

illinois

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# PARKS AND RECREATION

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



A circular graphic with a green and white color scheme. The text 'SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS' is written along the left inner edge. In the center, there is a stylized graphic of a city skyline with the text '2024 PRE-CONFERENCE GUIDE' and 'INSIDE'. At the bottom, it says 'IAPD/IPRA SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS'.

# leadership & governance



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# FROM THE EDITOR

## How Will You Lead When Challenges Arise



What defines a leader?

That word might seem like it comes with a simple answer like, "someone who leads or commands a group of people." But I tend to see it as a more nuanced position in the hierarchy of any district, association, board or volunteer group.

Leading means knowing where to take your team according to plan to hit goals, make improvements, and meet the expectations of those you serve. It means being able to adapt when disaster hits and plans change. Regardless of if there is a weather emergency, a pandemic, or an act of violence, leaders are the ones we turn to in times of need to steer the ship, maintain calm and make things happen.

This issue looks at how leaders at every level of your agency can be prepared to step up when called to take action. From the employee level to executive directors to board members, everyone has a role to play in being leaders. We hope this issue shines a light on how you can best prepare to lead by example.

In *Leading Through Crisis in Highland Park* on page 14, Liz Gogola of the Park District of Highland Park tells us how her agency handled an active shooter situation during its Fourth of July parade. In *Utilizing Leadership to Attract Support* on page 22, Lori Hoffner shares the how leaders can build networks of advocates that can spread the mission of an agency and build trust in communities. Finally, Jill Allread of Public Communications Inc. shares best strategies to handle crisis and controversy in *Park District Boards Have a Role in Times of Crisis and Crisis Prevention* on page 26.

I hope these stories can guide your team to be prepared for anything that might come your way.

Thanks for reading!

— Wayne Utterback, Editor

**Photo Credit:** This issue's cover image is from Peter Hernandez of the Park District of Highland Park, which earned second place in the Recreation/People at Play category of the 2022 Give Us Your Best Shot photo contest.



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

## Ask and Answer

### Governance

There are two questions that are critical to the development of high-performance park boards. Ask and answer these as a board annually, alter course if need be, and you will always be heading in the right direction.

The first question is “How do we want our board to be viewed from the outside? What words would we like our citizens to use when describing our board?”

The second question is “What are we doing as a board to encourage and promote the talent we have?” The future of your park district is directly tied to the quality of talent you can attract and keep. Research studies clearly demonstrate that no organization can survive unless one of their major strategies revolves around talent management.

Many times I am asked “what are the most important duties and responsibilities of a park district board member?” Here are some thoughtful responses from members of park boards in Illinois:

- To be open-minded, set aside my own personal opinions and think about what benefits the community as a whole.
- To help establish goals and vision.
- To pass a budget.
- To hold the executive director, leadership, and staff accountable for following goals and policies.
- To develop policies that best serve the community.
- To hire an executive director.
- To recognize that we are in the customer service business.
- To acknowledge that we should have no hidden agendas.
- To be fiscally responsible with taxpayers funds.
- To create and follow the strategic plan.
- To protect and promote our parks and open spaces.
- To focus on high level issues, set policies and, direction for the executive director, governance, and respect for other board members.

- To further the park district's mission and vision.
- To be stewards of the park district and seek to understand the policies, procedures, and positions taken by prior boards that set the course for future progress.
- To act in a fiduciary role to ensure key financial duties are met such as the budget, capital projects, funding, etc.
- To listen and learn from the community and fellow board members and find consensus on issues, then take actions that benefit the entire community.
- To make sure that park district amenities are maintained and continuously improved so that they are available to the community for generations to come.

### Leadership

What traits do leaders embody? Leadership is an art that transcends positions and titles, encompassing a set of qualities that inspire and guide individuals towards a common goal. Exceptional leaders possess a unique blend of attributes that enable them to navigate challenges, empower their teams, and create a positive impact. What are commonly considered the qualities that define outstanding leaders.

### Visionary Thinking

Exceptional leaders are visionaries, who possess the ability to see beyond the present and envision a better future. They have a clear and inspiring vision that serves as their compass, guiding their decision-making and motivating others. By sharing their vision and communicating effectively, leaders create a sense of purpose and ignite commitment in those around them driving collective progress.

### Integrity and Authenticity

Integrity is also the cornerstone of exceptional leadership. Leaders who exhibit unwavering honesty, transparency, and ethical behavior, gain the trust and respect of their colleagues. They lead by example, upholding their values and principles, even in challenging situations. This fosters an environment of trust and openness, and collaboration.

## Effective Communication

Great leaders are skilled communicators, adept at conveying their ideas, thoughts and expectations clearly and persuasively. They actively listen to others fostering an environment where diverse perspectives are valued. This effective communication strengthens relationships, resolves conflicts, and ensures alignment within a board. By being approachable and empathetic, leaders create a safe space for open dialogue and feedback.

## Empathy and Emotional Intelligence

Empathy is a fundamental quality of exceptional leaders. They understand and connect with the emotions and experiences of their board and staff demonstrating genuine care and concern. Leaders with high emotional intelligence can effectively manage their own emotions and understand the emotions of others. This enables them to make empathetic decisions, inspire trust, and foster a supportive culture where boards and individuals can thrive.

## Decisiveness and Accountability

In the face of ambiguity and complexity, exceptional leaders exhibit decisive decision-making skills. They gather relevant information, analyze alternatives, and make timely decisions with confidence. Moreover, they take ownership of their decisions and actions, accepting accountability for both successes and failures. By modeling accountability, leaders inspire their staff to take responsibility and learn from mistakes, which fosters a culture of growth and continuous improvement.

## Adaptability and Resilience

In a rapidly changing world, leaders who can adapt to new circumstances and guide their boards through change are highly effective. Leadership in dynamic environments requires adaptability and resilience. Exceptional leaders embrace change and pivot when necessary. They remain composed in the face of adversity, exhibiting resilience and motivating others to overcome challenges. By demonstrating flexibility and a positive mindset, leaders navigate uncertainty and inspire confidence, keeping the board and staff focused on achieving goals.

## Empowerment and Development

Outstanding leaders understand the importance of empowering their staff. They provide opportunities for growth, delegate responsibilities, and encourage autonomy. Leaders invest in their staff and board member development, offering guidance, mentoring, and constructive feedback. By nurturing talent, leaders create a pipeline of future leaders cultivating a culture of continuous learning and advancement.

## Collaboration and Team Building

Effective leaders recognize that success is a collective effort. They foster a collaborative environment, promoting teamwork, and valuing diverse perspectives. By creating a sense of belonging and purpose, leaders build cohesive boards that are motivated and inspired to work towards a common goal. They also celebrate individual and team achievements fostering a positive and supportive work culture.

## In Summary

Exceptional leaders possess a unique combination of qualities that set them apart: visionary thinking, integrity, effective communication, empathy, decisiveness, adaptability, empowerment, and collaboration and in addition, confidence, problem-solving ability, time management, and humility are among the traits that collectively define outstanding leaders.

Developing and honing these qualities can help individuals become successful leaders both as park executives and as board members.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Oct. 20, 2023

### Best of the Best Awards Gala

Chevy Chase Country Club  
Wheeling Park District

Nov. 2, 2023

### Legal Symposium

Hyatt Lodge/Conference Center  
Oak Brook, IL

Jan. 25-27, 2024

### 2024 IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference

Hyatt Regency, Chicago

May 7, 2024

### Parks Day At the Capitol

Legislative Reception  
Illini Country Club

May 8, 2024

### Legislative Conference

IAPD Board of Trustees Meeting  
Crowne Plaza Hotel

Visit [ILparks.org](https://ILparks.org) and listen to our latest Park Cast podcasts!



Jason Anselment  
IAPD General Counsel

## Five Platform Bills Become Law Amid Numerous Other Legislative Successes

The Governor recently completed action on all legislation approved by the General Assembly during a very busy Spring Session. Of the 6,717 bills and 1,589 amendments that were introduced, IAPD tracked 905 bills because of their impact on member agencies. As a direct result of our active engagement on dozens of these bills, this first year of the 103<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly was another highly successful year at the Capitol for IAPD and its members.

### IAPD Platform

Earlier this summer, the Governor signed five IAPD Platform bills into law.

By expanding the permissible uses of the park district police system levy under Section 5-9 of the Park District Code, **SB 1840 / Public Act 103-0235 (Sims, E., Jr. / Slaughter, J.)** now allows those funds to be used for other public safety and security measures such as security personnel, emergency call boxes, active shooter trainings, and security lighting and cameras. This new flexibility will be instrumental in helping park districts protect their patrons in the future as we confront new safety challenges.

**HB 2277 / Public Act 103-0153 (Moeller, A. / Morrison, J.)** solves a problem some park districts have faced when DCFS representatives confused periodic recreational programs offered to preschoolers with full-time licensed daycares offered by other park districts. By codifying in statute that part-time special activity or recreation programs provided by park districts do not require a DCFS license if they are offered to children who have attained the age of 3, meet no more than 3.5 continuous hours at a time, and are offered no more than 25 total hours during any week, there is now a specific standard for those agencies to rely upon when future questions arise.

By permitting park districts to enter into solar energy and equipment agreements for up to 20 years, **HB 2192 / Public Act 103-0146 (Didech, D. / Ellman, L.)** solves an issue some park districts have confronted when attempting to enter into solar energy-related contracts that sometimes require longer term investments than were previously permitted by the Park District Code.

**HB 2033 / Public Act 103-0137 (Stephens, B. / Chesney, A.)** allows all units of local government, including park districts, forest preserve districts, and conservation districts, to file their bond ordinances electronically with the county clerk and is another example of IAPD leading the way when it comes to promoting good government practices.

Finally, by clarifying that if a park board changes the number or length of terms of commissioners after an election cycle has begun, i.e., once the candidate petition process has commenced, that change is not effective until after that election cycle, **SB 2123 / Public Act 103-0467 (Morrison, J. / Stuart, K.)**, avoids any confusion or possible litigation under the old law which used 60 days prior to the election as the determining date.

### Grant Funding

In March, the Governor awarded 118 OSLAD grants totaling nearly \$60 Million – the largest amount ever. Then, for the second straight year, the state budget approved for the fiscal year that began on July 1, **SB 250 / Public Act 103-0006 (Sims, E., Jr. / Gordon-Booth, J.)**, included another \$56 million appropriation for new OSLAD grants. It is important to note that these historic appropriations the past two years were only possible because of our collective efforts in repeatedly preventing the sweep of these funds during the budget impasse and the pandemic. Without those efforts, this historic amount of funding would not have been available.

In addition to OSLAD, the state budget includes appropriations and reappropriations for several other grant programs such as PARC, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Bike Path Grant Program, Boating Access Development Program, Public Museum Capital Grants, Tourism Attractions and Festivals Grants, and the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program.

### Improvements to other Legislation

While the IAPD platform bills described above are very important, they represent only a fraction of our legislative success this spring. As is always the case, a substantial amount of our time was spent working behind the scenes with legislators and legislative staff on dozens of proposals



to obtain amendments to improve legislation, provide clarity, avoid future problems and unintended consequences to our member agencies, and eliminate or reduce exposure to liability. Many of these items eventually passed both chambers and are now law.

**HB 219 / Public Act 103-0514 (Hoffman, J. / Harmon, D.)** amends the Wrongful Death Act to allow parties to recover punitive damages. As introduced, the legislation exempted the state and state employees but did not offer the same protections to employees of units of local government. Although this legislation was filed and pushed through both chambers in just three days, IAPD successfully advocated for amendatory language that exempts units of local government and local government employees (and ultimately their taxpayers) from this exposure to potential liability.

**HB 1122 / Public Act 103-0417 (Guzzardi, W. / Harmon, D.)** will create the Freelance Worker Protection Act placing numerous mandates on contracts with independent contractors such as requiring written contracts, specific rules regarding pay, and mandated record retainage to name just a few. As a result of IAPD's advocacy efforts, the bill was amended to exempt units of local government from these requirements, which was a critical change due to the sheer number of independent contractors that park and recreation agencies utilize. This law is effective July 1, 2024.

Effective June 1, 2024, **HB 1557 / Public Act 103-0020 (Williams, J. / Villa, K.)** will require indoor and outdoor music venues with a liquor license and a capacity of more than 1,000 persons to have opioid antagonists on hand and to train staff to administer those opioid antagonists. Because of IAPD's efforts on a similar bill that was introduced in the 102nd General Assembly, these rules will now only apply to venues where tickets are purchased to benefit a for-profit entity.

**HB 2949 / Public Act 103-0438 (Scherer, S. / Murphy, L.)** is the culmination of nearly five years of IAPD negotiations on previous bills from the past three General Assemblies. Those prior bills would have imposed nearly 20 pages of training, administration, and notification requirements related to asthma medication, epinephrine injectors, and opioid antagonists used by a program participant, required park districts to adopt emergency response protocols, and created exposure to potential liability. As a result of IAPD's advocacy efforts, the new law simply permits, but does not require, park district personnel to administer an epinephrine injector to a child whom they believe in good faith is having an anaphylactic reaction if the employee has completed an anaphylaxis training program conducted by a nationally recognized organization experienced in training laypersons in emergency health treatment such as the online program offered by the American Red Cross as listed on the IDPH website. Similarly, the law permits, but does not require, personnel to administer asthma medication to any child they believe in good faith to be experiencing respiratory distress. In both cases, the law requires program personnel to first inform the child's parents or guardian in writing that the program personnel shall incur no liability for the

administration of the injector or asthma medication. Rather than exposing park districts to liability as originally proposed, the new law now provides liability protection for park districts by requiring the child's parents or guardian to also sign a statement acknowledging that the personnel shall not be held liable for any injury and indemnifying and holding harmless the park district and its employees and agents against any claims arising out of the administration of the injection or medication unless the conduct was willful or wanton.

**SB 1710 / Public Act 103-0386 (Simmons, M. / Huynh, H.)** will require local authorities responsible for paved public bicycle trails to erect permanent signage alerting pedestrians and cyclists of highway crossings and will similarly require authorities with jurisdiction over highways to place signage in advance of bicycle trail crossings. Additionally, if local authorities have actual knowledge of emergencies or safety hazards that create a dangerous condition, they will be required to take reasonable steps to erect temporary signage alerting pedestrians or cyclists to the dangerous condition. As originally introduced, the bill would have required permanent signage in advance of all vehicle crossings and contained ambiguous language relating to signage for temporary hazards, which would have been very difficult if not impossible to implement. Because of IAPD's concerns about the ability of our member agencies to implement the bill due to its ambiguity and breadth, the bill was amended to require temporary signage only where there is actual knowledge of an emergency or safety hazard that creates a dangerous condition and permanent signage only at highway crossings, which is substantially narrower and much more workable. This law is effective January 1, 2024.

As a direct result of our advocacy, language in other bills was removed prior to being approved by the General Assembly. For example, **SB 249 (Halpin, M.)**, would have required employees of a public body be paid the prevailing wage rate when they are performing the construction or demolition of public works on behalf of another public body, thereby impeding intergovernmental cooperation. At IAPD's request, this language was removed from compromise legislation, **SB 895 / Public Act 103-0373 (Halpin, M. / Johnson, G.)**, which is effective January 1, 2024. Similarly, an amendment to TIF legislation that surfaced an hour before the committee hearing on the final day of session in **HB 2518 / Public Act 103-0315 (Croke, M. / Turner, D.)** would have removed local governments from the current process where the legislature requires their approval prior to receiving a TIF extension.

Unless otherwise noted, the new laws above were effective as soon as they were signed into law.

These are just a few examples. IAPD also worked behind the scenes on numerous measures to reduce exposure to liability, avoid unfunded mandates, and preserve local control as discussed in our Legislative Updates this year. While many of those bills failed to advance past both chambers during the Spring Session, they could still advance during the veto session or next year during the second year of the 103<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly.



By Vince Davis  
IPRA Membership Manager

## Unlocking the Continued Benefits of IPRA Membership

Now that the heat and craziness of a busy summer has faded into the cool and \*slightly\* less hectic fall we hope you have some time to think about IPRA again! Believe me I know it's hard especially when you have multiple classes with hyperactive children, vocal residents, board meetings, athletic schedules, referee shortages...the list goes on and on. Our goal at IPRA is to make your life just a little bit easier in any way we can!

As the Membership Manager of the Illinois Park & Recreation Association (IPRA), it's my privilege to guide you through the process of renewing your membership with us. We will delve into the essential reasons why renewing your IPRA membership is not just a formality but a strategic step toward advancing your career and professional growth.

Renewing your IPRA membership is more than just an annual event; it's a commitment to your professional development and a testament to the value you place on staying connected with the vibrant community of park, recreation and conservation professionals in Illinois.

### **Sustained Access to Resources:**

Your IPRA membership grants you continuous access to a wealth of resources, including the IPRA Connect Forum featuring best practices, and industry trends. These resources are invaluable in keeping you informed and up to date in your field. Whether it be a virtual or in-person program, the educational opportunities are endless, and we are always striving to add more to meet the needs of our members.

### **Networking Opportunities:**

Membership renewal ensures you remain part of a dynamic network of professionals who share your passion for parks, recreation and conservation. It's an opportunity to continue building relationships, exchanging ideas, and collaborating on projects. To fully take advantage of these

opportunities make sure to get involved in the IPRA sections. Whether it be Diversity, Recreation, Administration & Finance, Facility Management or one of our many other sections - there is sure to be something you are interested in. These are also great opportunities to explore areas of interest that you may not work directly in at your role with your organization. So get out and explore the sections at [ilipra.org](http://ilipra.org)!

### **Professional Development:**

IPRA offers an array of professional development opportunities, from workshops to conferences. Renewing your membership keeps you eligible for these events, where you can enhance your skills, gain new insights, and earn certifications. Keep in mind you must be renewed for 2024 to attend the 2024 conference at the member rate! Don't stop at just attending conference, whether it be our fun networking events like Park Pursuit or great ongoing educational opportunities like Professional Development School or our ongoing Skills Development Webinar Series, there is plenty to take advantage of throughout the year.

