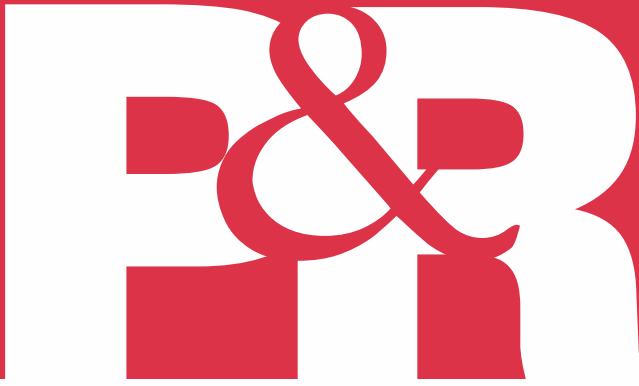


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PARKS AND RECREATION

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



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FROM THE EDITOR

My new running buddy has some unfair advantages.



She has four legs instead of two, and she has a *lot* more energy than I do. Her name is Kimber, and she is our family's new Chocolate Labrador Retriever. At just 10 weeks old, her current recreational activities include chewing on absolutely everything she can get her teeth on, chasing balls, eating, drinking, sleeping, and my personal favorite, fighting me for my husband's attention!

Although we haven't gone running yet, I look forward to logging several miles of easy, relaxing strides with my new furry friend. (*Who am I kidding? That dog will drag me down the pavement while I scream for help and beg her to slow down!*) I am not sure what will hurt more... the road rash, or my pride.

Our hometown of Athens has a modest population of 1,911. There are very few sidewalks, so most recreational activities are pushed to the streets where we share the road with a surprisingly large amount of traffic for a small town. So, being dragged down the road by my four-legged friend will likely cause me to end up in the hazardous line of traffic, or worse, on someone's iPhone to eventually appear as a viral YouTube video.

Fortunately, last year, the Springfield Park District extended their Sangamon Valley Trail toward our small town, and future plans will bring it all the way to Athens. This has been a blessing for me and hundreds of others who can bike or drive a few miles to access a beautiful, well-kept trail that provides 5.5 miles of safe space for active recreation.

According to the Illinois Association of Park Districts' database, our member agencies maintain more than 3,000 miles of trails for bicycling, walking, hiking, running and for BMX and equestrian use – and that number is growing as many of our member agencies have more trails in the works.

This issue of *Illinois Parks & Recreation* highlights the popularity of trails and the array of benefits they provide. In *Biking is a Major Component for Urbana Park District* on page 20, Mark Schultz discusses how connectivity, partnerships and the park district's commitment to bike programs have advanced their long-term goal of expanding biking in the community. The Champaign County Forest Preserve District's Mary Ellen Wuellner brings readers along for the ride in *My Ride on the Kickapoo Rail Trail* on page 24, which outlines numerous benefits of trails. And, on page 12, in *The Path to Creating a Regional Trail – Ridgefield Trace*, Wendy Kummerer with the McHenry County Conservation District explains how several partnering organizations journeyed toward completion of a 7.5-mile trail, 18 years in the making!

Also included with this issue of the magazine is the Soaring to New Heights full conference guide. **Please remember to bring this guide to the January conference**, so that you have easy access to 'everything conference,' including Session #129 *Cal-Sag Trail Coalition: Building the Partnership to Build the Trail*.

Happy New Year! I look forward to seeing you at the conference!

— Bobbie Jo Hill, Interim Editor



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Peter M. Murphy, Esq., CAE, IOM
IAPD President and CEO

IAPD is Dedicated to Helping Our Members Thrive

As we reflected on the association's 90 years in 2018, we celebrated the many outstanding achievements and ideas that IAPD has helped bring to fruition to make Illinois the nation's model for parks, recreation and conservation. Without a dedicated statewide association working closely with locally elected commissioners and park professionals, things would be vastly different.

For instance, IAPD generated the idea and fought to establish a funding source for the OSLAD/NAAF program, which has provided more than \$414 million in grants to Illinois park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies. Matched locally, this totals more than \$1.1 billion dollars invested in the recreational infrastructure of communities across Illinois since 1989.

The association's educational training for commissioners and professionals, such as the Commissioner Boot Camp, Leadership Institute, Legislative Conference, Legal Symposium and the highly-acclaimed *Soaring to New Heights Conference* have helped to develop the most knowledgeable and skilled leaders in the nation.

IAPD is indebted to our founding fathers who had the foresight to create something special nine decades ago. We are inspired by the same drive and vision shown by you, the commissioners and professionals of today. And, we are motivated by the knowledge that the work we are doing together now will make a positive, lasting difference for the future.

In 2018, achievements by your statewide association included:

- Creating a multi-faceted communications strategy to educate Appropriations Committee chairpersons, legislative leaders and key legislative staff about the significance of OSLAD's local match, the overall return on investment and its positive economic impact. **As a direct result of these advocacy efforts, this year's state budget included a \$29 million appropriation for new OSLAD grants – nearly double the amount that was in the proposed budget.**
- Successfully advocating for the passage of House Bill 4573, which expands the authority under the Public Funds Investment Act to allow IAPD member agencies to earn

additional interest on their investments by increasing the maturity length in highly rated corporate obligations.

- Responded to the General Assembly's new sexual harassment policy requirements for all local governments by delivering a timely webinar and providing member agencies with a sample policy to help them satisfy these new legal requirements.
- Attended 11 legislative breakfasts in member districts throughout the state, interacting with a total of 41 legislators and more than 500 members.
- As part of IAPD's newly-redesigned website, IAPD **boosted the Legal Assistance section with 104 members-only resources on 30 different legal topics and 382 total resources on approximately 85 legal topics.**
- Responded to 425 legal inquiries from 150 different agencies – a 25% increase above our average.
- IAPD's *Board Self-Evaluation Program* continued to be a popular service in 2018 with 76 board self-evaluations completed to date. This valuable service provides boards with specialized assistance in defining roles and responsibilities, describing duties for oversight and governance and determining leadership within their agencies.
- Enrollment in IAPD's *Board Member Development Program* increased among board members throughout the state who want to track their accomplishments while serving on their local board through the accumulation of Board Development Units.
- **Our Director Search Program remains highly acclaimed as the best option for boards to utilize when hiring an executive.** IAPD has placed 127 executive directors/CEOs to date (5 during 2018).
- IAPD published the *2018 Buyer's Guide*, the yellow pages for Illinois park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies.
- **A complete website redesign was unveiled this year,** giving our members a professional, mobile-friendly source with complete access to comprehensive information

regarding advocacy, education, research and public awareness. Video tutorials were also created to assist members in navigating the site's various tools and information centers.

