

illinois

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P&R

PARKS AND RECREATION

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



SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS
PRE-CONFERENCE GUIDE
INSIDE
2025

leadership & governance



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FROM THE EDITOR

Leadership in Layers



Leadership is not just about holding a title or commanding authority, it's about inspiring others, making difficult decisions, and fostering a vision that transcends individual goals. At its core, leadership means guiding a team or community towards a shared purpose, while nurturing growth, trust, and collaboration along the way.

A true leader leads by example. They demonstrate integrity, resilience, and empathy in every action. By being accountable and transparent, they build trust and respect within their team. Leaders are also great listeners. They understand that leadership is as much about hearing others as it is about speaking. This means valuing diverse perspectives, encouraging open dialogue, and empowering others to contribute their ideas.

True leadership is not about power, it's about purpose.

Purpose is what guides this issue of *Illinois Parks and Recreation* magazine. This issue features different perspectives on what makes a leader become fully realized. In *Responsible Leadership: Four Simple Habits of Strong Leadership* on page 14, Kristin Strunk shares best practices to make a positive impact. Tracey Jones shares *From Contributor to Leader: Embracing Your New Role and Thriving in Leadership* on page 56. Finally Chakisse Newton breaks down how to increase your influence in *Practical Persuasion: 5 Small Shifts Can Dramatically Increase Your Influence* on page 60.

I hope this issue helps you find a purpose or gives you the perspective you need to become the leader you want to be.

Thanks for reading!

— Wayne Utterback, Editor



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

Good Governance Makes Everything Possible

One of the special things about government in Illinois is its locally elected non-compensated park boards. This is public service at its finest. All who serve do so with the commitment to improve the quality of life in their community, and you all are to be congratulated for your service.

Working with an elected group of people can be both rewarding and challenging. That's where a commitment to good governance comes into play. It's great when everyone agrees, but it can be difficult when there is a difference of opinion that leads to conflict that if left unchecked can develop into animosity.

The IAPD Leadership Institute just concluded on Thursday, August 22nd, with a wonderful presentation by Chakisse Newton on "Conflict to Conversation: Practical Conflict Resolution."

Three of the many quotes about conflict she shared with those attending resonated with me, and I wanted to share them with you as well.

"When people respond too quickly, they often respond to the wrong issue. Listening helps us focus on the heart of the conflict. When we listen, understand, and respect each other's ideas, we can then find a solution in which both of us are winners." – Dr. Gary Chapman

"Conflict can and should be handled constructively; when it is, relationships benefit. Conflict avoidance is *not* the hallmark of a good relationship. On the contrary, it is a symptom of serious problems and of poor communication." Harriet B. Braiker

"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't being said. The art of reading between the lines is a lifelong quest of the wise." – Shannon L. Alder

Every board member has the *opportunity to lead* and as a result has the *opportunity* to set the tone, communicate effectively, and to capitalize on what is possible.

Communicating effectively involves not only speaking well, but listening well, too. Active-listening tools, such as those in the following list, help you hold up your end of a successful conversation or discussion.

- Concentrate on what the speaker has to say.
- Listen for content and emotion to understand the entire message.
- Maintain steady eye contact so that the speaker knows your attention is with them.
- Reflect back with verbal feedback to confirm your understanding of the message.
- Stay patient when people talk to you.
- Keep your tone sincere and nonjudgmental when you listen.
- When you give feedback to check understanding, do so in one sentence.
- Tune into how the message is being said, not just what the words are.
- Acknowledge feelings that are important to the message you're hearing.
- Make your goal in conversations to show understanding of what the speaker truly means.

A strong leader develops the skills it takes to build consensus.



Look for these traits in yourself and others.

8 Traits of *ideal* board members:

- dedication
- experience
- time commitment
- professional skills
- attentiveness
- toughness
- collegiality
- ability to compromise

What makes a **great** board member?

- great judgement
- commitment to listening
- wisdom
- motivation and Interest
- style
- effective coach, mentor, and sounding board

To be effective....

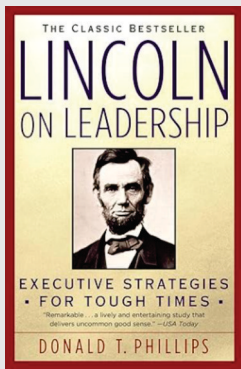
- Bring personal interests and expertise, while keeping the whole organization in mind
- Come to meetings on time, prepared, and attentive
- Respect disagreement without personalizing the debate
- Ask questions rather than accepting the status quo
- Welcome information and advice, while maintaining own best judgement
- Support board decisions and professional staff
- During meetings, do not check your phone for email and messages.

Summary

- A. Read
- B. be Present
- C. be Nice
- D. Listen!**

“A leader is vocal without being loud, fair and kind regardless of agreement, collaborative without force, and respectful of the right of each board member to participate equally while valuing the professional experience and perspective of the executive staff.” - Anonymous

Thank you to each of you serving park districts, forest preserves, conservation districts, and recreation agencies for making Illinois the best state in the nation for parks, recreation, and conservation. Your commitment to leadership and good governance should be emulated by all other units of local government.



YOU THINK YOU HAVE IT ROUGH?

Only ten days before Abraham Lincoln took the oath of office in 1861, the Confederate States of America seceded from the Union, taking all Federal agencies, forts, and arsenals within their territory. To make matters worse, Lincoln, who was elected by a minority of the popular vote, was also viewed

by his *own* advisors as nothing more than a gawky, second-rate country lawyer with no leadership experience. What Lincoln did to become our most honored and revered president is history and how he can help you run your organization is revealed within the gems in this book. You'll discover why you should use the management strategies discussed, several of which are listed below.

- Get out of the office and circulate among the troops
- Build strong alliances
- Persuade rather than coerce
- Never act out of vengeance or spite
- Have the courage to handle unjust criticism
- Set goals and be results oriented
- Encourage innovation
- Preach a vision and continually reaffirm it

Lincoln on Leadership is a compelling book. I encourage you to read it and incorporate its leadership principles in your management style.

