

illinois

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PARKS AND RECREATION

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



partnerships
that drive fitness initiatives



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FROM THE EDITOR



We all have our own definition of fitness. For me, physical activity usually always involves my dogs. My husband and I have a pack of dogs that are all willing to go for a walk at the first sight of a leash. It takes both of us to walk them and usually gives all of us a pretty good workout. For most, however, fitness involves a park, open space or program that is structured to each individuals' unique needs. Park districts, forest preserves and special recreation agencies are working hard to identify these needs and create programs to cater to residents to help them meet their fitness objectives.

This issue of IP&R is dedicated to the partnerships that drive fitness initiatives. This topic is broad because we wanted authors to take the reins and write about unique partnerships that they have participated in to increase fitness and wellness in their districts. Well, they did just that! We received some wonderful articles about how community partnerships can really help a park district or special recreation agency achieve their fitness goals.

We all know fitness is important and should be a part of all of our daily lives. We are all busy, but it is imperative we make time for fitness for ourselves and our children in the midst of our busy schedules. Park agencies and special recreation agencies understand the need for incorporating fitness into our routines, so they are always trying to find a way to make it easier to do. Sometimes increasing participation in fitness programs and services take a special partnership with another party to make things happen. When these agencies create effective partnerships in which all parties gain a benefit, community residents can take advantage of some of the fabulous programs that are created out of these relationships.

Get out and enjoy some of the programs your agencies offer and start out your summer with fitness goals in mind!

Rachel Laier

— Rachel Laier, Editor



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The object is simplicity.



Peter M. Murphy, J.D., CAE
IAPD President and CEO

Benchmarking for Success: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Board Meetings

Board members should establish criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of their board meetings.

Rules of Conduct. It's important to establish rules of etiquette for meetings. Each new member joining the board should receive a list of meeting rules. These could include such things as waiting to be acknowledged when you want to speak, listening to what other board members say, being courteous to guests, not interrupting your fellow board members, supporting board decisions, and turning off your mobile device during the meeting. Meeting etiquette rules make board sessions much more orderly and enjoyable.

Social Interaction. Although it's important to stick to the agenda, you can make meetings efficient, but also include social interaction. According to Robert's Rules, the social aspect of board meetings is important for creating board camaraderie. Meetings certainly should not drag on, but they shouldn't be finished so quickly that interaction is eliminated. Board members feel better about a meeting when they have had an opportunity to talk and do not feel rushed.

Differing Points of View. Conflicts will arise periodically at board meetings. When differences of opinions occur, board members should keep in mind that they need to remain objective. It's easy to make up your mind and refuse to listen to another board member's opinion, but the key to good governance is the ability to listen carefully. That's one of your roles as a board member. And don't be too sensitive. It's important to hear what other board members think about your idea. If most board members show agreement with the board member who opposes your view, then maybe your idea needs refinement or wasn't so great after all.

Conflict Resolution. Don't let board disagreements go unresolved. Tackle divisiveness immediately. You should take a proactive approach to solving problems otherwise they continue to build. In some cases, you may want an outside consultant to review the situation with the board. The consultant can address the board's concerns and oftentimes a third party can give a more objective point of view. The board shows integrity by recognizing that there is a problem, then enlisting help to solve it rather than letting a problem fester.

Conflicting Personalities. Don't let personalities disrupt board meetings. If there are two people who don't get along outside the board room, chances are they won't agree inside. Board members must set personal animosities aside in the board room otherwise they will make board meetings miserable for everybody.

Meeting Postmortem. The executive director and president of the board should sit down and do a postmortem on the meeting. Post-meeting discussions provide the opportunity to determine the quality of

the meeting while the events are still fresh. Each meeting gets better because you can talk about issues and how to avoid them in the next meeting.

Board Input on Meeting Structure and Flow. Periodically, the board should be asked to formally evaluate their meetings. Utilize a questionnaire to do this. Formal evaluations performed two times a year can help you find a meeting structure that satisfies everyone. Each board member should also evaluate their own performance following a board meeting. At the end of the meeting you might want to ask yourself, were you prepared for the meeting? Are you leaving the meeting confident in the overall performance of your agency? Did you feel you had ample opportunity for input? Would you change anything for future meetings? Also, take time to reflect on what was your board's best meeting this year? What made it so, and have you been able to sustain that approach?

An effective board
is multiple minds
speaking with
one voice.



Objectivity. In evaluating your effectiveness as a board member, you need to ask yourself whether you let your head—not your heart—influence your decisions. Were you as objective as you possibly could be in the decision-making process? If there is an issue on the agenda that you are emotional about, you need to recognize it. Prior to the meeting, review in your own mind how you are going to handle the situation and the comments that you are going to make, and try to assess whether or not you are objective. As a board member you should listen to every side of an issue and then base your action on what is best for the agency and the people you serve.

It's About the Team. The right decision on issues at a board meeting isn't always the easiest one to make, but each board member needs to assess, "Are we operating as a team or are we operating as adversaries?" Everyone should recognize that in order to get things done they must work together and not pull in different directions. When board members work as a team, they are able to talk freely about issues without worrying about hurting feelings when disagreements arise.

Here are other questions you can ask yourself when evaluating the effectiveness of board meetings:

- Was the meeting conducted in a businesslike manner resulting in actions that resolve problems?
- Were agenda items submitted to the board in advance with reports covering all items on which the board would make decisions?
- Were the reports succinct, clear and well-prepared?
- Were all board members prepared to discuss materials sent in advance?
- Were all board members given an opportunity to participate in the discussion?
- Was the agenda strictly followed?
- Did the board discuss policy matters rather than day-to-day management decisions?
- Did the board seek the opinion of counsel on matters that have legal ramifications?
- Was the meeting room conducive to a comfortable meeting? Does it accommodate visitors?
- Are board meetings regularly attended by all board members?
- Were diverse opinions expressed and issues dealt with in a respectful manner?
- Is there always controversy? Why? Should the board hold occasional educational programs on conflict management and boardmanship? Should these programs be held separately from the board meeting or be a part of every meeting?
- As a board, do we use the expertise of our chief executive or do we constantly go over every detail? Do we avoid wasting time on petty details?
- Are we addressing big issues and looking at the bottom line of the agency? Are we establishing achievable goals? Are we making major decisions? Are we concerned with the agency's future?
- Are we working together as a team? How does the public perceive us?
- Did we enjoy working and being together?