- *SocialLink* was launched as an online community for members to interact via a secure online platform linked to their IAPD profile.
- IAPD staff provided prompt responses to thousands of member phone calls, emails, text messages, social media posts and letters regarding grant applications, board matters, employment issues, legal questions and information on organizing a park district and more.
- IAPD **concluded a major member centric research study with aQity Research & Insights, Inc.** to gauge program participation and facility usage at IAPD member agencies. The study built on previous research that quantifies the excellent value that park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies statewide deliver to Illinois residents.
- IAPD secured seven billboards throughout Illinois to promote the *Park District Youth License Plate* in support of fitness, health and nutrition for children.
- *Parks Day at the Capitol* featured nearly 50 IAPD member agencies showcasing their programs, services and natural areas with the theme: *Discover the Power of Park Districts and Forest Preserves.*
- The 25th annual *Park District Conservation Day* featured media interviews and brought more than 200 representatives of Illinois park, recreation, and conservation agencies to the Illinois State Fair to showcase their programs to more than 39,000 fairgoers at various high-traffic areas throughout the fairgrounds.
- More than 250 guests joined the IAPD for the 12th annual *Best of the Best Awards Gala and IAPD 90th Anniversary Celebration.*
- IAPD secured an all-time high of 3,368 combined followers on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.
- Member agencies received \$31,000 in *PowerPlay!* grants from IAPD this year.
- ***Friends of Illinois Parks contributed to the protection and enhancement of parks, open space and the quality of life in Illinois.*** The *Friends of Illinois Parks' 17th Annual Summer Golf Tour* brought together nearly 250 golfers, corporate sponsors and guests, raising money for *Friends* programs and research.
- IAPD continued to negotiate and secure agreements with a number of organizations to offer our member agencies discounted prices on products and services.
- Nearly 200 commissioners and professionals participated in IAPD's *Leadership Institute*, a unique educational series designed to transform leaders by enhancing personal growth and professional development.

- The 2018 *Soaring to New Heights Conference* at the Hilton-Chicago brought together more than 4,000 park, recreation and conservation agency board members, professionals, staff, students, legislators and businesses to network and learn about the latest trends, products and services.

- **IAPD provided more than 40 educational programs in 2018** including *Negotiating Cell Tower Agreements: An Alternative Source of Revenue for Your Agency*, *Strategic Planning, Public Accessibility with Transgender Populations*, *The Impact of Rising Interest Rates* and *A Road Map to Effective Intergovernmental Collaboration.*

- The 40th *Annual Legislative Conference and Reception* featured nearly 350 attendees who connected with legislators and learned about effectively communicating benefits to policymakers.

- IAPD's 2018 *Legal Symposium* provided the sold-out audience with a powerful agenda packed with the hottest topics in park district law.

- **The 2018-2019 IAPD Benefits of Membership** was created in hard copy and emailed in digital format to IAPD's membership. This reference guide **contains more than 700 hyperlinks to an** array of valuable internal and external resources for commissioners and professionals to make the most of their membership.

- IAPD produced bi-monthly, content rich, issues of *Illinois Parks & Recreation* magazine.

- A history piece highlighting IAPD's 90 years appeared as a supplement to the September/October issue of *Illinois Parks & Recreation*. The 22-page publication reviewed the association's significant milestones and great achievements of its leaders.

All in all, 2018 was an amazing year of service to IAPD's membership and a celebration of 90 years of dedicated service by countless park commissioners and professionals who, throughout the decades, embodied volunteerism at the highest level.

To all of them and to all of you who continue to build on this strong foundation, I give my sincerest thanks for making a difference in Illinois and in my life. I am honored to serve as the President and CEO of such a wonderful organization which puts me in daily contact with people, such as yourself, who epitomize the meaning of professionalism and volunteerism.

As 2019 begins, IAPD continues to live by the Walt Disney motto: ***Around here, we don't look backwards for very long. We keep moving forward, opening up new doors and doing new things, because we're curious...and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.***

I wish you a happy and healthy New Year!

EYE ON THE PROFESSION

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



By Debbie Trueblood, CAE
IPRA Executive Director

See YOU at the IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference!

On behalf of the IPRA Board of Directors and staff team, we are eagerly looking forward to seeing so many of you at this year's "IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference!" For many of our members, the conference is the highlight of the year, and the top-rated member benefit. It is the culmination of so many volunteers coming together as one community, bound together in our passion for parks and recreation. I can't wait!

My thanks to the volunteers on the hard-working Joint Conference Committee. This committee, which includes professionals from IPRA's membership and commissioners from IAPD's membership, are a passionate group of volunteers who work tirelessly on the conference for twelve months planning every detail to ensure the best conference experience. My thanks to them including IPRA Chair John Robinson and IAPD Chair Kevin Dolan, and the committee: IPRA Operations Chair Carlo Capalbo, IPRA Exhibits Co-Chair John Curran, IPRA Events Chair Andrew Dallner, IAPD Operations Co-Chair Adriane Johnson, IAPD Operations Chair Jerri-Lynn Kleina, IAPD Events Chair Lori Palmer, IPRA Operations Co-Chair Tim Reinbold, IPRA Program Chair Kevin Romejko, IAPD Exhibits Chair Bob Schmidt, IAPD Exhibits Co-Chair Ted Schulz, IAPD Program Chair Mike Vogl, and IPRA Exhibits Chair John Wilson, along with Conference Directors Leesa Kuo Johnson from IPRA and Sue Triphahn from IAPD.

My thanks to the dedicated IPRA Program Committee. This committee works to ensure that you have the best educational experience at conference. My thanks to IPRA Program Chair Kevin Romejko and IAPD Program Chair Mike Vogl and the committee: Liz Cox, Caitlin Deptula, Nikki Ginger, Carol Heafey, Tammy Hoggatt, Darleen Negrillo, John Short, Marlon Rodas, Theresa Eposito, Jonelle Bailey, Lonette Hall, Erin Chapa, John Chase, Laura Cavazos, Mat Emken, Kim Hansen, Jennifer Knitter, Ken McEwen, Rob Sperl, Matt Nefrefa, Erika Strojinc, Dawn Krawiec, and Ethan Williams, along with Conference Directors Leesa Kuo Johnson from IPRA and Sue Triphahn from IAPD.

Plus, conference would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of many onsite volunteers. We rely on their assistance in daily logistics, registration, and Conference Headquarters. If you wish to volunteer and have an hour or two to spare during conference, please send an

email to the following people and include the day(s)/time(s) you are available: Conference Headquarters: Duane Smith (duane@ilipra.org) Conference Registration: Alan Howard (ahoward@ilparks.org), and the IPRA Booth: Jean Kane (jean@ilipra.org).