IAPD Calendar of Events

Oct. 8-10

NRPA Annual Conference
Atlanta, Georgia

Oct. 25

Best of the Best Awards Gala
Chevy Chase Country Club
Wheeling Park District

Nov. 7

Legal Symposium
Hyatt Lodge/Conference Center
Oak Brook, IL

Jan. 23-25, 2025

2025 IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference
Hyatt Regency, Chicago



Monday, September 30
Sunset Valley Golf Club
Park District of Highland Park

EYE ON THE PROFESSION

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



By Suzi Wirtz, IOM
IPRA Executive Director

#truthinleadership

This year, I attended the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) Annual Meeting in Cleveland (yes, Cleveland) -- thanks to an IPRA Board of Directors that supports and encourages ongoing professional development. As a lifelong association professional, I've been to many ASAE conferences and listened to many speakers on a wide variety of topics. Some are innovative, some are reminders. Among the sessions and keynotes I attended this year, one stood out as an extremely timely reminder, and the second put it into practice when working with boards of directors, volunteers and the community.

First, a morning keynote, interview-style, with Former U.S. Congress Member, CNN Commentator and Air National Guard Officer Adam Kinzinger. I took a lot of notes and videos during this interview, in which he was asked hard questions, but also basic life lesson questions: What is the one thing that you would want your son to know, that you could model for him? (His son is two years old.) Kinzinger said, simply, "Tell the truth."

When you think about that, it should be easy to do and allow you to sleep more soundly. In leadership and governance, it's called ethics. Ethics is more than a set of rules that you may or may not follow when they fit your needs or a situation; ethics is a foundation of trust, accountability and integrity within any organization or government, family or friendship. Whether in a park district boardroom, charitable organization, government, or with your employees, adhering to ethical governance ensures that decisions are made transparently, fairly, and in the best interest of all stakeholders. When an organization (or person) operates ethically, the result is credibility and confidence, both of which you need in order to succeed long-term.

Furthermore, acting ethically ensures that decision-makers are accountable for and transparent in their actions. Being held accountable prevents abuses of power and takes into account the interest of all stakeholders, not just a select few. You've got to be willing to explain and justify decisions sometimes. Transparent practices let us all see and understand how and why decisions are made and fosters a culture of openness. Organizations and leaders who prioritize ethics are more likely to maintain a positive reputation, avoid legal troubles and build long-term relationships with the community. As is quite evident with IPRA members and what

you do every day, there is a responsibility to society. This includes respecting human rights, protecting the environment, and contributing positively to the community.

Leaders with integrity inspire trust and respect—they set a positive example for others to follow. Conversely, leaders who fail to demonstrate ethical behavior can single-handedly erode the organization's ethical standards and culture. I'm sure you all can name a leader or boss you've had who consistently respected the rights, interests, and dignity of all ... and one who did not.

Why Can it Be So Difficult?

Maintaining ethical governance can be challenging. Organizations, leaders and governments often face obstacles that can undermine ethical standards, including conflicts of interest, pressure, influence from others and, unfortunately, ambiguity. While there is nothing inherently wrong with having a conflict of interest, it must be disclosed and transparent. Ethical governance requires identifying and managing conflicts of interest to ensure that decisions are made impartially and in the best interest of the organization or public. Too often, and even in associations and park agencies, decision makers face pressure from powerful stakeholders or special interest groups. This can sometimes lead to decisions that favor certain groups at the expense of others. Bottom line? #telltthetruth! Again, base decisions on fairness and the common good. Many times, dilemmas arise in complex situations where the right course of action is not apparent. Competing values or interests make it difficult to determine the most ethical choice. Ethical governance involves carefully weighing the options, considering the potential consequences, and making decisions that align with ethical principles and the mission of the organization.

Plan for the Future

The second session I attended at ASAE was a concrete example of how to assess and validate the capabilities and competencies of a board of directors—the same ones who have the responsibility for ethical governance. Presented by the American Planning Association, this session thoroughly laid out how to create a positive leadership experience by developing processes and activities to identify, recruit, develop and evaluate the leaders in your organization. Using a numeric system, they took into account both hard and soft skills, as well as strategic alignment with the organizational mission and culture.

This is critical in making sure your board has the right components, the right people, the right mindset to achieve the goals set forth in a strategic plan. It also allows for individuals to understand their role and to shine, with their specific skillset, leadership style and tenure with the organization. There were a few ideas I can take back to the IPRA board as we move forward in planning for 2025 and beyond. Currently in first year of a strategic plan, the leaders at IPRA (board and staff) are working together on quite a few new and exciting initiatives and also enhancing what is working well. Later this year, look for a membership satisfaction survey; those results will help us to design and build even more programs and services that benefit all members and align with the strategic plan.

DON'T FORGET!

Renew your IPRA membership on or before December 31 to be a member in good standing for the new year. All members receive significant discounts on the Annual Conference and educational opportunities!

Establish a Code of Ethics

As IPRA enters its annual election cycle, ethical standards are all in play when evaluating candidates for board and section positions. I'm proud of the steps we take to ensure that ethics are at the forefront for our Board and volunteers. The IPRA Board of Directors, and all our volunteers, are required to read and sign a Code of Ethics, which clearly outlines our values, principles and standards of behavior. It serves as a guide for decision-making and provides a framework for addressing ethical dilemmas. In addition, there are accountability mechanisms in place, for example audits, reviews, and reporting systems, which are all essential for ensuring that ethical standards are upheld.

I believe our IPRA leaders foster an ethical culture, where honest behavior is valued, encouraged and rewarded. Throughout my first year, the IPRA board leaders have modeled and recognized ethical behavior and conduct. They have also successfully engaged stakeholders in governance processes and made decisions transparently and with consideration of diverse perspectives. We regularly communicate with the membership and have ample feedback mechanisms in place to actively listen to IPRA members' concerns and ideas. So, to get back to Mr. Kinzinger and his young son: Just tell the truth. Ethics doesn't apply only to some people; it is necessary for continued integrity and maintaining trust within your community, your staff, your colleagues, your boards, members and other organizations. Do what's right. Tell the truth. It's not that hard.

IPRA Upcoming Events

Professional Development School - "There's No Place Like Parks & Rec"

Eagle Ridge Resort and Spa, Galena
November 10-13, 2024
 IPRA's longest-standing educational and networking opportunity takes place in November at the Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa in Galena, Illinois. Professional Development School, otherwise known as PDS, provides park, recreation, forest preserve, and conservation professionals with the opportunity to gain practical education in a small, student-focused and relaxed atmosphere.