At a recent board self-evaluation I conducted, one board member succinctly stated, "Board meeting quality is directly related to the following and should be optimized:

The President's

- commitment and ability to maintain a welcoming respectful transparent environment without censoring difficult messages from the public or fellow commissioners.
- keeping the board appropriately focused on the agenda.
- personal model of good commissionership.
- collaboration and planning with the executive director to ensure balanced agendas in conformity with the mission and goals of the district.

All Commissioners'

- shared commitment to the mission and goals of the park district.
- preparation and engagement on issues.
- ongoing dialogue with the executive director to stay current on issues, challenges and triumphs.
- understanding their roles and responsibilities as a publicly-elected board member and continuing education.
- maintaining and encouraging a positive and constructive attitude at all times, both during and outside of meetings."

Always remember that meetings are at the heart of an effective organization, and each meeting is an opportunity to clarify issues, set new directions, sharpen focus, create alignment, and move objectives forward.

2016 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monday, June 6, 2016
IAPD Summer Golf Tour #2
 Cary Park District/GolfVisions Management, Inc.'s Foxford Hills Golf Club

Thursday, June 16, 2016
IAPD Leadership Institute
 Everyone Communicates – Few Connect Webinar

Thursday, July 14, 2016
IAPD Leadership Classic
 Bensenville Park District's White Pines Golf Club

Thursday, July 21, 2016
IAPD Leadership Institute
 Transformational Leadership Webinar

Thursday, August 18, 2016
IAPD Leadership Institute
 Leading Community Engagement Webinar

Saturday, August 20, 2016
Park District Conservation Day
 IL State Fairgrounds, Springfield

Monday, August 22, 2016
IAPD Summer Golf Tour #3
 Byron Forest Preserve District's Prairie View Golf Club

Monday, September 19, 2016
IAPD Summer Golf Tour #4
 Park District of Highland Park's Highland Park Country Club

Thursday, September 22, 2016
IAPD Leadership Institute
Leading Through Turbulent Times
 6:00pm – 9:00pm
 Downers Grove Park District's Recreation and Fitness Center

October 6-8, 2016
NRPA Congress
 St. Louis, MO

Friday, October 21, 2016
IAPD Best of the Best Awards Gala
 Wheeling Park District's Chevy Chase Country Club

Thursday, November 3, 2016
IAPD Legal Symposium
 McDonald's University/Hyatt Lodge Oak Brook

January 19-21, 2017
IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference
 Hilton Chicago

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EYE ON THE PROFESSION

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



By Debbie Trueblood, CAE
IPRA Executive Director

Partnerships That Drive Fitness Opportunities

As we head into the summer, we know that as park and recreation professionals you will be so busy with your pools, golf, camps, athletic events, water parks and the rest that you will almost certainly not be reading this until the leaves begin to fall and the weather begins to relax into early Autumn. We know you're busy and we respect what you do. I hope whenever you read this it provides you some value and inspiration to get through your busy months of stress and summertime madness.

As I write this, I'm attending the California Park and Recreation Society annual conference in Long Beach, California. In my three and a half years with IPRA, I have attended Wisconsin, Michigan, and now the California park and rec state conferences. I'm always interesting in learning from other states and identifying things we could do differently, as well as building that relationship between Illinois and our sister states. While the California conference is quite large like ours, I thought you might appreciate some of the unique differences between us. First, it is held as a "citywide" conference- the model you see with NRPA, for example, where the sessions are at a convention center and multiple hotels are utilized. For us in Illinois, we don't have the beautiful 70 degree California weather, so we work hard to keep everything contained in one or two buildings so that people don't have to bring their coats everywhere in January in Chicago. The California conference opens with pre-conference sessions on the first day like ours, and then early the next day, opens with a general session/keynote, awards summary, and the swearing in of the new board. The awards are done in detail at an awards banquet at the very end of conference, but they are not a surprise/everyone already knows they have won. So, as that has a separate ticket, awards are done in rapid summary via a five minute video during opening session. This is the same idea that IPRA does in quickly naming off the luncheon awards at the Annual Business Meeting later that day. Their new board chair took the stage, delivered his annual address and thanks, then explained that early in his career he was a camp counselor and would lead kids in sing alongs. He got out his guitar and a harmonica and led us all in a singalong of "California Dreamin'". Can you imagine! Further, the California state association board is sworn in by the **NRPA** board chair every year.

The opening social was outside around a huge fountain with six food trucks of varying kinds of foods, some drink stations, some outdoor heaters, and an oldies' band. I was envious of the options they have for outdoor events! This replaced both our opening social and our closing social as their awards banquet is the final event at the end of conference. Still, in many ways, it was just like home. Park and rec people were very welcoming. Sessions were great. It was a joy to get to visit our sister state and build that relationship. I came back with many ideas to try new things.

One example of how partnerships can come together is IPRA's public education campaign, **Unplug Illinois**.



The theme of this issue is "Partnerships that Drive Fitness Opportunities." This program was finally rolled out at conference, after three years of work, research, and planning by the Community Campaign Task Force. We held two sessions about it at conference presented by Gregg Bruggeman and Denise Barreto, with the support of program Co-Chairs Jarrod Scheunemann and Allison Niemela and IPRA Outreach Director Heather Weishaar. The sessions were well attended and received positive reviews. Further, we announced the start of our new website at www.unplugIllinois.org. I encourage you to check it out today! This website, secondary to our website for members at www.ilipra.org, is for the public to see research about the value of parks and recreation. It is also where members can view a sneak peek and order our new toolkit to help you educate your community about the value of parks and recreation. Use this tool to help you when you need to quote statistics, put a press release together, and especially when you need to talk to elected officials-while there is no specific advocacy issue in mind, we know that reminding your

community and its elected leaders about all the values you bring to the community through health, wellness, social equity, and environmental/conservation areas. In the coming year and months, you'll see much more about "Unplug Illinois" as we develop this statewide campaign.

A few more words on the partnerships that IPRA participates in. We are thrilled that our partnership with the Southern Illinois Park and Recreation Association (SIPRA) and the University of St. Francis has led to the recent first culmination of the inaugural class of ProConnect South. ProConnect, IPRA's unique mentoring program has been around for two years now, and ProConnect South a new program serving southern Illinois was started a year ago. Long term, if we identify sufficient volunteer support and member interest, we may roll this program out in other parts of the state. We will be accepting applications for the 2016/2017 year in the late summer. This program is for people at all levels of their careers to participate in either being mentored or mentoring others. Each team has three people, typically they are early career, midlevel, and seasoned professionals or retirees. The three person team meets together at five events between September and March. Those events are an educational event, two social/networking events, a service project, and culmination/graduation which also has an educational component. Once people apply and are accepted, all events are mandatory as your team is there to network with you, so it's important to your teammates that you all make the commitment to be there for each other at all five events. Additionally, we encourage you to get together with your team outside events if possible. At the end of the program, participants receive a certificate of completion from our partner, the University of St. Francis.