This year's conference will be January 24-26, 2019, at the Hyatt Regency Chicago on Wacker Drive. As usual, we have exciting entertainment planned to enhance your networking opportunities. On Thursday night, January 24, enjoy the Welcome Social featuring the band, Hey Jimmy. They are a premier party dance band, from medleys to mashups, Hey Jimmy's high-energy performance will bring you to your feet and on the dance floor. No tickets needed, all conference attendees are welcome!

On Saturday night, January 26, enjoy the annual Closing Social at the Shedd Aquarium. You'll need a ticket to this exciting event. Ticket includes: roundtrip shuttle service from the Hyatt Regency Chicago, admission to Shedd Aquarium, including access to the *Underwater Beauty* special exhibit, dinner buffet, and unlimited beer, wine, and soft drinks. You won't want to miss the memorable celebration. Additional tickets may be purchased through the pre-registration process or on-site from Conference Registration. Adult tickets are \$95; Child tickets (12 and under) are \$35. Tickets **will not be sold** on-site at the Aquarium.

Don't miss the Keynote General Session on Saturday, January 26, 8:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m., which awards 0.1 CEUs. The speaker this year will be Greg Schwem, presenting "Rock, Roll, and Laugh Your Way to the Top". As a comedian who has opened concerts for stars such as Keith Urban, Celine Dion, Enrique Iglesias, and (wait for it) KC and the Sunshine Band, Greg has seen how rock and roll is really a business. Like the business of running the best agency possible! In short? Every park district, forest preserve, conservation, recreation or special recreation agency, and employee within that agency, has "rock star" potential. Greg shows you how to achieve that potential in a highly motivational presentation that combines hilarious comedy, live concert footage and a musical soundtrack featuring everything from classic rock to country western to Lollapalooza. Topics include "Why Every Office Needs a Keith Richards," "Are You Team Taylor or Team Kanye?" and "Don't Let Your Park District Become a Country Song." Rock on, IAPD & IPRA members!

We want to thank our conference sponsors who help make the conference possible for us. Thanks to our Diamond Sponsors: CardConnect, Cunningham Recreation and Gewalt Hamilton Associates, Inc., our Titanium Sponsors: Greenfields Outdoor Fitness, Nicor Gas, and WT Group, LLC, our Platinum Sponsors: Ancel Glink, ComEd Energy Efficiency Program, DLA Architects, Ltd., Trane, and Upland Design, Ltd., and our Gold Sponsor: BCI Burke Company and Robbins Schwartz.

We also have some other exciting events planned. We will have our annual Silent Auction and Sports Raffle. Proceeds go to the Illinois Park and Recreation Foundation (IPRF) to provide scholarships to professionals and college students all over the state. It will be located at registration this year. If you would like to make a donation or need more information, please contact Nanette Sowa at nsowa@nwsra.org. The winners of the sports raffle will be announced at the Closing Social Saturday night of conference.

For students, our premier option is the Sponsor a Student program at the Awards Luncheon on Friday, January 25 at 12:15 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. In this program, students can opt in when they register to attend the lunch for free and be matched with an organization who will share their table with you, giving you a chance to network with professionals in the field. We also offer “Professional Connection” on Thursday, January 24 at 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. You won't want to miss this unique opportunity to network with professionals in the field. Everyone who attends will enjoy complimentary pizza and soda. We will offer “Mock Interviews/Resume Review” on Friday, January 25 at 9:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Professionals will ask interview questions, as well as review students' resumes. At the conclusion of the interview, students will receive constructive feedback and advice that will help them be more prepared to do well in a real-life interview.

Again, this year, we will host the IPRA Member Engagement Town Hall presented by IPRA 2019 Chair Jeff Fougousse and I on Saturday, January 26 from 2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. In this session we will share ways for new and long-time members of IPRA to get more involved.

Go Green! Download the IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference app for up-to-the-minute news during conference. Also, there will be no paper evaluations for conference sessions and workshops this year. Instead, use the app to provide comments and feedback. Go to Google Play or the Apple App Store and search the keyword: IAPD/IPRA.

On Friday night, January 25 from 5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. will be IPRA's Annual Business Meeting. All are welcome to attend this event where we will present a variety of awards for both agencies and individuals, share IPRA's Annual Report for 2018, and all new board and section board members will be inaugurated. IPRA's new Chairman of the Board will be Jeff Fougousse from the Vernon Hills Park District and our new Chair-Elect will be Erin Folk from the Oregon Park District. In 2019, IPRA is turning 75! Come

join us in celebrating this milestone anniversary immediately following the meeting. More details coming soon!

I also want to thank the 2018 IPRA Board of Directors for all their time and commitment to IPRA this year: Chair Matt Corso, Past-Chair Rita Fletcher, Chair-Elect Jeff Fougousse, North West Region Rep Erin Folk, Chicago Metro Region Rep Jim Warnstedt, Central Region Rep Doug Damery, Southern Region Rep Kimberly Caughran, At-Large Rep Trisha Breitlow, and Membership Council Rep Conor Cahill.

Additionally, I want to thank the members of the Illinois Park and Recreation Foundation (IPRF) Board of Directors: Chair: Michael Clark, Cam Bettin, Carlo Capalbo, Tracey Crawford, John Curran, Mike Kies, Ray Ochomowitz, Jarrod Scheunemann, Liz Serruto, Chuck Szoke, Carol Sente, John Wilson, IPRA Board Liaison Jeff Fougousse, members of the Events Committee: Laura Barron, Bill McAdams, Gayle Mountcastle, Lindsey Nicholson, and Nanette Sowa.

IPRA is thriving today because of the continued dedication and commitment of our volunteers. Again, my thanks and congratulations to the Joint Conference Committee and Program Committee on a successful conference. All your work is going to culminate in a successful and memorable conference that we will all remember. I look forward to seeing you all there.



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Jason Anselment
Legal/Legislative Counsel

Make Grassroots Advocacy a Part of Your New Year's Resolutions

As this issue goes to press, newly elected legislators are preparing to take office when the 101st General Assembly is sworn in on January 9, 2019. Including legislators who were recently appointed, there will be more than 40 new faces in the House and Senate next year.

Many retiring legislators are very close friends of IAPD, including several Outstanding Legislators of the Year. While their steadfast support will certainly be missed, change brings opportunity and we are excited to develop relationships with a new group of legislators.

