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P&R

PARKS AND RECREATION

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



diversity, equity
& inclusion

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FROM THE EDITOR

New Year, New Challenges and Opportunities



We've rung in 2022 and while the pandemic and its variants are still an ever-present part of our day-to-day, I'm glad that we can all continue to look forward with a sense of optimism for the opportunities that are to come this year.

The opportunity to focus on how your agency handles Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is one that should not be missed. When you consider who your park district serves, do you think about it as just one collective of people? Do you take a moment to think of what makes up that population?

Once you identify those differences, then the work to bring equity and inclusion to the table begins. That's why I'm excited to share this issue of Illinois Parks and Recreation magazine, because this topic is becoming more and more relevant with every passing day.

This month, we focus on DEI and we have some incredible resources for you to help your agency either bolster your efforts, or help you take that first step towards making your agency inclusive. On page 16, Joshua Green gives some tips on what you can do to leverage your agency's resources to embrace DEI in "Equity Planning Roadmap." Skokie Park District's Jon Marquardt gives us a closer look at how his agency has historically handled DEI in "Don't Wait for Your Diversity 'Aha' Moment" on page 22. Todd Pernsteiner delves into bringing equity in sports on page 28 with "Leveling the Playing Field." Finally, Tracey Crawford and Oralethea Davenport look at "Where are You in the DEI Process" on page 12.

I hope these stories help you start your year off by being more inclusive to those you serve in your communities. Happy New Year!

— Wayne Utterback, Editor



211 East Monroe Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701-1186 217.523.4554 FAX 217.523.4273 iapd@ilparks.org www.ilparks.org www.Ilipra.org

Managing Editor
PETER M. MURPHY, President and Chief Executive Officer, IAPD

Editor
WAYNE UTTERBACK, IAPD

Graphic Design
GOSS ADVERTISING, 217.423.4739, www.gossadvertising.com

Advertising Sales Representative
TODD PERNSTEINER, 952.841.1111, info@pernsterner.com

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211 East Monroe Street, Springfield, IL 62701-1186 217.523.4554 www.ilparks.org

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536 East Avenue, LaGrange, IL 60525-6815 708.588.2280 Fax 708.354.0535 www.Ilipra.org

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

Hone Your Boardsmanship Skills at the Leadership Institute

At IAPD, we believe in great leadership. It is something we see every day in park boards that are making a difference in the quality of life in communities across Illinois.

One of the great opportunities that serving as a park commissioner provides is the opportunity to further develop the leader within you. Many times, we hear references to a person as a 'born leader,' but the reality is that this trait is not typically innate, but rather learned, developed, and refined.

John Pence brings to light the seven competencies of being a great leader: character, competence, courage, collaboration, communication, compassion, and contribution. Other qualities of a leader that come to mind as well are: honesty, integrity, innovation, communication, and being a good strategic thinker.

Leaders strive to sharpen their skills for they know the impact and influence that good governance at a park district can have on the lives of the people within their communities.

Recognizing the basic tenant of good leadership which is to treat others (park district staff, the public and fellow commissioners) as you would like to be treated is the foundation for leadership development.

Periodically even the best boards need to tune up their leadership practices and our goal is to make that process readily available. **The IAPD Leadership Institute** kicks off this year in April and provides a series of opportunities for leaders that are committed to life-long learning as well as being committed to the communities they serve.

The IAPD Leadership Institute presenter this year is Ian Hill, business leader, and award-winning social innovator. Whether running a multi-million-dollar business operation with over 1000 employees, or spearheading the first of their kind life-changing community projects, Ian Hill has been recognized for being a catalyst for positive change throughout the globe.

Ian is CEO of the National Grassroots Media Corporation and its family of networks reaching 185 million households across the US and 3.1 billion mobile devices around the world.

Ian is also known for his humanitarian effort, "Let Them Be Kids," of which he is the founder and volunteer CEO. This first-of-its-kind initiative builds playgrounds in areas of extreme need. Let Them Be Kids has impacted over 150 communities across North America and as far away as Africa.

"I believe every individual, every neighborhood and every community is one idea, one voice, one action – one person – away from being better tomorrow than it was yesterday." – Ian Hill



The National Council for Community and Justice recognized Ian for his commitment to positive change, by naming him Humanitarian of the Year. Most recently, Ian's Let Them Be Kids program was named one of the foremost innovative social leisure programs in the world by the World Leisure Congress.

Ian Hill's course is designed to develop a leader's abilities to become a Community Builder. The Community Builder has the ability to marshal human capital – intelligence, passion, work effort, innovation – of the various stakeholders they interact with and move them towards a common goal. Rather than leaders who require, it's about leaders who inspire.

The Community Builder has the capacity and skill to tap into the collective intelligence of all stakeholders to create great plans that have deep buy-in and produce meaningful solutions and tangible results. Today's effective leaders are authentic, honest, direct, and comfortable in their own skins. They care about others and do what's best for the broader good.

That kind of leadership does not need to be all that complicated. It may just boil down to the development of four leadership competencies:

First of all, we want our leaders to be **agents of change** who understand, demonstrate, and exert influence by building trusting relationships. We are hungry for leaders who have the courage, passion, and motivation that is respected by others so that barriers can be addressed and overcome.

Next, we want leaders who are **optimistic, proactive, big picture, systems thinkers**. That systems approach is essential because the issues in our country, communities, and businesses are too complicated to be solved by any one person or sector.

We don't expect leaders to do it by themselves either because we want to be **catalysts for encouraging responsibility** in others and for engaging and cultivating a sense of pride and ownership.

We want leaders who are **innovators and committed to sustained improvement** for themselves, for others, and for their communities. That of course doesn't happen without strong values, a moral compass, and code of conduct that reflects those values.

Ian will be providing four coaching sessions for IAPD members to become effective and dynamic community builders.

The first track will be offered as an in-person workshop on **Thursday, April 7, 2022, from 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.**, which will be held at the Park Ridge Park District's Paula Hassell O'Connor Community Building. It is a three-hour session entitled "Ignite." Ian Hill will explain and introduce the concept of behavioral change and how to accomplish this in a post-pandemic era.

The second track, "Agency of Change," a virtual presentation on **Thursday, May 12, 2022, from 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**, will examine the holistic big picture, the transformational change, and managing ourselves to be an agent of change.

The third track, "Systems of Thinking," a virtual presentation on **Thursday, June 9, 2022, from 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.**, will examine citizen engagement, park planning, and the future of their community.

The final virtual presentation, "Catalyst for Responsibility," on **Thursday, July 14, 2022, from 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**, will explore the power of the internal leader, the leadership journey, how to activate as leaders, and how to equip the frontline of community builders.

These sessions are designed to educate park commissioners and professionals as leaders and bring significant value to those they serve and those they lead.

The IAPD Leadership Institute delivers the content to make this possible. Take this opportunity to gain the knowledge to grow as a leader and learn how to improve your community by improving yourself. Be a part of **The IAPD Leadership Institute**. Registrations will be opening in early March.

As we head into a New Year, IAPD is committed to providing an array of new services and opportunities to you, our members, to build your capacity to lead, govern, and succeed. I wish you all a *Happy New Year!* and encourage you to contact me if you have ideas on ways for us to better serve you.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 27-29, 2022
**2022 IAPD/IPRA
Soaring to New Heights
Conference**
Hyatt Regency Chicago

Wednesday, March 9, 2022
Legislative Conference
Crown Plaza, Springfield, IL
9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 7, 2022
**Track #1:
Leadership Institute
Face to Face Workshop
"Ignite"**
Park Ridge Park District
Paula Hassell O'Connor
Community Building
733 N. Prospect Ave.
Park Ridge, IL 60068
6 p.m. – 9 p.m.

Thursday, May 12, 2022
**Track #2:
Leadership Institute
Virtual Webinar –
"Agent of Change"**
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, June 9, 2022
**Track #3:
Leadership Institute
Virtual Webinar –
"Systems of Thinking"**
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Monday, June 13, 2022
**Summer Golf Tour
Outing #1**
Northbrook Park District
Heritage Oaks Golf Club

Thursday, July 14, 2022
**Track #4:
Leadership Institute
Virtual Webinar –
Catalyst for
Responsibility"**
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Wednesday, July 27, 2022
**Summer Golf Tour
Outing #2**
Huntley Park District
Pinecrest Golf Club

Saturday, August 20, 2022
IAPD Conservation Day
Illinois State Fair
Springfield, IL 62702
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Monday, August 29, 2022
**Summer Golf Tour
Outing #3**
Foss Park District
Foss Park Golf Course

Friday, October 14, 2022
**IAPD Best of the
Best Awards**
Wheeling Park District
Chevy Chase Country Club
6:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

Thursday, November 3, 2022
IAPD Legal Symposium
Hyatt Lodge/Conference
Center
9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

January 27-29, 2022
**2023 IAPD/IPRA
Soaring to New
Heights Conference**
Hyatt Regency Chicago



By Barry Franks
IPRA Interim Executive Director & Finance Director

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Creating a Path

The theme of this magazine issue is “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Creating a Path” and I'd like to take this opportunity to share with you several new and exciting DEI initiatives that were recently introduced by our volunteer leaders and staff in 2021. These initiatives are the first step of an overarching strategy to operationalize diversity, equity, and inclusion within our association and create a more welcoming and inclusive “path” for engagement.

Safe Zone Conversations

Shortly after the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, IPRA's Diversity Leadership Task Force began discussing the need for a program to promote safe and purposeful conversations about sensitive topics (i.e., racism, LGBTQ+, Latinx) that might otherwise not take place in the workplace because people are uncertain of how to start the conversation.