Additionally, IPRA has a great partnership with the University of Illinois. U of I has been our partner on the Leadership Academy program since its inception in 2012. Additionally, IPRA has had graduate students working on research for us for each of the last five years, this year increasing that program to two graduate students. I look forward to building this partnership even further with our new Central Region Rep to the IPRA Board, Jarrod Scheunemann, coming from the U of I.

Again, whether you are reading this in May or after your summer has begun to wind down, I hope you have a great summer and find many new and exciting ways to serve your communities and all the families who look to you for their summertime opportunities for parks and recreation.

Upcoming Events

June 8 & 16, 2016

Skills Development Webinar Series - June: PURPOSE DRIVEN PROGRAMMING

Learn to use Purpose Driven Programming and Evaluation tools developed by presenter, Dr. Keith Fulthorp. These tools will elevate the impact of recreation programs, and expedite the efforts of staff utilizing the tools in their daily programming efforts.

June 17, August 19, September 30 & Oct 14, 2016

Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) Exam Preparation - Series of Four Classes

Certification is important to demonstrate that you have an understanding of the basic competencies needed to be successful in the park and recreation profession. In addition, maintaining the

certification shows you have a willingness to continue to learn and grow throughout your career.

July 6, 2016

IPRA Teen Kayak Trip

The IPRA Teen Committee wants to invite you and your teens on a Kayak Trip on Wednesday, July 6!

July 13 & 21, 2016

Skills Development Webinar Series - July: SPIRIT OF CULTURE

Since 1965 the ethnic composition of the country has changed more rapidly than any other time in history. How do you define yourself? How do you define yourself culturally?

July 20, 2016

Teen Camp Challenge

The Teen Committee is excited to hold its fifth annual Teen Camp Challenge!

For details and registration, please visit the IPRA event calendar at ilipra.org

IPRA CAREER CENTER

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Jason Anselment
Legal/Legislative Counsel

Help Legislators and Citizens Discover the Power of Parks This Summer

Earlier this month, nearly 400 IAPD members visited Springfield to attend the IAPD Legislative Conference, Parks Day at the Capitol and the Legislative Reception and to discuss the importance of parks, recreation and conservation with their legislators.

In connection with these events, IAPD developed a number of advocacy resources to help members deliver key messages to legislators and other officials about the “Power of Parks.” These materials contain important information about the essential services park districts provide to their local communities and their positive economic impact.

With summer programming and recreational activities now in full swing, it is the perfect time to invite legislators to visit your facilities and show them the “Power of Parks” within your community.

Power of Parks Beyond the Playground

One of the key takeaways from legislators during the Legislative Conference was the need for all agencies to demonstrate that they are a priority. This is extremely important at this particular time because the matching grant funding received through programs like OSLAD and PARC are long term capital investments, and the budget impasse has shifted focus to short term operational needs. This is because many private, non-profit social service providers have been forced to close their doors or drastically reduce services due to a lack of state funding.

Investments in park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies pay significant economic dividends. But these agencies are also critical providers of essential services, including some of the very social services that face funding difficulties due to the budget impasse. In other words, investments in local park and recreation agencies will help the State address some of its budget issues in both the short term and long term. For example,

- Convenient and affordable access to health and wellness programs and recreational facilities help citizens maintain healthy lifestyles and reduce medical costs.
- Before and after school programs offer safe, engaging places for children of working families during critical hours when school is not in session.
- Accessible parks, playgrounds and recreational facilities and programs provide substantial support for children and adults with special needs.
- Senior services offer opportunities for this growing population to participate in activities that provide physical and mental stimulation as well as valuable socialization.

These are just a few of many essential services which were highlighted at the Legislative Conference and Parks Day at the Capitol. However, it is important to continue to deliver these key messages throughout the year.



One of many advocacy tools developed by IAPD for the Legislative Conference. These resources are also available to IAPD members under the Public Policy/Advocacy Resources section at ilparks.org

Power of Parks Helps Illinois Thrive and Establishes a Future Legacy

In addition to providing essential services, the time is always right to remind lawmakers and your citizens that local park, recreation, and conservation agencies deliver a great return on investment and make Illinois a better place to live and work. Park and recreation facilities and services help attract and retain business and their workers and are an integral part of communities throughout Illinois. They are economic engines employing thousands of workers and generating other economic

activity through tourism. Park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies are also major providers of first-time jobs for youth, which, in turn, offers valuable training for these future workers.

IAPD continues to conduct research and develop other advocacy resources to help members communicate these economic benefits. IAPD members have immediate access to these research results and a wide array of other advocacy tools which are updated frequently. Visit the Public Policy section at ILparks.org to access these member resources, including key messages and other valuable information from the Legislative Conference.



Banners encouraging legislators and citizens to "Discover the Power of Parks" lined the streets surrounding the State Capitol during the month of May.

Grassroots Advocacy Is a Yearlong Effort

The Legislative Conference is always a great opportunity for IAPD members to hone their advocacy skills, meet one-on-one with their legislators at the Capitol and obtain valuable information that can be used in their grassroots advocacy efforts back in their districts. This year's Legislative Conference was another huge success, but effective grassroots advocacy programs are year round. When lawmakers return to their districts in June, make sure you continue to convey these important messages that were delivered during the Legislative Conference.

CPI Rate for 2016 Extensions Would Be 0.7%

A number of bills are pending in the 99th General Assembly that would freeze property tax levies by eliminating the Consumer Price Index (CPI) "cost of living" or inflation percentage in the annual tax levy calculation. If no state mandated property freeze becomes law, the CPI increase that locally elected officials would use to compute the 2016 extensions (taxes payable in 2017) under PTELL's current state-mandated cap would continue to remain below 1% at .7%.

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

For 2016 extensions (taxes payable in 2017), the CPI to be used for computing the extension limitation is 0.7%. The CPI is measured from December 2014 to December 2015. The U.S. City Average CPI for December 2014 was 234.812 and 236.525 for December 2015. The CPI change is calculated by subtracting the 2014 CPI of 234.812 from the 2015 CPI of 236.525. That amount, 1.713, is then divided by the 2014 CPI of 234.812, which results in 0.7% CPI.

Information on PTELL may be accessed through the Illinois Department of Revenue's Web site at revenue.state.il.us under the category of "Property Tax," then look for the "Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL)" option.