Why Culture Supersedes Brains: Creating an Environment of Success Webinar

November 13 & November 21
 Too often enough care is not taken in hiring staff. This webinar will explore the challenges of effective hiring, the myths of hiring the most 'qualified' as opposed to the best fit, and the steps required to establish a proper culture.

Unleashing the Power of High-Quality Data Webinar

December 11 & December 19
 We are living in a data driven world. However, data can be intimidating. It can be difficult to know what to collect, how to interpret it, and how to present it persuasively. By reframing our thinking around "the data," we can begin to see its benefits more clearly and approach it with optimism and possibility.



Details and registration available at ILipra.org

IT'S TIME TO RENEW

Membership expires December 31



ILipra.org



Jason Anselment
IAPD General Counsel

Beneficial Resources and Important Reminders for the Election Season

The 2024 General Election is nearly upon us, and as you will note from the pull-out election calendar within this article, several key dates for the April 2025 Consolidated Election for park commissioner are just around the corner. Many agencies will have referendum on the ballot at these upcoming elections, so now is also a good time to review legal restrictions related to election activities of public bodies, their officials, and their employees.

IAPD offers many resources to assist members with these and other election-related matters.

IAPD Resources

The popular 2025 IAPD Election Calendar contains key dates associated with the Consolidated Primary and the Consolidated Election. Besides the pull-out copy here, a printer-friendly digital version is available through the IAPD website. The IAPD Tools webpage also offers easy access to the comprehensive resources published by the State Board of Elections such as the Local Election Officials Handbook, Election and Campaign Finance Calendar, Candidate's Guide, and an abbreviated calendar.

IAPD is excited to deliver a **brand-new members-only resource** to assist member agencies with referendum planning. For 25 years, we have been tracking the results of every local referendum related to parks, recreation, and conservation in Illinois. These results have always included the types of initiatives, amounts requested, and vote totals, but they have historically been organized on the IAPD website by year and election.

While we will continue to offer members this helpful resource, the IAPD website now also contains the results from every election for the past 25 years **organized by type of initiative**.

This means when an agency is considering a bond referendum, you no longer need to investigate the results for bond referendum by reviewing the results from dozens of individual elections. Instead, the results of every local bond referendum for the past 25 years related to parks, recreation, and conservation are now just a click away. This powerful new tool also includes the results for all limiting rate, extension limitation, fund rate increase and several other referendum types, and is available under the Advocacy tab at ILparks.org.

Refresher on Election Restrictions

Hopefully, most are already aware of the well-established rule that public funds cannot be used to urge any elector to vote for or against a referendum. For example, it is a criminal offense to use public funds to print pamphlets urging voters to vote "yes" at an upcoming election.

Although the Election Code does not prohibit the use of public funds to disseminate purely factual information that does not urge any elector to vote for or against a ballot proposition, the line between factual information and advocacy is not always bright. Consequently, it is very important to tread carefully and consult local counsel if public funds are used to disseminate factual information.

Remember the District's Ethics Ordinance

All units of local government must have an ethics ordinance that is at least as restrictive as the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act (Act). Therefore, certain activities that are banned by the Act for state officials and employees are also banned by units of local government for their own officials and employees.

"Prohibited political activities" are one category of illegal conduct barred by the Act. These activities are illegal when performed by public officials and employees during compensated time unless the individual is on paid leave such as vacation, personal or compensatory time off. Regardless, government property or resources may not be used in connection with activities like:

- Preparing for, organizing or participating in any political meeting, rally, demonstration or other political event.
- Soliciting contributions for any political fundraiser, meeting or other event.
- Soliciting or preparing campaign-related documents or reports.
- Planning, conducting or participating in a public opinion poll in connection with a campaign for elective office or on behalf of a political organization for political purposes or for or against any referendum question.

- Surveying or gathering information from potential or actual voters in an election to determine probable vote outcome in connection with a campaign for elective office or on behalf of a political organization for political purposes or for or against any referendum question.
- Assisting at the polls on election day on behalf of any political organization or candidate for elective office or for or against any referendum question.
- Soliciting votes on behalf of a candidate for elective office or a political organization or for or against any referendum question or helping to get voters to the polls.
- Initiating for circulation, preparing, circulating, reviewing or filing any petition on behalf of a candidate for elective office or for or against any referendum question.
- Distributing or mailing campaign literature, signs or other material on behalf of any candidate for elective office or for or against any referendum question.
- Campaigning, or managing or working on a campaign, for any elective office or for or against any referendum question.

Examples of Prohibited Conduct

While most district employees would likely know they cannot send a political fundraiser invitation during work hours, this prohibition would also apply to coordinating or inviting anyone to attend the meeting of a private citizens' committee formed to support the referendum. It makes no difference that the e-mail is sent from a private account if the employee uses his or her district computer.

Contributions related to the referendum should not be collected on district property, even if they are to fund a private citizens' committee. While at work, district employees should not call potential voters to find out whether they intend to support the referendum at an upcoming election. If they are participating in Election Day activities such as poll watching or "get-out-the vote" campaigns, employees must use time off. The district's copy machine must not be used to copy materials that urge voters to support the referendum regardless of whether it is after business hours. A "yes" vote cannot be urged on the district's website or in newsletters.

Private Citizens' Committee

To avoid violations of the law, private citizens' committees are often formed. To effectively prevent violations, however, individual employees and officials must still take extra precautions to separate their involvement on these committees from the job duties and responsibilities at the district. Not only are these individuals restricted to their personal time and resources, but their official capacities should not be connected to their involvement with the citizens' committee. For example, the district's executive director should not be coordinating activities of the committee at the park district's office or on district time. A billboard asking

voters to vote "yes" should not have a testimonial by the board president in his or her official capacity. Other laws still apply as well. If multiple board members are participating, they must ensure that they do not unlawfully meet in violation of the Open Meetings Act.

Although beyond the scope of this article, private citizens' committees, or ballot initiative committees, must also comply with campaign finance and disclosure laws.