IAPD recognized that widespread changes would be coming to the General Assembly more than a year ago. We are well-prepared to hit the ground running by reaffirming our existing relationships with our legislative champions and by meeting personally with each new representative and senator to deliver a welcome packet that contains important information regarding the benefits of local park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies as well as key contacts for each agency within his or her legislative district.

Relationships are the foundation of IAPD's success at the Capitol, and your agency plays a vital role in our advocacy program. There are several important things you can do to help us build alliances as we begin the New Year.

Three Simple Resolutions to Complete in the Next Several Weeks

If history is any guide, many of you have already started connecting with legislators who are new to your agency. For those who may be looking for ways to introduce themselves and their agency or to develop existing relationships, here are three easy resolutions to accomplish at the beginning of the year.

1. Invite Your Legislator to Join You at the IAPD/IPRA Conference Awards Luncheon

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

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

If you have not already done so, make a lasting impression by inviting your legislator to accompany you to the IAPD/IPRA Conference Awards Luncheon on January 25, 2019.

2. Join Your Legislators at a Legislative Breakfast

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

The legislative breakfasts are some of my favorite events of the year. It is always gratifying to see so many IAPD members with legislators back in their legislative districts. Please join us at one of the dozen events that are

scheduled during the months of February and March. Event details are at the end of this article, so please find a Legislative Breakfast location near you and encourage your legislator to attend.

3. Invite Your Legislator to Your Facilities

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

One of the best ways to raise awareness of all your agency offers is to give your legislator a personalized tour of your facilities. This would afford you the opportunity to explain the programs you deliver to residents and the role your legislator can play in helping you. For example, the impact of unfunded mandates and the capital needs that exist at your agency can be more easily demonstrated during legislator site visits to your facilities.

These are just three of the many ways you can build important relationships with your legislators at the beginning of the year. Obviously, it is important to update your mailing lists to make sure legislators are receiving information about the programs and services your agency offers to residents. Legislators welcome information about events within their legislative districts, so make sure your legislator receives your calendar of events and, when appropriate, invite them to attend events.

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

IAPD is counting on you to help us develop strong relationships with the dozens of new members of the General Assembly. Do not wait to start this process. Our legislative success depends upon each of you!

2019 SPRING SESSION IAPD LEGISLATIVE AWARENESS SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

The 101st General Assembly's Spring Session officially begins on January 9, 2019. Key deadlines and other important dates are available on the IAPD website at ILparks.org, as well as the General Assembly's website at ilga.gov.

There will be numerous opportunities throughout the Spring Session to meet with legislators to discuss important legislative issues and deliver positive messages about the benefits of parks, recreation and conservation. Please mark your calendar to attend these events and invite your legislator to join you.

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Friday, January 25 | Soaring to New Heights Awards Luncheon |
| Friday, February 8 | Mundelein Park & Recreation District |
| Monday, February 11 | Rockford Park District |
| Friday, February 22 | Joliet Park District Berwyn Park District |
| Saturday, February 23 | Schaumburg Park District |
| Monday, February 25 | Peoria Park District |
| Friday, March 1 | Buffalo Grove Park District |
| Monday, March 4 | Tinley Park-Park District |
| Friday, March 8 | Wheaton Park District Fox Valley Park District |
| Monday, March 11 | Urbana Park District |
| Tuesday, March 12 | Springfield Park District |
| Tuesday, April 30 | Parks Day at the Capitol State Capitol, Springfield |
| | Legislative Reception Illini Country Club, Springfield |
| Wednesday, May 1 | Legislative Conference Crowne Plaza, Springfield |



THE PATH TO CREATING A REGIONAL TRAIL —

RIDGEFIELD TRACE

By **Wendy Kummerer**, *Director of Marketing & Communications, McHenry County Conservation District*

From beginning to end, the Ridgefield Trace regional trail is just 7.5 miles in length, yet, it was a journey that was 18 years in the making. The paved, 10 foot wide trail extends primarily along a ComEd right-of-way and the busy U.S. Highway 14. It connects the bustling suburban cities of Woodstock and Crystal Lake, offering residents a safe mode of travel whether by bike, on foot or via rollerblades.



“Having McHenry College as the anchor of Phase I provided the project a substantial community entity and established the trail as a destination, an alternate travel route, and a true community connection for college staff, students and casual riders, as well as neighborhood dog walkers,”

Bringing this trail from concept to reality took the cooperation, persistence and funding resourcefulness of numerous local and state agencies who each played a significant role in the successful addition of a new recreational amenity and green transportation corridor in McHenry County.

“It was in March of 2000 that discussions began on where the trail would be placed, and an alignment study was launched. This process involved multiple jurisdictions, various public/private landowners, local and state regulatory agencies, and, of course, multiple opinions,” quipped Director of Operations and Public Safety John Kremer of the McHenry County Conservation District (MCCD). “After numerous discussions, deliberations and meetings, four years later we had a plan! We finally broke ground on March 23, 2009 - then it rained for six weeks!”

The trail was built in multiple construction phases. Phase I was a 1.78-mile segment traveling east from McHenry County College that dead-ended and looped back. “Having McHenry College as the anchor of Phase I provided the project a substantial community entity and established the trail as a destination, an alternate travel route, and a true community connection for college staff, students and casual riders, as well as neighborhood dog walkers,” said Kremer. “McHenry County College also gave the project a

unique aspect in the grant funding arena and thus spurred the attention of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Illinois Bicycle Path Grant Program and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), who eventually aided in funding the trail.”

Phase II travels 1.5 miles from Oak Street in Crystal Lake east to connect with Crystal Lake Park District's Veteran Acres Park. Phase II was funded in part through a Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) grant. Both section I and II travel along a ComEd right-of-way. These two sections, however, were divided by a trail break at the Oak Street intersection due to the active Union Pacific Railroad line. For years, the district continued to work with Union Pacific Railroad, Nunda Township and the city of Crystal Lake in developing solutions for a safe crossing and sought out multiple funding sources for the completion of this critical link.

Meanwhile, Phase III of the trail, (that had been delayed several times due to state funding) was back on track and completed in the fall of 2016 in conjunction with IDOT's road-widening project of U.S. Highway 14. This section extended the trail 4.5 miles from McHenry County College in Crystal Lake, northwest along U.S. Route 14 to West Lake Shore Drive in Woodstock and was funded by a grant from the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP); (80% IDOT / 20% MCCD).



Whether it's a morning trek, a family weekend ride or a part of a weekly fitness regime to hike, pedal or roll - trails are a great way to enjoy the outdoors, experience nature up close, and get some exercise.