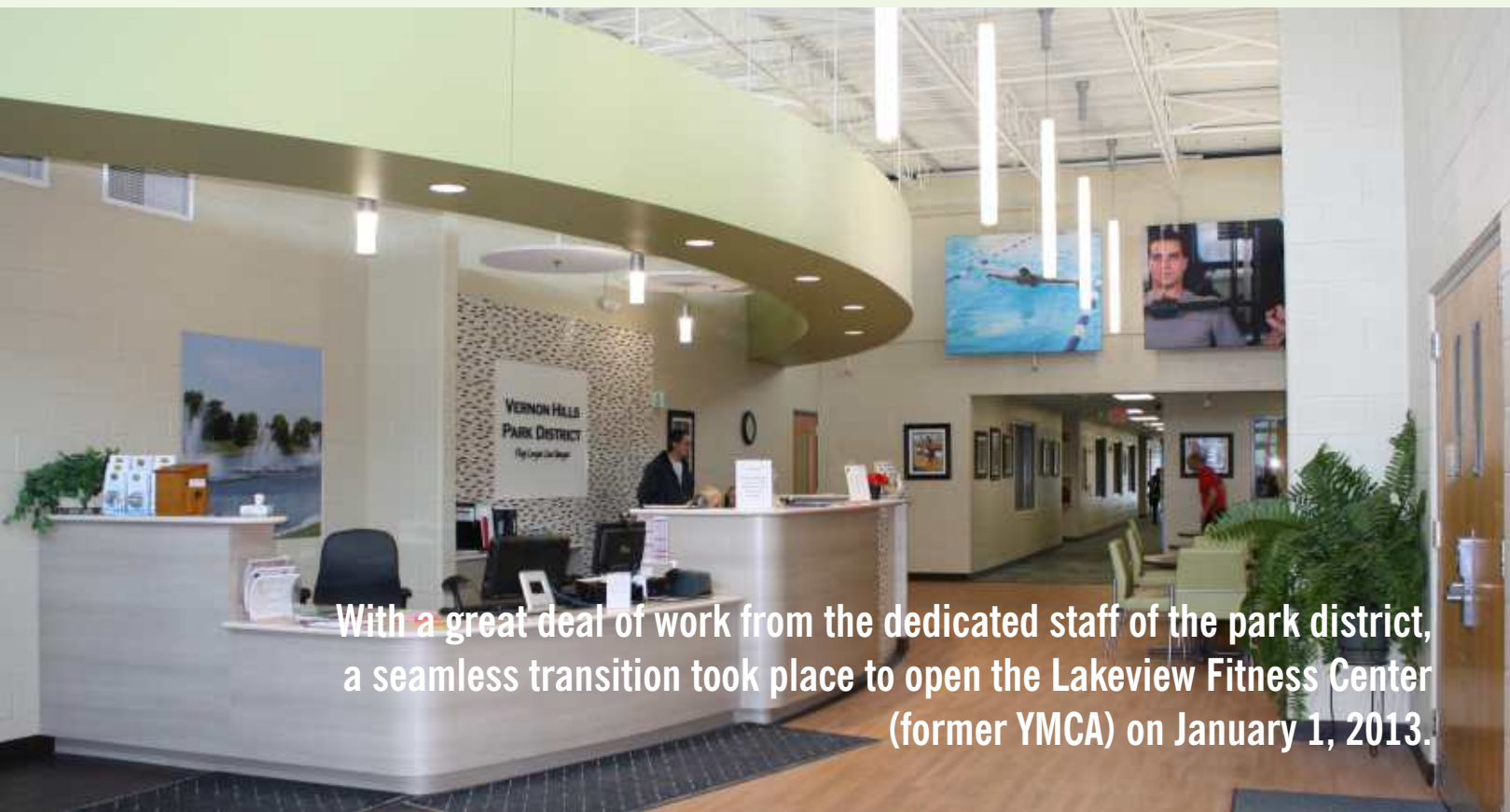
Year	December CPI-U	% Change From Previous December	% Use for PTELL	Levy Year	Year Taxes Paid
1991	137.900				
1992	141.900	2.9%	2.9%	1993	1994
1993	145.800	2.7%	2.7%	1994	1995
1994	149.700	2.7%	2.7%	1995	1996
1995	153.500	2.5%	2.5%	1996	1997
1996	158.960	3.6%	3.6%	1997	1998
1997	161.300	1.5%	1.5%	1998	1999
1998	163.900	1.6%	1.6%	1999	2000
1999	168.300	2.7%	2.7%	2000	2001
2000	174.000	3.4%	3.4%	2001	2002
2001	176.700	1.6%	1.6%	2002	2003
2002	180.900	2.4%	2.4%	2003	2004
2003	184.300	1.9%	1.9%	2004	2005
2004	190.300	3.3%	3.3%	2005	2006
2005	196.800	3.4%	3.4%	2006	2007
2006	201.800	2.5%	2.5%	2007	2008
2007	210.036	4.08%	4.1%	2008	2009
2008	210.228	0.1%	0.1%	2009	2010
2009	215.949	2.7%	2.7%	2010	2011
2010	219.179	1.5%	1.5%	2011	2012
2011	225.672	3.0%	3.0%	2012	2013
2012	229.601	1.7%	1.7%	2013	2014
2013	233.049	1.5%	1.5%	2014	2015
2014	234.812	0.8%	0.8%	2015	2016
2015	236.525	0.7%	0.7%	2016	2017



THE VILLAGE OF VERNON HILLS AND THE VERNON HILLS PARK DISTRICT
PARTNER IN EXPANDING
FITNESS OPPORTUNITIES
IN THE COMMUNITY

By **Cheryl Baron**, *Communications Manager, Vernon Hills Park District*

On September 29, 2012, the Central Lake County YMCA, located in Vernon Hills, announced its future closing due to financial hardship. The Village of Vernon Hills and the Vernon Hills Park District were approached as possible partners in keeping the facility open under new management. The agencies worked together, in a very short timetable, to access the possibility of acquiring the YMCA.



With a great deal of work from the dedicated staff of the park district, a seamless transition took place to open the Lakeview Fitness Center (former YMCA) on January 1, 2013.

Concerns for both parties included the building structure, space limitations, operation and maintenance of an indoor pool and taking over a DCFS childcare facility. Moreover, a bigger concern was the price tag to purchase the YMCA. The park district's operating budget had no monies set aside to purchase or maintain such a facility. However, it still made sense to the Village for the park district to purchase the YMCA and continue to operate it as a recreational extension of the park district.

