbook](http://ILparks.org/lawhandbook) to order your copy.

### Comprehensive Update on Legal Changes Available in One Program

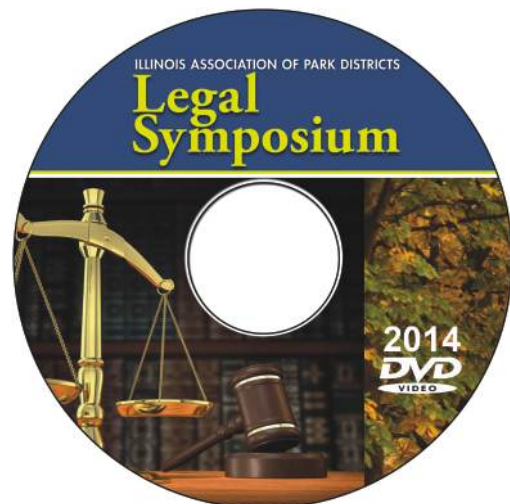
Each year, IAPD provides members with an opportunity to learn about all of the past year's most relevant statutory and regulatory changes and court decisions during a single day at the IAPD Legal Symposium. If you missed IAPD's premier legal event on November 6<sup>th</sup>, IAPD offers the next best thing – a DVD recording.

The Legal Symposium is one of the best ways to make sure your agency is keeping up-to-date with all the recent legal changes affecting park and recreation agencies. Again, many legal changes are not tied to the Legal Calendar; nevertheless, they involve very important matters.

Cutting edge legal topics, statutory and regulatory changes and recent court decisions impacting park and recreation agencies were discussed in the following seven sessions at the IAPD Legal Symposium held earlier this month.

- *Employment and Labor Law Update*
- *Firearms at Facilities and Weapons at Work: Tackling the Tough Issues under the New Concealed Carry Law*
- *Hot Topics in Park District Finance and Borrowing*
- *Thorny Relationships: Exempt or Non-Exempt Employee? Employee or Independent Contractor?*
- *Surviving Election Season: What You and Your Local Election Official Need to Know*
- *Update on New Laws from the 98th General Assembly*
- *Tort Liability Cases that Provide the Guideposts*

Take advantage of this opportunity today by ordering a DVD of the entire program. Each order also receives a binder packed with information to keep you updated on new laws and regulations affecting your park and recreation agency. If you attended the Legal Symposium on November 6<sup>th</sup> but need additional binders, visit IAPD's online store at [ILparks.org](http://ILparks.org).



**Did You Miss the Legal Symposium?  
Recorded DVDs Now Available!  
Order Yours Today at [ILparks.com/store](http://ILparks.com/store)**

Constantly changing laws can present challenges to professionals and boards that are busy keeping up with their day-to-day operations and providing first class services to their communities. Whether it is tools like the Legal Calendar, events like the Legal Symposium or publications such as the Park District Law Handbook, IAPD is your source for staying up-to-date on important legal requirements.

# Legal calendar 2015

Prepared by Peter M. Murphy, IAPD President/CEO & Jason Anselment, IAPD Legal/Legislative Counsel

*The following park district calendar includes key dates based on a fiscal year that begins on May 1 and ends on April 30. For those park districts that have adopted another date for the commencement of the fiscal year (70 ILCS 1205/4-4), this calendar must be adjusted for those duties that must be performed at times related to the fiscal year. The calendar is also established around regular park board meetings held on the third Thursday of each month selected. Selected election dates are based on the Consolidated Election to be held on February 24, 2015, and the Consolidated Election to take place on April 7, 2015. For additional election dates, consult IAPD's election calendar published in the September/October issue of Illinois Parks & Recreation.*

All references are to the Illinois Compiled Statutes (ILCS).

## ANNUAL REQUIREMENTS

### AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CALENDAR (OR FISCAL) YEAR:

Post the date, time and place of park district regular meetings for the year. Mail copies to the news media. (5 ILCS 120/2.02)

Review the requirement that all closed sessions are to be recorded verbatim by audio or video. (5 ILCS 120/2.06)

Review requirement that open meeting minutes must be approved within 30 days after the meeting or at the public body's second subsequent regular meeting, whichever is later, and made available for public inspection within 10 days after approval. (5 ILCS 120/2.06)

Review the requirements that all Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act officers must complete the Attorney General's annual training requirements. Newly appointed officers must complete the training within 30 days after designation or assuming the position. (5 ILCS 120/1.05; 5 ILCS 140/3.5(b))

Review requirement that newly elected or appointed members of a public body must successfully complete a course on the Open Meetings Act offered by the Illinois Association of Park Districts or the electronic training curriculum on the Open Meetings Act developed by the Illinois Attorney General's Public Access Counselor within 90 days of their oath of office or otherwise assuming their responsibilities if no oath is required. (Public Act 98-0900; 5 ILCS 140/1.05)

Beginning April 1, 2015, all local governments with Internet websites are required to post on that website an email address for their elected officials for the public's use in contacting those officials and to post a hyperlink on the local government's homepage to allow the public easy access to the contact information. (Public Act 98-0300)

Review with the park district treasurer the requirement that all funds of the district not immediately needed for disbursement must be invested within two working days at prevailing interest rates or better. (30 ILCS 225/1)

Review the requirement that every person, other than the treasurer, receiving money for the district must keep a triplicate record of the money, and deliver the money to the treasurer not later than the middle of the month following the month of receipt. (30 ILCS 20/1)

The American flag must be displayed and flown each day of the week from each City Hall or Village Hall and Village Square and at the principal entrance to all supervised public parks. (5 ILCS 465/3b)

Contributions to the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) must be deducted each pay period from covered employees' pay and remitted to the IMRF along with the contribution from the local government. This requirement is mandatory for municipalities over 5,000 population where Social Security is not provided, and elective for others. (40 ILCS 5/7-132, 7-172, 7-173)

Districts that have employees under Social Security must send their FICA contributions at such times as may be designated by the Internal Revenue Service. (40 ILCS 5/21-105.2, 21-109)

Review the requirements that all newly hired employees must be reported to the Illinois Department of Security. (820 ILCS 405/1801.1)

Review the requirement that while participating in a public works project, each contractor and subcontractor must submit a certified payroll to the public body in charge of the project every month. The public body must maintain these records submitted prior to January 1, 2014 for at least 3 years. Pursuant to Public Act 98-0328, the public body must maintain these records submitted on or after January 1, 2014, for at least 5 years, but can do so in paper or electronic format. (820 ILCS 130/5)

For persons or entities required to report under the Lobbyist Registration Act, review reporting requirements for expenditures made during the 2013 calendar year. (25 ILCS 170/6, 170/6.5)

Beginning January 1, 2015, all employers must post a notice developed by the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) and include information concerning an employee's rights in any employee handbook.

Samples of these required notices will be available on the IDHR's website. (Public Act 98-1050)

## EVERY SIX MONTHS

Unpublished written minutes of all closed meetings are to be reviewed not less than semiannually. Minutes are to be reviewed to determine if (a) the need for confidentiality still exists as to all or part of those minutes, or (b) if the minutes or portions thereof no longer require confidential treatment and are available for public inspection. The results of the review are to be reported in the open session of the board of commissioners. (5 ILCS 120/2.06)

Check IAPD database to verify that all information is up-to-date for your agency.