Those task force discussions quickly led to the creation of IPRA's Safe Zone Conversations (SZCs), which can be defined as dialogue amongst a group of people purposely engineered to discuss human topics that can be deemed sensitive, uncomfortable, or complex in nature. The goal of each conversation is to create a place of mutual understanding and respect for our differences as human beings, and to use that experience to further educate oneself and better serve our communities. Conversations are only done virtually and can take up to three (3) hours, so each event is a big commitment for facilitators and participants alike. I'm proud to share that as of December 31, 2021, our three amazing facilitation teams have hosted a total of 54 Safe Zone Conversations.

The IPRA Safe Zone Conversations were recognized by NRPA as a best practice for centering equity in parks and recreation. IPRA and NRPA have partnered to roll out the Safe Zone Conversations for state associations across the country. IPRA facilitators will train other professionals on how to facilitate SZCs in exchange for a donation to the

Illinois Park and Recreation Foundation's (IPRF) DEI Education Fund. Donations are earmarked for future IPRA educational opportunities that focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In 2021, IPRA was awarded a **2021 Power of A Silver Award** by ASAE: Center for Association Leadership, for the Safe Zone Conversations. The Power of A Awards recognize and celebrate the extraordinary contributions associations make to society by enriching lives, creating a competitive workforce, preparing society for the future, driving innovation, and making a better world.

“The Safe Zone Conversations are not means to an end, but rather an ignition for park, recreation, and forest preserve professionals to engage in meaningful conversation about topics that impact professional service delivery and daily life. We are extremely proud of our facilitation teams for their dedication and passion in delivering this wonderful educational opportunity to IPRA members across Illinois.” – Duane Smith, IPRA's Education Director

Champions for Change Award

The IPRA Champions for Change Award recognizes agencies with unique and exemplary practices of increasing access and fostering diversity and inclusion within their community or organization. These are measurable practices that improve the working experience and engagement levels of employees and/or the lives of all people within the community through the delivery of excellent services that improve social equity and access in the community.

Our very first recipient of the Champions for Change Award was the Skokie Park District, in 2021. The Skokie Park District mission statement envisions a community where all residents enjoy a quality life. Whether it's through board diversification, policy, programming, or training, Skokie has created a culture that operationalizes diversity, equity, and inclusion, and promotes a welcoming environment for staff and the community.

Skokie Park District is the hub of DEI conversations and offers a wide range of inclusive and diverse programming. The annual Skokie Festival of Cultures has seventy different cultures participating with an average annual attendance of more than 25,000 people. Since 2009, DEI programming, special events, and staff training has increased in ranges of 300 to 700%, proving that when intentional, change can happen.

Congratulations, to the Skokie Park District, IPRA's first Champions for Change Award recipient!

Diversity Education Institute

In October, IPRA offered its first Diversity Education Institute, or DEI. Sponsored by IPRA's Diversity (DIV) Section, the Diversity Education Institute is designed to provide students and professionals of all experience levels a curriculum that supports DEI awareness and tools to assist in the process of operationalizing DEI at their agency. This year's inaugural event included a personal message from Illinois House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch, an inspiring keynote from Roslyn Johnson, Director of Recreation & Parks for Baltimore County (MD), followed by a virtual track of sessions that featured industry professionals and quality speakers presenting on DEI topics such as language barriers, biases, and equitable hiring practices. This event was generously sponsored by the Illinois Park and Recreation Foundation (IPRF) using funds generated from the IPRA Safe Zone Conversations.

Learning Labs

IPRA learning labs are offered monthly and include 60 minutes of timely topics at no expense to IPRA members. In March, we partnered with NRPA and IAPD to present *Centering Equity in Parks and Recreation*, focusing on new NRPA strategies for operationalizing DEI at agencies. In June, we partnered with IAPD, the Illinois After School Network, and Equality Institute to offer *Over the Rainbow: Tools to Become an Authentic LGBTQ+ Ally*, focusing on key terms, policies, and allyship. In August, we partnered with IAPD and Asian-Americans Advancing Justice – Chicago to offer *Anti-Asian Hate and Xenophobic Harassment*, focusing on types of discrimination experienced by Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders, and different bystander intervention techniques to keep people safe.

We are incredibly proud of the work we have done, and will continue to do, to support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts. A special thanks to the Diversity Leadership Taskforce, Safe Zone Facilitators, and the Diversity Section for your patience, passion, and perseverance in organizing and facilitating these wonderful opportunities at IPRA during the last 18 months. We look forward to continuing this great work with all of you!

IPRA Upcoming Events

February 9 & 17, 2022 Going and Growing Beyond our Comfort Zone Webinar

Going and Growing Beyond our Comfort Zone is presented by Maureen Dougherty, owner of Let's Go with Dr. Mo!. "You never grow when you're comfortable" is a favorite mantra that Dr. Mo has shared with former students, friends, and her own children. However, before we can break out of our Comfort Zone, we need to identify and understand why it's so important to us.

February 17, 2022 WIU Summer Opportunities Fair Western Illinois University Virtual: March 24, 2022

The WIU Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration is excited to partner with the Illinois Park and

Recreation Association to support members' participation in the Summer Opportunities Fair! Western Illinois University has expanded their spring job fair to the Summer Opportunities Fair and is welcoming employers representing park, recreation, conservation, forest preserves, event management, and camp organizations.

March 9 & 17, 2022 What's New in Marketing? Technologies and Applications Webinar

What's New in Marketing? is presented by Aamir Munshi, Founder of the Learning Scape. It feels hard to keep up with today's chaotic world of marketing communications. This webinar will help you navigate both classic and new strategies, tools, and technologies in the dynamic marketing toolkit.

For details, and to register, visit ILipra.org

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topics include:

- Going and Growing Beyond our Comfort Zone
- Innovative and Inclusive Community Engagement
- Microaggressions and Unconscious Bias

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Jason Anselment
General Counsel

Answers to Common Questions Regarding Park Board Vacancies

IAPD receives hundreds of inquiries from member agencies each year. Because 2022 is a non-election year for park commissioners, it is a good time to address several frequently asked questions related to the method by which park boards obtain new commissioners without an election, i.e., an appointment to fill a board vacancy.

Declaring a Vacancy

Section 2-25 of the Park District Code, sets forth the specific and limited situations when a vacancy can be created, namely, that a commissioner:

- (i) dies,
- (ii) resigns,
- (iii) becomes under legal disability,
- (iv) ceases to be a legal voter in the district,
- (v) is convicted in any court located in the United States of any infamous crime, bribery, perjury, or other felony,
- (vi) refuses or neglects to take his or her oath of office,
- (vii) neglects to perform the duties of his or her office or attend meetings of the board for the length of time as the board fixes by ordinance, or
- (viii) for any other reason specified by law.

If any of these circumstances arise, the office may be declared vacant.

Aside from the specific conditions outlined above, the Park District Code is relatively silent when it comes to the process for declaring a vacancy. Therefore, it is critical for boards to work with their local counsel when declaring a vacancy and appointing a replacement in order to avoid any uncertainty over who is and is not a member of the park board at any given time. This uncertainty may not exist if a commissioner dies in office or tenders a written, unconditional resignation, but in some other situations described above the existence of a vacancy could be contested, so having the park district's local counsel involved can help avoid legal pitfalls down the road.

Time Limit

Once a vacancy is clearly established, it is filled by appointment by a majority of the remaining members of the board pursuant to Section 2-25 of the Park District Code.

Unlike other statutes such as the School Code, there is no deadline by which a park board must fill the vacancy. However, it is typically advisable for the remaining members of the board to take steps to fill the vacancy as soon as practical. Leaving a position vacant for too long could lead to problems establishing a quorum or to a tie vote since one vacancy leaves a board with an even number of remaining members.

Moreover, the longer a vacancy goes unfilled, it is possible that additional vacancies could be created. For example, an unexpected death, a resignation, or a commissioner moving out of the district are just a few examples where a park board could be left with even fewer members. Because the remaining members of the board must take a vote to fill a vacancy, and a five-member board must always have at least 3 affirmative votes to take action under the Open Meetings Act, a board's failure to fill a vacancy for too long could eventually lead to a calamitous situation where there are not enough affirmative votes to take action to fill a vacancy.

This is not to say that boards should not act deliberately when filling a vacancy to ensure that they are appointing the best individual for this important position. Rather, it is simply to point out that leaving a position unfilled indefinitely could lead to major problems depending upon the circumstances, so prudence is recommended.

Term of Appointment

Few provisions of the Park District Code seem to cause more confusion than the following portion of Section 2-25.

Vacancies shall be filled by appointment by a majority of the remaining members of the board. Any person so appointed shall hold his or her office until the next regular election for this office, at which a member shall be elected to fill the vacancy for the unexpired term, subject to the following conditions:

(1) If the vacancy occurs with less than 28 months remaining in the term, the person appointed to fill the vacancy shall hold his or her office until the expiration of the term for which he or she has been appointed, and no election to fill the vacancy shall be held.

(2) If the vacancy occurs with more than 28 months left in the term, but less than 123 days before the next regularly scheduled election for this office, the person appointed to fill the vacancy shall hold his or her office until the second regularly scheduled election for the office following the appointment, at which a member shall be elected to fill the vacancy for the unexpired term.

The key, however, is to carefully read the entire section. Oftentimes, members simply skip to the language referenced under subsections 1 and 2 and ignore the immediately preceding clause that sets forth the general rule, which is that *a person appointed to fill a vacancy holds his or her office until the next regular election for the office*. The items in Section 2-25(1)-(2) are simply exceptions to this general rule.