Over the course of just three months, numerous special meetings were held between the two agencies. Additionally, both agencies brought other professionals, contractors, and financial personnel to the table to assess the feasibility of continuing the operation of the YMCA under the new ownership of the park district. Key factors that pointed to keeping the facility open were the need for a community DCFS childcare facility and indoor pool. The park district would also be able to expand its fitness amenities and offer more programming space.

The Vernon Hills Park District hosted a Town Hall Meeting at the Central Lake YMCA in November, 2012. The park district board, executive director, and staff were present to answer questions from the YMCA members as well as the Vernon Hills community regarding the purchase of the YMCA and how it would affect current members of the YMCA and also current members of the park district's small fitness facility. At that time, YMCA referred to participants as members, while the park district referred to participants as residents. Many discussions were held regarding the transitioning of one into the other.

The Village of Vernon Hills and the Vernon Hills Park District reached an agreement in principle with the Lake County Family YMCA on December 20, 2012 to purchase the Central Lake YMCA. Under the terms of the agreement, the YMCA would continue the operation of

the facility until the Vernon Hills Park District closed on the purchase and commenced operation of the facility no later than January 1, 2013. The Village provided a no interest free loan to the park district to purchase the YMCA with a repayment plan of ten years beginning in 2019. The park district would continue providing the services of the YMCA including fitness membership, aquatic programs, day care, and after school care, at the current fees, regardless of residency status, for the immediate future. With a great deal of work from the dedicated staff of the park district, a seamless transition took place to open the Lakeview Fitness Center (former YMCA) on January 1, 2013. The former YMCA never closed and the childcare facility was in continuous operation throughout the transition. Many of the former YMCA staff were retained and are now park district employees.

The Vernon Hills Park District, prior to purchasing the Central Lake YMCA, had a 2-room fitness center plus a gymnasium in its Sullivan Community Center. A decision was made to permanently close the cardio and weight training rooms at the Sullivan Community Center and move the existing fitness equipment to the district's new facility, Lakeview Fitness. The aerobic room and gym remained open at the Sullivan Community Center. While the two fitness areas remained open at the Sullivan Community Center, the Lakeview Fitness Center temporarily closed their cardio/weight training room for improvements including new flooring, paint, and the transition of fitness equipment from the Sullivan Community Center. All members who utilized the cardio/weight training room at Lakeview Fitness were invited to workout at the Sullivan Center Fitness Room during the improvements closing.

The former Central Lake YMCA, now referred to as Lakeview Fitness Center, has undergone a transformation to increase space and update the facility with a modern design. Renovations included a redesigned lobby area and front desk, redesigned babysitting room which



The Village and park district had a vision for the residents of the community and took a cooperative approach to bring that vision to a reality.

increased 50% in size, redesigned group exercise room which increased the size by 40%, created separate free weight and cardio workout areas, renovated the spa area, replaced carpet, and painted walls. Additionally, new strength and cardio equipment were added. The grand opening of the newly renovated Lakeview Fitness Center was held on November 9, 2013.

The Lakeview Fitness Center has continually grown over the past three years and has become a community friendly fitness facility for all ages. The district has added additional staff to accommodate membership services, fitness classes, personal training, and customer service and facility maintenance. In 2013, Lakeview Fitness had 1,700 unique visitors (members) and at the close of 2015, that number rose to 2,800 – a 61% increase in individual visitors! Moreover, during that same time period, members came to the facility 51% more times during the year increasing their dedication to incorporating fitness into their daily lives. These numbers do not reflect the 1,000 participants that register for our swim lesson program nor the nearly 100 children enrolled in our Little Learners Childcare, which is located within the building of Lakeview Fitness Center.

The increased babysitting service has allowed members to bring their children, 6 months – 10 years, with them to the facility while they workout, allowing fitness to be incorporated into their daily routine. Babysitting is offered 7 days per week during key times in the mornings and early evenings. Members may utilize the facility for up to two hours while their children are being cared for in a safe environment.

Prior to the purchase of the Central Lake YMCA, the district was only able to offer outdoor swim lessons at the Family Aquatic Center. The lessons could only be offered in the morning before the Aquatic Center opened to the public and were dependent on the weather. Today, swim lessons for children and adults, as well as private lessons, are offered year round at the Lakeview Fitness Center at times convenient for school children and working parents. The district has increased the number of participants, for each session, by 58%. The district continues to offer outdoor lessons in the summer too.

When the district originally took over the operation of Lakeview Fitness, there were only a handful of fitness classes available for

registration and the selection was outdated. A new position, fitness supervisor, was immediately incorporated into the re-design of the new Lakeview Fitness Center. Fitness instructors were hired to teach a variety of classes suited for all fitness levels and interests being mindful of the latest trends to attract new members and keep current members interested. In 2013, 15 different group exercise classes were offered for a total of 50 classes per week. Today, the number has risen to 30 unique classes offered 77 times per week! Additionally, cardio and weight equipment was re-evaluated to make sure the fitness equipment offered was top-of-the-line in good working condition. To further the community's fitness opportunities, a personal training program was added for individuals and also group training.

Last summer, for the first time, Lakeview Fitness brought programming outdoors for children. A "Mighty Kids Triathlon" was held for children, ages 5-12 years. Any child from any community could participate. Young athletes swam laps in the Lakeview pool, and rode their bikes and ran in the park adjacent to the Lakeview facility. That event was a huge success and in 2016, additional programming is available to children such as an 8-week program "Fit Kids" that will help young participants train for the 2nd Annual Mighty Kids Triathlon.

Overall, the district has been able to maintain an affordable facility in the community of Vernon Hills. There are numerous big name fitness facilities in Vernon Hills and the surrounding area, but Lakeview Fitness Center has become known as a personable, approachable fitness facility for individuals and families. What Lakeview may lack in blockbuster exterior appearance, it makes up for in interior cleanliness, fitness opportunities and the community feeling of being home.

The Village and park district had a vision for the residents of the community and took a cooperative approach to bring that vision to a reality. Today, the Lakeview Fitness Center and Little Learners Childcare are thriving. The Childcare program has increased its participants by 52% providing daycare to over 85 children today. The Park district has adopted the Turtles Swim Team, which just recently had two swimmers compete on a national level! Due to the partnership between the Village of Vernon Hills and the Vernon Hills Park District, the district now has the opportunity to offer swim lessons year round, and has tripled the amount of fitness classes and fitness space.