Then, in June of 2016, persistence paid off and, appropriately occurring during national bike week, we got the go-ahead to close the gap between Phase I and II – the final, crucial link in making the trail complete! The McHenry County Conservation District and the Nunda Township Road District were given the authority by a duly appointed administrative law judge at the Illinois Commerce Commission to construct a multi-use path on the west side of Oak Street in Crystal Lake. Union Pacific Railroad agreed to expand and improve their existing crossing to accommodate the new trail crossing.

Momentum was finally on our side. This final connection of Ridgefield Trace received a boost of support from our local community partners and advocates by means of a “Close the Gap” funding campaign that resulted in \$60,000 from the McHenry County Division of Transportation; \$10,000 from the McHenry County Community Foundation; \$5,000 from the McHenry County Conservation Foundation; and \$5,000 from McHenry County Bicycle Advocates and McHenry County Bicycle Club. Construction began in late fall of 2017 and was completed in July 2018 and thus completing a near 18-year journey!

Now, an avid cyclist can ride from the west side of Woodstock to downtown Crystal Lake via Ridgefield Trace and, in under a mile along neighborhood roadways, connect with the conservation district's 26-mile Prairie Trail, which gives users access to over 100 miles of trails

including the Hebron Trail, Kane County's Fox River Trail, the Great Western Trail, and the Illinois Prairie Path.

Whether it's a morning trek, a family weekend ride or part of a weekly fitness regime to hike, pedal or roll - trails are a great way to enjoy the outdoors, experience nature up close, and get some exercise. Which makes it significant to note that in 2018, Illinois adopted cycling as the official state exercise!

And further testament to McHenry County's dedication to non-motorized transportation, the McHenry County Board, the McHenry County Board of Health, the McHenry County Conservation District, the city of Woodstock, the city of McHenry, the city of Crystal Lake and the village of Algonquin proclaimed the week of June 21 to 29 as Bicycle Week. These communities dutifully recognize that the bicycle is an environmentally sound, economical and effective means of personal transportation, recreation and exercise.

“To hold steadfast in a vision, to keep pushing the players and pieces forward, to maintain belief in a project that is for the greater vision of healthy, livable communities takes great coordination,” stated David Kranz, President of the County Conservation District Board of Trustees. “We were honored to be able to announce that this unique project received recognition from the Illinois Association of Park Districts at the 2018 Best of the Best Awards Gala for the Intergovernmental Cooperation Award. The Ridgefield Trace

regional trail project is testament to great community collaboration that exists in McHenry County, Illinois and McHenry County Conservation District's commitment to all of its current and future residents who benefit from recreational trails and community connections."

Ridgefield Trace Project Partners: Nunda Township, city of Woodstock, McHenry County College, city of Crystal Lake, Crystal Lake Park District, McHenry County Department of Transportation, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning – CMAP, ComEd, the Illinois Nature Preserve Commission, and the Union Pacific Railroad.

Ridgefield was one of the first towns to come into existence in the McHenry County area during the mid 1800s. Route 14 was originally an Indian trail, also known as a "trace." Thus, when it came time to naming the Woodstock to Crystal Lake trail, Ridgefield Trace was chosen to honor the route that provided safe passage in the past and now far into the future.

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IAPD & IPRA 2019 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

IAPD

January 24-26, 2019
2019 IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference
Hyatt Regency Chicago

Friday, February 8, 2019
Legislative Breakfast
Mundelein Park & Recreation District

Monday, February 11, 2019
Legislative Breakfast
Rockford Park District

Friday, February 22, 2019
Legislative Breakfasts
Joliet Park District and Berwyn Park District

Saturday, February 23, 2019
Legislative Breakfast
Schaumburg Park District

Monday, February 25, 2019
Legislative Breakfast
Peoria Park District

Friday, March 1, 2019
Legislative Breakfast
Buffalo Grove Park District

Monday, March 4, 2019
Legislative Breakfast
Tinley Park-Park District

Friday, March 8, 2019
Legislative Breakfasts
Wheaton Park District and Fox Valley Park District

Monday, March 11, 2019
Legislative Breakfast
Urbana Park District

Tuesday, March 12, 2019
Legislative Breakfast
Springfield Park District

April-May, 2019
Flying for Kids Month, Statewide Kite Fly

Tuesday, April 30, 2019
Parks Day at the Capitol
State Capitol, Springfield, IL

IAPD Legislative Reception
Illini Country Club

Wednesday, May 1, 2019
IAPD Legislative Conference
Crowne Plaza, Springfield, IL

Monday, May 20, 2019
IAPD Summer Golf Tour Outing #1
Park District of Highland Park Sunset Valley Golf Club

Wednesday, May 29, 2019
IAPD Boot Camp #1
Deerfield Park District

Thursday, May 30, 2019
IAPD Boot Camp #2
Hoffman Estates Park District

Tuesday, June 4, 2019
IAPD Boot Camp #3
Lockport Township Park District

Wednesday, June 5, 2019
IAPD Boot Camp #4
Wheaton Park District

Thursday, June 6, 2019
IAPD Boot Camp #5
Oregon Park District

Saturday, June 8, 2019
IAPD Boot Camp #6
Washington Park District

Monday June 17, 2019
IAPD Summer Golf Tour Outing #2
Mundelein Park & Recreation District

July 11, 2019
IAPD Leadership Classic
Lake County Forest Preserves ThunderHawk Golf Club

Saturday, August 17, 2019
IAPD Park District
Conservation Day Illinois State Fair

Monday, August 26, 2019
IAPD Summer Golf Tour Outing #3
GolfVision Management Inc. Settler's Hill Golf Course

Wednesday, September 18, 2019
IAPD Summer Golf Tour Outing #4
Glenview Park District Glenview Park Golf Club

September 24-26, 2019
NRPA Congress & Exhibition
Baltimore, MD

October 4-6, 2019
IAPD Board Retreat
Tentative

Friday, November 1, 2019
Best of the Best Awards Gala
Wheeling Park District Chevy Chase Country Club

Thursday, November 14, 2019
Legal Symposium
McDonald's U/Hyatt Lodge

January 23-25, 2020
2020 IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference
Hyatt Regency Chicago

Friday, October 16, 2020
2020 Best of the Best Awards Gala
Wheeling Park District's Chevy Chase Country Club

IPRA

FEBRUARY
CPRP Exam Prep Series
Series of classes designed to prepare individuals for the National Recreation and Park Association's Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP) exam. All four classes will be taught by Nikki Ginger of the Chicago Park District, and they will provide attendees with an intensive review of parks and recreation in the content areas of Programming, Human Resources, Finance, and Operations.