## OCTOBER 2014

### OCTOBER 27

Last day notice of intention to file a petition to create a political subdivision whose officers are to be elected, rather than appointed, may be published in a newspaper within the proposed political subdivision, or, if none, in a newspaper of general circulation within the proposed territory for the Consolidated Primary Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(g))

### OCTOBER 27

Last day to file petition (must contain original sheets signed by voters and circulators) to create a political subdivision with the appropriate officer or board (for park districts, circuit court clerk) for the Consolidated Primary Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(b); 70 ILCS 1205/2-3)

NOTE: Objections can be filed on or before the date of the hearing with the appropriate circuit court clerk. (10 ILCS 5/28-4)

NOTE: If initial officers are to be elected at the election for creation of a new unit of government, candidates for such offices shall file nomination papers 99-92 days before such election (November 17-24, 2014). (10 ILCS 5/10-6)

NOTE: The circuit court clerk shall publish the hearing date for a public policy petition filed in his/her office not later than 14 days after the petition is actually filed, but at least 5 days before the actual hearing (final orders within 7 days of hearing). (10 ILCS 5/28-4)

NOTE: See the specific statute governing the unit of local government to be established for filing procedures. (10 ILCS 5/28-4)

## NOVEMBER 2014

### NOVEMBER 3

Last day to file objections to petition to create a political subdivision in the office of the appropriate officer where the petitions were originally filed (for park districts, circuit court clerk) for the Consolidated Primary Election.

### NOVEMBER 24

Last day for filing of petitions (must contain original sheets signed by voters and circulators) for referenda for the submission of questions of public policy (local) for the Consolidated Primary Election. [EXCEPTION: Proposition to create a political subdivision, referenda initiated under the Liquor Control Act and Section 18-120 of the Property Tax Code. (10 ILCS 5/28-2, 28-6, 28-7)]

NOTE: Petitions to initiate backdoor referenda must be filed under the deadline specified in the specific statute authorizing the referenda, but in no case later than 92 days prior to the ensuing election.

## DECEMBER 2014

### DECEMBER 3

Last day to file objections to petitions for referenda for the submission of questions of public policy (local) for the Consolidated Primary Election. Objections to petitions for local referenda are filed with the same office in which the original petitions were filed. [EXCEPTION: Proposition to create a political subdivision, referenda initiated under the Liquor Control Act, and Section 18-120 of the Property Tax Code. (10 ILCS 5/10-8, 28-4)]

### **DECEMBER 8**

Last day for local governing boards to adopt a resolution or ordinance to allow a binding public question to appear on the ballot for the Consolidated Primary Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(c))

### **DECEMBER 8**

Last day for county, municipal, school, township and park boards to place advisory referenda on the ballot by resolution for the Consolidated Primary Election. (55 ILCS 5/5-1005.5; 60 ILCS 1/80-80; 65 ILCS 5/3.1-40-60; 70 ILCS 1205/8-30; 105 ILCS 5/9-1.5)

### **DECEMBER 8**

Last day notice of intention to file a petition to create a political subdivision whose officers are to be elected, rather than appointed, may be published in a newspaper within the proposed political subdivision, or, if none, in a newspaper of general circulation within the proposed territory for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(g))

### **DECEMBER 8**

Last day to file petition (must contain original sheets signed by voters and circulators) to create a political subdivision with the appropriate officer or board (for park districts, circuit court clerk) for the Consolidated Election.

NOTE: Objections can be filed on or before the date of the hearing with the appropriate circuit court clerk. (10 ILCS 5/28-4)

NOTE: If initial officers are to be elected at the election for creation of a new unit of government, candidates for such offices shall file nomination papers 113-106 days before such election (December 15-22, 2014). (10 ILCS 5/10-6)

NOTE: The circuit court clerk shall publish the hearing date for a public policy petition filed in his/her office not later than 14 days after the petition is actually filed, but at least 5 days before the actual hearing (final orders within 7 days of hearing). (10 ILCS 5/28-4)

NOTE: See the specific statute governing the unit of local government to be established for filing procedures. (10 ILCS 5/28-4)

### **DECEMBER 15**

Last day to file objection to petition to create a political subdivision in the office of the appropriate officer where the petition was originally filed (for park districts, circuit court clerk) for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-4; 70 ILCS 1205/2-3)

### **DECEMBER 15**

First day for filing in office of the local election official or board of election commissioners, original nomination papers (must contain original sheets signed by voters and circulators) for nonpartisan candidates in park districts and forest preserves for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/10-6(2))

NOTE: Filing is between 113-106 days prior to the Consolidated Election. December 15, 2014 is the 113<sup>th</sup> day prior to that election and is the first day of filing in those offices which are open.

### **DECEMBER 18**

Last day for the circuit court clerk and the local election official to certify any binding public question or advisory referenda to the election authority having jurisdiction over the political subdivision for the Consolidated Primary Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-5)

### **DECEMBER 22**

Last day for filing in the office of the local election official or board of election commissioners, original nomination papers (must contain original sheets signed by voters and circulators) for nonpartisan candidates for township and municipal library boards, road district boards, library district boards, park district boards, school boards, community college boards, regional boards of school trustees, fire protection district boards and forest preserve district boards for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/10-6(2))

NOTE: The office in which petitions for nomination must be filed shall remain open for the receipt of such petitions until 5:00 P.M. on the last day of the filing period. (10 ILCS 5/1-4)

### **DECEMBER 30**

Last day for filing objections to nomination papers for nonpartisan candidates (whose nomination papers were filed for the Consolidated Election during the period December 15-22, 2014) in the office of the election authority or the local election official with whom the nomination papers are on file. (10 ILCS 5/10-8)

NOTE: The December 30<sup>th</sup> objection deadline is based upon the State Board of Elections' holiday schedule. The Wednesday before and Friday after Christmas, the State Board of Elections offices are open. If your unit of government has a different schedule this might affect your objection deadlines.

## **JANUARY 2015**

### **JANUARY 5**

Last day for filing petitions (must contain original sheets signed by voters and circulators) for referenda for the submission of questions of public policy (local) for the Consolidated Election. [EXCEPTION: Proposition to create a political subdivision, referenda initiated under the Liquor Control Act, and Section 18-120 of the Property Tax Code. (10 ILCS 5/28-2, 28-6, 28-7)]

NOTE: Petitions to initiate backdoor referenda must be filed under the deadline specified in the specific statute authorizing the referenda, but in no case later than 92 days prior to the ensuing election.

### **JANUARY 12**

Last day to file objections to petitions for referenda for the submission of questions of public policy (local) for the Consolidated Election. Objections to petitions for local referenda are filed with the same office in which the original petitions were filed.

[EXCEPTION: Proposition to create a political subdivision, referenda initiated under the Liquor Control Act, and Section 18-120 of the Property Tax Code. (10 ILCS 5/10-8, 28-4)]

### **JANUARY 14**

Newly elected members of the General Assembly shall convene and organize their respective chambers. (Illinois Constitution, Article IV, Sections 5(a) & 6(b))

### **JANUARY 15**

Regular January board meeting.

### **JANUARY 20**

Last day for local governing boards to adopt a resolution or ordinance to allow a binding public question to appear on the ballot for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(c))

### **JANUARY 20**

Last day for county, municipal, township, school and park boards to place advisory referenda on the ballot by resolution for the Consolidated Election. (55 ILCS 5/2-3002, 5-1005.5; 60 ILCS 1/30-205, 80-80; 65 ILCS 5/3.1-40-60; 70 ILCS 1205/8-30; 105 ILCS 5/9-1.5)

### **JANUARY 22-24**

Attend the IAPD/IPRA Annual Conference, Hyatt Chicago.