### **Member-Exclusive Benefits:**

Many benefits, such as discounts on events and access to specialized training, are exclusive to IPRA members. Renewal ensures you continue to enjoy these perks. We are always looking for better ways to serve our members, if there is something you would like to see from IPRA please reach out to me at [Vince@ilipra.org](mailto:Vince@ilipra.org) or give me a call and let's chat about your membership at 708-588-2286.

### **Renew Today**

Renewing your IPRA membership is a straightforward process. We have done our best to streamline the process even further with our new software and website. All you need to do is visit our website, log in to your member portal, and follow the simple renewal instructions. You

can find a step-by-step tutorial video on our website as well as on the ILParks YouTube channel:  
<https://www.youtube.com/@IPRAAssoc1815>

Subscribe and be notified when we add new features or new tutorials to our website!

Lastly, make sure to check-in with your organization to make sure they do not have plans on doing a bulk renewal for their employees. Although our memberships are assigned to an individual and non-transferrable some agencies prefer to renew everyone at once. So, make sure you and your team are on the same page.

**If you have someone who has joined your team and has not had an IPRA membership, beginning on October 1<sup>st</sup>, if they sign-up for an IPRA account they will receive membership for the remainder of 2023 for free with the purchase of a membership for 2024.** Just have them register directly on our website beginning Oct 1<sup>st</sup>!

Let us know if you have any questions or need assistance, our dedicated team is ready to help.

## IPRA Upcoming Events

### Professional Development School

**November 5-8, 2023 - Galena, IL**

Join us November 5-8 in Galena for Professional Development School (PDS) - designed to provide you with practical education in a relaxed atmosphere. Whether you're a new or seasoned professional, we encourage you 'track the case of career advancement' and attend IPRA's longest-standing educational and networking event.

### Researching What Matters

**November 8 or 16 - Webinar**

How can you measure the outcomes and benefits of what you do? Learn how to take advantage of tools and research to add value and credibility to your agency's perception and brand. From economic impacts to service assessments, this webinar shares tools and techniques to gather data you need to better tell your story. Dr. Teresa Penbrooke has led projects for communities of all sizes across the United States. Her areas of expertise include master and strategic planning, transdisciplinary alignment, community engagement, and level of service analysis. She teaches and researches best practices in agency administration and planning both nationally and internationally, presenting at conferences, associations, universities, and individual agencies.

### The Stewardship Approach

**December 13 or 21, 2023 - Webinar**

Often there is a chasm or even opposition between parks AND recreation goals, roles, and responsibilities. However, effectively managing and maintaining your agency's parks, facilities, spaces, and places is everyone's job. Learn how to train recreation staff, volunteers and even customers to become part of the facilities team. Creating a sense of ownership and stewardship is a cultural shift that can save your agency time, money, and resources in the new year

Visit [ILipra.org](http://ILipra.org) for more information and to register.

# renew today!

**Your IPRA membership expires 12.31.23**  
**Renew at [ILipra.org](http://ILipra.org)**





By Heather Weishaar  
IPRA Communications & Marketing Director

## The Power of Unplugging: Why Taking a Vacation is Essential for Well-Being

The ability to guide and inspire others is closely intertwined with the practice of stepping away from the demands of work. Effective leaders do more than guide, motivate and influence – they also have the wisdom to recognize the importance of taking time off. And to encourage their teams to do the same. We need to unplug in order to recharge!

### Rejuvenation and Rest:

Taking a vacation provides a perfect opportunity for rejuvenation and rest. Continuous exposure to work-related stress and the demands of everyday life can lead to burnout and exhaustion. By unplugging from work emails, deadlines, and responsibilities, we allow ourselves to recharge both physically and mentally. Stepping away from our routine and immersing ourselves in a different environment helps reduce stress levels and promotes a sense of relaxation and tranquility.

### Enhanced Mental Health:

In the digital age, we are bombarded with a constant stream of information and notifications, which can significantly impact our mental health. According to the National Library of Medicine, increased screen time is associated with migraines in young adults as well as sedentary behavior that can lead to weight gain, increased risk of depression and increased stress and loneliness. By disconnecting from technology during a vacation, we give our minds the opportunity to reset and regain clarity. This break allows us to focus on the present moment, appreciate our surroundings, and engage in activities that bring us joy. It provides the space for introspection and self-reflection.

### Strengthened Relationships:

Vacations offer an excellent chance to strengthen our relationships with loved ones. In our constantly on-the-go lives, it's easy to neglect the quality time we spend with family and friends. When we unplug, we become fully present and attentive to those around us. Engaging in meaningful conversations, sharing laughter, and creating lasting memories fosters deeper connections and builds stronger bonds. Whether it's exploring new destinations

together or simply relaxing on a beach, vacations allow us to prioritize relationships and reconnect with our loved ones.

### Increased Creativity and Productivity:

When we're constantly plugged in, our minds rarely get the opportunity to wander and daydream. Vacations offer the perfect setting for creativity to flourish. Prioritize creating space for new ideas and allowing fresh perspectives to emerge. Exploring new places, engaging in stimulating activities, and embracing diverse cultures all serve as catalysts for inspiration. A Forbes Magazine article states "vacations, especially those taken in warmer climates, resulted in increased productivity and less exhaustion for employees." When we return to work after a well-deserved break, we feel reinvigorated, motivated, and ready to tackle challenges with restored energy.

### Mind-Body Connection:

A vacation provides a unique opportunity to reconnect with our physical bodies. Engaging in activities such as hiking, swimming, or practicing yoga not only benefits our physical health but also enhances our mental and emotional well-being. Being in nature and engaging in physical movement promotes mindfulness, reduces stress, and increases overall happiness. We can truly listen to our bodies, honor our physical needs, and engage in activities that promote holistic well-being.

In a world that demands constant connectivity, taking a vacation and intentionally unplugging from our devices is more important than ever. The benefits of rejuvenation, enhanced mental health, strengthened relationships, increased creativity, and improved productivity cannot be overstated. By carving out time to disconnect and prioritize our well-being, we allow ourselves to return to our daily lives feeling refreshed, inspired, and ready to embrace the challenges that lie ahead. Encourage your colleagues and loved ones to take their well-deserved time off. Go ahead and plan that vacation, unplug!

Unplug Illinois is a public awareness campaign designed by the Illinois Park & Recreation Association, to help park, recreation, and conservation agencies communicate the value "unplugging" offers people and communities. Learn more at [UnplugIllinois.org](http://UnplugIllinois.org)

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LEADING THROUGH

# CRISIS

IN HIGHLAND PARK

**By Liz Gogola**, Director  
of Communications and  
Marketing, Park District of  
Highland Park

**Brian Romes**, Executive  
Director, Park District of  
Highland Park



*Not even his 20 years in the field, nor three years as an executive director—coming off the heels of COVID-19—could have prepared him to handle what would come next. No one could have been prepared.*



It started as a picture-perfect sunny morning in Highland Park. Like most communities across the country, thousands of residents were gathering for the first time in two years for the traditional hometown July 4th parade. The Park District of Highland Park was the co-sponsor of the parade with the city, and the main sponsor of the Fourth Fest celebration immediately following. More than 100 park district employees—many high school and college-aged camp counselors—were there directing the float lineup and preparing for the festival down the street in Sunset Woods Park.

At 10:14 a.m., a gunman opened fire on the parade. Park district employees and board members marching in the parade were just steps away from the corner where seven people were murdered in the street, and dozens were injured. Brian Romes, executive director for the Park District of Highland Park, was with them.

Nothing could have prepared anyone for that moment or the days and months following. Not active shooter drills. Not webinars. Not anything in the experience of parks & recreation professionals. It was an overwhelming combination of fearing for your own life, the need to ensure the safety of residents and employees you are responsible for, and the helplessness of not knowing what to do next.

Even though he was also in the line of fire, Brian assisted on the street, helping people follow police instructions to shelter at the nearby train station, including those blocks away at the far end of the parade route. Brian worked with staff to immediately close all park district facilities and properties, which helped police speed up the process of securing public spaces. That day and in the days ahead, Brian Romes thoughtfully and carefully shepherded the park district through the most challenging time imaginable.

Because park districts provide unique, essential services, Brian was keenly aware of how critical it was to care for our staff so that they could care for the community. **It was what our residents needed. It was what the staff needed. He knew it, and he made it happen.**



Over the next several hours, he coordinated with the FBI and police to evacuate employees who were “sheltered in place” at various locations in Highland Park. The park district’s Hidden Creek AquaPark parking lot had become the command center for police, FBI, ATF, Red Cross, the media, and city officials. Brian and a small team worked into the night from a little lifeguard locker room at the AquaPark, preparing and sending out communications regarding the next day’s cancellation of summer camps, closing facilities, and the availability of grief counseling for our employees and anyone who had been marching in the parade.

Brian made dozens of decisions about which park district facilities would be closed and for how long, which ones were essential to open as soon as possible, and when some significant programs—including summer camps—would open, so the community could have a sense of things returning to “normal.” Whatever that would be. Because park districts provide unique, essential services, Brian was keenly aware of how critical it was to care for our staff so that they could care for the community. It was what our residents needed. It was what the staff needed. He knew it, and he made it happen.

In the weeks and months after the shooting, as Highland Park’s horror played out in the media, Brian’s leadership was compassionate and consistent. His deep understanding of what would help our staff heal is one of the most important reasons the park district has been able to move forward. Day by day. With many of those days

being just unbearably sad. During the following weeks, as he led the park district through the uncharted territory of mentally and physically coping with a mass shooting, Brian also worked intensely with the city and community organizations. He took on the responsibility of collecting in-kind donations, assisting with memorial events, and coordinating fund-raisers at park district locations. That work continues to this day, with Brian involved at all levels.

Now, more than a year after the shooting, Highland Park still grieves. The original temporary memorials have been relocated to the park district’s beautiful Rose Garden near City Hall. A grief counselor continues weekly group sessions with our park district employees who are still struggling. Still trying to cope with what was once unthinkable.

This year’s July 4 was a much different day from the traditional celebration. Brian worked collaboratively with the city, state, and federal officials to develop events and activities, using a trauma-informed approach with the goal of balancing the diverse needs that emerged in the wake of the shooting. The theme, “We are Highland Park,” focused on the community’s inner strength. The day’s events were flexible, and structured to allow community members the opportunity to participate in any way that was most comfortable and meaningful for them.

Most importantly, Brian minimized the number of employees who had to work at the events, giving them the



opportunity to spend the 1-year anniversary with their families. No employee was required to work at the community walk that replaced the traditional parade. And the festival at Sunset Woods Park was run primarily by community member volunteers.

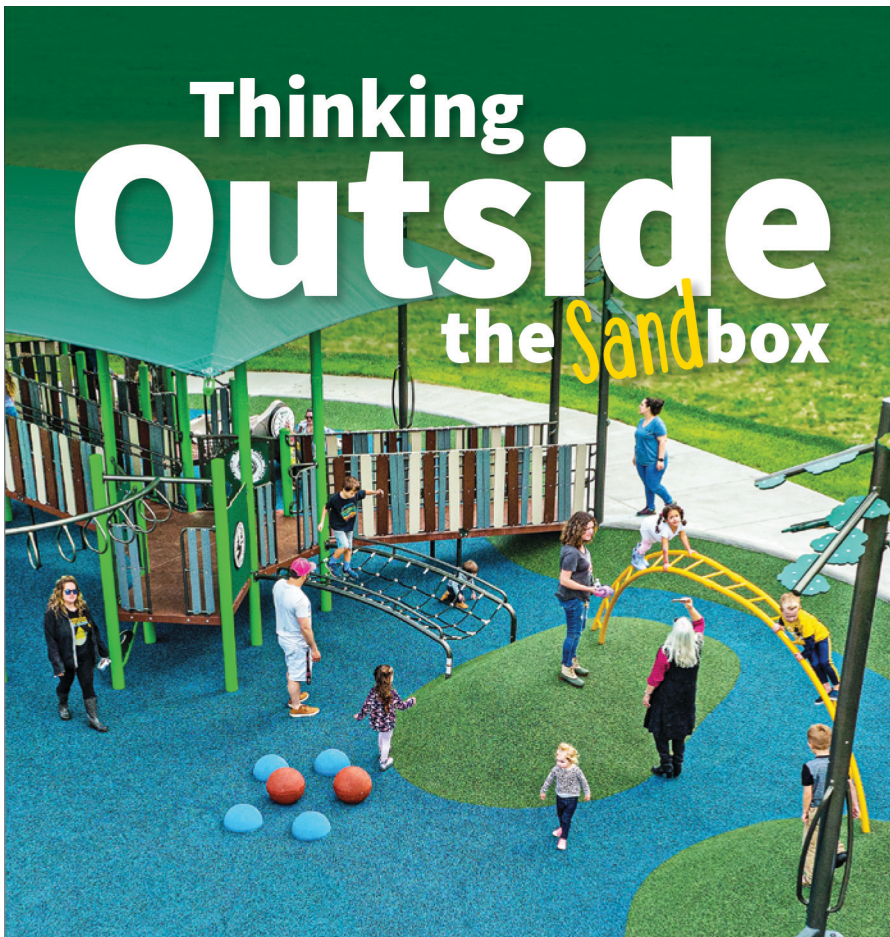
Brian shared his thoughts on leadership and his experience leading his team and his community through the Highland Park shooting crisis:

### Leading Through Adversity

Being part of another person's growth development, guiding a team through a successful project that positively impacts a community, or leading programs and events that can change someone's life is why many of us choose to become parks and recreation professionals. In our pursuit of creating a positive impact on the lives of people and the communities we serve, we know that our most important role is to ensure a physically and emotionally safe space for our teams to thrive and for our community members to experience an enriched life. It's true today more than ever. To accomplish that, it is essential for us to be prepared to lead through adversity and even crisis.

*“Leading others comes with a great deal of responsibility and an awareness that our words, actions, and decisions will influence other people's lives. We have all taken on the unimaginable roles of leading our teams and communities through the complexities and uncertainties of a global pandemic. Many have led their districts through the chaos from natural disasters, the pain from a drowning or the loss of a life at a facility, and now even the trauma from a mass shooting.*”

*Feeling pain and experiencing uncertainty as a leader during a crisis is normal. Knowing that other leaders feel and experience the same is important. We are not alone. Our relationships with others make us stronger and wiser. People support us when we need it, just as we support them when they are in need. I am extremely thankful to be surrounded by tremendous leaders at the Park District of Highland Park and I'm grateful for the leaders at local park districts who offered their immediate care, encouragement, and even their resources in our time of need. These helping hands extended across the state and included our Associations, Foundations, and other like-minded leaders throughout the country.”*

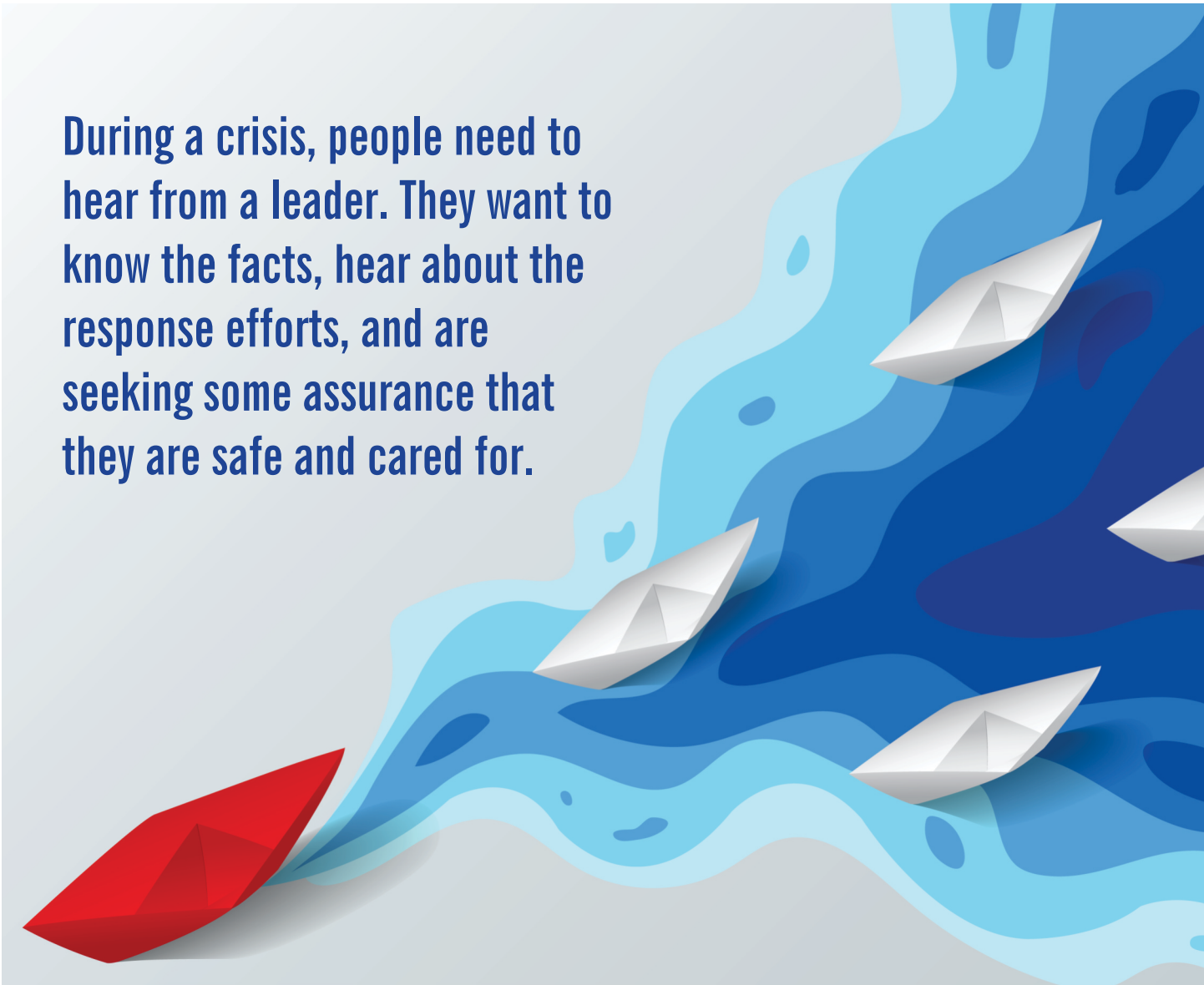


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**During a crisis, people need to hear from a leader. They want to know the facts, hear about the response efforts, and are seeking some assurance that they are safe and cared for.**



### **Communication, Communication, and More Communication**

One of the most important elements in responding to, working through, and leading out of a crisis is communication. Communication should be factual, caring, and frequent. During a crisis, people need to hear from a leader. They want to know the facts, hear about the response efforts, and are seeking some assurance that they are safe and cared for.