HR & Communications
Friday, February 1, 2019
Finance
Friday, March 8, 2019
Programming
Thursday, April 4, 2019
Operations
Friday, May 3, 2019

Webinar: Events that WOW!
Wednesday, February 13, 2019 & Thursday, February 21, 2019
Award winning event planner, Réna Puébla, kicks off this year's webinar series with secrets and techniques that will transform the way you look at event planning. Réna will share practical tips that she has gained from more than 30 years in the business, including how to choose the right venue, security, and menu for large-scale community celebrations, small festivals, and business gatherings.

MARCH
Webinar: What's on the Horizon – Everything from Y to Z
Wednesday, March 13, 2019 & Thursday, March 21, 2019
Learn the similarities and differences between the Gen Y - Millennials and the up-and-coming Gen Z generations. Better understand how today's young adults, teens, and youth think and behave - whether staff or consumers. You'll learn how to create an environment of cooperation and open-mindedness that will help you communicate across these dynamic groups.

Joint Section Education: Blast Away Procrastination
Wednesday, March 20, 2019
Are you overwhelmed with all that you've been putting off? Is it almost impossible to get yourself going? Do you know what you need to do in order to be successful at work, in a relationship, with your life - but you are just putting it off? Many people are constantly tired because of what they DO, but putting off what-you-know-you-should-do is usually more exhausting, more debilitating than hard work, right? If you can't find the time for this session, perhaps THIS is the session you need!

Certified Playground Safety Inspector Course
Tuesday, March 26 – Thursday, March 28, 2019
The CPSI course is a national certification program delivered by National Recreation and Park Association and co-hosted by the Illinois Park and Recreation Association. It is designed to train individuals how to identify hazards on public playgrounds and playground equipment, prioritize those hazards by injury potential, and establish a playground safety program.

APRIL
Webinar: Navigating the New Reality
Wednesday, April 10, 2019 & Thursday, April 18, 2019
Now, more than ever, leaders need to stay grounded, proactive, and adaptable. If it feels like you're navigating uncharted waters, you're not alone. This session will help you relieve the pressure of keeping up with technology, uncertainty, and fear of the future while offering solutions for better managing today's diverse and dynamic workforce.

Supervisor Symposium
Friday, April 12, 2019
Supervisor Symposium provides students and professionals in the recreation field a curriculum that builds a strong foundation of basic skills needed to obtain and succeed at a supervisory position. New, partially-seasoned professionals, and students will be provided with opportunities to learn skills and emerging trends that can be implemented immediately at on the job.



BIKING

Is A Major Component For

THE URBANA PARK DISTRICT

BY MARK SCHULTZ,
PUBLIC INFORMATION AND MARKETING MANAGER
URBANA PARK DISTRICT

People in Urbana love to ride their bikes and love biking to stay fit and to reduce their carbon footprint.

The Urbana Park District, recognizing this, is working hard to enhance biking in the community with strong, new bike programs.

“Biking is a great way for people to exercise,” said Corky Emberson, superintendent of recreation at the Urbana Park District. He continued, “It is also good for the environment as people use pedal power instead of horsepower to get around town. With that in mind, we want to make sure people have the best, safest and most convenient way to bike.”



“Our goal is to eventually have our residents be able to bike to each and every one of our parks, no matter the location.”

Connectivity key to biking expansion

The Urbana Park District has a long-term goal of expanding biking in the community. “The park district is committed to promoting fitness and green space in Urbana,” said Elsie Hedgspeth, outreach and wellness manager at the park district. “To that end, our long-term plans include expanding and adding more bike paths around town and in our parks.” She continued, “Our goal is to eventually have our residents be able to bike to each and every one of our parks, no matter the location.”

A major step in bike connectivity happened in May of 2018, when the park district opened the Kickapoo Rail Trail (KRT) trailhead at Weaver Park in Urbana. The existing seven miles of the KRT is built over old railroad tracks. People will someday be able to ride the rail trail 24 miles from Urbana in Champaign County, well into Vermilion County in eastern Illinois.

“People can now get on the KRT from our park in east Urbana,” Emberson said. “It is a beautiful park and a safe place for people to park, unload their bikes, and go on a spectacular ride. We worked with the city of Urbana, the Champaign County Forest Preserve District and biking groups to make this a great trailhead.”

“And, we were fortunate that the Urbana Parks Foundation provided a generous grant to fund construction for the trail head. It was a true partnership with groups dedicated to biking to make this happen,” Emberson explained.

Partnerships key to expanded biking

This is just one component of the Urbana Park District's commitment to being bike friendly. The Urbana Green Loop is an idea supported in both the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan and Urbana Park District Trails Master Plan.



“We are proud to be recognized as bike friendly. Biking is a great way to exercise, get out in the fresh air and have fun with friends and family. We want more people to enjoy biking opportunities in our parks...”

“The Green Loop is intended to connect Urbana neighborhoods, Downtown Urbana, and the University of Illinois to all Urbana Park District parks and facilities. It is intended to be a family-friendly path, available to users of all ages and abilities, and inviting both residents and visitors to explore Urbana,” said Kara Dudek, planner at the Urbana Park District. “We hope that people have access to a trail in every corner of the city and can bike to our parks from city trails.”

The park district also participates in Urbana's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. “Many people in Urbana choose active forms of transportation,” Dudek said. “So, we really need to hear what bicyclists and walkers have to say. This committee is an excellent way for us to address people's concerns and needs as well as efficiently plan for the future.”

Commitment to bike programs

All the partnerships and expanding connectivity do nothing if people don't get on their bikes. The park district offers several biking programs for people of all ages.

“The programs, offered mostly in warm weather, encourage biking, bike safety, and a healthy life,” Hedgpeth said.

“We incorporate biking and bike safety into all of our summer camps.”

If adults who want to learn more about biking as a primary source of transportation, the park district wants to speak to them. “We offer beginning bicycling classes for people ages 18 and up. Adults learn bicycling basics and safe bicycling techniques in traffic from a certified instructor,” Hedgpeth explained. “It is vital for bikes and cars to share the road safely, and that class is a major component keeping people safe.”

For the weekend warriors, the park district partners with the Prairie Cycle Club for Saturday morning rides in the park district's beautiful Meadowbrook Park. For more hardcore riders, the club offers cross country rides of 10-20 miles and longer rides of 40-60 miles.

The Urbana Park District also supports free night rides. “Riding a bike during twilight in the summer is a special experience,” Hedgpeth said. The Prairie Cycle Club offers evening rides cross country (usually stopping at a rural town with a popular ice cream shop!), along with special “Full Moon Bike Rides” where cyclists can enjoy a sunset and moonrise over the prairie.