### **JANUARY 29**

Last day for the circuit court clerk and the local election official to certify any binding public question or advisory referenda to the election authority having jurisdiction over the political subdivision for the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/28-5)

### **JANUARY 31**

Last day to file with the chief county assessment officer for all tax-exempt real estate an affidavit/certificate of exempt status stating whether there has been any change in the ownership or use of the exempt real estate and the nature of any such change to continue the exemption of park property from real estate taxes. (35 ILCS 200/15-10)

NOTE: Copies of leases or agreements related to exempt property that is leased, loaned, or otherwise available for profit must be filed with the assessment officer. (35 ILCS 200/15-15)

## **FEBRUARY 2015**

### **FEBRUARY 1**

Last day by which the chief administrative officer or his or her designee for a unit of local government with persons described in items (h), (i) and (k) of Section 4A-101 shall certify to the appropriate county clerk a list of names and addresses of those persons described in items (h), (i) and (k) of Section 4A-101 that are required to file statements of economic interest

pursuant to the Illinois Governmental Ethics Act. In preparing the lists, each chief administrative officer or his or her designee shall set out the names in alphabetical order. (5 ILCS 420/4A-106)

### **FEBRUARY 17**

Last day for the election authority to publish notice of a question of public policy appearing on the ballot at the Consolidated Primary Election. Such notice shall be published once in a local community newspaper having general circulation in the political or governmental subdivision. The notice shall also be given at least ten (10) days before the date of the election by posting a copy of the notice at the principal office of the election authority. The local election official shall also post a copy of the notice at the principal office of the political or governmental subdivision, or if there is no principal office at the building in which the governing body of the political or governmental subdivision held its first meeting of the calendar year in which the referendum is being held. (10 ILCS 5/12-5)

### **FEBRUARY 19**

Regular February board meeting.

### **FEBRUARY 24**

Consolidated Primary Election

## **MARCH 2015**

### **MARCH 19**

Regular March board meeting.

### **MARCH 30**

Last day for the election authority to publish notice of a question of public policy appearing on the ballot at the Consolidated Election. Such notice shall be published once in a local community newspaper having general circulation in the political or governmental subdivision. The notice shall also be given at least ten (10) days before the date of the election by posting a copy of the notice at the principal office of the election authority. The local election official shall also post a copy of the notice at the principal office of the political or governmental subdivision, or if there is no principal office at the building in which the governing body of the political or governmental subdivision held its first meeting of the calendar year in which the referendum is being held. (10 ILCS 5/12-5)

## **APRIL 2015**

### **APRIL 1**

Last day by which the county clerk of each county shall notify all persons whose names have been certified to him, other than candidates for office who have filed their statements with their nominating petitions, of the requirements for filing statements of economic interests. The Illinois Governmental Ethics Act, 5 ILCS 420/4A-101, requires the following persons to file verified written statements of economic interests: (g) Persons who are elected to office in a unit of local government, and candidates for nomination or election to that office; (h) Persons appointed to the governing board of a unit of local

government and persons appointed to a board or commission of a unit of local government who have the authority to authorize the expenditure of public funds but not members of boards or commissions who function in an advisory capacity; (i) Persons who are employed by a unit of local government and are compensated for services as employees and not as independent contractors and who:

1. are, or function as, the head of a department, division, bureau, authority or other administrative unit within the unit of local government, or who exercise similar authority within the unit of local government;

2. have direct supervisory authority over, or direct responsibility for the formulation, negotiation, issuance or execution of contracts entered into by the unit of local government in the amount of \$1,000 or greater;

3. have authority to approve licenses and permits by the unit of local government (this item does not include employees who function in a ministerial capacity);

4. adjudicate, arbitrate, or decide any judicial or administrative proceeding, or review the adjudication, arbitration or decision of any judicial or administrative proceeding within the authority of the unit of local government; judicial or administrative proceeding, or review the adjudication, arbitration or decision of any judicial or administrative proceeding within the authority of the unit of local government;

5. have authority to issue or promulgate rules and regulations within areas under the authority of the unit of local government; or

6. have supervisory responsibility for 20 or more employees of the unit of local government. (5 ILCS 420/4A-106; 5 ILCS 420/4A-101)

#### **APRIL 2**

The suggested date to prepare the budget and appropriation ordinance in tentative form and place on file for public inspection at least 30 days prior to final action. (All park districts are required to adopt a combined budget and appropriation ordinance within or before the first quarter of each fiscal year.) (70 ILCS 1205/4-4)

NOTE 1: IMRF employers must post on their website or at their principal office the total compensation package of employees with a total compensation of \$150,000 or more per year at least 6 days before the employer approves the total compensation package. The employer must also post the total compensation package within 6 business days after approving their budget for employees with a total compensation package in excess of \$75,000 or more. (5 ILCS 120/7.3)

NOTE 2: Before an IMRF employer increases the earnings of an officer, executive or manager by more than 12%, the employer must obtain a "Pension Impact Statement" from the IMRF which states the effects of the salary increase on the employee's pension benefits. (40 ILCS 5/7-225)

#### **APRIL 7**

Consolidated Election

#### **APRIL 16**

Regular April board meeting.

#### **APRIL 28-29**

Attend the IAPD Legislative Conference in Springfield. The Legislative Reception is held the evening of April 28 with the conference starting the next morning on April 29. April 28 is Parks Day at the Capitol with park district, forest preserve, conservation district and special recreation displays lining the Capitol Rotunda.

### **MAY 2015**

#### **MAY 1**

The last date for filing Statements of Economic Interest for persons who have not previously filed during the calendar year. (5 ILCS 420/4A-105)

NOTE 1: Failure to file a statement of economic interests within the time prescribed shall not result in a fine or ineligibility for, or forfeiture of, office or position of employment, provided that the failure to file results from not being included for notification by the appropriate agency, clerk, secretary, officer or unit of government, and that a statement is filed within 30 days of actual notice of the failure to file. (5 ILCS 420/4A-105)

NOTE 2: All statements of economic interests shall be available for examination and copying by the public at all reasonable times. (5 ILCS 420/4A-105)

NOTE 3: Any person required to file a statement of economic interests who willfully files a false or incomplete statement shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor. Failure to file a statement within the time prescribed shall result in ineligibility for, or forfeiture of, office or position of employment, as the case may be; provided, however, that if the notice of failure to file a statement of economic interests is not given by the county clerk, no forfeiture shall result if a statement is filed within 30 days of actual notice of the failure to file. (5 ILCS 420/4A-107)

NOTE 4: The County Clerk with whom a statement is to be filed may, in his or her discretion, waive the late fees & penalties, and the ineligibility for or forfeiture of office or position for failure to file when the person's late filing or failure to file is due to (i) serious or catastrophic illness that renders the person temporarily incapable of completing the statement or (ii) military service. (5 ILCS 420/4A-105)

#### **MAY 1**

Suggested date to send notice to the Illinois Department of Labor requesting determination of current prevailing rate of wages for the district's area. (820 ILCS 130/4; 130/9)

#### **MAY 1**

(Beginning of new fiscal year.) The date to post the dates, times and places of park district regular meetings for the fiscal year. Mail copies to news media. (As an alternative, this can be done at the beginning of the calendar year.) (5 ILCS 120/2.02; 2.03)

#### **MAY 1**

The date to start the annual audit. Every governmental unit is required to make an annual audit to cover the immediately preceding fiscal year. The audit must be completed and the audit report filed with the Comptroller within six months after the close of the fiscal year. All governmental units are also required to file a copy of the completed report with the county clerk. (50 ILCS 310/2 and 310/3)

NOTE 1: Any governmental unit receiving revenue of less than \$850,000 for any fiscal year is required to file a financial report with the Comptroller in lieu of an audit. Pursuant to Public Act 98-1019, beginning with fiscal year 2016 those governmental units receiving revenue less than \$850,000 for any fiscal year must also provide copies of this annual financial report to each member of that governmental unit's governing board of elected officials and present it either in person or by a live phone or web connection during a public meeting and have the financial report approved by a 3/5 majority vote. Otherwise, that unit must cause an audit of the account to be made once every four years in addition to filing the annual financial report with the Comptroller.