Section 2-25(1) applies only if a vacancy occurs with less than 28 months remaining in the term. Regular elections for park commissioner only occur every 2 years (24 months), and nominating petitions for the office are due 113 days (roughly 4 months) prior to the election. Subsection 1 exists because there would either not be an election during the appointee's remaining term or there would not be sufficient time for a candidate to circulate and file a petition to be placed on the ballot at the next regular election (24 months + 4 months = 28 months). So, if there are less than 28 months left in the term of the vacant position, then the individual who is appointed to fill that vacancy simply serves out the remaining term.

Section 2-25(2) applies only if the vacancy occurs with more than 28 months left in the term, but there are less than 123 days before the next regularly scheduled election for park commissioner. In this situation, the individual appointed shall serve until the second regularly scheduled election for the office following the appointment. This provision also exists because nominating petitions are due 113 days prior to the Consolidated Election. If the vacancy occurs with less than 123 days before that election, there would be insufficient time ($123 - 113 = 10$ days, or less) for a candidate to circulate and file a petition to be placed on the ballot at the next Consolidated Election, so the appointee serves until the second regularly scheduled Consolidated Election for the office, at which time a member would be elected to serve the remaining unexpired term, if any.

Unless one of the two exceptions above applies, then an appointment to fill the vacancy always serves until the next Consolidated Election, at which time a member shall be elected to fill the vacancy for the unexpired term.

The Unexpired Term

Once the length of the appointment is established, always remember the very last part of that clause of Section 2-25 "... at which a member shall be elected to fill the vacancy for the *unexpired term*."

The Park District Code is thoughtfully constructed to ensure that the terms of park boards always remain staggered. This is true regardless of whether a board is 5 members or 7 members and whether the terms are 6-year terms or 4-year terms. Even in situations where the board size or terms are expanded or reduced under Sections 2-10a and 2-10b, those provisions ensure that the boards remain staggered.

This framework for staggered terms also applies where there has been an appointment to fill a vacancy. Once the term of the appointment is completed at the next election for park commissioners described above (subject to the two limited exceptions), the person who is elected for that spot on the park board is only elected for the remaining unexpired term. For example, if a commissioner was elected this past April 2021 to a park board with six-year terms, she resigns in August 2022, and a new commissioner is immediately appointed, then that appointed commissioner will serve until a commissioner is elected at the April 2023 Consolidated Election and takes the oath office. That newly elected commissioner would then serve the remaining 4-years of the unexpired term through the April 2027 Consolidated Election.

It is also important to note that at the April 2023 Consolidated Election, the unexpired or partial 4-year term will be treated separately from any full terms for park commissioner that will be open at the same election. In other words, in the example above the petitions that candidates circulate must designate whether the candidates are running for the partial four-year term or the full six-year term(s) and the official ballot will also treat these as separate offices.

As the first day to circulate petitions approaches in September, it is best practice to make sure your records match the county clerk's when it comes to the number of full terms and the number of partial terms that will appear on the ballot and to maintain a record or schedule that indicates the past and future cycles for every full term regardless of any intervening appointments.

In many instances, the Park District Code is designed to provide some level of flexibility to park districts so that their elected boards have the discretion to set policies and procedures for their individual districts within general parameters. Sometimes, this statutory framework then leads to questions, and this is often the case with Section 2-25 regarding vacancies.

In addition to this article, members can find this topic addressed on pages 6-7 of the brand-new edition of the *Illinois Park District Law Handbook*.

Again, for the reasons discussed above, you should always consult with your local counsel on important matters like declaring a vacancy and, of course, you may always contact IAPD for insight as well.

Diversity Equity Inclusion

WHERE ARE YOU IN THE DEI PROCESS?

By **Oralethea Davenport**, MS, CPRP, Irwin Community Center Manager, Homewood-Flossmoor Park District
Tracey Crawford, CTRS, CPRP, Executive Director, Northwest Special Recreation Association

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are currently the hot button topics of conversations in our homes, at our agencies and throughout our communities. Are you aware of what DEI means? Or is it just a set of acronyms to you? Do you understand the phases associated with the DEI process? Have you identified where you are in the DEI process as an individual, a professional, as an agency, and in your community?



Starting a conversation about **diversity, equity and inclusion** can begin anywhere. The conversation should begin when and where you are most comfortable and with individuals open to having an authentic discussion about diversity.

Diversity, equity and inclusion can have different definitions for different people. **Diversity** represents an individual's identity and welcomes their differences. **Equity** refers to the fair treatment, equal access and opportunities for everyone. **Inclusion** is the effort to create environments that are open and welcome to all. Simply stated, diversity is inviting everyone to the table. The table is a metaphor for your agency, office, home, program or event. Equity means everyone invited to the table can contribute to the conversation. Diverse individuals are not solely invited as a representative to check a box, but to provide input, ideas and different perspectives to the conversation. Inclusion means that the perspectives and ideas shared are heard, respected, and valued by those holding the power and privilege seats at the table.

Now that we have a basic understanding of what DEI means, let us dive into the different phases associated with the DEI process. Phase one pertains to your individual or personal journey. The second phase affects you as a professional. The third phase is where you begin to apply your knowledge of DEI at your agency influencing policy, procedures and practices. The final phase is focused on reaching the community. Are you including everyone throughout your community to contribute to the conversation about DEI? Are you providing opportunities to diversify your

workforce? Are you educating community members on how to become a board member? Are you welcoming all residents and marketing to the diverse populations you serve in your communities?

PHASE ONE: Individual or Personal Journey

The DEI process begins with YOU! In order for you to think about starting a DEI journey, you have to start with yourself and challenge your own belief systems. Begin with a self-evaluation and your understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion. This will uncover any of your personal unconscious biases and assist you with identifying any micro aggressions that you may have towards different groups of people, while uncovering your inner thoughts regarding diverse populations, and challenging your own beliefs.

Starting a conversation about diversity, equity and inclusion can begin anywhere. The conversation should begin when and where you are most comfortable and with individuals open to having an authentic discussion about diversity. However, it is more than a simple conversation. You need to learn how to create a "brave space". A brave space encourages dialogue from all parties, recognizing everyone's differences, holding each person accountable, and sharing experiences while accepting and understanding.



As park and recreation professionals working in community agencies, we ultimately affect and influence the success, or lack of success, regarding **diversity, equity and inclusion** efforts in our communities.

The next step in this phase is independent learning. Locate trusted resources from your state association, from your local, state and national organizations, your local library, books, and vetted print media, documentaries, podcasts, Ted Talks, trainings, webinars and seminars. Do your homework! Be prepared to open your heart and mind to discover new ways of thinking and understanding diverse topics.

PHASE TWO: Professional Journey

In this phase, you are recognizing that your personal actions, beliefs, values, and biases, both unconscious and conscious, affect you as a professional and impacts your daily decisions. At this point, your personal thoughts can impede your professional decisions regarding agency policies, procedures, hiring practices, programs, services, marketing and strategic planning. Education and knowledge is the key to understanding when your personal biases overlap and begin to affect your professional decisions. This can lead to excluding diverse populations, silencing the voices of different perspectives, excluding residents, eliminating potential employees and halting the overall growth of your agency. Therefore, dive in, educate yourself, and learn more about DEI, to equip yourself with the tools needed for you to make the appropriate unbiased decisions to move your team, department, and your agency forward.

PHASE THREE: Agency Journey

The conversations have started, the education and learning has begun, now, it is time to evaluate your agency's overall efforts in addressing diversity, equity and inclusion. Create a survey to gather employees' perspectives on how the agency is addressing DEI. Some questions to consider including in your survey are as follows:

- Do you feel your agency is diverse?
- Does your staff reflect the diversity in your community?
- What type of training do you implement around diversity, equity and inclusion?
- What are your agency's blind spots when it comes to DEI?
- Have you set goals toward your DEI efforts?
- Why are you interested in addressing DEI at your agency and in your community?

Once the survey is complete and you have compiled the data, use this information to advance the agency's DEI efforts. Identify challenges or areas of improvement and tackle them one at a time. Although this may seem overwhelming, addressing DEI can be done in small steps. Start with creating a DEI Committee to help address the challenges and areas of improvements. Have the committee focus on creating goals to include in your strategic plan to keep DEI at the forefront of all your planning efforts.

The DEI Committee can view your agency's efforts through a diversity, equity and inclusion lens and conduct an agency self-assessment by addressing the following:

- **Review of marketing materials** - Does the marketing materials reflect the diversity in your community?
- **Review of staff vs community served** – Does your staff mirror your diverse community?
- **Hiring practices** –How are you recruiting? Where are you recruiting?
- **Policies and Procedures** – Who does this policy or procedure benefit or exclude?

- **Review Mission, Vision and Value statements** –Is it clear where your agency stands on DEI?
- **Review Strategic Plan** – Have you done a needs assessment that targets the underserved populations within your community?
- **Review programs and events** – Are you providing programs and services that are welcoming to all diverse backgrounds in the community that you serve?
- **Evaluating staff training** – Are you reviewing your agencies stance on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion?

- Recognize the diversity among your community and acknowledge your efforts to include the diverse populations or recognize your lack of efforts to include these voices.
- Discuss how the engagement and collaboration will benefit both parties. Learn from the leaders their thoughts regarding the needs and interests of the diverse groups they represent.
- Be flexible and open to all communication styles.

Don't be afraid to make a list of the successes you heard, obstacles that were brought up, and areas of concern that may have been overlooked. Rome was not built in a day! Tackle each task one at a time to avoid being overwhelmed.