The Kickapoo Rail Trail offers great opportunities for individuals and families to ride bikes, and the park district encourages its use. May is Bike Month and the Urbana Park District celebrates bikes to the fullest.

“We have a huge celebration at Weaver Park at the Kickapoo Rail Trail trailhead in May that features biking groups that answer people's questions, conduct bike safety checks and give information about various bike clubs and rides,” Hedgspeth said.

Many of the bike celebrations also feature local music, food and a party-like atmosphere.

“Even if people don't bring their bikes to the event, they can learn about biking in the area and, hopefully, become riders,” Hedgspeth explained.

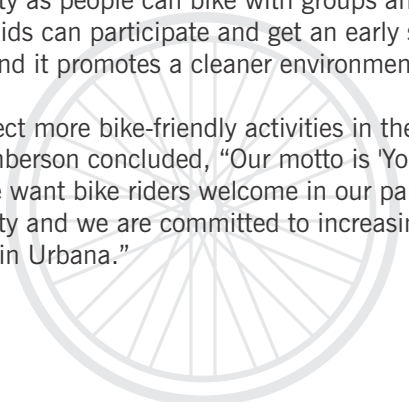
The park district's efforts are getting recognition. The League of American Bicyclists awarded the Urbana Park District a Silver Designation as a Bicycle Friendly Business in 2018. “We are proud to be recognized as bike friendly. Biking is a great way to exercise, get out in the fresh air

and have fun with friends and family. We want more people to enjoy biking opportunities in our parks,” Emberson said.

The park district joins the city of Urbana in recognition. The League of American Bicyclists awarded the city as a Gold Bicycle Friendly Community.

Hedgspeth says the Urbana Park District wants to have more people ride bikes for several reasons. “Biking is easier on a person's joints than running, yet they can get the same cardio-vascular workout,” she said. “It also promotes community as people can bike with groups and make new friends. Kids can participate and get an early start on fitness. And it promotes a cleaner environment.”

And, expect more bike-friendly activities in the coming years. Emberson concluded, “Our motto is 'You Belong Here.' We want bike riders welcome in our parks and community and we are committed to increasing bike ridership in Urbana.”



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2019 Editorial Calendar & Deadlines

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| March/April 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get Out on the Green and Golf • Give Us Your Best Shot Photo Winners <p>Advertising deadline: January 15, 2019</p> |
| May/June 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep Cool with Aquatics <p>Advertising deadline: March 20, 2019</p> |
| July/August 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthier Communities Through Partnerships • Legislative Advocacy <p>Advertising deadline: May 17, 2019</p> |
| September/October 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading by Example and Building Better Boards • Soaring to New Heights Pre-Conference Program <p>Advertising deadline: July 18, 2019</p> |
| November/December 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing Screen Time with the Benefits of Technology and Nature • 2019 Best of the Best Gala Award Winners <p>Advertising deadline: September 13, 2019</p> |
| January/February 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020 Vision: Keep Your Eyes on Your Fitness Prize • Full 2019 Soaring to New Heights Conference Program • 2020 Buyer's Guide Insert <p>Advertising deadline: November 12, 2019</p> |

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My Ride on the Kickapoo Rail Trail



By **Mary Ellen Wuellner**, Executive Director
Champaign County Forest Preserve

When I learned that IAPD and IRPA would be featuring trails in its January/February Parks and Recreation magazine, I wanted to share our experiences with the newly opened Kickapoo Rail Trail (KRT). Located in east central Illinois, this converted rail corridor spans 24½ miles from Urbana to Kickapoo State Park, just west of Danville. The first seven miles, from Urbana to St. Joseph, were completed and have been open to the public for a little more than a year.



That day is finally here and I'm happy to have a place to leave my car, air up the tires on my bike, and set off.



But, what should I include in the article? I could talk about the history of the trail... how it began life as part of the Big Four (later New York Central, later Conrail, later CSX) railroad system. Or how it took an Illinois prairie pioneer by the name of David Monk and his Heartland Pathways non-profit to see the immense value in preserving this rapidly vanishing native Illinois landscape and the foresight to seek rail banking status to keep the corridor intact. Or maybe I could mention the Champaign County Design and Conservation Foundation (CCDCF) that paid the lease on the rail line for nearly 20 years to hold the line while it negotiated a purchase price with one railroad company after another. Or, perhaps how the Champaign County Forest Preserve District and the Vermilion County Conservation District became partners with CCDCF in 2005 to take the lead in planning for the acquisition, development, and long-term management of the trail. It would certainly be important to note that it took another eight years for the acquisition to finally take place, with the Champaign County Forest Preserve District purchasing its trail mileage in 2013 and the Vermilion County Conservation District finalizing its purchase the following year.

But no, I don't want to write about the history. So, I decided to take a bike ride on the KRT to get some ideas.

It's a cloudy, cool Sunday in early October. I load my bike on my car and head over to the trailhead at the trail's western end. The Urbana Park District bought the Weaver Park property many years ago, long before the rail line was purchased, with the idea that someday it would become a place for KRT visitors to meet, park, and begin their journey. That day is finally here and I'm happy to have a place to leave my car, air up the tires on my bike, and set off.

The first thing I notice, besides it being a little cooler than I thought, is the singing of chickadees and goldfinches enjoying the seeds of native plants in the Weaver Park prairie. So, I'm considering writing about the prairie species I see on my ride. The natural resources staff of the Champaign County Forest Preserve District has been very busy doing restoration work along the trail, but some of the best prairie remnants in the entire county were already here, long before the tracks were laid and the first trains came through. *New England aster* is plentiful along the



population estimate but it can't be much more than 100. In Mayview, I ride past three young girls playing on the KRT – two sisters and their friend. They watch me approach, careful to move out of the middle of the trail when a cyclist comes by. I slow down to speak to them and notice they are not the least bit concerned about me – clearly they've already become accustomed to the friendly strangers that the trail has brought to their small community. I ask them if they like the trail. They point to the home that the two sisters occupy, about 50 feet away, and tell me that their mom lets them play on the trail but they have to stay within sight of the house. They love riding their bikes on the trail and mom enjoys knowing they're close to home, and safe from traffic. Maybe I should write about how the trail offers a safe place for recreation, outdoor exercise, and non-vehicular transportation.

No, I think I'll move on and see what else comes to mind.

Shortly after, I arrive at Fulls Siding, a grain elevator adjacent to the KRT that has been owned and operated by Premier Cooperative since 1982. Premier is an Illinois farmer-owned cooperative providing agricultural commodities and energy products.