NOTE 2: Any governmental unit receiving revenue of \$850,000 or more shall, in addition to complying with the audit requirements, file a financial report on forms required by the Comptroller. (50 ILCS 310/3)

NOTE 3: Pursuant to Public Act 97-0890 and Public Act 97-1142, these reports must be submitted to the Comptroller electronically unless the governmental unit provides the Comptroller's Office with sufficient evidence that the reports cannot be filed electronically and the Comptroller waives the requirement.

#### **MAY 1**

The date to begin preparation of the Statement of Receipts and Disbursements. (30 ILCS 15/1)

#### **MAY 1**

Update IAPD database with information pertaining to newly elected commissioners and verify accuracy of other information.

#### **MAY 8**

The suggested date to publish notice of public hearing on the budget and appropriation ordinance (must be done at least one week prior to hearing). (70 ILCS 1205/4-4)

#### **MAY 21**

Regular May board meeting. This is the suggested date to hold the public hearing on the budget and appropriation ordinance and the date for enacting the ordinance at the board meeting following the hearing. (70 ILCS 1205/4-4)

NOTE 1: The budget and appropriation ordinance must be made available in tentative form for public inspection at least 30 days prior to final action thereon.

NOTE 2: All taxing districts are also required to file a certified copy of their budget and appropriation ordinances with the county clerk within 30 days of adoption, as well as an estimate, certified by the district's chief fiscal officer, of revenues, by source, anticipated to be received by the taxing district in the following fiscal year. Failure of a district to file the required document will authorize the county clerk to refuse to extend the tax levy imposed by the governing authority until such documents are filed. (35 ILCS 200/18-50)

#### **MAY 31**

General Assembly scheduled to adjourn.

### **JUNE 2015**

#### **JUNE 18**

Regular June board meeting.

#### **JUNE 19**

The last day for filing a copy of the district's budget and appropriation ordinance with the county clerk, as well as a certified estimate of revenue by source anticipated to be received in the following fiscal year (assuming a passage adoption date of May 21).

#### **JUNE 30**

The last day to: (a) investigate & ascertain prevailing rate of wages to be paid for work on public works projects, and (b) publicly post or keep available for inspection in the main office of the public body its determination of such prevailing wage rates. The district must promptly file, no later than July 15 of each year, a certified copy of its determination with the office of the Illinois Department of Labor. (820 ILCS 130/9)

NOTE: Pursuant to 820 ILCS 130/4, a park district may request the Illinois Department of Labor to ascertain the prevailing rate of wages.

NOTE: Pursuant to Public Act 98-173, a public body is no longer required to also file a certified copy of its determination with the Illinois Secretary of State.

### **JULY 2015**

#### **JULY 15**

Last day to file certified copy of prevailing wage rate determination with the office of the Illinois Department of Labor. (820 ILCS 130/9)

NOTE: Pursuant to Public Act 98-173, a public body is no longer required to also file a certified copy of its determination with the Illinois Secretary of State.

#### **JULY 16**

Regular July board meeting.

#### **JULY 16**

Attend the Legislative Golf Outing at the Bensenville Park District.

### **AUGUST 2015**

#### **AUGUST 1**

First date nominations for the Board of Trustees of the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund Board are to be made for terms beginning the next January 1. (Between August 1 and September 15.) (40 ILCS 5/7-175)

#### **AUGUST 14**

The last date to publish determination of prevailing rate of wages and mail copies of rates to requesting parties if filed with Department of Labor on the last possible date (July 15). (Publication must be within 30 days of date of filing with Department of Labor.) (820 ILCS 130/9)

#### **AUGUST 20**

Regular August board meeting.

#### **AUGUST 29**

Attend Legislative Awareness Picnic at Joliet Park District.

### **SEPTEMBER 2015**

A good month to review and update park district policies and ordinances.

#### **SEPTEMBER 15-17, 2015**

Attend the NRPA Congress in Las Vegas, Nevada.

#### **SEPTEMBER 17**

Regular September board meeting.

### **OCTOBER 2015**

#### **OCTOBER 1**

The suggested date to review documents to determine which records can be destroyed. Permission of Local Records Commission required. See 50 ILCS 205/7 for authorization to digitize records. (50 ILCS 205/1)

#### **OCTOBER 15**

Regular October board meeting. Review non-referendum bonding needs preparatory to selling bonds before close of calendar year. (70 ILCS 1205/6-4)

NOTE: Before adopting any ordinance selling non-referendum general obligation bonds or limited bonds, the district must hold a public hearing concerning the intent to sell the bonds. Although the hearing may be part of a regular meeting, the ordinance authorizing the bonds may not be adopted for a period of 7 days after the hearing. Notice of the hearing must be published not less than 7 nor more than 30 days before the hearing. (30 ILCS 352/10, 352/15, 352/25)

#### **OCTOBER 15**

The suggested date for the board to determine the amount of money estimated to be necessary to be raised by the tax levy ordinance and to determine whether the funds to be raised exceed, by more than 105 percent of the amount, which has been extended or is estimated to be extended, upon the final aggregate levy of the preceding year. (This determination must be made at least 20 days prior to enactment of the levy ordinance.) (35 ILCS 200/18-60; 200/18-65)

NOTE 1: Local governments must file either a certificate of compliance or a certificate indicating the inapplicability of the Truth in Taxation Law with the tax levy ordinance filed with the county clerk. (35 ILCS 200/18-90)

NOTE 2: 35 ILCS 200/18-185 provides park districts in the tax cap counties the authority to levy a tax for handicapped programs outside the restrictions of the tax cap.

NOTE 3: It is recommended that the park district attorney review all determinations and proceedings relating to this reference, which is the Truth in Taxation Law. (35 ILCS 200/18-55 *et seq.*)

#### **OCTOBER 29**

Attend the IAPD Legal Symposium Hamburger University, Oak Brook

#### **OCTOBER 31**

The last day to publish annual statement of receipts and disbursements and file a copy with the county clerk for districts on a May 1-April 30 fiscal year. In lieu of publishing the annual statement of receipts and disbursements, the district can publish a notice of availability of its audit report that includes the time period covered by the audit, the name of the firm conducting the audit, and the address and business hours where the audit may be publicly inspected. (Must be accomplished within six months after expiration of fiscal year.) (30 ILCS 15/1; 15/2)

#### **OCTOBER 31**

The last day to file annual audit report (or financial report if district received revenue of less than \$850,000) with the Comptroller of the State of Illinois and county clerk (within six months of close of fiscal year) and make a copy open to public inspection. Pursuant to Public Act 98-1019, beginning with fiscal year 2016 those governmental units receiving revenue less than \$850,000 for any fiscal year must also provide copies of this annual financial report to each member of that governmental unit's governing board of elected officials and present it either in person or by a live phone or web connection during a public meeting and have the financial report approved by a 3/5 majority vote. Otherwise, that unit must cause an audit of the account to be made once every four years in addition to filing the annual financial report with the Comptroller. Any governmental unit receiving revenue of \$850,000 or more shall, in addition to complying with the audit requirements, file a financial report on forms required by the Comptroller. (50 ILCS 310/2; 310/3; 310/6)

NOTE: Pursuant to Public Acts 97-0890 and 97-1142, these reports must be submitted to the Comptroller electronically unless the governmental unit provides the Comptroller's Office with sufficient evidence that the report cannot be filed electronically and the Comptroller waives the requirement.