*"I recall the first minutes after the shooting on July 4. No one immediately understood where the shots came from or where to seek cover for safety. As panic ensued in the streets, some of my first thoughts were to care for the hundreds of team members and families working or walking in the parade. As I hurried to find my phone to contact others on my team, the city manager, and our board of commissioners, you can imagine my panic when I realized my phone was missing! Feeling helpless and*

*unsure of what to do, I hurried to help others. In doing so, I bumped into our park board president, who, with bewilderment, said, 'I have your phone!'. My first text was to my family to let them know I was OK, and then the phone calls to the city manager, director of communications, human relations, recreation, and so on—and then immediately back to the chaos. From that point forward, I was in constant communication with city and park district staff, board members, police, city, fire, residents, and everyone who I felt either had or needed information. Throughout the following 8 hours we learned exactly what was happening, determined how to account for everyone, and ensured that people were in a safe place or could get to a safe place. We closed facilities, helped people to safety, and provided as much assurance as possible to team members and residents who were sheltering in place. And even before we fully understood the current reality, we were already planning for tomorrow. How will we handle the trauma from this event? How can we support our staff and our community? How*

can we help the victims who were directly and indirectly impacted by this event? That night and every morning and evening during the following week, I emailed our team. I was providing information, encouragement, and compassion. As in most cases, communication was the lifeline that kept us connected with others. Communication in a crisis must be compassionate, completely honest, and above all frequent. Unlike any other time, your teams need to hear from you even more than you think.”

### Be Present

Almost as important as communication, when leading during a crisis, is the significance of being present. A crisis is not a time to lead from the sidelines. Or the office.

As you would expect, no matter what your leadership position or role, in a crisis our first instinct is to protect our families.

“Fortunately, my family was not at the July 4th Parade during this crisis, and I was able to focus my attention on the team members and community I serve. Leaders are

often faced with the challenging responsibility of putting others first and themselves second. By no means am I suggesting work comes before family, but for whomever you are leading being present increases trust and provides emotional support that often cannot be achieved over the phone or in an email. I was present that day until we received word that the shooter had been arrested and all team members were safely on their way home. The following day, I wanted to arrive at the park district early. While all of our facilities were closed and nobody was required to come to work, a trauma care specialist was invited to help team members manage their emotional response to the horrific event we had just been through. I met with key leadership team members that day and we agreed on a plan to best care for everyone on our staff and the residents of our Highland Park community. Day 1 was all about healing within our district. And we began the long journey, which continues to this day, of helping to heal our community. The theme for Park and Recreation Month was ringing in my head to "Rise Up" for our community. For me, that meant we needed to be present. On Day 2, we resumed limited services. My day began with visiting every full-time team member at their facility. Healing began.



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*We talked. We mourned. I cried, and I offered my support and encouragement. Team members needed to see me as much as I needed to see them. Our resiliency was built on being present with each other, supporting and caring for one another. During a crisis, a leader's presence shows how much you care and builds trust with your team."*

### **Care for Others and Yourself!**

Caring for others is the most critical component of leading during a crisis and it often means getting out of your comfort zone. It takes time and energy to understand that everyone is feeling different emotions, and as a result, productivity will suffer. A leader must care for their people first.

*"For camp counselors, who were steps away from the shooting, camps would not open for the remainder of the week. It meant providing trauma counselors and opportunities to regroup. It meant being patient and encouraging. One of the most challenging things for me was understanding that I needed to meet others where they were emotionally. On days when I wanted to be upbeat and respond positively, others still needed to mourn and heal in their own time and ways. Sadness can be overwhelming. I needed to allow them that grace—and to encourage them to open their hearts and minds to redirect their emotions towards helping others."*

*In times of crisis, people need healthy outlets. Our community needed our park district. Parents wanted their kids to return to camp, and the kids needed to be there. Adults needed to exercise, recreate, and find peace in our natural areas. Our staff required the same things, and we organized outings and fun activities for our team members and their families. Together, we were healing.*

*Likewise, I stress to all leaders the importance of caring for yourself. As expected, I was out of my routine the first week. I was focused on others and on persevering. Thanks to some gentle reminders from others, I saw that I also needed to care for myself. I needed to see a therapist and talk to someone about what happened. I needed to exercise, eat healthy, and return to my regular routines. While nothing seemed normal during that time, I needed to make an extra effort to use my support network. To accept love and caring from others. To give it to my team and our community. I could not be more grateful for all those who supported me and our team by sending messages, food, cards, and other gifts for me and our team to enjoy. What a difference it makes to know people care about you."*



## WebXtra



Jonelle Bailey and Sarah Rex of the Sycamore Park District share **“Don’t Just Talk About It, Be About It: Elevating Employee Well-Being Through Effective Leadership,”** delving into the pivotal role of leadership style in nurturing employee well-being and sheds light on strategies to bridge the gap between rhetoric and reality.

---

Want to learn more about some of the creative things park districts are doing in the world of leadership and governance? Check out our Digital edition of *Illinois Parks and Recreation* magazine by going to [ILparks.org](http://ILparks.org), then **Knowledge Center**, then **IP&R Magazine** to catch all our issues.

# 2024

## PRELIMINARY PROGRAM

January 25-27, 2024 | Hyatt Regency Chicago  
151 E. Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois



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# WELCOME



## WELCOME AND GREETINGS!

*"If you can dodge a wrench, you can dodge a ball!"*

If you have seen the 2004 blockbuster movie, *Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story*, then you recognize this quote from character Patches O'Houlihan, played by actor Rip Torn. Patches was a dodgeball legend who volunteered to coach *Average Joe's*, a team of athletically challenged misfits who were pegged as the underdogs in an intense dodgeball tournament.

Patches had a unique training technique to get his team into shape: hurling wrenches at them to hone their dodging skills. The bizarre practice paid off, and *Average Joe's* overcame the odds to bring home the win!

Training to be the best at what you do is important, and for those of us training to be the best in our roles at Illinois park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation, and special recreation agencies, the Illinois Association of Park Districts and the Illinois Park & Recreation Association have a much less painful training opportunity for us to hone our skills: the *Soaring to New Heights Conference*.

This highly acclaimed conference is the largest state park and recreation conference in the nation. This is a testament to the expertise and enthusiasm of two outstanding state associations who have a long history of partnering to create an amazing power-packed educational experience. The *Soaring to New Heights Conference* brings board members, professionals, staff, legislators, and businesses together for three days of 'all things' parks, recreation, and conservation.

Our Joint Conference Committee and our dedicated volunteers and staff have been working for more than a year to create another top-notch program with an impressive content-rich educational curriculum, a diverse array of opportunities to connect with colleagues, and an engaging Exhibit Hall showcasing the latest products and services from more than 300 vendors.

We are excited to present this 2024 *Preliminary Program*, complete with details about Thursday night's social featuring *Hello Weekend*, Friday afternoon's Awards Luncheon recognizing the stars of our field, Saturday morning's Keynote Address with Charles Clark, and Saturday evening's celebratory Closing Social with an array of high-energy entertainment choices at the Hyatt Regency Chicago.

Don't forget to download our conference mobile app by visiting the Apple Store or Google Play. Once you have registered for the conference, this convenient app will enable you to personalize your schedule, explore the exhibit hall, earn and track CEUs, complete session surveys, and much more!

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the many exceptional conference volunteers. Your countless hours of work and steadfast dedication are instrumental to this event's continued success. To our exhibitors and speakers, thank you for your unwavering support. Lastly, to our attendees, we applaud your commitment to the pursuit of knowledge that will enable our park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation, and special recreation agencies to overcome any odds!

The park, recreation, and conservation family share a contagious energy and enthusiasm that is evident when we come together each year to hone our skills so that we can effectively dodge the challenges that we face. Our conference is one of the reasons that we continue to 'bring home the win' year after year in improving the quality of life for all people in Illinois through the best park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation, and special recreation agencies in the nation!

We look forward to seeing you January 25-27 at the Hyatt Regency Chicago.

### JEFF RIGONI

President  
Lockport Township Park District  
IAPD Conference Chair

### LACY MARINENKO

Facilities Manager  
Vernon Hills Park District  
IPRA Conference Chair

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# SCHEDULE - AT - A - GLANCE

## THURSDAY, JANUARY 25

8:00 am – 5:00 pm	Conference Registration Open
10:00 am – 12:00 pm	Conference Workshops (0.2 CEUs)
10:30 am – 11:30 am	Conference Sessions (0.1 CEUs)
11:00 am – 5:00 pm	Grand Opening of the Exhibit Hall
12:30 pm – 2:30 pm	Conference Workshops (0.2 CEUs)
3:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Conference Sessions (0.1 CEUs)
4:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Exhibit Hall Dedicated Hours
5:15 pm – 7:15 pm	IPRA Section Meetings
6:00 pm – 7:00 pm	Professional Connection
9:00 pm – 11:30 pm	Welcome Social with Hello Weekend

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 26

7:00 am – 5:00 pm	Conference Registration Open
8:30 am – 9:30 am	Conference Sessions (0.1 CEUs)
8:30 am – 4:00 pm	Agency Showcase
9:00 am – 12:00 pm	Exhibit Hall Open
10:00 am – 11:00 am	Conference Sessions (0.1 CEUs)
11:00 am – 12:00 pm	Exhibit Hall Dedicated Hours
12:15 pm – 12:45 pm	Conference Speed Sessions
12:15 pm – 2:15 pm	All-Conference Awards Luncheon*
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	Conference Sessions (0.1 CEUs)
1:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Exhibit Hall Open
2:15 pm – 3:30 pm	Dessert in the Exhibit Hall*
3:45 pm – 4:45 pm	Conference Sessions (0.1 CEUs)
5:00 pm – 6:30 pm	Commissioners' Reception**
5:00 pm – 6:30 pm	IPRA Annual Business Meeting
9:30 pm – 11:00 pm	Leadership Reception**

## SATURDAY, JANUARY 27

7:45 am – 12:00 pm	Conference Registration Open
9:00 am – 10:00 am	Keynote General Session with Charles Clark (0.1 CEUs)
10:30 am – 11:30 am	Conference Sessions (0.1 CEUs)
12:30 pm – 1:30 pm	Conference Sessions (0.1 CEUs)
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Conference Sessions (0.1 CEUs)
3:30 pm – 5:00 pm	IAPD Annual Business Meeting
7:00 pm – 10:00 pm	Closing Social*

\* Ticketed Event  
 \*\* By Invitation

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\* Ticketed Event

Event photography provided by JHyde Photography.

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## ACCESSIBILITY

**Meeting Rooms, Parking, Restaurants, Restrooms, Sleeping rooms:** All are accessible at the Hyatt Regency Chicago and the Swissôtel Chicago. If you are in need of an accessible room, please be sure to notify the respective hotel when making your reservation.

## ADA AND SERVICES FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the IAPD/IPRA Joint Conference Committee will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate persons with disabilities. Please indicate any special needs on your registration form or contact Cindy Galvan at IPRA at [Cindy@ilipra.org](mailto:Cindy@ilipra.org) **no later than January 15, 2024**. If you have special needs regarding hotel accommodations, please contact the Hyatt Regency Chicago at (312) 565-1234 or the Swissôtel Chicago at (312) 565-0565. Individuals who require TTY may call (800) 526-0844 and the Illinois Relay Center will transmit the message to IAPD or IPRA.

## ALL-CONFERENCE AWARDS LUNCHEON

Delegates who register for the conference “Full Package” will receive a ticket for this event. Additional tickets may be purchased through your registration or on-site. Please join us as we recognize and honor the leaders and volunteers of park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation, and special recreation agencies.

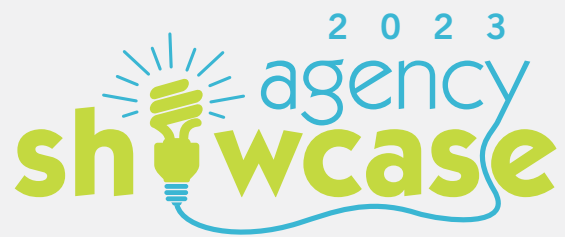
## ALL-CONFERENCE AWARDS LUNCHEON PREFERRED AGENCY SEATING

### (Includes Legislator Tables!)

**DEADLINE: Monday, January 15, 2024**

**Preferred Agency Seating** is available for all delegates from the same agency/organization who wish to be seated together at a table during the Friday All-Conference Awards Luncheon. An agency that opts to attend must indicate so on the registration form on page C32 or at the time of online registration. There is a \$50 nonrefundable fee (per table) to participate, which must be paid for when registering for the conference. **If you plan to invite your legislator(s) to join you at your table(s), then you should indicate/register for a Legislative Table following the same process, above.** The individual who registers/pays for the table(s) will be the designated agency contact (table host) and will receive all emails with details and instructions on the seating process. The table host will be responsible for notifying those seated at their table(s) of the table assignment(s). After **January 15, 2024**, table reservations WILL NOT be accepted, and **no on-site requests will be taken**. All tables will be set for twelve people.

Non-reserved tables for open general seating will be noted with a balloon. There is no guarantee that you and your agency will be able to sit all together in open, general seating. These seats are first-come, first-served, and will be set for twelve people.



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### Division 1: Overall Agency Showcase

Your agency submits in eight of the thirteen individual categories and creates a tabletop display that showcases how your marketing efforts represent your agency as a whole. Scores from each category as well as the display are compiled to determine the overall winners. The eight categories that you select will be eligible for recognition in the Individual Category division. First, second, and third place are awarded in the Overall Showcase division.

### Division 2: Individual Category

This division allows you to select up to four categories below to enter your work for the judges to critique. There will be one outstanding submission recognized in each category.

### Categories

- Program Brochure Print
- Program Brochure Virtual
- Integrated Photography
- Large Format Marketing
- Logo Design
- Marketing Campaign
- Paid Advertisement
- Print Communication - Informational
- Print Communication - Promotional
- Social Media Campaign
- Videography Long Form
- Videography Short Form
- Website

For more information on the Agency Showcase competition, please visit [ILparksconference.com](http://ILparksconference.com).

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## ANNUAL MEETINGS FOR IPRA AND IAPD

The Illinois Park & Recreation Association's (IPRA) Annual Meeting will be held on Friday, January 26 at 5:00 pm. The Illinois Association of Park Districts' (IAPD) Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, January 27 at 3:30 pm.

The associations have staggered their annual meetings to accommodate elected officials and professionals who would like to attend both meetings.

## COMMISSIONERS' RECEPTION

**Attention all IAPD members!**

Please join us on Friday, January 26 at 5:00 pm. This reception will be an excellent opportunity for commissioners to exchange ideas, network, and socialize. The IAPD board and staff will be present to answer questions and offer the perfect venue to visit with fellow commissioners.

### CEUs and CLEs Are Ticketless!

To simplify the process, CEUs and CLEs will be contactless and fully digital through the conference mobile app (no paper tickets). Attendees are required to attend entire sessions and complete session evaluation to obtain CEU credit.

Since no paper tickets will be issued, you will not need to sign up for CEUs during the registration process. You will need to ensure that you provide a valid email though so that you will be able to access the mobile app. Attendees will be able to login to the app at any time during the conference to manage, earn, and track their CEUs.

You must register and pay for CLEs. See details under CLEs.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS (CEUs)

Attendees will be able to earn up to 1.2 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) by attending a variation of workshops and general sessions. CEUs can be earned based on the number of sessions attended during the Soaring to New Heights Conference.

- Concurrent sessions and the Keynote General Session scheduled for 60 minutes award 0.1 CEUs.
- Conference workshops scheduled for 120 minutes award 0.2 CEUs.
- No CEUs for speed sessions.
- No additional CEU fees for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday sessions apply
- Official CEU transcripts available on-demand via the mobile app. No hard copies will be distributed.

## CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION (CLE)

The CLE credit is educational credits that attorneys elect to earn by attending educational offerings certified by the Supreme Court of Illinois.

Sessions scheduled for 60 minutes award 1.0 CLE. Please note not all sessions are eligible for CLE credits. If you would like to apply for CLE credits, you must register, provide your ARDC number and pay for the CLEs with your conference registration. See page C32.

Four different CLE packages are offered:

- (3) CLE credits are \$45 plus registration
- (4) CLE credits are \$60 plus registration
- (7) CLE credits are \$105 plus registration
- (8) CLE credits are \$120 plus registration

Attorneys will receive their CLE attendance receipt(s) within 2 weeks of the conclusion of the conference.