Personal Resources

While employees cannot advocate or campaign in support of a referendum while on the clock or on district property, state law does not prohibit them from fully supporting the measure when they are not on district property, not using district resources, and not being compensated by a public agency. Determining whether activities are performed during compensated time can be more difficult for salaried employees that do work outside of regular business hours. When invited to speak publicly about the referendum, employees such as executive directors are well advised to remember where they are and whether they are there in an official capacity. Because unpaid elected officials like park commissioners are not compensated by the district, the time in which to perform activities may not be as constrained as an employee. However, commissioners still must limit their conduct when they are acting in an official capacity as a park commissioner. For example, the board president should not promote passage of a referendum at a park district event.

Furthermore, while state law does not prohibit what an official or an employee does on his or her own time, districts potentially have policies that are more restrictive than the Act. Regardless, local government employees in Illinois do not forfeit their political rights just because they are public employees. In fact, some conduct is perfectly legal and protected. For example, the Local Governmental Employees Political Rights Act prohibits units of local government from making or enforcing any rule or ordinance that in any way inhibits or prohibits employees from exercising their political rights such as the right to petition, to make public speeches, to campaign for or against political candidates, to speak out on questions of public policy, to distribute political literature, to make campaign contributions and to seek public office *when the employee is not at work or on duty*.

Be Mindful of your Duties and Responsibilities

Illegal activity is not necessary to have a successful referendum, and unintentional violations are avoidable. Remembering what, where, and when certain activities may be conducted will help prevent embarrassment and punishment. There can be gray areas, and whether a certain activity violates election or ethics laws is determined based on specific facts. Therefore, officials and employees are well advised to consult their attorneys if there is any uncertainty.



ELECTION CALENDAR

2025

PREPARED BY PETER MURPHY, IAPD PRESIDENT/CEO AND
JASON ANSELMANT, IAPD GENERAL COUNSEL



This Election Calendar contains key dates associated with the 2025 Consolidated Primary and Consolidated Elections. It includes information and dates IAPD deems most important to its members but does not include every date associated with these elections. For a complete list of all election dates consult the State Board of Elections Campaign and Finance Calendar, which is available under the Legal section of the IAPD website at ILparks.org. All candidates and voters are encouraged to seek the appropriate legal advice concerning their rights and obligations.

For purposes of this calendar, “election authority” means the County Clerk or the Board of Election Commissioners. “Local election official” means the clerk or secretary of a unit of local government or a school district. “Business day” means any day in which the office of an election authority, local election official or the State Board of Elections is open to the public for a minimum of seven hours. (10 ILCS 5/1-3)

All citations contained herein are “Illinois Compiled Statutes, 2023”.

FILING AND REGISTRATION DATES

(a) Filing and registration dates are fixed by the Election Code. The dates shall conform to those expressed in statute unless they fall on a date which is not a business day as defined above. In such case(s), the period shall extend through the first business day next following the day otherwise fixed as the first or last date. (10 ILCS 5/1-6(a))

(b) If the first or last day of any action required or allowed by the Election Code falls on a State Holiday, Saturday, or a Sunday, the period shall extend through the first business day following the day otherwise fixed as the first or last day for filing or the close of registration, irrespective of whether any election authority or local

election official conducts business on the State Holiday, Saturday, or Sunday. (10 ILCS 5/1-6(a))

(c) For the section of the Election Code upon which this calendar is based, "State Holiday" means New Year's Day, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday, Lincoln's Birthday, President's Day, Casimir Pulaski's Birthday, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Juneteenth National Freedom Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and any other day declared by the President of the United States or the Governor of Illinois to be a day during which the agencies of the State of Illinois that are ordinarily open to do business with the public shall be closed for business. (10 ILCS 5/1-6(b))

(d) To receive specific signature requirements for any particular office, candidates should contact the election authority or local election official who is responsible for receiving the filing of the petition for nomination and/or election to office.

Key Dates Associated with the Consolidated Primary Election – February 25, 2025

2024

Thursday, SEPTEMBER 26

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

Monday, OCTOBER 28

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

Monday, OCTOBER 28

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

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

NOTE: If initial officers are to be elected at the election for creation of a new unit of government, candidates for such offices shall file nomination papers 127-120 days before such election (October 21-28, 2024). (10 ILCS 5/2A-1.2; 5/10-6)

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

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

Monday, NOVEMBER 4

Last day to file objections to petitions to create a political subdivision in the appropriate office where the petitions were originally filed (for park districts, circuit court clerk). (10 ILCS 5/10-8, 28-4; 70 ILCS 1205/2-3)

Monday, NOVEMBER 25

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

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

Wednesday, NOVEMBER 27

First day for any registered voter presently within the confines of the United States to submit an application by mail or in person to the election authority for an official vote by mail ballot. (10 ILCS 5/19-2, 19-4)

NOTE: Mailing and delivery of ballots does not occur until Thursday, January 16, 2025.

Wednesday, DECEMBER 4

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

NOTE: The objection period is five business days. If the office of the appropriate local election official is open on Friday, November 29, then the deadline to file an objection is Tuesday, December 3, 2024.

Monday, DECEMBER 9

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

Monday, DECEMBER 9

Last day for county, municipal, school, township, library, and park boards to authorize the placement of advisory referenda on the ballot by resolution. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(c); 55 ILCS 5/2-3002, 5-1005.5; 60 ILCS 1/30-205, 80-80; 65 ILCS 5/3.1-40-60; 70 ILCS 1205/8-30; 75 ILCS 5/4-18; 105 ILCS 5/9-1.5)

Thursday, DECEMBER 19

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

Friday, DECEMBER 27

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

2025

Monday, JANUARY 6

Last day for the election authority to post a schedule for early voting conducted at the office of the election authority and each temporary location. Such posting shall remain at each site until the last day of the early voting period (February 24, 2025). If the election authority has a website, it shall make the schedule available on the website. (10 ILCS 5/19A-25(b)(d))

Thursday, JANUARY 16

Last day for organizations of citizens that have among their purposes the investigation or prosecution of election fraud, ballot proposition proponents or opponents, and state nonpartisan civic organizations to register their names and addresses and the names and addresses of their principal officers with the proper election authority if the organization(s) wish to qualify for poll watchers at the Consolidated Primary Election. (10 ILCS 5/7-34)