#### **OCTOBER 31**

Update IAPD database with financial information from audit report and verify accuracy of other information.

### **NOVEMBER 2015**

#### **NOVEMBER 9**

The suggested date to publish notice of hearing (Truth in Taxation Law) if the district's proposed levy is greater than 105 percent of last year's extension or estimated extension. Must publish not more than 14 days, nor less than 7 days prior to the date of the public hearing. Publication date assumes a hearing date of November 16-20, 2015. (35 ILCS 200/18-70; 200/18-75)

NOTE: The form of the notice is set forth in the Truth in Taxation Law. Be sure to check special publication requirements found in statute. Further, any notice that includes information in excess of that specified and required by the Act shall be considered an invalid notice. (35 ILCS 200/18-80)

#### **NOVEMBER 19**

Regular November board meeting and the suggested date to hold a hearing pursuant to the Truth in Taxation Law. (35 ILCS 200/18-55 *et seq.*)

#### **NOVEMBER 19**

The suggested date to enact tax levy ordinance at the regular meeting following the Truth in Taxation hearing (if required).

### **DECEMBER 2015**

#### **DECEMBER 1**

The suggested date to verify that, for real estate acquired in 2015, appropriate applications have been filed to exempt the real estate from real estate taxes. (35 ILCS 200/15-5)

#### **DECEMBER 4**

(If levy ordinance was enacted on November 19, 2015) the last day to publish Truth in Taxation notice if levy amounts as enacted exceed prior published figures, or if levy exceeds 105 percent of last year's extension and there was not prior publication. (Notice must be given within 15 days of the date the levy ordinance was enacted.) (35 ILCS 200/18-85)

#### **DECEMBER 8**

The suggested date to confirm that a certified copy of the levy ordinance was properly filed with the county clerk. (70 ILCS 1205/5-1 and 35 ILCS 200/18-15 require that a certified copy of the levy ordinance be filed with the county clerk not later than the last Tuesday in December.)

#### **DECEMBER 17**

The regular December board meeting date and suggested date to enact bond ordinance for non-referendum bonds to be issued prior to the end of calendar year. (70 ILCS 1205/6-4)

#### **DECEMBER 28**

The suggested date to prepare and file with the Supervisor of Assessments the annual affidavit/certificate of exempt status stating whether there has been a change in the ownership or use of the district's exempt real estate and the nature of any such change to continue the exemption of park property from real estate taxes. (Last day for filing is January 31, 2016.) (35 ILCS 200/15-10)

#### **DECEMBER 28**

The suggested day by which bond ordinances should be filed with county clerk in order to receive extensions of taxes for the payment of principal and interest on general obligation bonds or limited bonds for 2015 taxes collected in 2016. The filing must actually take place prior to March 1, 2016. (30 ILCS 350/16)

NOTE: This filing has no relationship to the General Tax Levy filed by park districts.

#### **DECEMBER 29**

In most counties the last day to: (a) file certified copy of tax levy ordinance with county clerk (70 ILCS 1205/5-1; 35 ILCS 200/18-15), and (b) file board president's certificate of compliance with county clerk. (35 ILCS 200/18-90)

NOTE 1: State statutes require a certified copy of the tax levy ordinance to be filed with the county clerk on or before the last Tuesday in December.

NOTE 2: State statute requires that all local governments file either certificate of compliance or a certificate indicating the inapplicability of the Truth in Taxation Law with the certified copy of the tax levy ordinance filed with the county clerk.

An illustration of a tree with dark, thick branches and green leaves. Several colorful butterflies in shades of yellow, orange, and brown are flying around the tree. The background is a light, muted green.

## Butterflies and trails and a new nature playground,

*oh my!*

### *Marketing nature as an experience*

Walk away from your electronic devices. Go outside. Return to nature. Play!

Marketing professionals in the field of parks and recreation have the responsibility to promote all of the benefits of recreation (economic, environmental, social, health and wellness) to our communities. To most of us, the benefits are clear, but often a reminder is necessary.

**By: Traci Wicks**, Director of Marketing & Public Relations, Geneva Park District





## Hawks Hollow is beyond unique. It engages children in environmental education through hands-on activities and play.

At the Geneva Park District, our goal is to educate and reinforce these benefits along with our commitment to environmental education and conservation. In 2013, a marketing goal was established specific to one of our facilities, Peck Farm Park. The goal was to increase attendance in a variety of programs, attract more visitors to the park and make Peck Farm Park an all-day family destination. Promoting a new and unique nature playground, Hawks Hollow, which opened in the fall of 2013, was essential to achieving our goal.

So, how did we create a successful marketing strategy? Well, that is where the fun began!

After brainstorming and sharing several creative ideas, staff developed an integrated marketing strategy that focused on the benefits of recreation as well as marketing nature as a true experience. A marketing strategy emerged that included traditional marketing outlets. It also focused on the “The Power of Play,” which ignited enthusiasm about nature and, more importantly, the desire to simply get outside and play. When we began to market Peck Farm Park as a free, all-day destination where families could spend quality time together learning, discovering and exploring nature, a renewed spirit of recreation was established.

Traditional tools were utilized including: the district's seasonal brochures, direct mail, email blasts, outdoor signage, press releases and social media. “The Power of Play” became the heart of a direct mail piece in the fall of 2013. It concentrated on specific benefits of

recreation within Geneva as well as the overall nationwide benefits. It also announced the grand opening of Hawks Hollow. This piece generated interest, so much so that word-of-mouth sparked a buzz within our community.

As the Hawks Hollow Nature Playground opening date was quickly approaching, we realized we had to adapt the marketing strategy to include an educational component. Oftentimes, a successful marketing strategy presents unforeseen challenges as it drives excitement. The marketing definitely was sparking interest throughout the community; however, we realized people did not understand what a nature playground was. It was hard for them to grasp why Hawks Hollow was different than a traditional playground with colorful equipment, swings and a rocketship play area. We embraced this challenge and quickly began to educate the community.

A press release was developed that concentrated on the unique aspects of Hawks Hollow, our use of recycled materials and our ongoing commitment to the environment. By highlighting the use of this creative material, we enhanced the marketing strategy to include this educational and green living component, specifically supporting the district's goal of creating a place that connected children with nature. More importantly, driving people to get outside and play.

Additionally, we sought out the assistance of Hitchcock Design Group, the landscape architects working on Hawks Hollow, to assist with the education of the project and spreading the word. Soon our marketing messages evolved to include an educational component.



Hawks Hollow Nature Playground and Peck Farm Park soon became a headline in several regional and local newspapers. So, what is a nature playground? More importantly, what is the newest addition Hawks Hollow Nature Playground at Peck Farm Park? Hawks Hollow is beyond unique. It engages children in environmental education through hands-on activities and play. The eight learning stations throughout the park compliment the district's on-going mission to create a bond between children and the surrounding natural world. This playground encourages children to use their imagination and experience the smells, textures and wonders of nature. Home to several hawks and a variety of other bird species native to Illinois and the Midwest, it was only fitting this new playground area feature an aviary theme.