PHASE FOUR: Community Journey

What does it mean to engage in your community journey? Addressing this question is a critical step in the final DEI phase. It is important to create an opportunity for widespread awareness, using multiple avenues for input and feedback from all residents and community stakeholders. This is an important step to building relationships with diverse community leaders, who can represent the different perspectives and voices of your community. It is never too late! The key to effectively and respectfully engaging with diverse community leaders is to:


Remember that DEI is a journey that cannot be accomplished overnight. It begins with your self-evaluation, which leads to a better understanding of how your personal beliefs and biases can influence your professional decisions and actions. Your daily professional decisions and actions effect every aspect of your agency. As park and recreation professionals working in community agencies, we ultimately affect and influence the success, or lack of success, regarding diversity, equity and inclusion efforts in our communities.



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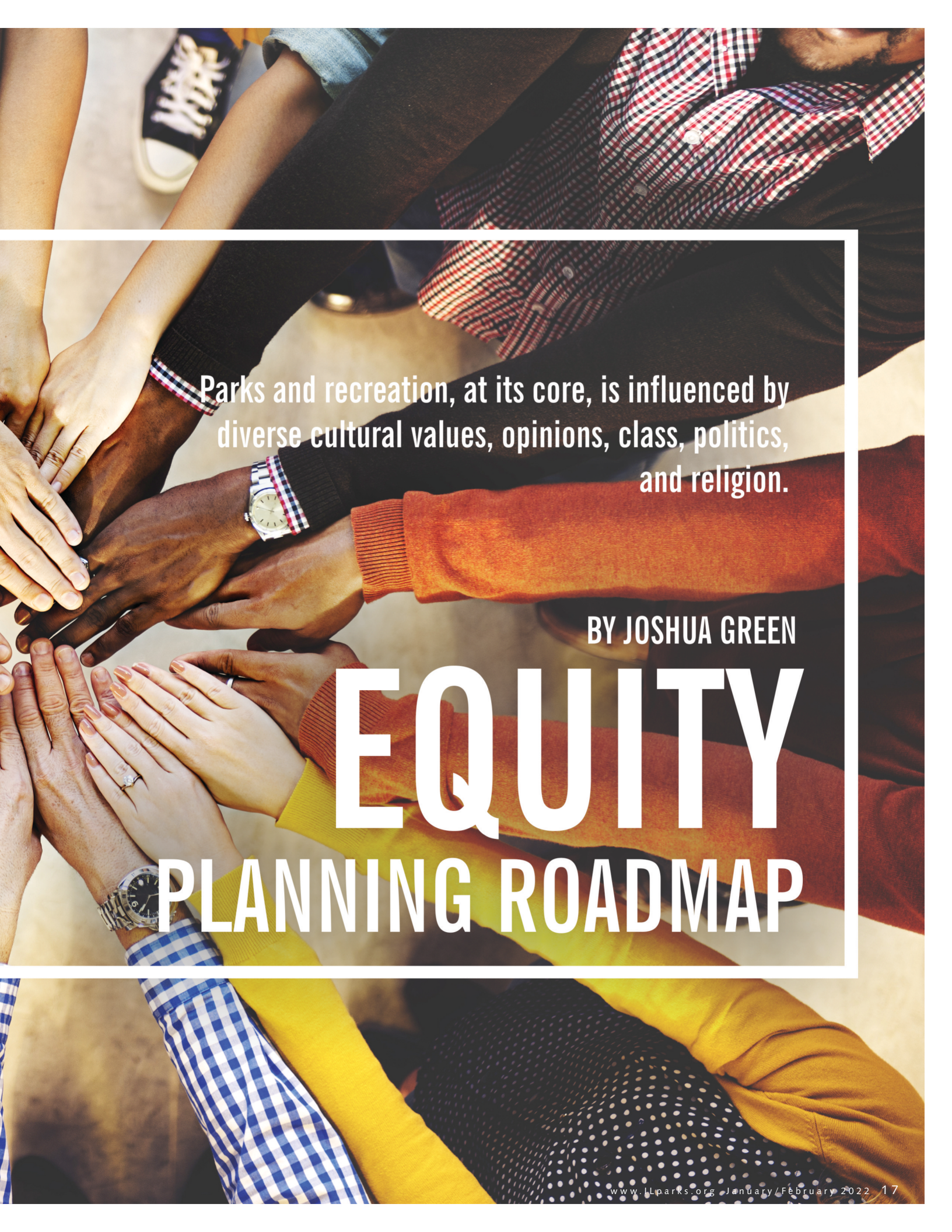
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Park and recreation agencies are uniquely positioned to be the driving force in the 21st century for equity and justice. No other government function is tasked with giving voice to all, creating safe and inclusive spaces, and providing broad community engagement in the way that Parks and Recreation agencies are.

For some, this work is already deeply ingrained through serving diverse communities and removing systemic barriers. Equally, for some, this conversation may be the starting point on your journey. For the latter, remember that this is an opportunity to lean into the work and become a better professional and community service-oriented leader. Regardless of where you are on this journey, it is about organizational and personal reflection, commitment, and growth. Industry professionals must acknowledge that systemic barriers exist for members of our community – and many of those systems, processes, and procedures have been created and perpetuated, either unintentionally or intentionally, by government entities. Therefore, we have an obligation to address and remove barriers wherever they exist.

Parks and recreation, at its core, is influenced by diverse cultural values, opinions, class, politics, and religion. Public recreation itself holds the ideals of access and inclusion. However, the historic reality demonstrates that these public spaces were segregated and exclusionary. This historical ramification passes generationally and is measured through metrics such as geographic locations of facilities, urban canopy density, and access to programs such as swim lessons.



Parks and recreation, at its core, is influenced by diverse cultural values, opinions, class, politics, and religion.

BY JOSHUA GREEN

EQUITY PLANNING ROADMAP

“Creating safe and welcoming spaces is our primary mission, and we are ready to move forward together.”



Understanding the unique challenges to your organization and community is the first step in developing your strategy. Much of the historical context has led us to the modern day. You don't need to look very far to see the current national and international context; it surrounds us – simply turn on the news or read the newspaper. Every community will have a unique context to combine with the regional, national, and global context. Try googling your city, town, or state and combine your search with 'hate,' 'bias,' or 'racism' and see for yourself. By understanding context, we can begin developing the strategy required to propel the parks and recreation industry into the leadership role of creating justice and inclusion.

Now focus on getting started – step 2 of developing your strategy. Seek out other organizations that want to be on this journey and invite them to collaborate. Professional associations and networks support this work with data and best practices. In addition to formal networks, engage other informal networks such as non-profits, your local LGBTQ center, local school student clubs, veteran groups, and worship centers.

Workplace surveys are another great tool to combine with demographic analysis of your workforce and the

community you are serving. The best starting point is surveys on workplace culture extrapolated by race, ethnicity, age, gender, salary, and any other demographics that you deem valuable. An example of a workplace culture question is, “At work do you try to hide some aspect of your diversity and what you perceive as its stereotypes?”. Combine this with real-time data analysis of your current demographics; what are the demographics of your highest wage earners, recently promoted employees, and full-time versus part-time staff. Compare the survey data to the internal demographic information and the internal demographic information with the community you are serving.

Finally, utilize your network and the data collected to formulate your commitment statement. This statement should reflect the context and input from the previous work done; this might be a racial-equity commitment, an equity commitment, or a commitment to addressing all inequities. Regardless of the format, consider these four commitment elements: (1) promoting a climate conducive to the success of all, (2) ensuring equity in recruitment/hiring/training opportunities, (3) developing internal practices and policies that reflect these values, and (4) maintaining an



external presence to make the community better. The last commitment is incredibly critical for parks and recreation agencies. It is a space they already occupy – engage everyone and create more robust, more sustainable, and more vibrant communities. But now incorporate your equity lens on behalf of your organization and the larger community. Take this commitment on the road, utilize focus groups and your network to vet this, and create the buy-in.

The next phase of this journey focuses on internal procedures and practices. When preparing public agenda items, consider including an equity consideration (along with a sustainability consideration). Use this section to discuss how this action supports your commitment to equity or the potential consequences of action or inaction. Recently, an organization I work with decided to eliminate the lifeguard training course fees and instead offer that program for free to provide better access to jobs. Another consideration might be to invest in revitalization projects with an equity lens with the intent of removing barriers to access outdoor recreational opportunities.

Take the opportunity to update your policies with the same equity lens. Start with your anti-harassment policy – is it available online, does it clearly outline the process for filing

a complaint for internal and external stakeholders, how will you protect those who have the courage to come forward with a concern or complaint? Evaluate your hiring process, ask yourself what bias exists in current practice and consider updating the process to address those inequities and remove barriers to accessing opportunities and employment. Such as evaluating where and how you post jobs, using your demographic data to target under-represented communities within your workforce.

For the next step of this journey, we build upon the policy and practice foundation to establish our internal culture. Creating a committee to assist is a great way to balance leaders' intent with a grassroots effort. Utilize your committee to develop internal and external campaigns around various opportunities to recognize Juneteenth, Pride Month, Women in Sports Day, or other opportunities specific to your community. Pair these campaigns with an outward-facing proclamation made by your elected body. Utilize tools such as the new NRPA Equity Language Guide. Integrate your commitment to equity into every planning document, including your strategic and master planning. Seek out a Diversity Calendar (many available online), explore culturally relevant events that your employees may celebrate, and create an internal forum for education. This calendar also assists with being more



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inclusive when scheduling employee or community events to ensure everyone can participate fully. Consider additional training to normalize equity and inclusion in the workplace. Training components might include (1) foundations of cultural competency, (2) understanding bias, (3) building awareness such as institutional power and microaggressions, and (4) skill acquisition such as using inclusive language or uprooting internalized racism.