Thursday, JANUARY 16

First day for early voting at the office of the election authority and locations designated by the election authority. Temporary polling places for early voting may be established at the discretion of the election authority, and the dates and hours are also at the discretion of the election authority, but are not required to maintain the same voting days and hours as the election authority. (10 ILCS 5/19A-15, 19A-20)

Monday, JANUARY 27

Last day for citizens of the United States temporarily residing outside the United States who are not registered but otherwise qualified to vote and who expect to be absent from their county of residence on Election Day to make simultaneous application to the election authority having jurisdiction over their precinct of residence for vote by mail registration and a vote by mail ballot and the last day for the election authority to mail such ballot. (10 ILCS 5/20-2.1, 20-3)

Wednesday, JANUARY 29

First day of grace period registration and voting at the office of the election authority or at a location designated for this purpose by the election authority. If the election authority does not have ballots available, the election authority may mail the ballot to the voter when available. (10 ILCS 5/4-50, 5-50, 6-100)

Wednesday, FEBRUARY 5

Last day for employee to give employer written notice that the employee will be absent from the place of employment on Election Day because the employee has been appointed as an election judge under the provisions of 10 ILCS 5/13-1 or 13-2. (10 ILCS 5/13-2.5, 14-4.5)

Tuesday, FEBRUARY 18

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

Tuesday, FEBRUARY 18

Last day for any voter who is a member of the United States Service, a servicemember's spouse, or servicemember's dependent of voting age who expects to be absent from the voter's county of residence on Election Day to apply for an official ballot to the election authority having jurisdiction over the precinct of residence and the last day for the election authority to mail such ballot. Members of the Armed Forces may apply via facsimile machine or other method of electronic transmission. (10 ILCS 5/20-2, 20-2.3, 20-3)

Thursday, FEBRUARY 20

Last day for the election authority to receive applications by mail for a vote by mail ballot from any registered voter presently within the confines of the United States. (10 ILCS 5/19-2, 19-4)

Monday, FEBRUARY 24

Last day for early voting at the office of the election authority and permanent locations designated by the election authority. Temporary early voting locations may be established by the election authority but are not required to maintain the same voting days and hours as the election authority. (10 ILCS 5/19A-15, 19A-20)

Monday, FEBRUARY 24

Last day for any registered voter presently within the confines of the United States to apply in person at the election authority or approved local official for a vote by mail ballot. (10 ILCS 5/19-2)

Tuesday, FEBRUARY 25

Last day of grace period registration and voting in the office of the election authority or at a location designated for this purpose by the election authority. The election authority should be contacted to determine the availability of grace period registration and voting in the polling place on Election Day. (10 ILCS 5/4-50, 5-50, 6-100)

Tuesday, February 25, 2025
Consolidated Primary Election

Tuesday, MARCH 11

Last day for the county clerk or board of election commissioners to complete the validation and counting of provisional ballots. (10 ILCS 5/18A-15(a))

Tuesday, MARCH 11

Last day for the county clerk or board of election commissioners to complete the tabulation of vote by mail ballots that were (1) postmarked by Election Day, and were received after the close of the polls on Election Day but not later than 14 days after the election or (2) not postmarked, but did have a certification date prior to the Election Day on the certification envelope, and were received after the close of the polls on Election Day but not later than 14 days after the election or (3) not postmarked, but did have an intelligent mail barcode tracking system that verifies the envelope was mailed no later than Election Day and received not later than 14 days after the election. (10 ILCS 5/19-8)

Tuesday, MARCH 18

Last day for the county clerk or board of election commissioners to canvass the election results. (10 ILCS 5/18A – 15(a))

Tuesday, MARCH 18

The last day the election authority shall transmit to the State Board of Elections the following: (1) the number, by precinct, of vote by mail ballots requested, provided, and counted, (2) the number of rejected vote by mail ballots, (3) the number of voters seeking review of rejected vote by mail ballots, and (4) the number of vote by mail ballots counted following review. The report of this information must be made public by March 25, 2025. (10 ILCS 5/19-20, 20-20)

Key Dates Associated with the Consolidated Election April 1, 2025

2024

Tuesday, AUGUST 20

First day to circulate nomination papers (must contain original sheets signed by voters and circulators) for nonpartisan candidates for park district boards, forest preserve district boards, and road district, fire protection district, library district and municipal library boards, and school and community college boards, who file between November 12-18, 2024 (90 days preceding the last day to file nominating papers). (10 ILCS 5/10-4, 10-6)

Thursday, OCTOBER 31

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

Tuesday, NOVEMBER 12

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

NOTE: Filing is between 141-134 days prior to the Consolidated Election. November 11, 2024, is the 141st day prior to that election, but Veterans' Day is a State Holiday, so November 12, 2024, is the first day of filing.

Monday, NOVEMBER 18

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

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

Monday, NOVEMBER 18

Last day for filing a Statement of Economic Interests with the county clerk as required by the Illinois Governmental Ethics Act. The receipt must be filed on or before this date with the local election official or election authority who received the nomination papers. (5 ILCS 420/4A-105; 10 ILCS 5/10-5)

Monday, NOVEMBER 25

Last day for an individual who has filed nomination papers for two or more incompatible offices to withdraw from all but one of the offices with the local election official or election authority. (10 ILCS 5/10-7)

Monday, NOVEMBER 25

Last day for filing objections to nomination papers for nonpartisan candidates (whose nomination papers were filed during the period November 12-18, 2024) in the office of the election authority or the local election official with whom the nomination papers were originally filed. (10 ILCS 5/10-8)

NOTE: The objection period consists of five business days. If the office of the election authority or local election official is closed (or open for less than 7 hours) for days that would normally be business days that office must extend the deadline for filing objections in that office.

Wednesday, NOVEMBER 27

Last day the lottery shall be conducted by the local election official or election authority when two or more petitions are received simultaneously for the same office by more than one candidate as of the opening hour of the filing period (November 12, 2024) or during the last hour of the filing period (November 18, 2024). (10 ILCS 5/10-6.2)

Monday, DECEMBER 2

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

Monday, DECEMBER 2

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

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

NOTE: If initial officers are to be elected at the election for creation of a new unit of government, candidates for such offices shall file nomination papers 141-134 days before such election (November 12-18, 2024). (10 ILCS 5/10-6)

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

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

Monday, DECEMBER 9

Last day to file objections to petitions to create a political subdivision in the appropriate office where the petitions were originally filed (for park districts, circuit court clerk). (10 ILCS 5/10-8, 28-4; 70 ILCS 1205/2-3)

Monday, DECEMBER 30

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

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

2025

Thursday, JANUARY 2

First day for any registered voter presently within the confines of the United States to apply by mail or in person to the election authority for an official vote by mail ballot. (10 ILCS 5/19-2, 19-4)

NOTE: Mailing and delivery of ballots does not begin until Thursday, February 20, 2025 (or March 7, 2025, if a primary was held).