Natural materials, such as Western Red Cedar, were used as decking and guardrails for the ADA accessible boardwalk and Raptor's Roost. The Raptor's Roost, a favorite station among visitors, is a multiple

level learning feature that contains the Falconer's Message Pulley System, which encourages cooperative play with native fruits and goods. The Raptor's Roost, complete with owl adornment, also allows children to understand the importance of the raptor's dominant position in the bird family.

Rounded posts and a wood branch roof on the hawk's perch blended with the natural character so much that red tail hawks and other raptors typically use this high point for a perch, creating a spectacular view of these birds for visitors. Even animal and bird tracks were imprinted into the concrete to teach people of all ages how to identify local species.

In addition, tree trunks and branches cut from trees lost to the Emerald Ash Borer were repurposed into balancing logs, a barn structure, sitting benches, bird nest play areas and more. Damaged ash trees were used to create 'tree cookies,' small slices of trees branded with the new Hawks Hollow logo. They make excellent paper weights and were so popular at the grand opening that staff still gives them away at a variety of special events. Using these materials, visitors enjoy learning about tree health, insect life and urban forestry practices.

Weeks, days and hours prior to the celebration, e-marketing became a primary marketing avenue to keep the momentum going. Facebook was essential to communicating the construction process and the park's new unique features as well as posting numerous photos. In fact, some of our Facebook posts and photos directly related to the construction and progress at Hawks Hollow saw an average of 20% increase in views over other park district posts.

Great! Our strategy worked! The anticipation was high and the education was complete.

Now, let's have a grand opening! Unfortunately, it was an overcast, humid, unusually hot day in early October as we tied the big red ribbon to recycled ash logs, formed a bow and put the finishing touches on the playground; a thought crossed our minds, will anyone show up? The answer was yes! Nearly 400 people attended the grand opening, adults and children alike stormed the playground and were fascinated with all of the new and fun ways to learn, discover and experience nature.

In January 2014, Hawks Hollow was recognized at the IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference as an outstanding facility. Hawks Hollow Nature Playground and Peck Farm Park continue to be fun and educational destinations for the region. Attendance at Peck Farm Park has increased 40% in the last year and we continue to see growth.

Marketing nature as an experience, focusing on "The Power of Play" and the importance of environmental education and conservation helped us achieve our marketing goal. Additionally, Hawks Hollow exceeded our expectations in achieving the goal of creating Peck Farm Park as an all-day family destination. For now, we will continue to push "The Power of Play."

# Partnerships Matter

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*By Joan Scovic,*  
MARKETING COORDINATOR  
PALATINE PARK DISTRICT

KEEPING THE  
*Community*  
IN *Communications* AND  
*Marketing*



IN TODAY'S DIGITAL WORLD, A WORLD FULL OF METRICS, ANALYTICS AND MEASUREMENTS, IT IS EASIER THAN EVER TO CREATE REPORTS THAT PROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR MARKETING EFFORTS. AS MARKETERS, WE OFTEN FIND OURSELVES CAUGHT UP IN THE DATA OF VISITS, CLICKS, LIKES AND SHARES; PERHAPS LOSING SIGHT OF THE PERSONAL NATURE OF BOTH COMMUNICATION AS A DISCIPLINE AND PARKS AND RECREATION AS A FIELD.

Data is important, but should be used as a means to an end, not as the end itself. Personal relationships are key to the marketing world of parks and recreation, a group that provides services, programs, facilities and open land to **people**. This doesn't mean that we should stop analyzing data, because we still need to prove to our supervisors that our methods are effective. But, we should also remember that personal relationships will take us very far in our business as we communicate with our communities, develop a partner program and build relationships with the press.

### Communicating with the Community

Parks and recreation agencies are community-based businesses. As tax-based organizations, we work for our communities, providing a variety of services and facilities that meet their needs. Communication with the people we serve is key to understanding what they want from our agencies. Communicating with our constituents can also help us learn the best methods to use for our marketing efforts.

Surveys (yes, we'll talk about data first) are an excellent way to collect information from our communities that will provide direction for future marketing methods. Results from community-wide surveys, conducted as part of organizational master planning projects, can guide the overall future of the marketing department and help agencies decide the most effective ways of communicating with the community. Results can help determine where best to spend both time and dollars. Post-program and post-event surveys can also help provide an understanding of how people heard of the event or program, and what drove them to make their purchase. This data will show which avenues of communication are working, and which are not. In addition, asking people's opinions shows them that the agency cares about what they have to say as participants in park district programs. This is the beginning of a two-way avenue of communication between the agency and its constituents.



Once you have determined how the community prefers to communicate, decisions regarding where and how to market need to be made. It is important to remember that every community is different. Some have community-based publications, some are more heavily involved in social media, while others won't ever give up the paper brochure. Marketing efforts need to react to the community's needs and preferred methods of communication. While based on the data you collect, this is a very personal relationship.

### Building Community Partnerships

Being involved with the community and its public organizations can help with program and event promotion as well. Community businesses will often hang posters in their storefronts, the village might place a notice on their electronic signboard, the library might co-promote an event. While an email or letter can be sent to people at these organizations asking for their assistance, it is more likely that they will help you if they know you. Join the Chamber of Commerce, attend networking events, volunteer for other organizations. Getting out into the community and meeting the people in leadership positions in your area is well worth the time and effort.

In the same way, it often comes down to "who you know" when partnership programs are involved. Many agencies choose to use a menu of sponsorship opportunities. These menus can be uploaded to websites and mailed out to prospective partners. They can be a great starting point, especially when personnel resources are stretched.



**AS A PUBLIC AGENCY, YOU WANT YOUR ARTICLES TO GET OUT TO THE PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY IF THIS IS ONE OF THE AVENUES YOUR PUBLIC SITED IN YOUR SURVEY RESULTS AS A PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION.**

However, the agencies that typically show the strongest results, measured in sponsorship dollars and strong community partnerships, are those that create personalized programs for their partners. Not many businesses will simply hand over a check to a park district. They want to know what they will be getting in return for their support. It takes time to cultivate relationships and create partner programs that will benefit both parties. And it often takes more than one meeting to reach an agreement. But, in the end, personalized partnerships will produce higher revenue while often enhancing the event or program as well.

Partners, when the partnership is carefully cultivated, will have a vested interest in the outcome of the program. They can help promote the program through their marketing avenues, which will help the program's bottom line through increased attendance and community awareness. Knowing your partners - who they want to reach and what their goals are - can also help you fully create a package for them. Perhaps they prefer in-kind donations that will save your organization money on the expense side, rather than handing over cash that helps the income column. Personal knowledge and a little creativity can produce some amazing results for both parties.

Keep in mind that the partnership doesn't end when the agreement is signed. The personal relationship created during the negotiation phase must be cultivated on a long-term basis in order to sustain your partner program. Partners who are on site during an event should be greeted upon arrival, visited during the event, and thanked at the end of the event. After the event, a personal follow-up is key. Send a personalized thank you letter, not just a mass email. Better yet, deliver the note in person. Include an overview of the event itself, the key benefits they received through their partnership, a sample of your goody bag, and pictures whenever possible. Finally, if your budget allows for it, host a partner appreciation event. A few hors d'oeuvres and an appreciation plaque can work wonders. These personal touches will be remembered when you approach them to discuss the next partnership opportunity.