Once the internal culture promotes equity, move to the final step – external action. A solid internal culture must exist before genuine external action takes place.

It is essential to note the difference between multi-cultural programming and programs targeting underserved communities. This is the difference between the class “journey around the world with art” and offering swim lessons in languages other than English. There is value in both, and both serve the industry mission. Encourage staff to apply the equity lens to programs. For example, when you offer a scholarship, are you also removing the barriers for participation, such as the cost of soccer cleats, or does the scholarship only apply to the course fee?

Agencies also have a powerful voice. Consider using your social media platform to educate on those events from your

diversity calendar mentioned above. Use that platform to engage the community. For example, on Juneteenth, prompt the community by asking, “how do you celebrate freedom?” and encourage participation. Use a quote to further the message of justice on Martin Luther King Jr. Day instead of simply stating your closure. Finally, apply your equity lens regarding whom you partner with and where your logo shows up to ensure that all your great work is not undermined by unintentional association.

As communities continue to diversify, parks and recreation agencies must be ready to answer that call. The more inclusive the programs and the fewer barriers to access them, the more people will be served – often without significant additional resource needs. In the coming years, the demands for more voices to be heard and more inclusive access will be amplified. The parks and recreation industry should loudly and firmly state, “Creating safe and welcoming spaces is our primary mission, and we are ready to move forward together.”

Joshua Green is the principal consultant with JAG Consulting. He is a leadership expert and coach who emphasizes collaboration, intentionality, and integrity to create results. His practical strategies create sustainable systems for positive, substantial and purposeful growth benefiting individuals, organizations, and communities. For more information, contact Joshua at CoachGreen@outlook.com or connect on LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/in/joshmgreen/>.

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A group of four diverse people (two men and two women) are smiling and looking towards the right. They are outdoors, with a background of trees and a bright, warm sunset or sunrise. The text is overlaid on the image.

DON'T WAIT FOR YOUR DIVERSITY 'AHA' MOMENT

BY JON MARQUARDT, CPRP, Superintendent of Facilities, Skokie Park District

When it comes to diversity, equity, inclusion and justice (DEIJ) at a public agency, most journeys begin with an 'aha' moment. Unfortunately, that moment for our staff at the Skokie Park District didn't come right away.



Skokie is incredibly diverse, with more than 90 languages spoken in the district's 25,000 homes. We had — and still have — one of the largest cultural festivals in the Midwest, highlighting more than 80 cultures. We have staff and program participants that represent the tremendous diversity within our community, and we work closely with our special recreation organization to make sure all of our inclusion needs are met. With that knowledge, we thought that we had all of the boxes checked when it came to promoting diversity and inclusion throughout the district.

In 2015, we hired a consultant to help develop our new comprehensive master plan. With the help of a resident and community stakeholder survey, several strategies were developed during the process. The one that really stood out was the need for more DEIJ related programs, policies and community engagement. This was a shock to most of us since we

thought we excelled in that area. But as we looked closer, we realized that a solid DEIJ initiative doesn't stop with a few programs and events, it's a never-ending journey that remains fluid over time.

Staff buy-in

With a new master plan to guide us, the first step was to see if our staff was ready for change. We brought in a nationally known transgender speaker, Ryan Sallans, who discussed his journey, including gender and LGBTQ+ rights. We knew the topics discussed might be a trigger for some, but that the presentation would give us a better understanding of where our staff were regarding DEIJ-related subjects. After the training, multiple staff remarked about how amazing the speaker was and how it really opened their eyes to challenges that the transgender community faced. This moment showed us that our staff were ready to move forward in a positive direction.

As we set about to create new DEIJ events and programs, it was of course important to listen to — and take our queues from — each community during the creative process.



Welcoming our residents

Our next step was to figure out how to reach the diverse residents of Skokie and to assure them that we were hearing their voices. With dozens of languages spoken in the homes of our residents we needed a way to instantly connect with them when they entered our facilities. With a front-line staff that speak many languages, our newly developed staff diversity committee decided to engage non-English speaking patrons entering our facilities by creating staff nametags that included second languages that each staff member spoke. We believe that this initiative — as well as a newly-created giant welcome sign highlighting the many languages spoken in Skokie — provides a little piece of home for non-English speakers who enter our largest facility for the first time.

Diverse programming

Our first major DEIJ initiative began in 1990, when several community groups partnered with the Skokie Park District to create the Skokie Festival of Cultures. The two-day cultural arts festival was designed to celebrate Skokie's

diversity and to create a better understanding and appreciation between ethnic, cultural and religious groups residing in Skokie. For three decades this award-winning event was THE DEIJ special event in Skokie, however it was the only DEIJ special event that the district offered. Up until five years ago we had gotten comfortable with the fact that this was our only DEIJ event, since it was one of the largest cultural events in the Midwest, bringing in more than 25,000 visitors and showcasing more than 80 different cultures over one weekend every May. But this event offered only a two-day glimpse of what Skokie was and has become. We knew that the district had to start expanding DEIJ events and programming throughout the year, as well as reaching out to more cultural communities.

As we set about to create new DEIJ events and programs, it was of course important to listen to — and take our queues from — each community during the creative process. We have found that strong community engagement is the key to creating dialog with marginalized groups within the district. The Skokie Park District is now

very fortunate to work closely with various community groups, schools, social justice groups and other municipalities within Skokie. Because of these partnerships we have been able to create two new large DEIJ events for Skokie residents.

When staff discussed DEIJ-related events over the years, we usually talked about targeting ethnicities, religions or nationalities. But we decided that these discussions were not inclusive enough. One group that seemed off our radar was Skokie's LGBTQ+ community. While members of this community were represented in many of our programs and events, the district had done nothing to directly reach out to them. In June 2019, with the help of the LGBTQ+ community, social justice groups, local churches, schools, local businesses, the library and local government, staff welcomed more than 2,000 attendees to Skokie's first Pride event. The event included an educational piece, a family event, drag performers, and a discussion led by teenagers who discussed what it was like coming out to their families. It was an amazing public event that allowed everyone to come out and just be themselves.

Demographics play a huge role in planning a DEIJ event. Skokie's Black and African American population make up about 8 percent or approximately 5,100 residents from that community. We decided that the district was not fully meeting their needs. In early 2019, the head of a local social justice group suggested the park district create a Juneteenth event. In 2021, in spite of a pandemic, our small committee moved forward with the weekend-long event. Our committee was a very passionate group comprised of educators, influential leaders, local businesses and local municipality staff. The event's format included online educational pieces during the month of June, an opening ceremony on the day before June 19, and a family event on June 19. Committee members secured various speakers for the event including Mayor George Van Dusen reading the Village of Skokie's Juneteenth Proclamation, Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton, Sherialyn Byrdsong (Ricky Byrdsong's widow) and the Rev. Dr. Michael Nabors, President of the Evanston/North Shore NAACP. The district also partnered with a local brewery that created a special brew called "Freedomish," with all proceeds from the sale of the beer going to local social justice groups. This Village-wide collaboration was a huge success and provided a powerful history lesson for those in attendance, unfamiliar with the Juneteenth holiday.



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Education, outreach and the future of DEI/J

The Skokie Park District is not alone in its DEI/J work. The parks and recreation industry nationwide now understands that DEI/J initiatives are important for recognizing and correcting inequalities from the past. Park districts need to become more fluid in the way they tackle DEI/J-related topics, with a framework created from the inside out, in order to establish an inclusive environment, not only for their external customers, but for their staff as well.

Since 2017, many of our staff and leadership team have enrolled and completed The National SEED Project's nine-month local seminar. Participants in SEED explore their own education in relation to race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual identity, abilities, and age, and how these factors currently impact their workplace. They consider how they can use their workplaces to create a more equitable environment for all.

Today, the Skokie Park District is working with a DEI/J consulting firm to help us create a foundation that will allow us to continue our DEI/J journey into the future. The district's initial contract provides Implicit Bias Training for staff, a restructure of our current diversity committee, a DEI/J board workshop, and an equity audit. Once this has all been completed in early 2022, we hope to continue with our current consulting firm to create and implement a diversity advocacy team, racial affinity support group and the creation of a DEI/J strategic plan.

We believe that all park districts must strive to expand their DEI/J initiatives by listening to and accepting direction from all marginalized groups within their community. By doing this, they will expand their current thought processes and open the minds of both their internal and external customers.

Your DEI/J journey may begin with an 'aha' moment, but its future course will undoubtedly be ever-changing. This path WILL have a lot of bumps along the way, but don't get discouraged, the payoff in the end is what will make the never-ending journey worthwhile. q


Jon Marquardt was the Skokie Park District's assistant superintendent of recreation when the district began its DEI/J journey in 2015. Jon has led the staff DEI/J team since then, bringing in speakers, working with community leaders, organizing community events and educational opportunities, and working with other staff to increase DEI/J programming districtwide. In 2021, the district was awarded the IPRA's first-ever 'Champions for Change' Award, recognizing unique and exemplary practices of increasing access, and fostering diversity and inclusion within its community and organization.



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By Todd Pernsteiner
Pernsteiner Creative Group

LEVELING THE
Playing
Field

Creating equity in athletics and recreation

Creating equity in youth sports programs has been an on-going mission for many Illinois communities. In the recent past, park and recreation agencies have offered scholarships or waived registration fees for financially challenged families, however the past couple of years has been a different story. Communities have faced budget shortfalls due to the on-going pandemic which could affect their ability to provide grants.



Every Kid Sports, a non-profit organization that provides financial support to children of low-income families to pay sports registration fees, has committed to raising \$10 million to get 100,000 kids nationwide off the sidelines and into the game.