Tuesday, JANUARY 7

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

Monday, JANUARY 13

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

Monday, JANUARY 13

Last day for county, municipal, township, library, school and park boards to authorize placement of advisory referenda on the ballot by resolution. (10 ILCS 5/28-2(c); 55 ILCS 5/2-3002, 5-1005.5; 60 ILCS 1/30-205, 80-80; 65 ILCS 5/3.1-40-60; 70 ILCS 1205/8-30; 75 ILCS 5/4-18; 105 ILCS 5/9-1.5)

Thursday, JANUARY 23

Last day candidates may file Withdrawal of Candidacy in the office of the local election official or election authority. (10 ILCS 5/ 10-7)

Thursday, JANUARY 23

Last day for local election official to certify candidates and the offices they have filed for to the election authority. (10 ILCS 5/10-15)

Thursday, JANUARY 23

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

Friday, JANUARY 31

First day for the election authority to

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

Monday, FEBRUARY 10

Last day for the election authority to post a schedule for early voting conducted at the office of the election authority and each temporary location. Such posting shall remain at each site until the last day of the early voting period (March 31, 2024). If the election authority has a website, it shall make the schedule available on its website. (10 ILCS 5/19A-25(b) and (d))

Friday, FEBRUARY 14

Last day for the election authority to have in their office a sufficient number of ballots printed and available for mailing to persons in the United States Service, their spouses, their dependents of voting age, and citizens temporarily residing outside the territorial limits of the United States. (10 ILCS 5/16-5.01)

Thursday, FEBRUARY 20

Last day for organizations of citizens that have among their purposes the investigation or prosecution of election fraud, ballot proposition proponents or opponents, and state nonpartisan civic organizations to register their names and addresses and the names and addresses of their principal officers with the proper election authority if the organization(s) wish to qualify for poll watchers at the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/17-23, 18-6)

Thursday, FEBRUARY 20

First day for early voting at the office of the election authority and temporary locations designated by the election authority. Temporary polling locations for early voting can be established at the discretion of the election authority, and the dates and hours are also at the discretion of the election authority. (10 ILCS 5/19A-15, 19A-20)

Tuesday, MARCH 4

First day for election authority to publish notice of the Consolidated Election. The notice must include the polling hours, and the offices for which candidates will be elected. Such notice must also include a list of precinct polling addresses unless published separately at least ten (10) days prior to the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/12-4)

Tuesday, MARCH 4

Last day for citizens of the United States temporarily residing outside the territorial limits of the United States who are not registered but otherwise qualified to vote and who expect to be absent from their county of residence on Election Day to make simultaneous application to the election authority having jurisdiction over their precinct of residence for registration and a vote by mail ballot. (10 ILCS 5/20-2.1, 20-3)

Wednesday, MARCH 5

First day of grace period registration and voting at the office of the election authority or at a location designated for this purpose by the election authority. If the election authority does not have ballots available, the election authority may mail the ballot to the voter when available. (10 ILCS 5/4-50, 5-50, 6-100)

Wednesday, MARCH 12

Last day for employee to give employer written notice that the employee will be absent from the place of employment on Election Day because the employee has been appointed as an election judge under the provisions of 10 ILCS 5/13-1 or 13-2. (10 ILCS 5/13-2.5, 14-4.5)

Monday, MARCH 24

Last day for the election authority to publish notice of the Consolidated Election. The notice must include the polling hours and the offices for which candidates will be elected. Such notice must also include a list of precinct polling addresses unless these are published separately at least ten (10) days prior to the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/12-4)

Monday, MARCH 24

Last day for the election authority to publish a notice of any question of public policy to be voted upon within its jurisdiction at the Consolidated Election. Such notice shall be published once in a local, community newspaper having general circulation in the political or governmental subdivision. The notice shall also be given at least ten (10) days before the date of the election by posting a copy of the notice at the principal office of the election authority. The local election official shall

also post a copy of the notice at the principal office of the political or governmental subdivision, or if there is no principal office at the building in which the governing body of the political or governmental subdivision held its first meeting of the calendar year in which the referendum is being held. (10 ILCS 5/12-5)

Monday, MARCH 24

Last day for any voter who is a member of the United States Service, a servicemember's spouse, or a servicemember's dependent of voting age who expects to be absent from the voter's county of residence on Election Day to apply for an official ballot to the election authority having jurisdiction over the servicemember's precinct of residence and the last day for the election authority to mail such ballot. Members of the Armed Forces may apply via facsimile machine or other methods of electronic transmission. (10 ILCS 5/20-2, 20-2.3, 20-3)

Thursday, MARCH 27

Last day for election authority to receive applications by mail for a vote by mail ballot from any registered voter presently within the confines of the United States. (10 ILCS 5/19-2)