**Working with the Press**

It is also important to remember that members of the press can be significant allies and should be treated as such. As a public agency, you want your articles to get out to the people, especially if this is one of the avenues your public sited in your survey results as a preferred method of communication. You can always send out that

cold-call email with your event's information. The press might pick it up. You can also enter all of the information into the online sharing site for the newspaper and then wait to see if it appears in a printed publication. Or, you can personally call the reporter that you know, asking them if they have a few minutes to talk. Follow-up the phone call with your well-written press release and some relevant high resolution photographs. You are more likely to make it into print if you make it easier for the reporters whose time is already stretched thin.

And remember that it doesn't end once your article appears. After your article is printed, send a thank you note - especially if you received high profile coverage or a full-color picture in print. If the reporter went out of their way to help you communicate your agency's information, you should go out of your way to thank them for their time and support. Since not many people actually take the time for this follow-up step, your efforts will be remembered and probably rewarded again in the future.

Cultivating these relationships takes time. Setting up meetings, making phone calls, writing notes, attending events, and networking with others are all time consuming efforts. However, the benefits from knowing the people you work with outside of your agency will come back to you in the form of increased attendance at events, increased visibility in your community, increased press coverage, increased community partnerships, and an increase in your bottom line. And if it is done right, in the end, the data will prove how effective personal relationships can be.

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# WebXtra



## 'Tis the Season to Give the Gift of Fun

Written by Denise Delanty, and Laura Gibbs-Green, Rockford Park District

'Tis the season to give, but it's also the perfect time to promote your organization's assets to generate revenue. Everyone is always looking for a unique gift, but one of the best gifts we all have at our fingertips is the ability to provide our friends and family with an experience. As a gift giver, it feels great to know that you are the person responsible for giving someone the opportunity to learn how to skate, take their family to enjoy an afternoon at the pool, swing a golf club, visit a museum or facility, or learn a new life-long skill. Giving the gift of a park district experience is a fun and unique gift that can be enjoyed by all ages, and, the extra revenue you can generate for your organization is a great way to end the year.



## The Old Adage Still Holds True... A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

by Erika Young, St. Charles Park District

Seeing is believing. With the advancements in technology and the overwhelming success of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest, people nowadays much prefer visual communication over the written word. Hence, the use of imagery in all forms of print and digital marketing is far more effective than text alone.

In a recent interview, Marcel Just, Director of the Center for Cognitive Brain Imaging at Carnegie Mellon University, said "Processing print isn't something the human brain was built for. The printed word is a human artifact. It's very convenient and it's worked very well for us for 5,000 years, but it's an invention of human beings. By contrast Mother Nature has built into our brain our ability to see the visual world and interpret it."

Remember drawings on the cave wall? Even our ancestors used pictures to communicate.

According to Dr. Lynell Burbank, Ph.D. Associate at the Thornburg Center for Professional Development, "...Words are processed by our short-term memory. Images, on the other hand, go directly into long-term memory where they are indelibly etched."

With the growing popularity of social media and the ease and accessibility of using smartphones, it's apparent that people are using images more and more to communicate.

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## Evaluating Park and Recreation Service Standards through a Cooperative

# SECRET SHOPPER PROGRAM

By Jessica Cannaday, CPRP, Marketing & Promotions Manager, Oak Brook Park District

The benefits of a successful secret shopper program are well documented and numerous. From providing a unique look into your customers' experiences to measuring your agency's ability to provide a positive customer experience, secret shopper programs can help your agency develop the key behaviors necessary to create customer satisfaction and loyalty, as well as improve sales and profitability.

While there are several secret/mystery shopper companies and services available for hire, the expensive cookie cutter programs

they provide often fall short of effectively evaluating the unique service aspects of the park and recreation industry. Companies "specializing" in mystery shopping programs typically utilize a "one size fits all" survey originally developed for very specific industries such as food service or fitness. Typically, the results obtained from these surveys barely skim the surface of the wide range of experiences provided by park and recreation agencies. As a result, these programs rarely offer the information needed for park and recreation professionals to effectively evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in their personnel training.



In a response to these challenges, the Downers Grove, Elmhurst and Oak Brook park districts came together in 2012 to develop a comprehensive and cooperative secret shopper program that provided a customized program based on each agency's individual service standards, facilities and offerings.

### **GETTING BUY-IN**

Introducing an in-house secret shopper program was no easy task. Mystery shopping programs carry the unfortunate stigma of being designed to "catch" employees doing something wrong. Therefore, it was important to clearly communicate to front line staff and managers that the real benefit of the mystery shopping program was to determine what was being done well.

Soliciting input from staff on every level was crucial to make certain that evaluations were developed based on current training procedures and practices. To ensure that there were no surprises, staff and managers were informed as to exactly what types of questions would be on the mystery shop prior to its execution. To further promote positive buy-in, managers were encouraged to incentivize successful shops through their employee recognition and evaluation process.

### **CREATING A MANAGEABLE SURVEY**

One of the most unique aspects of the cooperative shopper program was that it provided a professional forum to develop a successful survey template. For accuracy's sake, the evaluation had to be short enough for shoppers to remember what is being asked, but detailed enough to capture enough relevant information.

The shopper survey template was standardized by Stacy Landis, office manager of the Downers Grove Park District Recreation Center. The format allows for comments, simple yes/no answers as well as a point based rating scale. It is also fully customizable for any facility, service, or program and agencies can indicate if they prefer a phone, web, or in-person shop.

The committee meets quarterly to review surveys, communicate special instructions and schedule shops for each agency. These meetings clarify the areas of focus needed for each agency and ensure that participating agencies are receiving quality feedback. It provides the opportunity to review the length and questions on each survey to ensure that shops can be completed effectively.

Committee members bring the requested shops back to their agencies and inform an assigned staff member of any special instructions or areas of focus requested by the partnering agencies. All staff members are encouraged to be trained shoppers, which helps to bring a wider perspective to each shop.

### **COMMITTING TO A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM**

While the program has eliminated the cost of outsourcing ineffective secret shopping programs, there is a level of commitment required from participating agencies to ensure its success. A typical shop can take anywhere from 2-3 hours, not including travel or the time required to draft the shop report.

Furthermore, agencies are asked to provide the funding or means necessary to participate in any program required in the shop survey. This could include providing a guest pass or gift card. Shoppers that are asked to use cash must provide receipts for purchases with their shop reports.

Discovering how your neighboring park, recreation or conservation agency approaches customer service, program standards, and even maintenance expectations can inspire you to reevaluate your own strategies.

Lastly, committee members are responsible for ensuring that their staff has completed a thorough evaluation. For an accurate report, shoppers record a narrative of their observations and experiences as soon as possible in a document that accompanies the completed survey. Report length and formats depend on the survey. Committee chairs review the results of each shop at the quarterly meeting. If a shop report does not provide adequate information or fulfill the requested requirements, the shop is completed again.

### **IMPLEMENTING RESULTS**

With the ability to fully customize the shopper survey, it has been easy to obtain information beyond the cleanliness of locker rooms or the friendliness of staff. The program helps evaluate how efficiently staff interacts with new customers, where to better focus staff training, the ease of registration procedures and the user friendliness of customer touch points, such as websites and social media. In addition, the program helps highlight the strong points in staff's customer interaction, allowing the development of a service strategy and training that best utilizes the agency's strengths.

### **THE BENEFITS OF A FLEXIBLE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM**

The nuances of the park and recreation industry are unlike that of any other. From fitness specialists to early childhood experts, the range of knowledge and expertise of park and recreation professionals is unmatched. By tapping into these resources, it is possible to create a set of service standards and benchmarks that can position your agency above its private sector competition.