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A group of people, including young adults with disabilities, are participating in a fitness activity in a gymnasium. They are standing in a line, holding large exercise balls. The scene is lit with a warm, yellowish light. A large, white, semi-transparent box with a thin black border is centered over the image, containing the title text in white, bold, sans-serif font. The background shows a typical gymnasium setting with a wooden floor, a mirror on the wall, and a ceiling fan.

PARTNERSHIPS THAT DRIVE FITNESS INITIATIVES

By **Gina M. Simmons**, *NETA-PT, Group Fitness Supervisor, Fountain View Fitness, Carol Stream Park District*

When Western DuPage Special Recreation Association (WDSRA) Rec & Roll Adult Day Program asked Fountain View Recreation Center if we would be interested in starting a program to incorporate more physical fitness for young adults with disabilities, we were very excited. We believe the need to develop fitness programs to help enhance the lives of those young adults with disabilities is extremely important.



Many “young adults with special disabilities” who don't normally seem to react to their environments are often completely altered when playing games.

WDSRA provides fun, engaging recreational and social programs, trips, and special events for children, teens and adults with special needs. Programs are structured to allow everyone to participate in their own ability level. Rec & Roll increases the participant's involvement in the community as well as continued growth and training in life skills.

Physical fitness is a critical component in the daily life of people with special needs. Exercise has both physical and mental benefits. Studies suggest that physical exercise is especially important for developing brains. It has been shown to increase life expectancy and also preventing age related neurodegenerative diseases. Weight maintenance and strength are often the key motivator for exercising, however it can boost your brain power too. Aerobic exercise has been found to increase connectivity in the temporal lobe in the ear, which is responsible for storing sensory memories.

This can be accomplished simply by walking. Science has said a more vigorous exercise like jogging or running for 30 minutes leads to faster reaction times and improved vocabulary learning and mental performance. [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) recommends adults get at least two and a half hours of moderate cardio and two days of muscle strengthening every week. However, only 50 percent of adults aged 18 and over meet the [Physical Activity Guidelines](#) for aerobic physical activity. ***“Cardiovascular health is more important than any other single factor in preserving and improving learning and memory,” says Thomas Crook, PH.D., a clinical psychologist ad memory researcher. “You're working out your brain the same time as your heart.”***

One of the ways this can be accomplished is by participation in group exercise classes. A qualified instructor will lead a one hour low to moderate exercise program incorporating fitness training using movement-based exercises. The instructor is assisted by the WDSRA staff, who is actively involved in helping the participants with adaptations as needed. The benefits of this type of training will reduce behavioral issues, improve and increase daily focus and productivity, strengthen functional movement patterns, and improve overall health, while increasing social interaction and meeting the sensory needs of the individual. The group fitness class consists of:

- Warm up, cool down and stretching
- Physical activity & resistance training
- Balance, coordination & flexibility

The warm up consists of gradually preparing the body for aerobic activity, focusing on large muscles and exercises specific to activities that will be introduced in the workout. Some of the exercises in the warm-up can include step touches, jumping jacks, squats, and big arm circles to music, as this is a helpful tool when teaching young adults with special disabilities, everyone responds favorably and is motivated.

After the warm-up, the physical activity begins with some team building and aerobic training. The use of games are a great way to improve mental and physical skills. Many “young adults with special disabilities” who don't normally seem to react to their environments are often completely altered when playing games. The ball toss game is similar to an egg toss. Each participant has a partner standing across from each other. After three tosses one side steps back and increases the distance. The partner must catch the ball without letting it fall to the ground.

We must take the initiative to motivate and inspire young adults with disabilities, to participate in regular exercise to help enhance their lives.

This game has a great impact on sensory perception at a number of different levels. For example, when the ball is tossed to their partner, they learn to process very quickly that the ball is coming toward them, or it is their turn to toss the ball, or they might get tagged, or if they hear the footsteps of someone behind them, or a touch on the shoulder. The person's senses are stimulated so they can recognize and respond to things going on around them more efficiently.

Relay games are very popular as they improve social interaction. One game we often play starts with two teams lined up, each team must pass the ball down the line and then the last person in line runs to the front and the passing begins again. Each person takes the ball to a line and back again. They give the ball to the first person in line and then take their place at the back of the line. The first team to have the ball pass through the hands of all their team members wins!

The participants enjoy cheering each other on, which promotes great team work and having fun while getting fit. This type of activity helps to release positive and negative energy resulting in productive output and improves social interactions. Games with more rules are a great way to focus attention and self-control, which requires a lot more mental and self-discipline.

One of the favorite games is Simon Says. We think the group likes the positive feedback of being right, as it helps to build self-esteem. This game also helps with total physical response and focus.

We also incorporate nature walks, pretending to walk to a park, while jumping over puddles, climbing up mountains, bending over on one leg to pick a beautiful flower, (great stabilization work) using high knees, to get through quick sand, and bending down to pick up sticks to clear the path ahead. This all focuses on the cardiovascular, daily focus, productivity and strength.

“In a recent study evaluating the cardiovascular fitness of young individuals with developmental disabilities, including Down syndrome, researchers concluded that the peak VO2 levels (the most important measure of fitness) of persons with and without Down syndrome were significantly below those of the general population.” (Fernhall et al., 1996). It was concluded that cardiorespiratory fitness must be greatly improved in this population in order to lower the risk of cardiovascular disease, predisposing them to greater health risks in adulthood.

The class then moves on to resistance training exercises based on functional movement, strength and endurance. A recent study published in the *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology* found that people who did moderate to high-intensity strength training showed a significant increase in how fast they processed information. ***“Doing a combination of aerobic and resistance exercises may offer the brain the biggest benefits,” says study co-author Jennifer L. Etnier, PH.D an associate professor of kinesiology at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.*** One way to increase the intensity of the activity in order to increase their heart rates and strengthen their

cardiovascular system is to include the use of light weights by adding a bicep curl while walking forward and back. This can be related to carrying grocery bags from the store. Using one weight to pull up to their rib cage (one arm row), simulates starting a lawn mower. Sometimes the class lift weights up to their shoulders while doing a step touch, we pretend like they are the waiters in a restaurant lifting a serving tray. Counting out loud the amount of times the group can lift a weight gives them confidence and makes them feel strong. These exercises help to improve focus and function of daily living skills. The importance of being with a group is not only emotionally satisfying, but it helps allow them to share a part of themselves with others. One of the WDSRA staff commented ***“my group had a fun time, the class was modified to their capabilities but challenging enough for everyone to get in a great workout. The group is looking forward to this monthly opportunity to increase their physical fitness level.”***

One of the last components of the class is improving flexibility which can help with daily activities such as bending down to tie shoelaces, brushing hair, getting up and down off the floor, moving in and out of the bathtub, and reaching for items in a cupboard. One of the favorite exercises we start with is laying down on the floor, coming up to a seated position and touching our toes. The class pretends they are waking up in the morning sitting up in bed and stretching. Some flexibility exercises might include shoulder and upper arm stretches, back and chest stretches, hip stretches, back of leg and calf stretches. Flexibility will help increase range of motion, which helps to make everyday movement easier, improve posture and muscle symmetry, reduce low-back pain and injury, and prevent muscle and joint tightness. The last part of the class is a cooldown, stretching the muscles while they are still warm and flexible.