Friday, MARCH 28

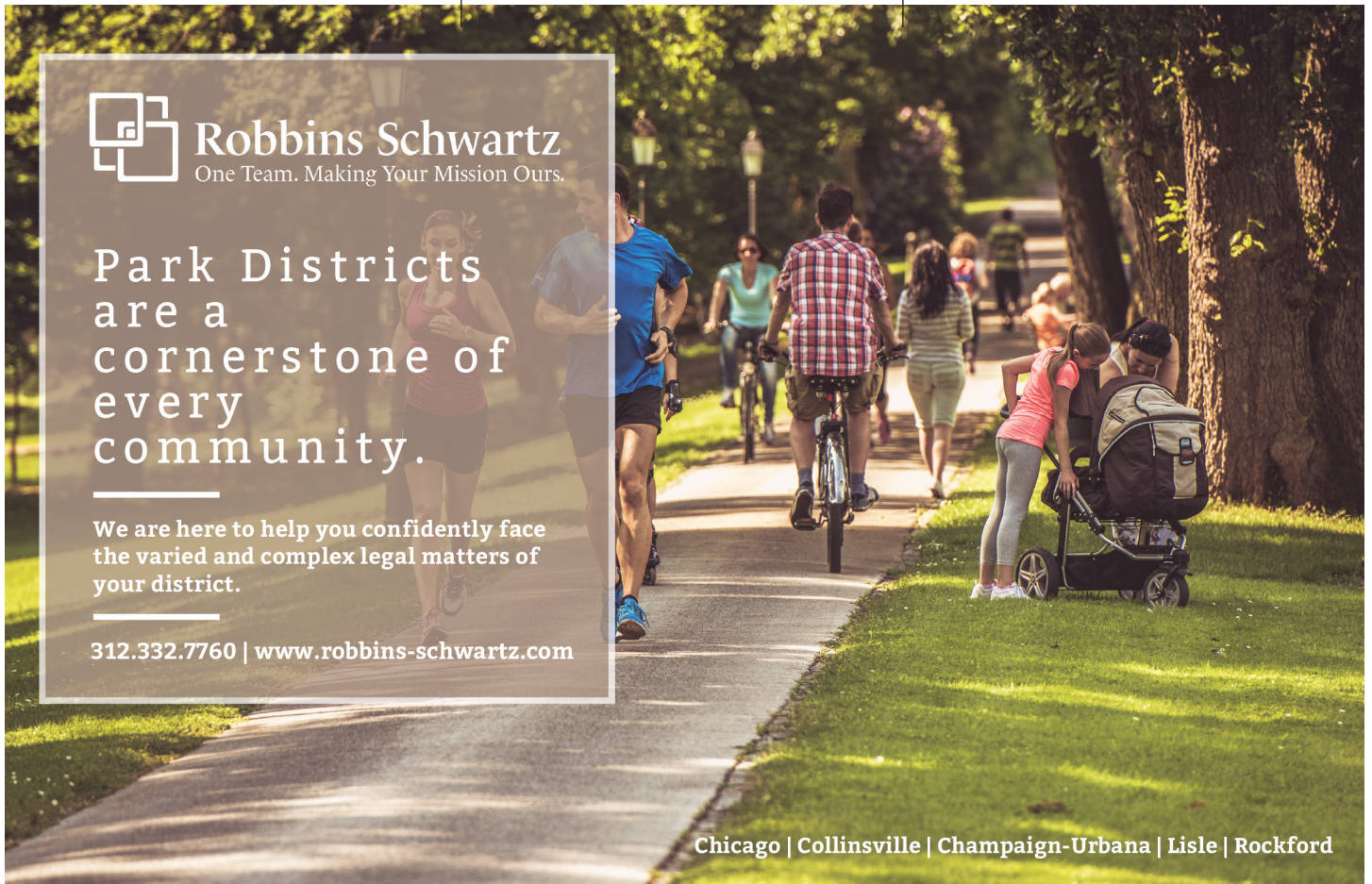
Last day for the election authority to have official ballots available for inspection by candidates or their agents. (10 ILCS 5/16-5)

Monday, MARCH 31

Last day for early voting at the office of the election authority and locations designated by the election authority. (10 ILCS 5/19A-15, 19A-20)

Monday, MARCH 31

Last day for any registered voter, presently within the confines of the United States to request a vote by mail ballot in person at the office of the election authority. (10 ILCS 5/19-2)



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Monday, MARCH 31

Last day for the election authority in counties having a population of not more than 500,000 to publish a list of all the nominations that are to be voted for at the Consolidated Election. (10 ILCS 5/16-10)

Tuesday, APRIL 1

Last day of grace period registration and voting in the office of the election authority or at locations designated for this purpose by the election authority. The election authority should be contacted to determine the availability of grace period registration and voting in the polling place on Election Day. (10 ILCS 5/4-50, 5-50, 6-100)

**Tuesday, April 1, 2025
Consolidated Election**

Tuesday, APRIL 15

Last day for the county clerk or board of election commissioners to complete the validation and counting of provisional ballots. (10 ILCS 5/18A-15(a))

Tuesday, APRIL 15

Last day for the county clerk or board of election commissioners to complete the tabulation of vote by mail ballots that were (1) postmarked by Election Day, and were received after the close of the polls on Election Day, but not later than 14 days after the election or (2) not postmarked, but did have a certification date prior to the Election Day, on the certification envelope, and were received after the close of the polls on Election Day, but not later than 14 days after the election or (3) not postmarked, but did have an intelligent mail barcode tracking system that verifies the envelope was mailed no later than Election Day, and received no later than 14 days after the election. (10 ILCS 5/19-8)

Tuesday, APRIL 22

Last day for the county clerk or board of election commissioners to canvass the election results. (10 ILCS 5/22-17)

Tuesday, APRIL 22

The last day the election authority shall transmit to the State Board of Elections the following: (1) the number, by precinct, of vote by mail ballots requested, provided, and counted, (2) the number of rejected vote by mail ballots, (3) the number of voters seeking review of rejected vote by mail ballots, and (4) the number of vote by mail ballots counted following review. The report must be made public by April 29, 2025. (10 ILCS 5/19-20, 20-20)

BEFORE PROCLAMATION BY THE ELECTION AUTHORITY

Prior to the canvass, in those jurisdictions where in-precinct counting equipment is utilized, the election authority shall retabulate the total number of votes cast in 5% of the precincts within the election jurisdiction, as well as 5% of the voting devices used in early voting as selected on a random basis by the State Board of Elections. (10 ILCS 5/24A-15, 24B-15, 24C-15)

AFTER PROCLAMATION CERTIFICATE OF ELECTION

The election authority shall issue a certificate of election to each person declared elected. For political subdivisions that are multi-county, the election authority of the county where the principal office of the political subdivision is located shall make the certificate of election. (10 ILCS 5/22-18)

WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

Each successful write-in candidate elected shall file the following documents with the proper election authority or the State Board of Elections prior to taking office: (1) a Loyalty Oath (optional), (2) a Statement of Candidacy, and (3) a receipt for filing a Statement of Economic Interest. (10 ILCS 5/22-7)

DISCOVERY RECOUNT

Within five days after the last day for the proclamation of the results, petitions for discovery recount may be filed by any qualified individual (who came within 5% of the votes cast for any successful candidate) with the appropriate county clerk or board of election commissioners . (10 ILCS 5/22-9.1)

ELECTION CONTEST

In general, the circuit court shall hear election contests. Individuals should refer to the particular statute which applies to their unit of government. (10 ILCS 5/23-4, 23-5, 23-19, 23-20)





By Duane Smith, CPRP
IPRA Education Director

Leadership is Soaring to New Heights...Literally

As we gear up for the 2025 Soaring to New Heights Conference, anticipation is building for the dynamic and impactful leadership opportunities that await attendees. Whether its attending sessions in the Leadership / Management track, dedicating time outside of primary work responsibilities to prepare a presentation, or volunteering as a moderator, registration associate, or Agency Showcase judge (just to name a few), there is an abundance of opportunities associated with the annual Conference.