An organization is stepping up to help agencies offset these financial shortcomings through grants to pay for youth registrations. Every Kid Sports, a non-profit organization that provides financial support to children of low-income families to pay sports registration fees, has committed to raising \$10 million to get 100,000 kids nationwide off the sidelines and into the game. With the support of organizations, foundations, brands, and individual donations, Every Kid Sports aims to level the playing field to playing youth sports.

Every Kid Sports signature program, **Every Kid Sports Pass**, provides qualified families grants of up to \$150 four times per year, per child, for participation in a variety of youth sports.

Every Kid Sports encourages sport sampling, as research shows that playing a variety of sports allows for greater physical literacy, better socialization, and greater enjoyment in being physically and emotionally active. It prepares them for a lifetime of activity, connection, and positive experiences.

To receive a grant, a parent applies online at least 14 days before the sport's season start date. Applications are reviewed in five to seven business days, and approved funds can be accessed through Chek Financial's mobile app to pay for league registration.

The overwhelmingly positive feedback Every Kid Sports receives is proof the program is working. Every Kid Sports all-star kids and families share their positive Sports Pass experiences through testimonials, videos and photos. Their messages let other families know of the opportunities that await them through the program.



Franklin
Every Kid Sports All-Star

One of these all-stars, 4-year-old Franklin from Paxton, Ill., is excited to share that he's learned patience, practice, and jump kicks. His mother, Kristina Pryor, has noticed its impact as well saying that he's made new friends and learned the importance of improvement through practice. Involvement in sports has also taught him respect, which has made the program invaluable to his family.

Every Kid Sports Executive Director Natalie Hummel said the program provides the opportunity to make a life-changing impact by bringing major brands, sports organizations, families, and most importantly, kids, together to equalize youth sports participation. Youth sports have been severely impacted by the pandemic and more families than ever need help to register their kids for sports.

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103 S. Church Street
Addison, IL 60101



ADDITIONAL SPORTS EQUITY RESOURCES

Illinois R3 Grants

R3 grants fund programs in Illinois communities that have been harmed by violence, excessive incarceration, and economic disinvestment.

R3 grants fund programs in five areas:

- Civil Legal Aid
- Economic Development
- Reentry
- Violence Prevention
- Youth Development

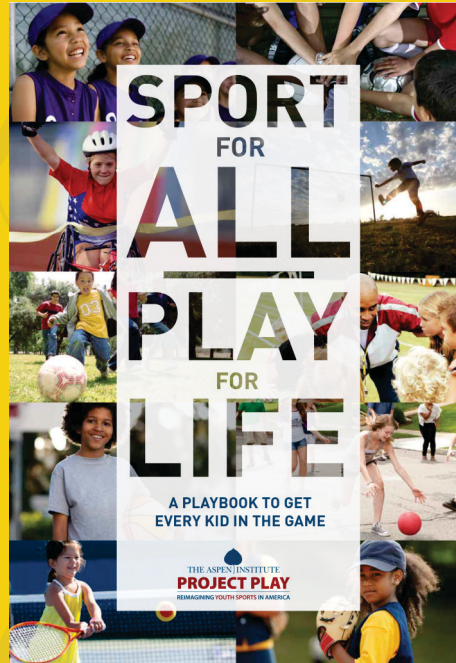
The communities that are eligible for R3 funding were identified, in part, by their rates of gun injuries, child poverty, unemployment and incarceration. Nonprofit organizations, local governments, faith-based organizations, businesses, and other community or neighborhood associations may apply for grants individually or in a collaborative with other groups.

To see if your organizations in your community are eligible for an R3 grant, visit <https://r3.illinois.gov/eligibility>

Coaching Corps

Coaching Corps ensures that the opportunity for kids to run, play, learn, and work with a team is a given – not a luxury. There are clear benefits to early sports participation and mentorship, and there is currently a great disparity in access to these benefits.

Coaching Corps seeks to use sports and the power of coaches as vehicles for transformative change for youth in underserved communities. To date, they have placed more than 19,000 coaches with hundreds of afterschool sports programs, serving over 210,000 youth in underserved communities across the country. By pairing qualified coaches with afterschool sports programs in under-resourced areas, communities can provide youth with a fun experience that enhances their positive development. Learn more at www.coachingcorps.org.



Aspen Institute's Project Play Playbook

Over the past two years, Aspen Institute's Project Play has convened more than 250 thought leaders in a series of roundtables, identifying strategies that can address barriers limiting access to early sport activity that fosters the development of healthy children and communities. This 50-page report aggregates the eight most promising strategies. Authored by the Sports & Society Program with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, ***Sport for All, Play for Life: A Playbook to Get Every Kid in the Game*** is a unifying document, collecting in one place the best opportunities for stakeholders—from sport leaders to mayors, parents to policymakers—to work together to grow access to an early, positive sport experience.

Hundreds of organizations have used the report to introduce programs or shape youth strategies. Ideas in the playbook have been used to unlock tens of millions of dollars in public and private investment and create government policies.

Learn more by downloading the playbook at <https://bit.ly/AspenPlaybook>.



PEOPLE & PLACES



Wendi Calabrese Retires After 24 Years at Plainfield Park District

After 24 years of serving the Plainfield Park District, Wendi Calabrese retired on Jan. 4, 2022.

Wendi joined the district in 1998 as a secretary at the front desk. At that time, the park district owned 17 parks encompassing 278 acres of land. Today, the district boundaries cover more than 43.04 square miles (27,545 acres) and serves a population of more than 100,000. It is the ninth largest park district in the State of Illinois based on population served.

Wendi held administrative assistant, guest services and executive assistant roles before her final position as director of administrative services. She was a part of many accomplishments while at Plainfield. In 2016, the district celebrated its 50-year anniversary with special events, programs and celebrations all year long that were coordinated by Wendi. In 2017, Plainfield was recognized as an Illinois Distinguished Accredited Agency. Wendi was the leader of the certification process.

Additionally, Wendi implemented the current Board Documents system and oversaw the integration of the online registration system. The Plainfield Park District Board of Commissioners officially declared December 8, 2021 as Wendi Calabrese Day at the district and she was honored at the Dec. 8 meeting.



Josh Hendricks Joins Plainfield Park District

Plainfield Park District recently announced that **Josh Hendricks** has been hired as the new director of marketing & community outreach.

Josh has a wealth of experience in the park district marketing and communications field, having served as the director of marketing and communications at Bloomingdale Park District the past 11+ years (2010-21). Prior to Bloomingdale, he was the communications coordinator at Schaumburg Park District (2008-2010).

Hendricks began his career as a sportswriter, with stints at the Olney Daily Mail, Reporter/Progress Newspapers in Downers Grove, and The Star Newspapers in Tinley Park. He later transitioned to public relations, serving as the sports information director at Saint Xavier University (2001-2003) and North Central College (2003-2008). Josh is a graduate of Benedictine University with a bachelor's degree in communications, and North Central College with a master's degree in liberal studies.



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Photo Courtesy of: Pekin Park District

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ACCOUNTANTS

Lauterbach & Amen, LLP

Ron Amen
ramen@lauterbachamen.com
668 N River Rd
Naperville, IL 60563
www.lauterbachamen.com
630-393-1483 PH

Sikich LLP

Anthony Cervini
anthony.cervini@sikich.com
1415 W Diehl Rd
Suite 400
Naperville, IL 60563
www.sikich.com
630-566-8574 PH

AQUATICS

Aqua Pure Enterprises, Inc.

Thomas Todner
tom@aquapure-il.com
1404 Joliet Rd Suite A
Romeoville, IL 60446
www.aquarepure-IL.com
630-771-1310 PH

Halogen Supply Company, Inc.

Rich Hellgeth
rhellgeth@halogensupply.com
4653 W Lawrence Ave
Chicago, IL 0630-2532
www.halogensupply.com
773-286-6300 PH

Spear Corporation

Sam Blake
sblake@spearcorp.com
12966 N County Rd 50 W
Roachdale, IN 46172
www.spearcorp.com
765-577-3100 PH

Vortex Aquatic Structures Intl.


Ryan Eccles
reccles@vortex-intl.com
11024 Bailey Rd., Unit C
Cornelius, NC 28031
www.vortex-intl.com
877-586-7839 PH

ARCHITECTS/ ENGINEERS

BFW Engineering & Testing Inc.

Mark Thompson
mthompson@
bfwengineers.com
500 S. 17th St.
Paducah, KY 42003
www.bfwengineers.com
270-4431995 PH

Dewberry Architects Inc.

Daniel Atilano
datilano@dewberry.com
132 N York St, Suite 2C
Elmhurst, IL 60126
www.dewberry.com
847-841-0571 PH 

DLA Architects, Ltd.

Lou Noto
l.noto@dla-ltd.com
2 Pierce Pl., Suite 1300
Itasca, IL 60143
www.dla-ltd.com
847-742-4063 PH

Eriksson Engineering Associates

Michael Renner
mrenner@eea-ltd.com
145 Commerce Dr., Suite A
Grayslake, IL 60030-7834
www.eea-ltd.com
847-223-4804

Farnsworth Group, Inc.

Bruce Brown
bbrown@f-w.com
100 Walnut St., Suite 200
Peoria, IL 61602
www.f-w.com
309-689-9888 PH

FGM Architects, Inc.

John Dzarnowski
johnd@fgmarchitects.com
1211 W 22nd St.
Suite 705
Oak Brook, IL 60523
www.fgmarchitects.com
630-574-8300 PH

Gewalt Hamilton Associates, Inc.