At Fulls Siding, grain is brought in by local farmers for entry into the market. Premier prides itself on its long history in central Illinois and its impact on the local agricultural economy. Premier was instrumental in facilitating early Illinois prairie settlers' efforts to grow and market their crop and is still an important force in feeding the world. When this rail line was active, grain was shipped by train to major cities throughout the Midwest. Now, most of the transport is done by truck.

In fact, as I ride by, several farmers pull in to unload truckloads of recently harvested field corn. I stop for a few minutes to watch, and think to myself, perhaps I should write about how the railroad played a major role in the establishment of east central Illinois' rich agricultural

trail this time of year, as is its close relative *aromatic aster*. The purple daisy-like flowers look lovely among so much goldenrod and the yellow-gold of the sawtooth sunflower and black-eyed Susan. The common milkweed, not as colorful in the fall, is releasing seeds to set a new generation of the monarchs' favorite plant into bloom next fall. I haven't seen as many monarchs on this ride as I have at other times, but I love the fact that our habitat restoration efforts will lead to an increase in their numbers.

No, I don't think I'll write about the prairie....

My ride takes me past the small town of Mayview. Not really a town at all, Mayview is an unincorporated area through which the trail runs. It consists of maybe two dozen homes and a couple small businesses. I can't find a

history and strong local economy. I'll give that some more thought as I head west into St. Joseph, at the eastern end of this seven mile stretch of the KRT.

Crossing the Salt Fork River bridge, I make it into downtown St. Joseph. The trail ends at Main Street, for now, anyway. A short section is currently under construction that will add another 1/3 mile, taking the trail into the more residential section of St. Joseph. At Main Street, just outside the Wheelhouse Restaurant, I run into my friend, Steve Hankel. Steve is unlocking his bike, which is chained to a rack near the restaurant along with eight other bikes. He tells me he just enjoyed lunch with a group of friends who rode over from Champaign-Urbana on the KRT. I mention that I'm riding to inspire a story about the trail for an upcoming article in IAPD/IPRA's monthly park and recreation magazine, but as yet, the inspiration hasn't come. He looks at all the bikes in the rack and says "why don't you write about how trails benefit the local economy?"

Steve has a point. The Wheelhouse is but one of several new eateries and businesses that have opened in St. Joseph to capture trail customers. In a recent conversation, Abby, who owns the restaurant along with her husband, told me how busy they've been since the trail opened and how they expect sales to keep increasing. In fact, her husband partnered with two others to open a barbecue restaurant in Ogden, the next town east through which the trail will run. Abby and Jeff, like several others, were smart enough to make the investment

before the trail opened, knowing that real estate along the KRT would only increase in value like the land along so many other rail-trails across the country.

We at the Champaign County Forest Preserve District have partnered with the University of Illinois and Trails for Illinois to conduct a user survey and economic development study of the KRT. Volunteers stop every third hiker, runner, or cyclist to ask if they're willing to share their thoughts and offer some data about funds they've spent in conjunction with their visit to the trail. University researchers are meeting with local businesses, nearby residents, and government officials to assess the trail's impact from the community's point of view. The study is still underway, and I look forward to the final report.

So, although Steve's idea was a good one, no, I don't think I'll write about the economic impact.

After a tour of the new trail section that's under construction in St. Joseph, I head back to the trail for the ride back home. This time, I make a point to notice the other people out on the KRT enjoying this chilly fall day. Runners, people walking dogs, a man hauling what I guess to be his grandson in a wagon, Steve's group of friends on bikes, a few solitary hikers, and the three girls I saw on my way to St. Joseph – about 35 in all – are among those using the KRT today. I make it back to my car, load my bike on the rack, and feel invigorated by my brisk ride. So, what have I decided to write? No idea.



An advertisement for The Mulch Center. The background is a field of white calla lilies. In the top left corner is the logo for 'THE MULCH CENTER' which includes a tree and a person. Below the logo, the text reads 'Buy Direct From The Manufacturer'. In the center, there is a small image of a blue truck with a green trailer that says 'SPREAD IT AROUND!' and '847-459-7200'. At the bottom, the text reads '• Mulch • Soil Products • Aggregates' and 'mulchcenter.com | Pickup or Delivery | 847.459.7200'.

PEOPLE & PLACES



Jennifer Hermonson Selected as New Addison Park District Executive Director

The Addison Park District's Board of Commissioners is proud to announce the hiring of **Jennifer Hermonson** as new executive director for the Addison Park District.

Hermonson holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Management and carries a Master of Business Administration. She is currently the deputy director of the Streamwood Park District. Prior to this position, she was the interim superintendent of park and planning, superintendent of business services and HR, and the human resource director for the Streamwood Park District.

She oversees the district's overall strategic and day-to-day operations, including, but not limited to, the entire budget process, business services department, IT, marketing, finance and human resources.



Michael J. Leonard Named Next Channahon Park District Executive Director

Working with the Illinois Association of Park Districts and its Executive Director Search Service, the Channahon Park District Board of Commissioners has appointed **Michael J. Leonard** to the position of executive director following the retirement of Chuck Szoke.

Mike earned a degree in public relations from Illinois State University in 1992 and is a 1994 graduate of Western Illinois University, where he received a master's degree in parks and recreation administration. Mike returns to the Channahon Park District after serving as their superintendent of recreation from 2002 – 2006 and over the last 12 years as director of parks and recreation for the city of Palos Heights.

Mike looks forward to working with the board and dedicated staff in continuing to provide outstanding parks and memorable experiences to the residents of Channahon.



Chuck Szoke to Retire from Channahon Park District

After more than 40 years of public park and recreation service, **Chuck Szoke** will retire from the

Channahon Park District on January 31. His entire career has been invested in Channahon.

The park district hired Chuck as its first ever full-time employee to a position of recreation coordinator as he graduated from the College of St. Francis in 1978. Working with an exceptional board of commissioners and a dedicated staff that has grown to over 300 full-time and part-time members, Channahon grew into a National Golf Medal Grand Award recipient agency and is an IAPD/IPRA Distinguished Accredited Agency and carries the highest accreditation level from the Park District Risk Management Agency.

In service to the profession, Chuck has presented at state and national conferences, and served on several IPRA/IAPD committees. He was a member and chaired the Board of Regents for the NRPA/NC State University Supervisors' Management School at Oglebay and has taught as an adjunct instructor for St. Francis.

Locally, Chuck has served on numerous local and governmental boards and commissions. In retirement, he will continue as a member of the Rotary Club of Channahon-Minooka, a trustee with the Illinois Park and Recreation Foundation, and a member of the NRPA Conference Program Committee.

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