Furthermore, you have the unique opportunity to further evaluate your own agency through the experience of critically observing the services and programs of other park and recreation agencies. Discovering how your neighboring park, recreation or conservation agency approaches customer service, program standards, and even maintenance expectations can inspire you to reevaluate your own strategies.

### **INCREASING THE PROGRAM REACH**

For the past two years, other agencies in the western suburbs such as Elk Grove Village, Naperville Park District and the Morton Arboretum have taken advantage of the benefits of this program. If your park and recreation agency is interested in participating, please contact Jessica Cannaday, marketing manager for the Oak Brook Park District at [jcannaday@obparks.org](mailto:jcannaday@obparks.org) for upcoming meeting dates.

## PEOPLE & PLACES



### Glenview Park District Announces the Retirement of Executive Director Chuck Balling

After more than 40 years of serving in the parks and recreation field in several Illinois communities, Glenview Park District Executive Director **Chuck Balling** has announced his plan to retire in the spring of 2015. His decision comes at a time when the district enjoys a strong financial position, its facilities are up to date, and it is about to finalize the 2014-2018 strategic plan, which will set the direction for the next three years and help facilitate a smooth transition.

Balling became executive director of the Glenview Park District nine years ago, bringing extensive experience in managing parks and recreation programs in Naperville, Homewood-Flossmoor, Elmhurst and Gurnee.

In 2008, The Glenview Park District was a National Recreation and Park Association Gold Medal Finalist. During his tenure, Balling oversaw the updating of many district facilities, championed the district's environmental and historical initiatives and worked diligently to promote team building and intergovernmental cooperation. Balling is an active leader who enjoys participating in local organizations and is a fervent believer in giving back to the community. Over the years, both the Illinois Park and Recreation Association and the National Recreation and Park Association have recognized him with many awards for his contributions to the profession.



### The Village of Lake In The Hills Selects Laura Barron as Director of Parks and Recreation

Serving as the Parks and Recreation Department head for the village, Laura will provide administrative direction and oversight of the diverse programming, parks, recreational areas and facilities the village offers to its approximately 30,000 residents which includes 31 parks, 2 beaches and numerous recreational facilities.

She previously served as the executive director at the Oakbrook Terrace Park District for seven years and the superintendent of recreation at the Lisle Park District for seven years. Laura has also worked at the Naperville, Glen Ellyn and Streamwood park districts in various supervisory positions.

Laura holds a master's degree in recreation administration from Aurora University – George Williams College, a bachelor's degree in recreation and parks administration from Western Illinois University and an associate's degree in recreational leadership from College of DuPage. She is a Certified Park and Recreation Professional and has served as a trustee on the NEDSRA Board, chairperson and member of the Board of Regents of Professional Development School, and as chair of the Joint Editorial Committee.

As a resident of West Chicago, Laura serves on the City of West Chicago Environmental Commission and is a member of the West Chicago Garden Club.



### Hanover Park Park District Hires Liz Blake as New Recreation Supervisor

**Liz Blake** worked her way through the aquatic ranks at the Oak Brook Park District from lifeguard to assistant manager between 2005-09. In 2009-10, she was a supervisor for the YWCA in East Peoria. Liz accepted a second grade teaching position at the Delphi Academy of Chicago in Lombard from 2011-13. In 2013, she was named the facility coordinator for the Hanover Park Park District Seafari Springs Aquatic Center.



### Lori Berkes-Nelson Joins the Rockford Park District as Foundation Director

Lori was raised in DeKalb, but has been a resident of the Rockford region for over 25 years. She received her master's degree in education and bachelor's degree in elementary education from Northern Illinois University.

Lori has over 20 years of non-profit management experience, and has devoted her professional life to non-profit viability through successful leadership, fundraising and marketing. She came to Rockford in 1987 to work for Rosecrance. During her 15 years there, her greatest accomplishment was the development of the first Adolescent Recovery Home for girls in the state of Illinois called the Monarch House.

She also served as the executive director of the Golden Apple Foundation for 11 years. Under her leadership, the organization expanded to recognize excellence throughout Winnebago and Boone counties, and increased donor and volunteer participation significantly during her tenure.

Lori was named Woman Manager of the Year by the Rockford Chamber of Commerce in 2007. Additionally, she has served on several community, state and national task forces and boards including her role as the President of Econ Illinois, a statewide, non-profit organization and the premier provider of economic education programs for Illinois schools.

## St. Charles Park District Welcomes New Staff



**Joshua Williams** is the new Pottawatomie Community Center supervisor. Responsibilities include overseeing program registration, rentals, front desk operations, recreation programming and special event planning. He recently completed an internship with the Downers Grove Park District. Joshua is a recent graduate of Illinois College with a double major in management & organizational leadership and communication & rhetorical studies.



**Cathy Medema** is the new superintendent of finance and administration. She is responsible for the district's business, human resources and IT departments. Previously, Cathy was employed as director of finance and human resources at Elmhurst Park District for 16 years and prior to that she worked as an accountant in the private sector. She is a graduate from Dominican University with a major in accounting and Benedictine University with an MBA in finance.



**Laura Johns** is the new Primrose Farm educator & lead interpreter for the district. She is developing new and diverse program options, facilitating visitor engagement, assisting with staff and volunteer management, expanding the farm's web presence and supporting daily farm museum operations by learning to drive tractors and milk cows. She is also spearheading several long-term projects. Laura received a BA in history and political science from Albion College and a MA in

public history from Loyola University Chicago.



## Cary Park District Names Sarah Welsh as New Program Manager

**Sarah Welsh** is the new program manager responsible for youth, adult, dance and day camp programs for the district. Sarah is a 2013 Western Illinois University graduate with a recreation, park & tourism administration degree and a minor in natural resources conservation. While in school she

was a recreation intern at Roselle Park District, and following graduation she was employed at Streamwood Park District as a building attendant and registration clerk.

## Geneva Park District Announces New Staff



**Elliott Bortner** is the new recreation supervisor for the Geneva Park District. His responsibilities include toddler, youth, family, adult and active older adult program areas. He is also responsible for the district's special events and Cultural Art programs, held at Playhouse 38. Elliott joined Geneva Park District in September 2013 as the recreation coordinator. He previously worked for the Champaign Park District as the special events and volunteer coordinator.



**Becky Densmore** is the new recreation coordinator for the Geneva Park District. Her responsibilities include Kids' Zone Before & After School Program, Summer Camps, teen programs and birthday parties. Becky previously worked for All Star Sports Instruction as a head coach and joined Geneva Park District in August 2014. She completed her parks and recreation administration degree at George Williams College in Williams Bay, WI.



**Kelly Wales** is a Certified Park and Recreation Professional, (CPRP) who joined the Geneva Park District as a recreation supervisor. She oversees the Kids' Zone, KinderZone Before & After School Program, preschool, summer camps, day-off trips, teen programs, birthday parties and special events. She previously worked at the Plainfield Park District.



## Flagg-Rochelle Community Park District Announces Calvin Clothier as New Recreation Supervisor

**Calvin Clothier, CPRP** has become the new recreation supervisor for the Flagg-Rochelle Community Park District. Calvin comes to Rochelle after completing two years at the Oregon Park District as the athletics assistant. He earned his CPRP in the spring of 2014.

Calvin is a 2012 University of Iowa graduate with a bachelor of arts in recreational management. He also worked for the Coralville Recreation Center as a recreation associate while attending the University of Iowa.

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