Tom Rychlik
trychlik@gha-engineers.com
625 Forest Edge Dr.
Vernon Hills, IL 60061-4104
www.gha-engineers.com
847-478-9700 PH

HR Green, Inc.

Dave Reitz
dreitz@hrgreen.com
420 N Front St., Suite 100
McHenry, IL 60050-5528
www.hrgreen.com
815-385-1778 PH

Inspec, Inc.

David Foler
dfoler@inspec.com
8618 W Catalpa, Suites
1109-1110
Chicago, IL 60656-1161
www.inspec.com
773-892-2771 PH

MSA Professional Services, Inc.

Alyssa Scheuneman
ascheuneman@msa-ps.com
201 W. Springfield Ave.
Ste 400
Champaign, IL 61820
www.msa-ps.com
217-531-4964 PH

Rocco Castellano Design Studio Inc.

Rocco Castellano
rocco.castellano@
castellano.design
30 N. Vincennes Circle
Racine, WI 53402
312-925-0907 PH

Sheehan, Nagle, Hartray Architects

Eric Penney
eric@snh-a.com
130 E Randolph
Suite 3100
Chicago, IL 60601
www.snh-a.com
312-633-2900 PH

TRIA Architecture

James Petrakos, AIA, LEED AP
jpetrakos@tria-arch.com
901 McClintock Dr., Suite 100
Burr Ridge, IL 60527
630-455-4500 PH

Veregy

Danielle Melone
dmelone@veregy.com
17 W 635 Butterfield Rd.
#315
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181
630-200-5204 PH

Wight & Company

Robert Ijams
rijams@wightco.com
2500 N Frontage Rd
Darien, IL 60561
www.wightco.com
630-739-6644 PH

Williams Architects, Ltd.

Karen Lellios
ktlellios@williams-
architects.com
500 Park Blvd, Suite 800
Itasca, IL 60143
630-221-1212 PH

IAPD CORPORATE/ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

WT Group

Troy Triphahn
Troy.Triphahn@
wtengineering.com
2675 Pratum Ave
Hoffman Estates, IL 60192
www.wtengineering.com
224-293-6333 PH

ATTORNEYS

Ancel Glink

Derke Price
dprice@ancelglink.com
140 S. Dearborn St., 6th Fl
Chicago, IL 60603
www.ancelglink.com
312-782-7606 PH

Chapman and Cutler, LLP

Kelly Kost
kost@chapman.com
111 W Monroe St, 13th Fl
Chicago, IL 60603-4011
www.chapman.com
312-845-3814 PH

Ice Miller LLP

Shelly Scinto
shelly.scinto@icemiller.com
200 W. Madison St.
Suite 3500
Chicago, IL 60606-3417
www.icemiller.com/
312-726-8116 PH

Montana & Welch, LLC

Erin Blake
eblake@montanawelch.com
11950 S. Harlem Ave.,
Suite 102
Palos Heights, IL 60463-
1161
www.montanawelch.com
708-448-7005 PH

Robbins Schwartz

Steven Adams
sadams@robbins-
schwartz.com
55 W. Monroe, Suite 800
Chicago, IL 60603
www.robbins-schwartz.com
312-332-7760 PH

BACKGROUND CHECKS

NCSI

David Rye
davidr@ncsisafe.com
807 Broadway St NE, #300
Minneapolis, MN 55413
www.ssci2000.com
802-829-1516 PH

BANKING

Wintrust Government Funds

Tim O'Brien
tobrien@wintrust.com
231 S. LaSalle St.
2nd Floor
Chicago, IL 60604
www.wintrust.com/
312-981-0765 PH

BRONZE PLAQUES/STATUES

Bronze Memorial Company

Rick Gurrieri
bronzememco@gmail.com
1805 Beach St.
Broadview, IL 60155
www.bronzememco.com
773-276-7972 PH

CONCESSION EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

Gold Medal Products, Co.

Jim Such
jsuch@gmpopcorn.com
450 N. York Rd.
Bensenville, IL 60106-1606
www.goldmedalchicago.com
800-767-5352 PH

CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

Byrne & Jones Construction

Britton Taulbee
britt@byrneandjones.com
13940 St. Charles Rock
Road
St. Louis, MO 63044
www.byrneandjones.com
314-567-7997 PH

Corporate Construction Services

Michael Rink
ccs@corporateconstructionse-
rvices.com
1323 Butterfield Rd.
Suite 110
Downers Grove, IL 60515
www.corporateconstruction-
services.com
630-271-0500 PH

Frederick Quinn Corporation

Jack Hayes
jhayes@fquinncorp.com
103 S Church St.
Addison, IL 60101-3746
www.fquinncorp.com
630-628-8500 PH

Henry Bros. Co.

Marc Deneau
mdeneau@henrybros.com
9821 S. 78th Ave.
Hickory Hills, IL 60457-
2324
www.henrybros.com
708-430-5400 PH

Lamp Incorporated

Ian Lamp
ilamp@lampinc.net
460 N. Grove Ave.
Elgin, IL 60120
www.lampinc.net
847-741-7220 PH

V3 Companies

Greg Wolterstorff
gwolterstorff@v3co.com
7325 Janes Ave
Woodridge, IL 60517
www.v3co.com
630-729-6334 PH

CONSULTANTS

Anthony Roofing - Tecta America

Corey Fratus
cfratus@tectaaamerica.com
2555 White Oak Circle
Aurora, IL 60502
www.tectaaamerica.com
630-515-5554 PH

aQity Research & Insights, Inc.

Jeff Andreasen
j.andreasen@
aqityresearch.com
820 Davis St., Suite 502
Evanston, IL 60201
www.aqityresearch.com
847-424-4171 PH

Landscapes Golf Management

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mmattingly@
landscapesgolf.com
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www.landscapes-
unlimited.com/index.php
402-423-6653 PH

ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Ameren Illinois

Carol Kulek
CKulek@ameren.com
1110 Memory Ln
Springfield, IL 62707
www.amerenillinois-
savings.com
217-741-2489 PH

IAPD CORPORATE/ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

ComEd Energy Efficiency Program

Chris McCabe
cmccabe@nexant.com
2011 Swift Drive
Oak Brook, IL 60523-1580
www.ComEd.com
PublicSectorEE
630-480-8132 PH

Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program

Tara Brown
tarbrown@southernco.com
1844 Ferry Rd.
Naperville, IL 60563
www.southernco.com
630-388-3844 PH

Seven Utility Management Consultants

Dale Snyder
dsnyder@sevenutility.com
7704 Oakridge Rd.
North Little Rock, AR 72116
www.sevenutility.com
501-835-3142 PH

Trajectory Energy Partners, LLC

Hal Sprague
hal@trajectoryenergy.com
PO Box 310
Highland Park, IL 60035
www.trajectoryenergy.com
847-204-4170 PH

Trane

Aaron Rafferty
Aaron.Rafferty@
tranetechnologies.com
7100 S. Madison
Willowbrook, IL 60527
www.trane.com
630-203-7007 PH

EXERCISE EQUIPMENT

Matrix Fitness

Kevin Kingston
kevin.kingston@
matrixfitness.com
1600 Landmark Drive
Cottage Grove, WI 53527
www.matrixfitness.com
773-919-7370 PH

FINANCE

Mesirow Financial, Inc.

Todd Krzyskowski
tkrzyskowski@mesirov
financial.com
353 N. Clark St.
Chicago, IL 60654
www.mesirovfinancial.com
312-595-7842 PH

Speer Financial, Inc.


Aaron Gold
agold@speerfinancial.com
1 N LaSalle St., Suite 4100
Chicago, IL 60602
www.speerfinancial.com
312-780-2280 PH

INSURANCE

Illinois Parks Association Risk Services (IPARKS)

Ryan Pnakovich
rpnakovich@bfgroup.com
315 S. Kalamazoo Mall
Kalamazoo, MI 49007-
4806
www.iparks.org 
800-692-9522 PH

Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA)

Brett Davis
bdavis@pdrma.org 
2033 Burlington Ave.
Lisle, IL 60532-1646
www.pdrma.org
630-769-0332 PH

INVESTMENTS

PFM Asset Management

Michelle Binns
binns@pfm.com
190 S. La Salle, Suite 2000
Chicago, IL 60603-3542
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PMA Financial Network, LLC

Courtney Soesbe
csoesbe@pmanetwork.com
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Naperville, IL 60563
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630-657-6421 PH

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Gerald Adelman
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Hitchcock Design Group

Bill Inman
binman@hitchcockdesign
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Suite 200A
Naperville, IL 60611-2009
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group.com
630-961-1787 PH

JSD Professional Services, Inc.

Lori Vierow
lori.vierow@jsdinc.com
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Suite 215
Des Plaines, IL 60018-3339
www.jsdinc.com/
312-644-3379 PH

LANDSCAPE SERVICES/SUPPLIES

Balanced Environments, Inc.