Amanda Wilkinson, the instructor of the WDSRA Group Fitness Class, also feels she benefits from teaching this class. ***“It is my pleasure working with this very special group of people. They put a smile on my face! They help remind me what everyone wants in life; to be appreciated, to have fun, to have friends and to be confident in yourself and your abilities. It is my goal to assist with the growth of each individual and build confidence, coordination and strength in a fun and challenging setting.”***

Dori Napolitano, Day Program Manager for WDSRA stated “This type of class motivates our participants to start building a more active life, one that they would not have been interested in without the fun spin that this class provides.”

We must take the initiative to motivate and inspire young adults with disabilities, to participate in regular exercise to help enhance their lives. These are special individuals with special gifts to offer, we need to help them excel within their given abilities.

“As Thomas Jefferson once said: “Without health there is no happiness. And attention to health, then, should take the place of every other object.”

Partnerships Matter



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STRONG PARTNERSHIPS EQUAL

Strong Bodies

By **Deb Carey**, *Executive Director, Dixon Park District*



When we think of our well-trained and physically-fit Illinois Army National Guard soldiers, it does not often remind us of senior citizens, babies and special recreation association (SRA) participants toning their bodies! But at the Dixon Park District, Dixon, Illinois, one historic National Guard Armory, and one special open-space park, provide opportunities for everyone to get in shape and stay in shape.

Every Monday through Friday morning, you'll find seniors, mothers with babies in strollers, recipients of brand new knees and hips, SRA participants and the general public taking advantage of the walking program at the Illinois Army National Guard Armory (IL ARNG). The Dixon Park District is fortunate, indeed, to be allowed gym space in an Illinois National Guard Armory; as recent terrorist actions have closed many armories for public use. Stringent security measures are in place and participants feel safe and secure when exercising in the Armory.

Steve Caudillo, activity therapist coordinator for the Illinois Department of Human Services Jack Mabley Developmental Center in Dixon, regularly utilizes the Armory for a walking program for his clients. Steve says "Therapeutic recreation is about looking at the abilities that make the individual who they are. Special recreation allows us to help people reach their goals and provides physical, mental, emotional and social stimulation – while having fun." Steve and crew are an integral part of the Dixon Park District's SRA.

In northern Illinois, walking outdoors is not always possible; ice, sleet, bitter weather and wind chill temps below zero are impediments to a fitness walk in the open air in winter. The secure footing, and the climate-controlled atmosphere, make the Armory Walking Program a boon for those who require a safe place indoors for their daily walk.

Walking is a great way to keep fit no matter your age or physical abilities. The Mayo Clinic tells us that physical activity doesn't need to be complicated. Something as simple as a daily brisk walk can help you live a healthier life.

For example, regular brisk walking can help you:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Prevent or manage various conditions, including heart disease, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes
- Strengthen your bones
- Lift your mood
- Improve your balance and coordination

Get the right gear. To protect the lovely wooden floors of the Armory and to promote good support for the walker, we suggest that participants choose shoes with proper arch support, a firm heel and thick flexible soles to cushion your feet and absorb shock. Walk slowly for five to 10 minutes to warm up your muscles and prepare your body for exercise.

The partnership between the Dixon Park District and the IL ARNG has withstood the test of time. In 1935 the Dixon Park District offered funding for the purchase of land upon which to construct the Armory. At that time in history, just prior to World War II, it was a real coup for your town to be chosen as a site for construction of an Armory. The history of the National Guard in Dixon and Lee County reaches way back in time to 1861, when Company A, 13th Illinois Volunteer Infantry was organized to fight in the Civil War.

Providing land was an incentive...and it worked! Park district funds were allocated to purchase building lots on Everett Street and land west of the football stadium from the Board of Dixon Public Schools. The deed was signed, sealed and delivered just before Christmas in 1936. Built with WPA support, the Armory was completed in 1939. To fit into the park setting, the architect altered the design and created a two-story Armory. In past years, the park district has covered the costs of resurfacing the wooden gym floor in the Armory in return for no-cost use of the facility. Renovated by IL ARNG to keep up with the times, the Armory remains a gem in our town. The current Dixon Armory, Bravo Troop 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry, has housed Artillery, Armor, Infantry and Cavalry units since its opening.

And the partnership continues. Planning has begun for construction in 2017 of a secured vehicle/equipment parking lot for IL ARNG along with an IL ARNG personnel parking area; this parking area will be available for park and school events when not in use by IL ARNG.

Once again this project is being constructed on land cheerfully provided by the Dixon Park District. *"The Illinois National Guard is truly a community-based organization and there is no better example of how a local Guard unit and armory can benefit the community and vice versa than our long-standing partnership with the Dixon Illinois Park District"* said SSG Kyle T. Bishop

The Armory is located at the north entrance to Page Park, a 60-acre park in the center of town. Page Park was designed by noted landscape architect O.C. Simonds in connection with the firm of Olmsted Brothers. These famed designers had a hand in the layout of 18 of Dixon Park District's 30 parks. Page Park is named for the Page family; inventors of Elsie the Cow of Borden's Milk fame. The park is a green, linear swathe along Rock River. Picnicking, walking and biking trails, boat ramps and docks, a baseball complex, and a band shell adorn Page Park. Another great partnership is between the park district and Dixon Public Schools; Page Park provides tennis courts, shot put and discus areas, and baseball fields for sports, plus space for physical education for all students.

On Monday nights, the play in the Armory is pure pickleball. Brought to our community by some of our snowbirds who picked up pickleball in Florida, this game is much-loved. Even the tough Army guys love to play! The park district offers free gym time for pickleball on Monday nights, free, open gym on Tuesday nights, volleyball leagues on Wednesday nights and basketball leagues on Thursday nights. The Armory is recreation director Terry Shroyer's second home!