## CONFERENCE TRACKS AND NUMBERING SYSTEM - Website

To help attendees identify sessions and workshops relevant to their field/interests, the conference program is organized around twelve different topic tracks: **Boardmanship, Diversity, Facilities, Finance/Information Technology, Forest Preserve/Conservation, Governance/Legal, HR/Risk Management, Leadership/Management, Marketing/Communications, Parks/Natural Resources, Recreation and Therapeutic Recreation.**

Additionally, a numbering system is used to provide attendees another avenue for identifying sessions/workshops that may be beneficial to them. The numbering system indicates the host sponsoring the session/workshop. Attendees can use the numbering system to quickly identify any session/workshop pertaining to a specific host across the multiple tracks. The following is the numbering system legend:

- 0-9: IAPD & IPRA
- 10 – 99: IPRA
- 100 – 199: IAPD
- 200 – 299: Parks and Natural Resource Management Section (PNRMS)
- 300 – 399: Administration and Finance Section (A&F)
- 400 – 499: Recreation Section (REC)
- 500 – 599: Therapeutic Recreation Section (TR)
- 600 – 699: Facilities Management Section (FM)
- 900 – 999: Communications and Marketing Section (C&M)
- 1000 – 1099: Diversity Section (DIV)
- 1100 – 1199: Forest Preserve/Conservation (FP/CONSV)

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## EXHIBIT HALL

The exhibit hall will be open on Thursday and Friday, with [dedicated hours](#) on both days.

Come visit more than 300 commercial manufacturers, distributors, designers, and educational booths. The exhibits will showcase the newest equipment, supplies, ideas, and services available to park, recreation, forest preserve, conservation, and therapeutic recreation agencies. Plan to spend several hours in the exhibit hall viewing the displays and visiting with exhibitors.

Each registered delegate will have multiple opportunities to win great prizes. Drawings will take place throughout the day Thursday and Friday. Entry blanks will be in the registration materials that you must pick up at conference registration. You must be present to win. Rules and regulations will apply.

The IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference has one of the largest exhibition of any state park and recreation conference in the country. Be sure to visit!

## EXHIBIT HALL HOURS

**Thursday, January 25:**

11:00 am – 5:00 pm, Grand Opening  
12:00 pm – 12:30 pm; 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm (*Dedicated Hours*)

**Friday, January 26:**

9:00 am – 12:00 pm  
11:00 am – 12:00 pm (*Dedicated Hour*)  
1:00 pm – 3:30 pm  
2:15 pm – 3:30 pm (*Dessert Reception and Dedicated Hours*)



## HOUSING INFORMATION

**Hyatt Regency Chicago (Host)**

151 E. Wacker Drive  
Chicago, Illinois 60601

**Reservations** (877) 803-7534

**Group Code** Refer to the group name IAPD/IPRA and group code **G-APKD** when making a reservation by phone.

**Rates** \$132 Single/Double; \$142 Triple; \$152 Quad

**Note:** Surcharges apply to upgraded room types including Deluxe, Regency Club and Business Plan rooms.

**Swissôtel Chicago (Overflow)**

323 E. Wacker Drive  
Chicago, Illinois 60601

**Reservations** (888) 737-9477

**Group Code** Refer to the group code **IAPD0124** when making a reservation by phone.

**Rates** \$132 Single/Double; \$162 Triple; \$192 Quad

**Note:** Surcharges apply to upgraded room types including Lakeview and Corner King rooms.

For online reservations for either the Hyatt Regency Chicago or the Swissôtel Chicago, visit [ILparksconference.com](http://ILparksconference.com)

Rooms are reserved on a first-come, first-served basis.

- The cut-off date for reservations for both the Hyatt and the Swissôtel is January 3, 2024. Reservations made after this date may be assessed at a higher rate and are subject to availability.
- One (1) night's room and tax advance deposit by check or credit card must accompany each reservation. This deposit is fully refundable on or before December 20, 2023. After this date there will be no refunds for cancelled rooms. The Joint Conference Committee implemented this policy in 1999 due to the high rate of rooms cancelled at the last minute.

**Suites:** IAPD member agencies or IPRA members interested in reserving a suite must first contact Cindy Galvan at IPRA ([cindy@ilipra.org](mailto:cindy@ilipra.org)). Once IPRA has given approval, you will be put in contact with the Hyatt Regency Chicago directly.

Exhibitors interested in reserving a suite must first contact Sue Triphahn at IAPD ([striphahn@ilparks.org](mailto:striphahn@ilparks.org)). Once IAPD has given approval, you will be put in contact with the Hyatt Regency Chicago directly.

**Note:** Suites are very limited due to renovations.

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## MEETING SAFETY AND RESPONSIBILITY POLICY

IAPD/IPRA are committed to providing a safe, productive, and welcoming environment for all conference participants and staff. All participants are expected to abide by this Meeting Safety and Responsibility Policy. Please visit <https://www.ilparksconference.com> for full details.

## PARKING

**Overnight Attendees:** Attendees staying overnight at the Hyatt Regency Chicago will receive a 50% discount off the existing published parking rate for overnight valet (no self-park on-site). Attendees staying overnight at the Swissôtel will receive a 50% discount off the existing daily parking rate (not applicable to self-park).

**Daily Commuters:** Delegates not staying at the hotels can park in any of the downtown garages at regular rates. Additional parking in the area can be viewed at [www.chicagoparkingmap.com](http://www.chicagoparkingmap.com).

## POLICY ON CHILDREN

To preserve a professional business environment and ensure a quality educational atmosphere at the IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference, no one under the age of 18 will be allowed to participate in pre-conference workshops, conference sessions, the Welcome Social or the Exhibit Hall. An exception will be made if the person is a speaker or a registered full or part-time college or university student, and is attending the conference for the purpose of professional development and networking opportunities.

## POLICY ON MEMBERS AND NONMEMBERS

The following persons will be allowed to register at the member rate:

- Members of the Illinois Park & Recreation Association in current standing through 12/31/23. **IPRA memberships not renewed for 2024 will be assessed the difference between the member and non-member conference registration fees upon their check-in on-site at Conference Registration.**
- Commissioners/park board members, attorneys, board treasurers, and board secretaries of agencies that are members of the Illinois Association of Park Districts.
- A maximum of six **support** staff from IAPD member agencies (**"Support staff" is defined as front desk/clerical and maintenance personnel only.**) **Support Staff on-line registration promotional code is SUPPORT2024.**

Requests from other persons or agencies asking for member rates will be presented to the Joint Conference Committee for approval prior to conference.

## RECORDING/VIDEOTAPING

Recording or videotaping from attendee smartphones or other electronic devices is not permitted during any part of the educational program, including pre-conference workshops, sessions, the Career Development Symposium, or the Keynote General Session.

## REGISTRATION INFORMATION

**Early Bird Registration Deadline** Monday, December 11, 2023  
**Registration Deadline** Monday, January 15, 2024

### Registration Methods:

- Online at [ilparksconference.com](http://ilparksconference.com); online registration **must be** accompanied by credit card for payment.
- Complete the Advance Registration Form and mail it with credit card or check to 2024 IAPD/IPRA CONFERENCE, 1460 Renaissance Drive, Suite 209, Park Ridge, IL 60068

### Registration Information:

- Mailed, and online registrations will be accepted until January 15, 2024.
- **IAPD/IPRA will not invoice agencies or individuals for conference registrations.**
- After registering you will receive an email confirmation with a bar code – **please bring this with you to conference.** This confirmation and a photo ID will be required to pick up your registration materials.
- Each registered delegate will receive their name badge and event tickets, and CLE coupons (if applicable) on-site at conference.
- Once on-site there will be a \$5 charge to reprint your name badge and **EVENT TICKETS WILL NOT BE REPRINTED. You must purchase new tickets at the current on-site price in order to attend any ticketed events.**
- You will not be permitted into conference workshops, sessions, or the Exhibit Hall without the proper name badge.

### On-site Registration Hours:

- Thursday, January 25 8:00 am – 5:00 pm
- Friday, January 26 7:00 am – 5:00 pm
- Saturday, January 27 7:45 am – 12:00 pm

### Registration Questions?

Contact CTE, our conference registration company, at either [ilparks2024@cteusa.com](mailto:ilparks2024@cteusa.com) or (847) 957-4255.



# GENERAL INFORMATION



## SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

The Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) and the Illinois Park & Recreation Association (IPRA) have instituted a Satisfaction Guaranteed Policy for the Thursday conference workshops. IAPD and IPRA make every effort to ensure quality programs for participants. However, if a participant is not fully satisfied with the content of the workshop, he or she may request and receive a 100% refund of the workshop fee. A participant who wishes to request a refund for a conference workshop **must do so no later than the end of the workshop in question.** Any CEUs offered will be forfeited when a refund is made. Refunds will only be made payable to the originator of the check or credit card for the workshop registration. Look for the Satisfaction Guaranteed symbols next to these workshops.

## SILENT AUCTION

The Illinois Park & Recreation Foundation (IPRF) provides resources to park and recreation agencies and professionals statewide.



Part of our commitment to the profession is ensuring that future and current park and recreation professionals have the tools they need to be successful. IPRF will be holding a Silent Auction at the IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference to provide support and funding for educational programming, research that will benefit the Illinois Park & Recreation Association and its members, and funding support for professional development for students studying parks and recreation within Illinois.

If you would like to make a donation or need more information, please contact Anne Kiwala at [akiwala@nwsra.org](mailto:akiwala@nwsra.org).

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

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## SPECIAL DIETS/ACCOMMODATIONS

Attendees with allergies should indicate their needs on the conference registration form. If you have questions or need additional assistance, please contact Cindy Galvan at [Cindy@ilpra.org](mailto:Cindy@ilpra.org).

## SPOUSE/GUEST PROGRAM AND REGISTRATION

All spouses or guests must register in order to participate in the conference, visit the exhibit hall, and attend special programs.

**Spouses or guests must have no affiliation with or be employed by any park district, forest preserve, conservation, recreation or special recreation agency.** Registration will include a name badge for admission to the Exhibit Hall, Welcome Social on Thursday, all 60-minute educational breakout sessions, and the Keynote General Session on Saturday. Tickets for the All-Conference Awards Luncheon and the Saturday evening Closing Social will be available for purchase. See page C32 for registration.

## STUDENT EVENTS

**Professional Connection**  
**THURSDAY, JANUARY 25**  
6:00 pm – 7:00 pm

You won't want to miss this unique opportunity to network with professionals in the field. The Professional Connection provides a relaxed, social atmosphere and an informal setting for talking with and getting to know professionals currently working in your area of interest. It also provides a great opportunity to learn about current and upcoming internships. Everyone who attends will enjoy complimentary pizza and soda. To register, see page C32 of the registration form.

## Mock Interviews/Resume Review

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 26**  
10:00 am – 11:00 am

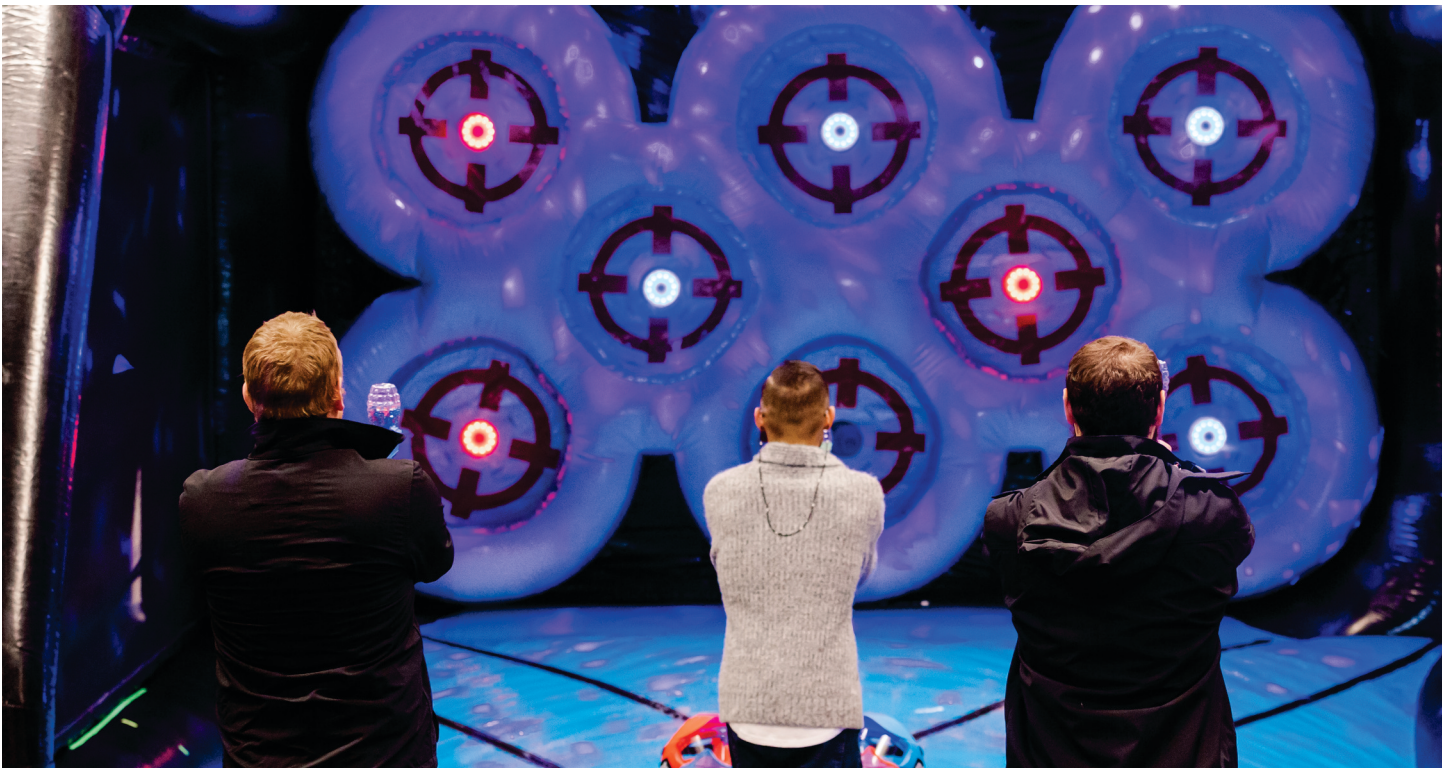
The Mock Interviews/Resume Review offers students the opportunity to receive critique on their resume, along with practice to improve their interviewing skills by being paired with a professional who will engage them in a simulated interview experience. At the conclusion of the interview, students will receive constructive feedback and advice to help them be more prepared and to do well in a real-life interview.

Matched student-professional pairs will be communicated with prior to the conference. Dedicated meeting space will be available on Friday, January 26 from 10:00 am – 11:00 am for the Mock Interviews/Resume Reviews to take place. However, since the goal is to help students connect and gain career advice from professionals, matched student-professional pairs are welcome to meet at a time and location that is most convenient for them.

In order to participate and be matched in the program, advance registration is required. See page C32 of the registration form.

## VOLUNTEERS... CALLING ALL COMMISSIONERS, PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS!

We are recruiting volunteers for Conference Registration. If you are interested and have an hour or two to spare during conference, please send an email to Alan Howard ([ahoward@ilparks.org](mailto:ahoward@ilparks.org)) with the day(s)/time(s) you are available.



Visit us at  
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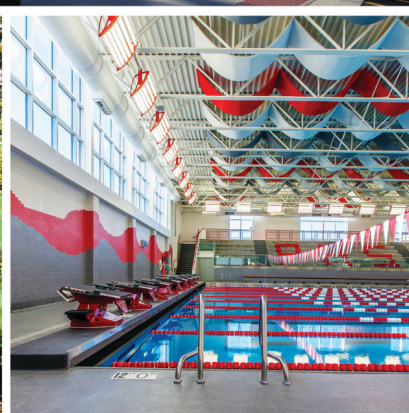
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## CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

All conference workshops award 0.2 CEUs. Pre-registration is required. Register online at [ILparksconference.com](http://ILparksconference.com) or see page C30.

### 01 AI in the Parks and Recreation Industry: Embracing the Future

**Speaker(s):** Neelay Bhatt, Next Practice Partners; Jason Ellisalde, Next Practice Partners; Scott Crowe, Huntley Park District  
**Track:** Leadership Management

This session will delve into the ways AI is transforming the industry, exploring specific examples and practical applications. Participants will gain valuable insights into the potential of AI technologies, ethical considerations, and strategies for successful integration. Through interactive discussions and real-world case studies, attendees will be equipped with the knowledge and tools to navigate the evolving landscape of the Parks and Recreation industry. Throughout the presentation, real-world examples and case studies will be shared to provide concrete illustrations of how AI is impacting the field. These examples will highlight the transformative power of AI in enhancing user experiences, improving operational efficiency, and driving innovation within the Parks and Recreation.

#### Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

1. Understand the potential of AI technologies and their specific applications within the industry.
2. Recognize the ethical considerations and challenges associated with AI integration.
3. Gain strategies for successful AI adoption and change management, enabling them to leverage AI to enhance user experiences, optimize operations, and achieve organizational goals.

### 203 Salt Smart Certified Workshop for Park District Winter Maintenance Staff

**Speaker(s):** Hannah Miller, The Conservation Foundation; Jennifer Hammer, The Conservation Foundation; Jimmy Schmidt, Streamwood Park District  
**Track:** Park and Natural Resource Management

Salt Smart Certified helps Park Districts keep visitors safe and lessen the impacts of chlorides, like rock salt, have on our natural and built environments from winter maintenance activities. Park Districts have important roles in the quality of life in our communities. Keeping people safe is a priority and can be challenging during and after winter storms. The Salt Smart Certified Workshop and accompanying Illinois Winter Maintenance Manual was developed to provide necessary tools winter maintenance staff need to be proactive, provide safe surfaces, and reduce environmental impacts through cost effective, industry accepted best practices. The interactive Salt Smart Certified Workshop includes topics such as: preseason planning, materials and liquids, key actions to take before, during, and after the storm, and more. Participating in this workshop and completing the post-workshop evaluation will count towards meeting the requirements for your Park District to be Salt Smart Certified.

#### Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

1. Understand why and how chlorides impact the natural and built environment.
2. Identify industry specific terminology and practices that support Salt Smart outcomes at your Park District.
3. Increase knowledge of resources and support available to Park Districts.



### 306 Data Manipulation in Excel

**Speaker(s):** Marie Herman, MRH Enterprises LLC  
**Track:** Finance/IT

You work with Excel every day. Have you ever wondered if there are features that you haven't explored that would save you hours of time and loads of frustration? Join us for this session as we delve into time saving ways to work with data in Excel, from combining to separating to custom sorting and so much more. Laptops are not recommended nor required; handouts will be provided.

#### Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

1. Identify some of the various ways to combine data in Excel.
2. Discover advanced filter and custom sorting methods to see your data just the way you want.
3. Understand how to correct common formatting issues people experience working with Excel.

### 420 Problem Solving Change: Being Proactive vs Reactive with Transition

**Speaker(s):** Lydie Gutfeld, City of San Bernardino, CA  
**Track:** Recreation

Dealing with transition and change can be the catapult to your quit and your team's burnout. Figuring out how to focus on the transition while understanding the fear of change can create a unity amongst your team. Supervisors, managers and department heads have been faced with the difficulty of maintaining staff levels and defining new roles with constant change and transition. Developing useful communication tools to implement with teams can prove effective in creating change agents. Be confident as you lead your team through the next big transition!

#### Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

1. Identify a transition and its phases to better prepare for successful outcome.
2. Develop the communication skills necessary for becoming a change agent.
3. Improve presence as a leader through transition and change.





## 508 Run, Hide, Fight

**Speakers(s):** Carol Cadle, Carol Stream Police Department; Dino Heckermann, Carol Stream Park District

**Track:** Therapeutic Recreation

It's an unfortunate reality - the threat of an active shooter or active assailant situation is very real, and no agency or individual is immune to the possibility. As we've seen on the news and here in Illinois, there's been numerous tragedies at schools, public events, and in the workplace. While we can't stop it from happening, we can certainly discuss and examine options to help mitigate the effects of these incidents at our agencies. Officers Cadle and Heckermann of the Carol Stream Police Department will help practitioners put together a real-world plan to keep everyone safe in the event of an active shooter or active assailant. Be intentional and be prepared because "seconds" count!

### Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

1. Outline and develop an effective response plan.
2. Explain how to activate a plan in an active shooter or active assailant situation.
3. Identify safe options in the event of an active shooter or assailant situation.

## 905 Bridging the Confidence Gap: How to Succeed at Upfront Communication

**Speaker(s):** Tiffany Olson, Workshops That Work

**Track:** Marketing/Communications

In her book *Playing Big*, author Tara Mohr describes the problem of the "confidence gap" this way: "Most women I know feel great pressure...to say what they really want to say, while also...being nice, ever flexible, ever calm." We've probably all been there — frustrated by a thousand thoughts preventing us from speaking up confidently when we need to. You can witness this with women hedging their ideas, disclaiming their opinions, or upspeaking their voices, all in an effort to curb any sense of seeming overbearing or confrontational. That's not to say there aren't confident women out there who are excelling when it comes to communication. And it's not to say there aren't men who struggle with confidence and speaking up. In this session, Tiffany will delve into, not just bridging the confidence gap between men and women, but she will also provide encouraging steps and takeaways for anyone, regardless of gender, to be a better upfront communicator and to have more confidence.

### Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

1. Identify confidence gaps and their significance in your life.
2. Understand why confidence gaps exist.
3. List the necessary steps to appear more confident in communication.

## CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS 12:30 pm – 2:30 pm

All conference workshops award 0.2 CEUs. Pre-registration is required. Register online at [ILparksconference.com](http://ILparksconference.com) or see page C30.

## 02 Responsible Leadership - Choosing How We Show Up for Others

**Speaker(s):** Kristin Strunk, Regent Leadership Group

**Track:** Leadership Management

Leadership isn't a position of authority. It isn't demonstrated in your job title. It isn't something you learn overnight. There are four principles for Responsible Leadership, and each of those principles needs to be practiced and demonstrated regularly to enhance team engagement, develop others through effective delegation and coaching, and create the environment that builds the next generation of leaders. Leadership impacts so much more than staff retention. Responsible Leadership can reduce burnout, ease performance conversations, simplify conflict resolution, and build confidence. Research from Harvard Business Review shows that if you are a good leader your impact on your team and your team's direct reports has positive ramifications throughout the organization. Whether you have been a leader for decades or you're just starting your journey, we have the opportunity for you to learn, reflect, and develop your action plan.

### Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to

1. Identify the four principles of Responsible Leadership.
2. Determine where you demonstrate the principles and their impact on others (not just your team).
3. Create an action plan for enhancing leadership style or determine how to become a leader.





### 302 Helpful Tips for Understanding and Prioritizing OSHA Standards in Parks and Recreation

**Speaker(s):** Bill Hooker, PDMRA  
**Track:** HR/Risk Management

Proactive employers look at OSHA compliance as a first step towards the implementation of safety systems and a culture of continuous improvement for the safety of all staff. Understanding and implementing OSHA standards can at times be confusing and difficult to prioritize the numerous standards that may apply to your organization. In this program we will highlight various OSHA related topics and provide common industry application of the topic. Through the use of case studies, pictures, hypothetical, checklists and group exercises, participants will identify standards applicable to their agency, discuss factors for prioritizing topics and create an implementation plan for an OSHA topic at their agency.

#### Learning Outcomes:

Participants will be able to:

1. Understand how various OSHA topics apply to their industry.
2. Better identify and prioritize OSHA topics that apply to their agency.
3. Create a goal for implementing an OSHA topic.

### 401 Collaboration Equity in a Hybrid Workplace

**Speaker(s):** Michael Gregory, MG Consulting LLC  
**Track:** Recreation

Come join Michael Gregory as he presents The Collaboration Effect®, which discusses the importance of hybrid equity in the workplace, defines different types and styles of hybrid workers, and shares hybrid work trends to help you and your team navigate this new work world that is here to stay. Using breakout sessions, participants will have the opportunity to discuss how to apply lessons learned sooner rather than later for their own work environment.

#### Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

1. Define Collaboration Equity and one's own place in this concept.
2. Apply three ideas for hybrid equity as they relate to the workplace.
3. Define three hybrid work trends for now and the future.

### 509 Having Hard Conversations: Rely on Relationships, Be Uncomfortable, and Do It Anyway

**Speaker(s):** Susan Mrazek, Consultant  
**Track:** Therapeutic Recreation

This training discusses the strengths and challenges of having hard conversations. Administrators, educators, and parents are all critical adults in children's lives who need to be able to confidently address challenging topics together. Participants will learn the different components of a challenging conversation and what skills are helpful to strengthen before entering one. They will gain practice in outlining their points, using assertive voice, setting a goal, validating others, and learning to question personal thoughts and assumptions. They will walk away with tools to use when going into a challenging conversation as well as ways to handle their own emotions when involved in talks that are uncomfortable and necessary.

#### Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

1. Identify and understand the different skills needed to embark on challenging conversations.
2. Practice planning a difficult conversation and having one inside a role play scenario.
3. Understand and practice several conflict prevention skills- engaged listening, active constructive responding, and assertive voice.





## 602 How to Implement F&B that Drives Cost Recovery

**Speaker(s):** Mike Holtzman, Profitable Food Facilities

**Track:** Facility Management

Food & Beverage programs help drive cost recovery in parks and recreation, so it's important for them to be successful. Some questions to ask as they relate to your program's ROI: How much does your agency rely on 3rd party food vendors? What is the criteria for identifying key menu items and will they engage your customers? Does your agency have a plan in place to help measure and achieve success now and long-term? Come join Mike Holtzman of Profitable Food Facilities as he discusses developing, implementing, and maintaining a successful F&B strategic plan that increases cost recovery, raises community engagement, and enhances park user experience.

### Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

1. Discover areas of improvement or development for current F&B operations.
2. Identify one or more food concepts that meet criteria for community engagement.
3. Develop, implement, and maintain an exceptional F&B strategic plan.

## 1000 Equitable Productive Conflict Resolution for People Managers

**Speakers(s):** Dr. Linda Henderson-Smith, ATC Consulting LLC; Jonelle Bailey, Sycamore Park District

**Track:** Diversity

One of the skills people managers need in order to equitably supervise teams is productive conflict resolution. Fear of conflict is one of the five dysfunctions of teams. If we want functional teams, we must learn how to face and resolve conflict in productive vs. destructive ways. This training will provide definition, steps, and practice to resolving conflict in productive ways to ensure our teams are safe places for staff to belong and thrive.

### Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

1. Define productive conflict and how it is connected to equitable leadership.
2. Describe why productive conflict resolution is required for teams to be functional.
3. Explain steps to resolving conflict productively.

## 1109 Unleashing Synergy: A Case Study in Transformation of the Willowbrook Wildlife Center

**Speaker(s):** Danielle Appelo, Wight & Company; Anamari Dorgan, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County; Stephanie Touzalin, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

**Track:** Forest Preserve and Conservation

Owned by the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, Willowbrook Wildlife Center provides care, rehabilitation, and medical treatment to native wildlife; supports the district's threatened and endangered species captive-rearing program; and is an environmental education resource for the public. To address the need to update the 42-year-old facility, the District committed to the design and construction of a clinic and visitor center, outdoor animal enclosures, wildlife gardens, and interpretive trails and immersive experiences in the surrounding forest preserve. This session will highlight the collaborative process between the District and Wight & Company to design and build a facility to enhance Willowbrook as a public resource, a project that is a true transformation in our approach to best practices in animal care and public communication. The improvements will underscore the critical message that healthy ecosystems are dependent on healthy wildlife populations and responsible human actions.

### Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to:

1. Understand the collaborative nature of design-build projects, highlighting how interdisciplinary teams work together throughout the project lifecycle.
2. Identify this project's unique challenges and how they were overcome through creative problem-solving and innovative solutions.
3. List lessons learned and best practices including successes, failures, and areas for improvement.





**Thursday, January 25**

**9:00 pm – 11:30 pm**

**Hyatt Regency Chicago,**

**Grand Ballroom,**

**East Tower/Gold Level**

With their incomparable style and sound, Hello Weekend puts on a flawless show while performing today's biggest chart-topping hits. They will have you singing along to their covers of well-known artists such as Pitbull, Rihanna, Lady Gaga, and may more. Although they are one of Chicago's newest cover bands, they have had the opportunity to perform at some of the city's most popular venues (House of Blues, Cubby Bear, etc.). Hello Weekend is the perfect band to wow your crowd with their bold colors and great music. You're sure to have an amazing time that will leave you and your party goers shouting, "Hello weekend" ...even if it is just a Thursday!

**This is not a ticketed event... everyone is welcome!**

**Beer, wine and soft drinks will be sold inside. Beverages brought in from outside are not allowed.**

# SINGING & DANCING, & DUELING TO NEW HEIGHTS!



Join us for our spirited closing social event – an old-fashioned bar hop ... Hyatt Regency style! Boogie on into the Decades Dance Party and relive the music and moves of the 70s, 80s, and 90s!

Hustle into American Craft as our energetic DJ livens things up with dance tunes from the decades! Then, Hip-Hop on over to the Plaza Ballroom for Conference Karaoke! After you have crooned your favorite tunes, Electric Slide to the Library for dueling pianos!

This entertaining evening will be out of this world! Attendees will be Moonwalking among the various musical venues all night long while enjoying tasty dinner morsels and thirst-quenching brews/wine in each location.

Bring your appetite, favorite song requests, and dancing shoes as we sing, dance, and duel to new heights during our groovy, gnarly closing social! We promise, it will be 'Da Bomb!'

**Saturday, January 27**  
**7:00 pm – 10:00 pm**  
**American Craft, Plaza Ballroom, and**  
**The Library at the Hyatt Regency**

#### **THIS IS A TICKETED EVENT!**

Ticket includes:

- Dinner buffet with unlimited beer, wine and soft drinks
- Disc Jockey, Karaoke, and Dueling Pianos!
- A great night of entertainment and fun!

#### **TICKET INFORMATION:**

- Delegates who register for the Full Package or the Saturday Only Package will receive one ticket for admission.
- Additional tickets may be purchased for \$125 per ticket through the pre-registration process or on-site from Conference Registration.
- Tickets **will not be sold** on-site at the Closing Social.

## BOARDSMANSHIP

- Boardmanship Essentials, Part I
- Boardmanship Essentials, Part II
- Board Member to Board Leader, Part 1
- Board Member to Board Leader, Part 2
- Frequently Asked Questions about Robert's Rules of Order at Meetings
- Government Finance for Non-Finance Park and Recreational Leaders
- Having a Healthy and Prosperous Relationship with your Executive Director
- Role of Board Members and Leadership in a Crisis
- The Importance of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at our Agencies – Part I
- The Importance of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at our Agencies – Part II
- The Importance of the Board Policy Manual: Why You Need One and What You Can Do with It
- Using Robert's Rules of Order in Your Meetings

## DIVERSITY, EQUALITY & INCLUSION

- Allyship: From Support to Action
- Building a Robust Commitment to DEIA and Getting Results in a Diverse Community
- Is Your Park District Gay Enough?
- Keep it 100 without Trippin', No Cap!
- Promoting Vendor Diversity at Your Agency
- The Goal of Belonging: Implementing DEI Within Your District's Summer Camps & Rec Programming
- The Look of the 'NEW' Professional
- Veteran Inclusive Programming - Yes, Women Served Too!

## FACILITY MANAGEMENT

- #banthebinder - Taking Your Operations into the Cloud
- Committing to Zero: Lessons Learned from Net Zero Energy Buildings
- Connecting with Your Gen Z Team
- Concession Stands: Pain or Profit?
- Crisis Management for Active Threat Situations
- Facility Rentals Panel: The Ins & Outs of Renting Space to the Public
- Healthy Communities, Parks and Splashpads
- Pickleball Palooza: What is the Big Dill?
- Sustainable Aquatic Design & Delivery in an Unpredictable Construction Market
- Take a New Look: Applying the Diamond of Care and Visual Literacy to Inspections and Maintenance
- To Game or Not to Game? Planning Successful eSports Programs and Spaces

## FINANCE/INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- Advanced Video Camera Solutions to Take your Park District or Forest Preserve to the Next Level
- Attackers Versus Defenders: How They React in Real Time
- Building Security Technology
- Collaboration Transformation & The Employee Experience
- Financing the Fun: An introduction to Municipal Bonds
- Fundamentals of IT Security for Everyone
- Innovation Oasis: Embracing AI for Next-Level Recreation
- Investing Park District Dollars: Maximizing Impact & Returns – SPEED SESSION
- Legal and Economic Update - New Laws, Economic Trends & Impact Financings for Park Projects
- Personal Finance for the Parks and Recreation Professional
- Thinking About a Bond Referendum? What to do and Where to Start
- What to Look for When Evaluating a Financing Proposal

## FOREST PRESERVE & CONSERVATION

- Break Out of Your Shell: Working Across Departments for Richer Engagement
- Connect Your Public to Nature's Recipe for Restoration
- Green from the Outside In
- "It's Dangerous to Go Alone! Take This!" - Gamification Marketing Strategies
- Naperville Park District Stream Restoration Case Study – SPEED SESSION
- The Challenges of Prescribed Burning in Urban Areas of Illinois
- The Living Map
- Under Pressure - The Region's Green Vision for Restoration, Resilience and Equitable Access
- Utilizing GIS for Planning, Management, and Analysis of Prescription Burns

## GOVERNANCE/LEGAL

- Agency State Accreditation - A Blueprint for Excellence!
- Bidding and Managing a Successful Construction Project
- Concrete to Green: How a Government Partnership is Turning a Commercial Site into a Events Park
- Critical Thinking About Accessibility and Inclusion
- Is it Easy Being Green? Exploring Renewable Energy Supply Options
- Legal/Legislative Part I
- Legal/Legislative Part II
- Not In My Park! Regulating Controversial Park Activities
- Planning for a Referendum: Available Options, Key Points and Milestones
- Real Estate 101
- Social Media & the Law: Facebook? Instagram? X?
- The Necessity of Video Surveillance in Parks and Facilities
- Why do I have to Go Through Zoning Approval Processes?

## HR/ RISK MANAGEMENT

- Controlling the Chaos of Your Outlook Inbox
- Evanston Lakefront: A New Chapter and Collaboration
- How to Not Only Apply for Your Dream Job - But Get It: Best Kept Secrets from a Marketer
- Parental Leave & Benefit Offerings - How to Remain Competitive in a Changing Environment
- Park & Recreation Compensation Survey: Get to Know This Valuable Resource
- Planning the Perfect Panel Interview - Enhancing the Candidate Experience – SPEED SESSION
- The Future of Parks and Rec: Winning the War for Talent in the Next Phase
- "You're Fired!" - What to do Before Uttering These Words

## LEADERSHIP/MANAGEMENT

- Affiliates: A Blessing or a Curse?
- Attributes of a Great Leader
- All Minds Matter: Integrating Wellness in the Workplace – SPEED SESSION
- Building a Culture of Innovation and Inclusion
- Conflict Unpackaged
- Cultivating a Campfire Culture
- Delegation IS Leadership
- Design, Implement and Fund a Sustainable Financial Assistance Program
- Girl Power - Are You Ready? Get Set and Lead!
- Girl Power - Get Your Questions Answered!
- iLearn: The Makings of a Sustainability Project Proposal – SPEED SESSION
- Laughter as Medicine: Using Comedy for Staff Wellbeing and Managing Burnout
- Leadership Games – SPEED SESSION
- No One Cares About Your Data
- NRPA | IAPD | IPRA Executive Directors' Roundtable
- Psychological Safety: Your Leadership Reflection
- Q&A is the Best Way to National Certification Exam Success
- Strategic Leadership While Facing a Crisis
- Succession Planning is Dead! Long Live Succession Planning!

## MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

- 10 Lessons About Marketing I Learned from It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia
- Crowdfund Your Marketing: How Enlisting the Public Can Help You Achieve More
- Designing Marketing Strategies for Young Kids and "Younger" Seniors
- How NOT to be Boring with your Marketing Outreach Booth: 25 Booth-Boosting Tips
- Improving Customer Feedback Systems
- Marketing and Communications Roundtable 1.0
- Marketing and Communications Roundtable 2.0
- Rising Above the Rest: Transforming Parks Through Smart Drone Use
- Selling Sponsorship in Style: The Do's and Don'ts
- Sponsorships: It Takes a Team
- "Survey Says...!" Best Practices for Community Surveys and Public Engagement
- Web Accessibility and the American with Disabilities Act – SPEED SESSION



## PARKS & NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- 2024 IDNR Grant Outlook and Success Grant Submission
- Advancements in Water Feature Management
- All Charged Up: Everybody's Talking about Electrification
- Celebration and Stewardship of Your Nature Preserve
- Kids Around the World - Building a Generation of Hope
- Park Maintenance Round Table – SPEED SESSION
- Planning, Design, Construction, and Management for a Sustainable Synthetic Turf Sports Complex
- Planning for Capital Project Grants
- The Future of Urban Forestry in the Parks
- Tournaments: The Challenge and Reward of Hosting Large-Scale Athletic Tournaments at Your Parks

## RECREATION

- Bridging The Gap Between Marketing and Recreation: Episode 3
- Building a Positive Culture in your Summer Camp
- CHAMPS! Classroom/Group Management from the Classroom into Recreation!
- CHAMPS - Redesigning your Preschool and School Age Behavioral Systems
- Cures for the Common Survey
- Designing Surveys to Obtain Usable Data
- Early Childhood, Nature, and the Park District
- Fitness and Wellness Program Management
- Forward Thinking Aquatics
- Going Digital- EPACT – SPEED SESSION
- How to Make the Most Efficient Use of Event Space
- How to Plan an Event: Steps, Tips and Checklists
- Just Be in The Room
- Official Officials: Officiating in Parks and Recreation
- Our Volunteers are Out of this World!
- Reimagining Success in Youth Sports
- The Future Is Inclusion
- The Secret Sauce to Successful Programming “It’s in There”
- Trend Check for Rec
- Unleashing Revenue Potential: Harnessing Data & Automation for Tennis & Pickleball Success – SPEED SESSION

## THERAPEUTIC RECREATION

- Prioritizing Mental Health: Empowering Your Organization
- Reframing Your Programs Through a Trauma Informed Lens
- Soaring to New Heights with The Alliance and Self Advocacy!
- “Squirrel!” Staying Focused with a Coworker Who has ADHD – SPEED SESSION
- SRA Budgeting 101
- The Healing Power of SOUL: Sharing of Unconditional Love and the Human-Animal Bond
- Transform Your Trainings
- What the ACC?

## Keynote General Session with Charles Clark

Saturday, January 27, 2024

9:00 am – 10:00 am

CEUs: 0.1



### About the Speaker

Charles Clark is a motivational speaker, creator of the Thrive Planner, and bestselling author. Before becoming an international speaker, Charles was one of the fastest men in the world. He is a 3x NCAA National Championship and USA Track and Field Championships silver medalist. Now, as a mindset expert, Charles shows athletes, entrepreneurs, and companies how to win in life. Today, Charles Clark teaches people how to use adversity to build greater strength, success, and fulfillment.

### Adversity Makes You Stronger

How To Change Your Perspective on Adversity and Use It to Become Relentless

Charles knows a thing or two about facing adversity. At a young age, he was recognized as one of the fastest men in the world. He won the NCAA Nationals and one of the fastest athletes in the world and was on the verge of signing a shoe deal. That was until he faced a career-ending injury that left him broken and feeling like he lost his life purpose.

Charles later realized that the adversity he was facing would be the very thing to propel him into his greatest purpose yet: to use his story to impact and encourage people all over the world who felt like he did.

**In this empowering and motivating session, you will learn:**

- How to shift your perception on adversity and use it to make you a better, more fulfilled person
- The one skill you need to become less impacted by setbacks
- The most important habits that amplify your confidence, happiness, and peak performance
- The power of decision-making and what choices lead to gaining momentum on your goals
- The science behind our behaviors and how to reprogram your mindset
- How to be empowered and uplifted to become your best self
- How to build a magnetic influence on those you lead and feel good about it
- Relearn the meaning of success to avoid burnout



# 2024 Conference Registration Form

**Register online at [ilparksconference.com](http://ilparksconference.com)**  
 Faxed or mailed registration forms will be accepted until January 15, 2024.

I am completing this form on behalf of the attendee and would like a copy of the receipt; email to: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION I. ATTENDEE INFORMATION**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ TITLE \_\_\_\_\_

NICKNAME FOR BADGE \_\_\_\_\_ AGENCY \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS, CITY, STATE, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ ATTENDEE EMAIL ADDRESS (ONE EMAIL PER REGISTRATION FOR MOBILE APP ACCESS) \_\_\_\_\_

**CERTIFICATIONS:**  AFO  CPO  CPRE  CPRP  CPSI  CTRS  
**MEMBER:**  IAPD  IPRA  NON-MEMBER  
**MEMBER RATES:** All registrations are checked for membership status. Refer to the Policy on Members and Non-Members on page C7.

Is this your first time attending the IAPD/IPRA Soaring New Heights Conference?  Yes  No  
 If "No," how many years have you attended  2-5  6-9  10-15  16+

Pronoun on badge:  he/his  she/her  they/their  ze/zir  None

IAPD/IPRA makes available the email addresses of conference attendees to conference exhibitors who provide products and services to the park and recreation field.  **Please check here if you prefer your email address to NOT be provided.**

**ADA COMPLIANCE / SPECIAL MEAL ACCOMMODATION:** If you have any special accessibility/meal requirement, please provide a brief description below. For requests pertaining to your hotel/lodging needs, please contact the Hyatt or Swiostotel directly when booking your room. \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency Contact (REQUIRED):** Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION II. PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHIPS - THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2024 (Enrollment is limited - REGISTER EARLY!)**

ID#	TITLE	FEE
<b>10:00 am – 12:00 pm</b>		
01	AI in the Parks and Recreation Industry: Embracing the Future	<input type="checkbox"/> \$85
203	Salt Smart Certified Workshop for Park District Winter Maintenance Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> \$85
306	Data Manipulation in Excel	<input type="checkbox"/> \$85
420	Problem Solving Change: Being Proactive vs Reactive with Transition	<input type="checkbox"/> \$85
508	Run, Hide, Fight	<input type="checkbox"/> \$85
905	Bridging the Confidence Gap: How to Succeed at Upfront Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> \$85
<b>12:30 pm – 2:30 pm</b>		
02	Responsible Leadership - Choosing How We Show Up for Others	<input type="checkbox"/> \$85
302	Helpful Tips for Understanding and Prioritizing OSHA Standards in Parks and Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> \$85
401	Collaboration Equity in a Hybrid Workplace	<input type="checkbox"/> \$85
509	Having Hard Conversations: Rely on Relationships, Be Uncomfortable, and Do It Anyway	<input type="checkbox"/> \$85
602	How to Implement F&B that Drives Cost Recovery	<input type="checkbox"/> \$85
1000	Equitable Productive Conflict Resolution for People Managers	<input type="checkbox"/> \$85
1109	Unleashing Synergy: A Case Study in Transformation of the Willowbrook Wildlife Center	<input type="checkbox"/> \$85
<b>SECTION II SUBTOTAL</b>		<b>\$</b>



**SECTION III. CONFERENCE REGISTRATION**

PACKAGE	EARLY (BY 12/11/23)		REGULAR (12/12/23 – 01/15/24)		ON-SITE (After 1/15/24)	
	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER
Full	<input type="checkbox"/> \$365	<input type="checkbox"/> \$670	<input type="checkbox"/> \$430	<input type="checkbox"/> \$800	<input type="checkbox"/> \$470	<input type="checkbox"/> \$880
No Frills	<input type="checkbox"/> \$310	<input type="checkbox"/> \$560	<input type="checkbox"/> \$365	<input type="checkbox"/> \$670	<input type="checkbox"/> \$420	<input type="checkbox"/> \$780
Thursday Only	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$260	<input type="checkbox"/> \$165	<input type="checkbox"/> \$290	<input type="checkbox"/> \$180	<input type="checkbox"/> \$315
Friday Only	<input type="checkbox"/> \$270	<input type="checkbox"/> \$485	<input type="checkbox"/> \$300	<input type="checkbox"/> \$545	<input type="checkbox"/> \$325	<input type="checkbox"/> \$595
Saturday Only	<input type="checkbox"/> \$290	<input type="checkbox"/> \$525	<input type="checkbox"/> \$320	<input type="checkbox"/> \$585	<input type="checkbox"/> \$345	<input type="checkbox"/> \$635
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250
Retiree	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175	<input type="checkbox"/> \$390	<input type="checkbox"/> \$185	<input type="checkbox"/> \$415	<input type="checkbox"/> \$215	<input type="checkbox"/> \$490
Guest/Spouse	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175	<input type="checkbox"/> \$185	<input type="checkbox"/> \$185	<input type="checkbox"/> \$215	<input type="checkbox"/> \$215
<b>A LA CARTE TICKET OPTIONS</b>					<b>QTY.</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friday, Awards Luncheon Ticket (includes one (1) dessert ticket)</li> <li>• Friday, Dessert Ticket (dessert served in the Exhibit Hall immediately following the luncheon)</li> <li>• Friday, Awards Luncheon Preferred Agency Seating (non-refundable fee)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specify preferred agency table OR preferred legislative table (if you will be inviting a legislator to join your agency).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Saturday, Closing Social Ticket</li> <li>• CLE Credit Packages (3=\$45; 4=\$60; 7=\$105; 8=\$120) ARDC # _____</li> </ul>					<input type="checkbox"/> \$70 x _____ \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 x _____ \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 x _____ \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Agency <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative  \$125 x _____ \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> \$45 <input type="checkbox"/> \$60 <input type="checkbox"/> \$105 <input type="checkbox"/> \$120	
<b>SECTION III SUBTOTAL</b>					<b>\$</b>	

**SECTION IV. SPECIAL EVENT REGISTRATION (Space is limited - REGISTER EARLY!)**

**Professional Connection: Thursday, January 25, 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm** (see page C9 for details.)

PCS	Professional Connection – <b>Student</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> N/C
PCP	Professional Connection – <b>Professional</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> N/C
<b>Mock Interviews/Resume Review:</b> (see page C9 for details.)		
MIS	Mock Interviews/Resume Review – <b>Student</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> N/C
MIP	Mock Interviews/Resume Review – <b>Professional</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> N/C

**Instructions:** Enter the subtotal from each section.  
Add Section II – IV line totals together to get the total amount now due.

<b>SECTION II: CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>SECTION III: CONFERENCE REGISTRATION</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>SECTION IV: SPECIAL EVENTS</b>	<b>\$ N/C</b>
<b>TOTAL AMOUNT DUE</b>	<b>\$</b>

**IF PAYING BY CHECK, MAIL REGISTRATION FORM(S) WILL BE ACCEPTED UNTIL JANUARY 15, 2024 AT:  
2024 IAPD/IPRA CONFERENCE**

1460 Renaissance Drive, Suite 305, Park Ridge, IL 60068

**FOR QUESTIONS OR TO MODIFY AN EXISTING REGISTRATION, EMAIL [ILPARKS2024@CTEUSA.COM](mailto:ILPARKS2024@CTEUSA.COM)  
OR CALL (847) 957-4255**

# IMPORTANT REGISTRATION INFORMATION

REGISTRATION FOR CONFERENCE AND ANY FEE-BASED CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS MUST BE DONE AT THE SAME TIME.

	Full Package	No Frills	Thursday Only	Friday Only	Saturday Only	Student/Retiree	Spouse/Guest
All-Conference Awards Luncheon (Friday)	✓						
Closing Social (Saturday)	✓				✓		
60-Minute Sessions * (Thursday-Saturday)	✓	✓	✓**	✓***	✓****	✓	✓
Exhibit Hall Admission (Thursday & Friday)	✓	✓	✓**	✓***		✓	✓
Keynote General Session (Saturday)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Welcome Social (Thursday)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

\* 2-hour workshops not included and are available for an additional fee.

\*\*\* 60-minute sessions and access to Exhibit Hall on Friday only.

\*\* 60-minute sessions and access to Exhibit Hall on Thursday only.

\*\*\*\* 60-minute sessions on Saturday only.

**FULL** – Includes All-Conference Awards Luncheon ticket, Thursday - Saturday 60-minute sessions, Closing Social ticket, admission to the Exhibit Hall, Keynote General Session, and Welcome Social.

**NO FRILLS** – Includes Thursday - Saturday 60-minute sessions, Keynote General Session, admission to the Exhibit Hall, and Welcome Social.

**THURSDAY ONLY** – Includes Thursday 60-minute sessions, admission to the Exhibit Hall, Welcome Social, and Keynote session.

**FRIDAY ONLY** – Includes Friday 60-minute sessions, admission to the Exhibit Hall, Welcome Social, and Keynote Session.

**SATURDAY ONLY** – Includes Saturday 60-minute sessions, Welcome Social, Keynote Session, and Closing Social ticket.

**STUDENTS/RETIREES** – Includes Thursday - Saturday 60-minute sessions; admission to the Exhibit Hall; Welcome Social, and Keynote Session.

**GUEST/SPOUSE/FAMILY/FRIEND (Must not be affiliated with or employed by any park and recreation agency.)** Includes Thursday - Saturday 60-minute sessions, admission to the Exhibit Hall, Welcome Social, and Keynote Session.

#### CANCELLATION POLICY:

Cancellations must be submitted in writing and received **by December 22, 2023**, in order to receive a refund less a processing fee of \$25. **Refund requests received after this date will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.**

#### ADDITIONAL REGISTRATION POLICIES:

- IAPD/IPRA will not invoice agencies or individuals for conference registrations.
- Please complete a separate registration form for each individual registering.
- Participants wishing to change workshops must pay the difference for a higher workshop or forfeit the difference for a lesser workshop.
- Pre-registration ends JANUARY 15, 2024. In order to receive the discounted pre-registration fee(s), registration forms must be postmarked or faxed by JANUARY 15, 2024. On-site registration begins at 7:30 am on January 25, 2024.
- The deadline for Preferred Agency Seating is JANUARY 15, 2024.** No preferred seating will be taken on-site.
- ADA Compliance/Special Meal Accommodation: Attendees with special needs/meal requests should indicate their requirements on the conference registration form. If you have questions or need additional assistance, please contact Cindy Galvan at [Cindy@ilipra.org](mailto:Cindy@ilipra.org).

#### POLICY ON MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS

The following persons will be allowed to register at the member rate:

- Members of the Illinois Park and Recreation Association in current standing through 12/31/23. **IPRA memberships not renewed for 2024 will be assessed the difference between the member and non-member conference rates. If there is an outstanding balance on an attendee's registration account at the start of the virtual conference, access to the platform will not be permitted. No refunds will be given.**
- Commissioners/park board members, attorneys, board treasurers, and board secretaries of agencies that are members of the Illinois Association of Park Districts.
- A maximum of six **support** staff from IAPD member agencies. **"Support staff" is defined as clerical/front desk and maintenance personnel only. Support staff on-line registration promotion code is SUPPORT2024.**

Requests from other persons or agencies asking for member rates will be presented to the Joint Conference Committee for approval prior to conference.

#### QUESTIONS:

- Email your question to [ilparks2024@cteusa.com](mailto:ilparks2024@cteusa.com) or call (847) 957-4255. **Be sure to reference the IAPD/IPRA conference.**

#### CONSENT TO CONFERENCE POLICIES

As a condition of attending the *Soaring to New Heights Conference* and to help protect the health and safety of yourself and others, all participants will be required to comply with protocols and conference policies that are in effect when the event takes place.

All participants will also be required to sign an acknowledgement of personal responsibility form prior to, and as a condition of, being admitted to the conference.

Any individual who refuses to adhere to health and safety protocols and conference policies or who refuses to submit a signed personal acknowledgement of personal responsibility form will not be admitted to, or be removed from, the conference without receiving a refund.

#### CONSENT TO USE PHOTOS AND OTHER REPRODUCTIONS

By registering for, participating in or attending IAPD/IPRA meetings or other activities, an individual irrevocably agrees to the use and distribution by IAPD/IPRA of his or her image or voice in photographs, video recordings, audio recordings and any other electronic reproductions of such events and activities for any purpose without inspection or approval and without compensation, right to royalties or any other consideration now and in the future.

Event photography provided by JHyde Photography.