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nkleber@balanced
environmentsinc.com
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Imagine Nation LLC
Michele Kuhlman
michele@imagineparks.com
1827 Stratford Ave.
Westchester, IL 60154-4249
imagineparks.com
773-330-0983 PH

Kompan
Ken Dobyns
kendob@kompan.com
2 Squantz View Dr.
New Fairfield, CT 06812
www.kompan.com
646-596-1052 PH

NuToys Leisure Products
Sheilah Wasielewski
sheilahw@nutoy4fun.com
915 Hillgrove
LaGrange, IL 60525
www.nutoys4fun.com
708-579-9055 PH

SAFETY PROGRAMS

Illinois Public Risk Fund
Robert Buhs
rbuhs@iprf.com
7851 W. 185th St.
Suite 101
Tinley Park, IL 60477-6296
www.iprf.com
708-429-6300 PH

SHELTERS

Norwalk Concrete Industries
Dalton Vaughan
dvaughan@nciprecast.com
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Justin Lettenberger
justin@
chicago.foreverlawn.com
3438 Colony Bay Dr.
Rockford, IL 61109-2560
www.foreverlawnchicago.com
779-368-0251 PH

TECHNOLOGY

CivicPlus
Rebecca Barton
rebecca.barton@
civicplus.com
302 S. 4th Street
Suite 500
Manhattan, KS 66502
www.civicrec.com
785-560-2063 PH

Links Technology Solutions, Inc.
James Burke
jburke@linkstechnology.com
440 E State Parkway
Suite 220
Schaumburg, IL 60173
www.linkstechnology.com
847-252-7285 PH

Smart Field Forms
Lee Forckenbrock
lee@smartfieldforms.com
3550 Hobson Rd.
Suite 403
Woodridge, IL 60517
www.smartfieldforms.com
312-588-7200 PH

TELE-COMMUNICATIONS

Call One
Camryn Filetti
cfiletti@callone.com
225 W. Wacker Dr., 8th Fl
Chicago, IL 60606-1260
www.callone.com
312-496-6693 PH



TRANSPORTATION

Best Bus Sales
Rob Zimmerman
A/P@BestBusSales.com
1216 Rand Rd.
Des Plaines, IL 60016-3403
www.bestbussales.com
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rkatzenberger@
monroetruck.com
1051 W. 7th St.
Monroe, WI 53566
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608-329-8112 PH

VIDEOGRAPHY

Jaffe, Inc.
Greg Bizzaro
greg@jaffeinc.com
1701 Quincy Ave.
Suite 2
Naperville, IL 60540-6689
www.jaffeinc.com
630-730-3777 PH

WATER RECREATION

Commercial Recreation Specialists
Ron Romans
info@crs4rec.com
807 Liberty Dr.
Suite 101
Verona, WI 53593-9160
www.crs4rec.com
877-896-8442 PH

WEB DEVELOPMENT

McDaniels Marketing
Randall McDaniels
rmcdaniels@
mcdmarketing.com
11 Olt Ave.
Pekin, IL 61554
www.mcdanielsmarketing.com
309-346-4230 PH

Please contact Alan Howard at ahoward@ilparks.org for updates or changes to your corporate member listing.

AQUATICS

AQUA PURE ENTERPRISES, LLC.
Deborah Todnerv
1404 Joliet Rd. Ste A
Romeoville, IL 60446
apei@aquapure-il.com
630-771-1310 PH
aquapure-il.com

AQUATIC COUNCIL, LLC
Timothy Auerhahn, CPOI
78 Lyndale Drive
Rochester, NY 14624
tim@aquaticcouncil.com
585-415-6926 PH
aquaticcouncil.com

BURBACH AQUATICS
Roger Schamberger
5974 Highway 80 S.
Platteville, WI 53818
baae@centurytel.net
608-348-3262 PH
burbachaquatics.com

JEFF ELLIS AND ASSOCIATES, INC.
Joe Stefanyak
PO Box 2160
Windermere, FL 34786
joe.stefanyak@jellis.com
407-401-7120 PH
jellis.com

JUST IN TIME POOL & SPA
Michael Butkovich
148 Eisenhower Lane N.
Lombard, IL 60148
justintimepool@yahoo.com
312-622-2223 PH

LINCOLN AQUATICS
Charlie Luecker
2051 Commerce Ave
Concord, CA 94520-4950
cs@lincolnaquatics.com
800-223-5450 PH
lincolnaquatics.com

SPEAR CORPORATION
Brian Spear
12966 N County Road 50 W
Roachdale, IN 46172-9538
bspear@spearcorp.com
765-522-1126 PH
spearcorp.com

VORTEX AQUATIC STRUCTURES INTERNATIONAL
Scott Stefanc
11024 Bailey Road, Suite C
Cornelius, NC, 28031
sstefanc@vortex-intl.com
877-586-7839 PH
vortex-intl.com

BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION

BID EVOLUTION
Steve Kulovits
1905 Sequoia Dr.
Suite 201
Aurora, IL 60506
stevek@bidevolution.com
630-450-8360 PH
bidevolution.com

FREDERICK QUINN CORP
Jack Hayes
103 S. Church St.
Addison, IL 60101
jhayes@fquinncorp.com
630-628-8500 PH
fquinncorp.com

H2I GROUP INC
Gavin Wilk
445 Eisenhower Lane North
Lombard, IL 60148
gwilk@h2igroup.com
(888) 239-8747
h2igroup.com

INTEGRAL CONSTRUCTION INC.
Christopher Osinski
320 Rocbaar Drive
Romeoville, IL 60446
cosinski@buildintegral.com
844-317-7403 PH

LAMP INCORPORATED
Ian Lamp
460 N. Grove Avenue
Elgin, IL 60120
ilamp@lampinc.net
847-741-7220 (305) PH
lampinc.net

BYRNE & JONES CONSTRUCTION
Joseph Schuit
13940 Saint Charles Rock Rd
Bridgeton, MO 63044-3826
jschuit@byrneandjones.com
314-619-3326 PH
byrneandjones.com

BACKGROUND SCREENING

INTELLIGENTS ETV
Darryl Bulliner
2555 Lincoln Hwy, Ste 203
Olympia Fields, IL 60461-1939
dbulliner@intelligentsetv.com
708-534-3994 PH
intelligentsetv.com

COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

APPLE CANYON LAKE PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION
Ashlee Miller
14A157 Canyon Club Dr
Apple River, IL 61001-9576
Ashlee.Miller@applecanyonlake.org
815-492-2238 PH
applecanyonlake.org

CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

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Mike Carpenter, LEED AP
4610 Roslyn Rd.
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mikec@featherstoneinc.com
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Jon Henke
202 12th Street NE
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Staples, MN 56479
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TIPS
Chandie Randle
4845 US Highway 271 N
Pittsburg, TX 75686-4303
chandie.randle@tips-usa.com
903-575-2608 PH
tips-usa.com

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Amy Populorum
2011 Swift Dr
Oak Brook, IL 60523-1580
Amy.Populorum@ComEd.com
630-891-7430 PH
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Chicago, IL 60603
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Naperville, IL 60563
ramen@lauterbachamen.com
630-393-1483 PH
lauterbachamen.com

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One North LaSalle
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Ken Chastain
18311 N Creek Dr, Ste F
Tinley Park, IL 60477-6215
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708-326-4000 PH
f-w.com

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630-574-8300 PH
fgmarchitects.com

**GEWALT HAMILTON
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Michael Shrake
625 Forest Edge Drive
Vernon Hills, IL 60061
mshrake@gha-engineers.com
847-478-9700 PH
gha-engineers.com

**HITCHCOCK DESIGN
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Bill Inman
225 W. Jefferson Ave
Naperville, IL 60540
binman@
hitchcockdesigngroup.com
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hitchcockdesigngroup.com

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8618 W. Catalpa
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dfoler@inspec.com
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inspec.com

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larsoncompany.com

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2500 N. Frontage Road
Darien, IL 60561
rijams@wightco.com
630-739-6644 PH
wightco.com

IPRA COMMERCIAL MEMBERS

WILLIAMS ARCHITECTS

Karen T. Lellios
500 Park Blvd.
Suite 800
Itasca, IL 60143
ktlellios@williams-architects.com
630-221-1212 PH
williams-architects.com

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Jaclyn Triphahn
2675 Pratum Avenue
Hoffman Estates, IL 60192
Jaclyn.Triphahn@wtengineering.com
224-293-6333 PH
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Greg Petry, CPRE
474 Glendenning Place
Waukegan, IL 60087
greg@gregpetryconsulting.com
847-287-4721 PH

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3025 Highland Parkway
Suite 225
Downers Grove, IL 60515
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7851 W. 185th Street
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Tinley Park, IL 60477
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2033 Burlington Avenue
Lisle, IL 60532
bdavis@pdrma.org
630-769-0332 PH
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Aaron Rafferty
7100 S. Madison St.
Willowbrook, IL 60527
aaron.rafferty@irco.com
630-203-7007 PH
irco.com

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Rudy Pottorff
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rudy.pottorff@heartlinefitness.com
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heartlinefitness.com

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Elmhurst, IL 60126-1524
rswets@chicomm.com
630-918-0019 PH
chicomm.com

CIVICREC

Nick Glasgow
302 S 4th St, Ste 500
Manhattan, KS 66502-6410
Nicholas.glasgow@civicplus.com
785-370-7328 PH
civicplus.com

COMMUNITYPASS

Meghann Zerrahn
P.O. Box 628
Ridgewood, NJ 07450
mzerrahn@capturepoint.com
201-689-2323 x. 2011 PH
communitypass.net

MUNICODE

Jordan Rochester
1700 Capital Cir SW
Tallahassee, FL 32310-9250
jrochester@municode.com
850-692-7096 PH
municode.com

RAM COMMUNICATIONS INC.

Rob McCoy
2720 S River Rd., Ste 152
Des Plaines, IL 60018-4111
info@ramcomminc.com
847-358-0917 PH
ramcomminc.com

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Renaud Beaulieu-Labbé
1751 Richardson Street
Suite 3.102
Montreal, QC H3K1G6,
CANADA
sales@amilia.com
514-343-0004 PH
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TYLER TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

Katie Caton
5101 Tennyson Pkwy
Plano, TX 75024-3525
katie.caton@tylertech.com
207-518-4745 PH
tylertech.com

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