"IL ARNG, and the staff at the Armory, make this partnership possible. The Dixon Park District could not ask for a better partner than IL ARNG. We cheerfully share restroom cleaning chores, floor maintenance and a slew of daily activities that provide a great place for the public to engage in meaningful exercise and just plain fun recreation," said Shroyer. Shroyer has worked part-time for the Dixon Park District since he was a teenager in the 1970s; after retirement, he came on as full-time recreation director.

Matt Ross, a NBA-D league draftee, offers basketball clinics for kids at the Armory; keeping kids active is our goal. Instilling the idea that "fitness can be fun" may be the incentive a child needs to mature into a healthy lifestyle filled with daily physical activity instead of morphing into a passive video game junkie.

To keep in shape physically, and to maintain critical warrior and scout skills, IL ARNG soldiers must participate in rigorous training on a regular basis. Plum Creek is a 62-acre park just west of the town of Dixon. This park was donated to the Dixon Park District by the Walgreen Family. With its hills and valleys, a rocky creek and forested lands, the park site provides excellent terrain for IL ARNG training maneuvers. Mounted and dismounted maneuvers, battle drills, and warrior tasks; it all takes place at Plum Creek. Previously, troops traveled many miles to another IL ARNG site for training; now they convoy a mile saving time, fuel and resources.

An advisory question on the March 15, 2016 ballot asked Dixon Park District citizens if they supported forging strong partnerships between the park district and not only government entities but also private businesses and non-profit organizations. The resultant vote was overwhelmingly in favor of partnerships. Life in general will be happier, more productive, and more economical, if we work hand-in-hand with our faithful partners.

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PEOPLE & PLACES



Peoria Park District Board of Trustees Selects New Executive Director

After working extensively with the Illinois Association of Park Districts, the board of trustees of the Peoria Park District hired **Susan Knoblauch** as its new executive director.

Susan was employed as the Director of Activities and Sports at the National Federation of State

High School Association (NFHS). Her responsibilities included serving state athletic/activity associations by providing program initiatives for students involved in interscholastic programs. While at NFHS, she developed online courses for music directing and adjudication training, streamlined the coordination of national conference workshops and collaborated with national governing bodies to align rule sets.

Susan also worked as the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) administrator for cheerleading, speech, drama, debate, music, tennis and journalism for 10 years. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from Illinois State University.



Joliet Park District Hires Tom Carstens as the New Executive Director

With the assistance of the Illinois Association of Park Districts' director search service, the Joliet Park District Board of Commissioners appointed **Mr. Thomas Carstens**, CPRP as executive director to lead the Joliet Park District.

Tom brings experience and expertise to the Joliet Park District through a proven record of operational leadership, strategy development, customer service, team building, financial management and performance management as the Executive Director of the Frankfort Park District and previous leadership roles at other park districts such as Deputy Director at Bolingbrook Park District and Superintendent of Recreation at Cary Park District.

Tom's main focus will be the completion of the referendum projects along with implementing a new culture and operating philosophy which will include professionalism, customer service and adding to the quality of life for residents.



Executive Director of the Arlington Heights Park District to Retire June 2016

Steve Scholten, who has served as executive director of the Arlington Heights Park District (AHPD) since 2008, will retire in June 2016, after devoting 40 years to the parks and recreation industry in Illinois with 32 of those years having served as an executive director.

Steve took the helm in 2008, bringing decades of wide-ranging experience that began at the Elk Grove Park District. His commitment to helping to make communities viable, strong and desirable places to live and raise families resulted in him successfully filling the executive director role at Medinah, Glen Ellyn and Bloomingdale. Under his leadership, in 2006, the Bloomingdale Park District received the National Recreation and Park Association's Gold Medal for Park and Recreation Management Excellence.

Steve always found time to fill leadership positions on local Chambers of Commerce, Special Recreation Associations, Park Foundations, the Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA) and the National Recreation and Park Association. He was named the IPRA 2003 Professional of the Year and received the Robert Artz Lifetime Achievement Award from IPRA in 2009. In 2008, Scholten officiated at the IHSA state basketball championship game and in 2012 was inducted into the Illinois Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame as an Official.

"I love my work and am honored to have spent my professional career working in communities to make life enjoyable and meaningful for citizens of all ages," said Scholten. Adding that he is forever grateful to all of the elected officials, staff and community members throughout his career that have given his professional life meaning and direction.



In Memoriam

H. **George Whitehead**, 70, passed away on Tuesday, March 8, 2016, in Herrin Hospital.

George was born Dec. 16, 1945, in Ava, Missouri, to Herbert Cecile and Jennie Leona (Greer) Whitehead. His wife, Jo Ann survives him and resides in Carbondale.

George served his country in the U.S. Army from 1965 to 1967. After his military service he attended and

graduated from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

He started his career with the park district for the City of Carbondale as an intern and went on to become the park district director where he served for 22 years. He was well known in the community as Santa George during the Christmas season. He also worked as a recreational instructor at Southern Illinois University for 10 years until his retirement in December 2015. George was a member of the Southern Illinois Parks and Recreation Association. He leaves behind many wonderful friends and colleagues and will be missed by all who knew him.



Longest Career at Hickory Hills Park District

Richard Rusk is retiring from the park district in April after 44 years of service. He has had the longest tenure of any employee at Hickory Hills Park District and has been working there since 1972. Richard is a long time resident of Hickory Hills and everyone in town knows who he is as well as anyone who has ever worked at the park district. He has been a faithful employee in the maintenance department and also working with the local youth baseball organization. Richard will be

moving to central Illinois where he can enjoy fishing and bike riding during his retirement.



Jim Pilmer Named 6th Executive Director in Fox Valley Park District's 68-Year History

A lifelong Aurora resident, **Jim Pilmer** brings extensive experience in both the public and private sectors. Most recently, he worked

as director of neighborhood standards for the City of Aurora and also served in an administrative role at Aurora University. From 2002 to 2009, Pilmer was director of parks and recreation for the City of Aurora.

A "compassionate public servant," Pilmer says interaction and communication with residents are among his top priorities. "I am visible, approachable and accessible; I like to be out there among the people I serve. Developing good relationships with our residents fosters a culture of mutual trust and respect."

Fox Valley, the second largest park district in Illinois, serves 233,000 residents in Aurora, North Aurora and Montgomery while maintaining 165 parks, 48 miles of trails and 2,500 acres of parkland.

"We're in the recreation business; we make people happy and we transform people's lives through our programs, facilities and events," said Pilmer.

"Jim is a visionary; a critical thinker with strong leadership capabilities who will pursue common objectives for the common good," said Board President Bob Vaughan. "He is a respected community leader with a proven ability to work hard for the betterment of everybody he serves in our communities."

Want to Read More?

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

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