# 2024 EXHIBITORS

COMPANY	BOOTH#	COMPANY	BOOTH#
5/3 Bank	344	ExoFit Outdoor Fitness	613
AED Professionals	609	Farnsworth Group, Inc.	419
All Inclusive Rec LLC	325	Fehr Graham	226
American Ramp Company	530	FGM Architects Inc.	600
American Red Cross Training Services	320	F.H. Paschen	605
Anthony Roofing - Tecta America	114	FieldTurf	519
Aqua Pure Enterprises, Inc.	431	ForeverLawn Chicago	137
Aquatic Design Partners	738	Frederick Quinn Corporation	310
Baird Public Finance	448	Geese Chasers Chicago	348
Balanced Environments Inc.	712	 <b>Gewalt Hamilton Associates</b>	<b>713</b>
 <b>BCI Burke</b>	<b>122</b>	Gold Medal Products	315
Bear Construction Company	223	GovDeals	714
Berliner Seilfabrik Play Equipment Corporation	157	GovHR USA	450
BerryDunn	522	GRAEF	337
Bid Evolution	412	H2I Group	233
Blick Art Materials	720	Halogen Supply Company	438
Bluestem Ecological Services	324	Harbour Contractors, Inc.	202
Bounce Houses R Us	705	Harris Local Government	614
Brock USA	346	Havenshine Technologies, Inc.	906
Bronze Memorial Company	216	Henry Bros. Co.	444
Byrne & Jones Construction	733	Hey and Associates	316
Camosy Construction	601	 <b>Hitchcock Design Group</b>	<b>410</b>
Capri Pools & Aquatics	426	HR Source	205
Central Parks	634	IHC Construction Companies LLC	222
Chicago Backflow	611	Illinois Association of Park District (IAPD)	503
CivicPlus	434	Illinois Park & Recreation Association (IPRA)	500
Columbia Cascade Company	147	Illinois Public Risk Fund	734
ComEd Energy Efficiency Program	246	 <b>Imagine Nation LLC</b>	<b>525</b>
Commercial Recreation Specialists	304	IPARKS	411
CommunityPass	834	iStrike by AnythingWeather	610
 <b>Confluence, Inc.</b>	<b>446</b>	IZONE IMAGING	523
Cordogan Clark & Associates	143	Jeff Ellis and Associates, Inc.	300
Correct Digital Displays, Inc.	118	 <b>JSD Professional Services</b>	<b>334</b>
Counsilman-Hunsaker	323	Kahler Slater	308
 <b>Cunningham Recreation</b>	<b>804</b>	Kankakee Nursery	527
Custom Bridges and Boardwalks	604	Keeper Goals	339
CXT Concrete Buildings	700	Kiefer USA	606
 <b>DaySmart Recreation</b>	<b>621</b>	KI Furniture	245
Design Perspectives, Inc.	708	Kwikgoal	338
Dewberry	119	Lake Country Corporation	332
Direct Fitness Solutions	540	LeadingIT	529
Divine Signs	214	Legat Architects	349
 <b>DLA Architects, Ltd.</b>	<b>220</b>	Leopardo Companies	427
Doty & Sons Concrete Products, Inc.	319	Lincoln Aquatics	615
Drury Lane Theatre	622	Local Government Health Plan	453
DuraPlay, Inc.	916	MAD BOMBER FIREWORKS	620
Engineering Resource Associates, Inc.	343	Matrix Fitness	115
Entertainment Concepts	917	Mesirow Financial, Inc.	436
 <b>Eriksson Engineering Associates, Ltd.</b>	<b>430</b>	Midwest Commercial Fitness	203
EVP Academies, LLC	201	Most Dependable Fountains with Play Design Scapes	333

# 2024 EXHIBITORS

COMPANY	BOOTH#	COMPANY	BOOTH#
Musco Sports Lighting	532	Stifel Public Finance	925
MyRec.com Recreation Software	204	Studio GC Architecture + Interiors	103
Nevco Sports, LLC	920	Team REIL Inc.	715
NiceRink	340	The Davey Tree Expert Company	602
 <b>Nicholas &amp; Associates</b>	<b>311</b>	The Pizzo Group	244
Norwalk Concrete Industries	352	The Spargo Group	629
NuToys Leisure Products, Inc	420	TinyMobileRobots	607
Omega II Fence Systems	336	ToolWatch	345
Original Watermen - Vista, CA	833	TRIA Architecture, Inc.	521
Outdoor-Fit Exercise Systems	327	Triple H Mulch and Firewood LLC	312
Paddock Pool Equipment	428	Tyler Technologies, Inc.	608
Parkreation Inc.	449	Univar Solutions MiniBulk	314
PDRMA	303	University of Wisconsin-La Crosse	640
Perfect Turf LLC	145	 <b>Upland Design Ltd</b>	<b>215</b>
Perkins&Will	638	Vermont Systems	531
Perry Weather	409	Visual Image Photography	423
PFM Asset Management LLC/ IPDLAF+ Class	401	Vortex Aquatic Structures International	619
Planning Resources Inc.	424	Water Technology, Inc. (WTI)	538
Playcraft Systems LLC	631	W.B. Olson Inc.	329
Playground Guardian	806	Wight & Company	429
PMA Financial Network, LLC	219	Williams Architects	603
Productive Parks LLC	632	Wintrust Financial Corporation	526
Products 4 Parks	612	Wold Architects and Engineers	356
Progressive Business Solutions	321	 <b>WT Group</b>	<b>400</b>
Pyrotecnico	322	Xplor Recreation	811
Rain Drop Products	235		
Ramuc/Tuff Coat Paint div of MRT	730		
RCP SHELTERS, INC	120		
RecDesk, LLC	240		
Record--A-Hit Entertainment	404		
Recreonics, Inc.	421		
Reinders	407		
Romtec	524		
Scharm Floor Covering	230		
School Health/Palos Sports	520		
SCORE SPORTS	624		
Sikich	539		
Smart Industry Products	330		
Soccer Made In America	309		
Sourcewell	719		
Spartan Sports Lighting	820		
Spear Corporation	639		
Speer Financial, Inc.	239		
Splashtacular	819		
Sport Court Midwest	149		
Sportsfields, Inc.	237		
Stageline	627		
Stalker Sports Floors	706		
Starfish Aquatics Institute	243		

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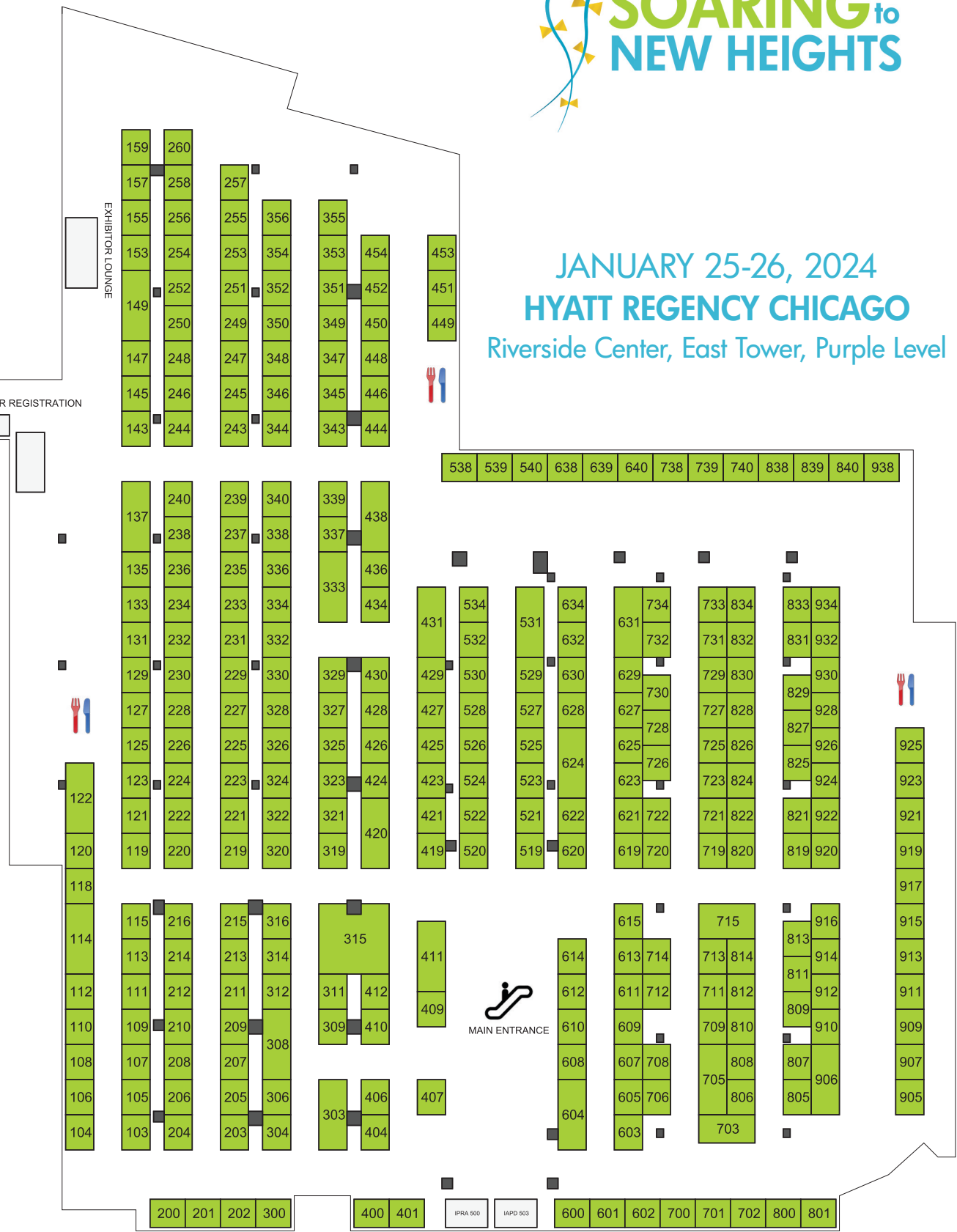
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# Utilizing Leadership to Attract Support

An illustration of a hand holding a megaphone. The hand is rendered in a flat, orange-red color, with a blue sleeve and white cuff visible. The megaphone is white with a blue rim. Three white, four-pointed starburst shapes are scattered around the megaphone, suggesting sound or attention.

by Lori A. Hoffner

ad•vo•ca•cy

noun \ˈad-və-kə-sē\

: the act or process of supporting a  
cause or proposal: the act or process of  
advocating something

- Merriam Webster Dictionary

One of my favorite scenes from an oldie-but-a-goodie movie *The Big Chill*, was in the kitchen when the entire group was cooking a spaghetti meal. One member of the group takes a few pieces of the cooked spaghetti noodles and throws them at the wall. A couple of the friends laugh at him and say, “you still cook it like that?” He explains to them that’s how you know it’s done, when the spaghetti sticks to the wall. Do you approach advocacy for your organization the same way; throwing ideas at the wall and keeping your fingers crossed that something would stick? It’s a fun process when cooking spaghetti but putting together an active group of key stakeholders and a successful advocacy campaign requires a leader to utilize a much more intentional and directive approach.

As a former director of a nonprofit organization, I knew that advocates were sometimes the only support and mechanism available to help move our mission forward and ultimately secure funding for our work. As a member of a board of directors for multiple nonprofits, I understood the expectations of my role as an advocate and took the power, responsibility, and efforts of that task very seriously. Finally, when I served as an elected official on a local parks

and recreation district board of directors, being an advocate for both the community that elected me, and the overall mission of the organization proved that the double responsibility was crucial to the success of mill levy and bond issue votes, program and facility sustainability and overall support of the district. **In that capacity, it was also critical to work with the district leadership to understand the necessary agenda. By doing so advocates would help support the mission and vision of the agency and ensure that it was moved in a forward and positive way.**

Regardless of what my role has been, I know the power of advocates and that being intentional about building a strong core of community stakeholders should not rely on chance but rather a very specific recipe for success. That recipe included a simple and applicable criterion for the individuals that would serve as an advocate: Passion, Objective, Perseverance, Modesty, and Details. Additionally, there are notable responsibilities that the organization must accept to ensure successful and positive advocacy campaigns; steps that will help move the mission of your organization forward and set everyone up for success.





The beginning of this joint venture is an understanding of the first criteria for advocates; PASSION. Encourage individuals to come to the table who have a passion for the topic, issue, or concern at hand. It is that passion that creates action. People typically vote out of passion, attend meetings, and speak up because they are passionate about an issue or concern. They will also get others involved who share the same passion. **The key is to harness that passion in a positive and productive way and that can only happen when we agree to work collaboratively with the leadership and its governing body.** It requires intentional conversations, a give and take of ideas and an understanding of differing points of view. That passionate voice can often be an opinionated voice. But when people feel heard, and their ideas validated in some way, that passion can be used for the overall betterment of the community. If we choose to not engage in a relationship with potential advocates, to not listen to that passionate and possibly opinionated voice and hope they will just stop showing up or speaking out, it's spaghetti cooking. Intentionally seek out those individuals that are passionate. Be willing to listen and engage with them and you will start to establish a successful group of invested stakeholders.

As stated by Henry David Thoreau over a century ago, "If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; there is where they should be. Now, put foundations under them." Broad goals or big picture ideas come from a variety of methods that most organizations have used; surveys, community meetings or focus groups. **However, it is up to the organization and its leadership, to examine broad goals and form them into a very solid OBJECTIVE.** Having a clearly defined objective that is finalized from these procedures is a particular responsibility that is guided by the organization. Stakeholders and advocates must clearly understand the purpose of their work and that comes from the objective. The objective outlines the

process, and the intent. The objective provides direction by serving as a roadmap for your advocates to follow for success. Without it, the overall message and work of your advocates can get lost in the "what-ifs" of the passion for the issue.

Once the objective is clearly defined and the advocates can see where they are going, it's much easier for them to participate and understand the rules of engagement. This part of the criterion is all about PERSEVERANCE. We need key stakeholders to stick with the issue to maintain integrity with the community. That is much more likely if those individuals know how long they will be working with the organization, which advocate(s) will be taking a leadership role and how to engage with one another. Establishing these important pieces helps to ensure longevity and accountability. **You and your staff can outline the length of time that an advocacy campaign will last, however, empowering the advocates to take on the work of determining leadership, engagement and accountability does more to secure perseverance and a willingness to stick with the work.** It is possible to have community stakeholders that work with you for a much longer period than just an advocacy campaign. In fact, I would encourage you to have a strong, consistent group of individuals that can serve in that role. Advocacy campaigns are most successful when a specific group of individuals see both the beginning and the end of the process and how they will provide the support for the organization and the issue.

Providing support for the issue is the key tenant of advocacy. Therefore, MODESTY is a critical piece of criteria for all advocates to think about. Keep the focus on the issue, not the individual. Ensure that advocacy efforts are about promoting positive change for the community, rather than personal agendas. It is up to the collective group of stakeholders to hold each other accountable for this end.

Use the facts. Any position that an advocate takes should be grounded in the facts and that is why the final criterion is DETAILS. No one has the time to put out fires created by misinformation. Although it often comes from good intentions, advocates can create those fires if they are not using the facts. This is where another responsibility of the organization is to keep your advocates in the loop. **Leadership, key decision makers, and members of the organizations team must be willing to constantly provide advocates with updated information. This involvement supports advocates by letting them know what the opposition view might be.** It gives them the necessary talking points to garner support in the community. Create an internal communication process that advocates can be a part of so they can receive and share accurate information, ask questions, and let you know what they might be hearing in the community. It is very helpful to create fact sheets that can be distributed by your advocates and staff at every possible opportunity. Those facts can and should be shared on multiple social media platforms. Social media allows you to share real-time updates and developments related to your advocacy efforts. This keeps stakeholders informed and engaged, fostering a sense of urgency and commitment to the cause.

Everyone is busy and their time is valuable so remember to say thank you. Provide for your advocates what they seek most, recognition for their time and effort. That recognition can come in the form of introductions at an event or meeting, possibly on your social media site or newsletters. Leadership at all levels plays an important role in intentional recognition of advocates. Maybe it's with a pass to their favorite activity or facility. Show appreciation for advocates' time and effort. No matter what form the thank you takes, this responsibility of the organization creates sustainability of a successful and positive group of advocates. If your advocacy campaign is a success, always thank everyone who helped you achieve your victory! Find success even when the outcome is not what you were hoping for. There was a positive change that took place. You learned something about the needs of your organization, your staff and most importantly about the community you serve.

What is Advocacy? – Its intentional, focused action by the organization that requires the right recipe and ingredients of the criteria for the advocates and key community stakeholders. You can't afford to do spaghetti cooking for a positive outcome, be purposeful and set everyone up for success.

**Lori A. Hoffner** is a professional speaker, trainer and consultant specializing in staff and leadership development, community networking, and youth programming. She has presented multiple times at the IPRA/IAPD Conference. To learn more about Hoffner's training, visit [www.SupportingCommUnity.com](http://www.SupportingCommUnity.com)

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# PARK DISTRICT BOARDS HAVE A ROLE IN TIMES OF **CRISIS**

BY **JILL ALLREAD**, CEO AND REPUTATION MANAGEMENT COUNSELOR AT PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS INC.

WHEREVER THERE ARE PUBLIC PLACES, PROGRAMS AND LOTS OF PEOPLE, THERE IS A RISK OF CRISIS AND CONTROVERSY. PARK DISTRICTS ARE PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE WITH A CONTINUAL MIX OF INDOOR AND OUTDOOR SPACES, CAMPS AND PROGRAMS FOR ALL AGES, AND A MISSION TO SERVE RESIDENTS WITH DIVERSE INTERESTS AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS.



It is no coincidence that controversies erupt for park districts more frequently than ever before due to the proliferation of people expressing their grievances and anger via social media. Some use national platforms, like [change.org](http://change.org), a website that allows users to create and sign petitions to influence decision makers. Others use more localized forums, such as Facebook groups specific to parents, dog owners, coaches, and other select interest groups.

An individual or small group of people can amplify their opinions and call on a park district to change policy, redirect funding, provide more facilities, or take specific action. These mini campaigns increasingly target park district board members, who, as public officials, are subject to hearing community concerns and complaints.

It is a tall order for a park district to ensure public safety, provide access and programs to diverse audiences of all ages, and to offer facilities that meet the recreational and social needs of residents. With those expectations are the realities of threats, including accidents, property damage, data breaches, park-use disputes and human resources

issues, such as allegation of harassment or discrimination. Also, park districts are often a community's largest summer employer of youth often working their first job as camp counselors, lifeguards and staff for grounds and facility work. One thing is certain, there is no shortage of challenges and vulnerabilities when managing a successful park district.

## DEFINED ROLES

Park district executive directors and their leadership teams are on the front-line daily managing public comment, conflicts and controversies regarding the park district. Districts that strategically mitigate and pre-empt incidents from becoming more serious issues or crises are those that proactively communicate with their audiences internally, such as a staff and board, and externally with a focus on the people they serve.

Whether appointed or elected, park board members should be prepared to be supportive during times of controversy or crisis in the district. That does not mean getting entangled in managing operations or writing a response or talking with staff, all of which is the responsibility of the executive director.

That said, board members do have the crucial role of raising questions, reviewing the plan of action, offering their expertise and using consistent, agreed-upon messaging to help ensure the park district and park board speak consistently about an issue. Sharing the same messages helps clarify what the park district is doing to address an issue and offer assurance that the district is acting with the public's wellbeing as the priority.

A park district's reputation is anchored in its responsiveness to the public and to prioritizing the safety and wellbeing of people in the community. In most cases when issues arise and people want answers to what is happening and what is the park district doing about it, there is power in thoughtful, factual responses from district leadership. For example, a parent alleges that the park district is not providing equal access to mainstream programs for his child with special needs, it is the executive director's responsibility to respond and to then inform board members of the resolution or ongoing action. If board members are not well informed, they may feel vulnerable and not know how to respond if the same community member approaches them in public with

questions. Informed park board members are the least vulnerable and most helpful in times of controversy and crisis.

## WHEN CRISIS AFFECTS THE BOARD

Park board members can easily become involved in a public relations issue or crisis affecting the park district. They need facts related not just to the issue, but to the park district's services and mission. They also need to know the district's plan for addressing an issue to help manage community dialogue proactively and factually on issues that can bring forth strongly opposing opinions.

For example, a park district in Illinois found itself in the middle of a controversy when approached by a community group insisting the park district close its golf course and use the green space as a recreation area and natural wetland to help control community flooding. The discussion became an emotional debate in the community and continued for several months. The district leadership and board formed a taskforce to do extensive research on the issue, and the taskforce returned with options for the

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board to consider. During a series of public meetings to hear residents' opinions, the board listened to hundreds of community members expressing their opinion on the golf course's future. In this case, the executive director and board members were fully engaged in shaping the public process, conducting hearings and weighing the facts that determined the continuation of the golf course.

**PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS**

Elected or appointed park board members are charged with acting in the public's best interest when allocating resources for park facilities and programs. Public interest in parks is high because park districts are supported by public funds. The public scrutinizes public officials, who oversee the use of tax dollars, which is another reason park board members must earn and maintain public trust. Part of meeting those expectations is receiving timely communications about issues affecting the park district.

Anxieties and threats in a crisis can sometimes blur the lines of responsibility between the park board members and the park district executive director. It is the

responsibility of the executive director to manage the operations and communications to the board and to staff. While the board needs information, it is the executive director's first responsibility to assess the situation and take immediate action to ensure the safety of the public and staff. In a crisis, the top priority is to tend to the wellbeing of people, or in some cases animals (think dog parks and leash policies).

The executive director can then inform park board members about the situation, share the detailed facts and the messages to ensure everyone in leadership is consistent in responding to any inquiries. It is also important that the park district provide updates as the situation progresses and resolves.

**CHECK LIST IN CRISIS**

When a potential issue or crisis begins to unfold for a park district, there are steps leadership can take to help alleviate or mitigate the impact. Things to avoid include:



SALT CREEK RURAL PARK DISTRICT - 2024



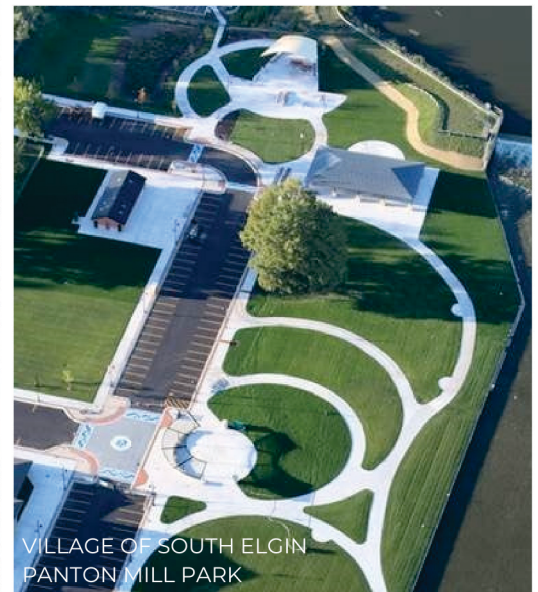
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- Do not be slow to react to a situation. Hoping it will resolve itself wastes valuable time and only leaves the district more vulnerable.
- Do not be slow to express compassion. A slow response to a serious situation is often severely criticized by the public and media. Tell your story quickly and factually.
- Do not get caught up in the minute-to-minute concerns at the cost of guiding the overarching strategies.

Here are tips for what to do when a crisis occurs:

- Do have a park district crisis plan. It provides a checklist and order of actions to follow.
- Do gather the facts surrounding the situation and develop mission-focused messages for a dedicated spokesperson(s), staff and the board to use.
- Do place a priority on human and community safety.

- Do take corrective action as soon as possible.
- Do continue communicating with park district audiences. Keep them informed during and post crisis. When there is a void of information coming from official sources, it is often filled by others with inaccurate or misleading information which is difficult to correct once it is in the media or on social channels.

Every park district encounters challenging issues that can be navigated with preparedness by the executive leadership and park board members. Defining roles, communicating consistently, following a crisis plan and having a communications system in place will help ensure your park district is prepared for the unexpected occurrence that can happen any day.

**Jill Allread, APR**, is CEO and a reputation management counselor at *Public Communications Inc.*, a woman-owned, national PR agency in Chicago, which works with several park districts and attractions on public engagement, referendums and issues management.

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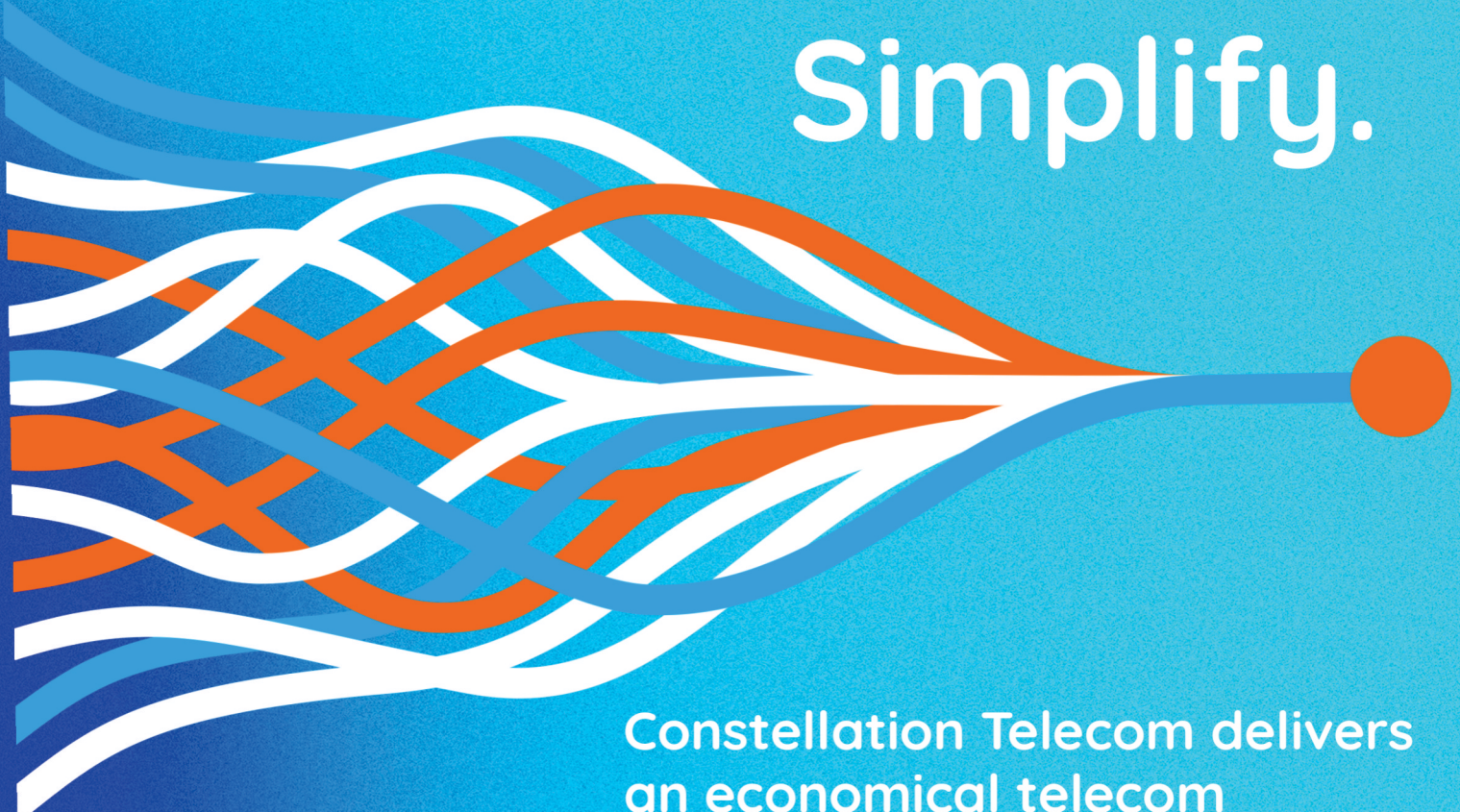
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# PEOPLE & PLACES



## Molly Hamer Retires

After a 37-year career in parks and recreation, Molly Hamer retired Sept. 8 as executive director for the Northbrook Park District.

Hamer was named 2023 Professional of the Year by the Illinois Parks and Recreation Association, on whose board she served from 2014 to 2016. She has a bachelor's degree in leisure studies from the University of

Illinois, whose department of recreation, sport and tourism gave her the Joseph Bannon Practitioner Award in 2016. She also has a master's degree in counseling from Western Illinois University.

She led two major multimillion projects during her seven years in Northbrook: the reopening of Sportsman's Country Club as Heritage Oaks Golf Club with a new club house and modern technology, and the opening of the net-zero energy Techny Prairie Activity Center. This year, Northbrook became the first park district in Illinois whose parks have earned the certification of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program from Audubon International.



## Boone County Conservation District Announces New Executive Director

The Boone County Conservation District (BCCD) is pleased to announce the hiring of **Josh Sage** as its new executive director. Josh has been with the organization since 2001 and comes from a background in natural areas land management.

Before becoming the executive director, Josh was the director of natural resources, responsible for managing the natural areas of the BCCD, as well as the prescribed burn program. His extensive knowledge of the organization will make for a seamless and efficient transition. Josh looks forward to continuing the partnerships he has created with organizations such as the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Josh holds a bachelor of science from Western Illinois University and has been participating in land management for over 25 years.



## Executive Director of Boone County Conservation District Retires

**Dan Kane** is retiring from his

position as the executive director of the Boone County Conservation District (BCCD) and has served in this position since April of 2000. He has more than 36 years of experience providing professional and technical perspectives addressing issues involving Boone County's natural resources. Dan also has previous work experience in the private sector working for engineering firms and as a well-site geologist in the oil exploration industry. Dan has a bachelors of science in Geology from Winona State University and is a licensed professional geologist by the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation.





## Executive Director Mountcastle Announces Retirement

The Park Ridge Park District announced the retirement of its executive director, **Gayle Mountcastle**, after 39 years in the parks and recreation

industry. Gayle will retire May 17, 2024.

At the time of her retirement, Gayle will have led the district as its top executive for the past 13 years. Gayle has spent almost half of her career at the Park Ridge Park District, previously serving Park Ridge for six years as the superintendent of recreation. Prior to joining our district, Gayle was the superintendent of recreation at both the Des Plaines and Streamwood Park Districts, as well as starting her professional career at the Skokie Park District.

During her 13 years as the executive director she has led major improvements that have resulted in incredible growth in facilities, programs, and acquisition of open space.

Gayle has served her profession through involvement on state association committees including the Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) Joint Legislative Committee and several Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA) committees. She is the past-president and current member of the Rotary Club of Park Ridge. She is also a long-serving board member of the Northwest Municipal Federal Credit Union, serving public employees in Park Ridge and Des Plaines.



## The Deerfield Park District Elevates Jeff Harvey to Executive Director

The Deerfield Park District is thrilled to

introduce its new executive director, **Jeff Harvey**. Jeff joined the Deerfield Park District in the fall of 2018, initially serving as the director of finance. Jeff holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from Texas Christian University, a master's degree in business administration from Loyola University, and practiced public accounting as a certified public accountant with KPMG. In his first four and a half years, he accomplished significant milestones. Notably, under his financial leadership, the Deerfield Park District received its first Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting (COA) from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA). In addition, the district's credit rating was upgraded to Aaa by Moody's Investors Service. As a long-time resident of Deerfield, Jeff enjoys working within the community. He continues to be involved with many local organizations as a parent and is committed to working with staff, his fellow community members and stakeholders in providing a vibrant and inclusive environment for all.

## PEOPLE & PLACES



### Chris Leiner Named New Executive Director of Northbrook Park District

**Chris Leiner**, formerly director of parks and properties for the Northbrook Park District, was selected as

its new executive director starting Sept. 1.

Leiner's career includes working as director of parks and planning for the Glencoe Park District, which earned a 2019 National Gold Medal for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management. He also was assistant director of parks and planning for the Des Plaines Park District, and maintenance and operations supervisor for the Park District of Oak Park.

Leiner lives in Gurnee with his wife and two children. His parks and recreation career started in high school, and has included jobs as a lifeguard and Zamboni driver. He is a graduate of the University of Phoenix with a business degree.



### Glen Ellyn Park District Announces New Executive Director

The Glen Ellyn Park District announced the appointment of **Dave Thommes** as their new executive director, effective August 8, 2023.

Dave Thommes brings over 16 years of experience in parks and recreation to the Glen Ellyn Park District. He most recently served as deputy director for the Oak Brook Park District, where he oversaw a wide range of operations, including programming and facilities. During his tenure, the Oak Brook Park District received the National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management from the National Recreation and Park Association in 2015 and is once again a finalist in 2023. Additionally, the district achieved recognition as an Illinois Distinguished Accredited Agency by the Illinois Association of Park Districts and as an Accredited Agency with the National Recreation and Park Association.

He earned an undergraduate degree in Physical Education/Fitness Management and Wellness from DePaul University, along with an MBA with a concentration in Management from Indiana Tech University. He is also a Certified Park and Recreation Executive.



### The Deerfield Park District Announces Retirement of Executive Director Jeff Nehila

After 6 years with the Deerfield Park District and well over 30 years within the parks and recreation industry, **Jeff Nehila** retired from the Deerfield Park District on June 2, 2023. During his tenure, Jeff's dedication, leadership, and expertise have significantly advanced the district's operations and services. He has led the district to receive prestigious recognition, including a National Recreation and Parks Association Gold Medal Finalist on two occasions and an Illinois Distinguished Accredited Agency. Under Jeff's guidance, the district successfully completed various construction and renovation projects, enhancing facilities for the community's enjoyment. Notably, he secured an OSLAD grant for the remainder of the

Jewett Park renovation and oversaw the construction of six outdoor pickleball courts. Jeff's leadership during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic was instrumental in maintaining Deerfield's high-quality services. His unwavering determination and proactive approach ensured the safety and well-being of the Deerfield community.

**ACCOUNTANTS**

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## Skokie School District 68

# RAM brings the Efficiency of Hosted Telephony to Skokie School District 68

Skokie School District 68 serves the diverse communities of Skokie and Morton Grove, IL and its families. The district provides primary education for over 1,600 students. Skokie School District 68 is continually recognized as a leader in public education.

Back in 2018 RAM Communications was initially hired by the district for telecom expense management. Our staff was asked to help the IT staff review, interpret and in some cases audit the line services for all the school district's facilities. Our team was able to help management successfully navigate their current services and identify outdated phone lines. As a result RAM was able to help eliminate unused lines and lower the district's fixed costs. RAM also served as the district's consultant helping management negotiate better terms with its line service provider.

In 2020 RAM was asked to help the school district with another project. This time the IT department and administration wanted an updated phone system to better serve its

needs. Those needs included several criteria: better reliability, centralized system control and elimination of equipment maintenance costs.

The initial Telecom Expense Management (TEM) project allowed RAM to become familiar with the school facilities and service needs. As a result RAM's Team were better equipped to make new service recommendations. That experience contributed to a better overall design.

To improve overall reliability and efficiency Skokie School District was seeking both a hosted and unified phone solution. The proper hosted solution would leverage a larger, redundant network with monitored by a 24x7 service center. This outsourced model would eliminate much of the support burden from Skokie's IT team. Skokie's IT team asked RAM to look for the best possible solution with a robust communications portal. Ideally, the portal would bring clear and usable information for both IT and management staff.

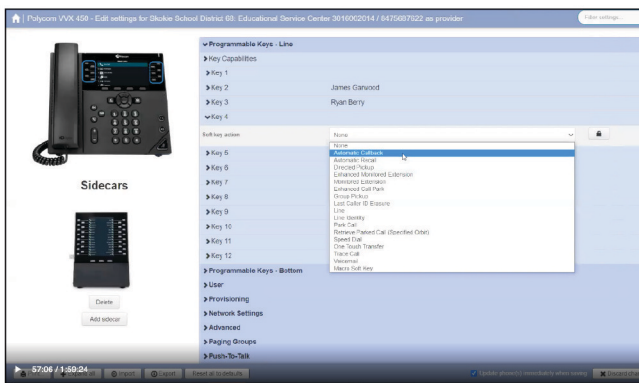


As with all our recommendations RAM worked closely with the client to research and select a handful of worthy competitors. In the end RAM helped Skokie School District 68 choose Access One. Access One is a local player in the Chicago Market who brought an industry leading hosted platform. The solution was competitively priced and met the district's specific requirements. Finally, RAM and Access One brought a team of installers to implement, test and document the new system. The system was operational in just a few days.

Today, Skokie School District uses their unified communications platform with greater efficiency than their previous phone system. Desk phones work in tandem with mobile and desktop applications. In a pinch, especially during snow days, administrators can use the hosted system to redirect phone calls to home-bound staff and other personnel. Any and all necessary software updates and phone replacements are included in Access One's solution. Maintenance and material costs are, for the most part eliminated from the district's operating budget.

### Overall Benefits

- Hosted system eliminated old analog lines and circuits lowering service costs
- Hosted system eliminated virtually all maintenance costs of premise-based system
- Hosted system is integrated with mobile and laptop apps for easier monitoring
- Secure platform is monitored and supported by Access One for no added fees
- Administrators can change call routes and greetings as needed for school calendars
- Updated phone systems provide the best of old technologies with new-world reliability



Access One's Online Portal: Shows phones and simple programming options for users.

### A telecommunications review can save you thousands!

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