Engaging in leadership development presents a powerful and dynamic avenue for honing essential, real-time job skills, such as strategic decision-making, impactful communication, and effective team management. By immersing oneself in these experiences, professionals not only enhance their ability to navigate complex challenges but also position themselves as key players within their organizations. This active involvement provides a platform for showcasing one's expertise and cultivating a robust leadership reputation, particularly within the park, recreation, and conservation industry.

The IAPD and IPRA Conference Program Committees are comprised of amazing volunteer leaders that are tasked with one job: providing you with a strong conference curriculum. Both committees have worked diligently throughout the last six months soliciting speakers and topics, critiquing proposals, and advocating for their selections to be included in the final conference program. The sessions they have curated not only reflect the current needs of leaders across various special interests but also anticipate the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. I couldn't be more impressed, proud, or inspired by their leadership and dedication to their volunteer responsibilities within each of their respective committees.

This year's conference program is packed with innovative, engaging, and practical sessions designed to equip park, recreation, and conservation professionals with the tools they need to navigate the ever-evolving challenges in the workplace. Here are just a few program highlights for the Leadership / Management track:

Leadership Through Laughter: The Power of Listening & Coaching
An interactive workshop led by comedian and CEO Ethan Blumenthal, where leadership skills are enhanced through humor, active listening, and collaboration. You'll leave with valuable insights and a refreshed approach to leadership, all while having a great time learning in a lively and engaging environment.

Building Innovation: A Lego® Serious Play Workshop for Park & Recreation Professionals

Unlock your creativity and drive innovation with our LEGO® Serious Play® workshop, tailored for park district professionals. This hands-on session uses LEGO® bricks to visualize solutions and spark transformative ideas, empowering you to lead your park district towards a more innovative future.

AI in Parks & Recreation: The Next Level

This in-depth session will explore how cutting-edge AI technologies are revolutionizing the park and recreation industry, driving efficiency, and enhancing user experiences. This session will feature live demonstrations, case studies, and forward-thinking discussions to equip you with the tools to leverage AI for your organization's success.

Executive Directors' Roundtable: A Chat with Neelay

This session offers executive directors, both new and experienced, a confidential space to exchange ideas, solve problems, and crowdsource solutions to their most pressing agency challenges. Facilitated by Neelay Bhatt and featuring a panel of Directors from across Illinois, this session will provide a highly interactive forum for advice-seeking, story-sharing, and learning from peer experiences.

Leading from Within

This session explores the distinct challenges and opportunities of being promoted from within your organization, focusing on how to navigate changing relationships with former peers and establish clear boundaries. Participants will gain insights on holding others accountable, discerning what support to provide staff, and empowering team members to take responsibility for their own growth.

If you are one of the many practitioners not serving on the IAPD or IPRA Conference Program Committees nor presenting a session in January, there are still volunteer leadership opportunities available. Upon completion of your on-line conference registration, sign-ups will be available for conference registration, session moderating, and assistance with the awards luncheon/expo hall. Take the next step in your leadership journey, join the conference team, and gain experiences that can enhance your personal and professional development.

Here's to soaring to new heights together in 2025!



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Responsible Leadership: Four Simple Habits of Strong Leaders

By Kristin Strunk, People and Culture Leader, Regent Leadership Group

Although the qualities that are required to be a good leader have not changed over the years, the abundance of information and advice has increased exponentially and manages to complicate the topic of good management practices unnecessarily. There are some simple actions that help managers create high performing teams: Creating psychological safety; modeling the behavior you want to see; recognizing others and giving them credit; and listening with focus and interest. Leading people is hard, but it is not complicated.

Being a responsible leader means you are taking interest in those around you regardless of if they are part of your direct team or not and regardless of the level they are in the organization.



Looking back at my early days as a manager, I cringe at some of the things I did and said to my team—all because I foolishly believed that a managerial title alone would earn me alignment, engagement, and respect. I was totally unprepared for the realities of leadership.

Leadership and management are two very different things. Management is focused on process, output, and obeying the rules. Leadership can be demonstrated regardless of your position in the organization and is focused on helping people be their best. Leadership impacts people throughout the organization, not only the people on your team. Being a responsible leader means you are taking interest in those around you regardless of if they are part of your direct team or not and regardless of the level they are in the organization.

Over the past 25 years, I've learned leaders have a responsibility to their teams and others. These are practices I return to time and again when I feel myself getting off course or focusing on the wrong things.

Create Psychological Safety

In this age of triggers and divisive environments it is more complex than ever to create psychological safety. Psychological safety at work includes fostering inclusion,

demonstrating respect, and valuing diversity. When employees feel safe to be themselves and free to work in a fashion that suits them, they are more likely to engage, share innovative ideas, and collaborate effectively. This boosts both individual and team performance, drives overall success and allows individuals to be at their best. The main components of psychological safety managers need to exhibit are emotional intelligence, trust, and space for safe disagreement.

Leaders with emotional intelligence can build strong, trusting relationships. They understand and manage their own emotions and empathize with others, creating an environment where team members feel valued and safe to express their thoughts without fear of judgment. Leaders with emotional intelligence can also read a room and adjust their energy to support the emotions that are present.

Building trust is crucial to creating psychological safety. When employees trust their leaders, they are more comfortable sharing ideas, which leads to better communication and innovation. We have all worked under various managers who did not build trust. Trust is rooted in consistency and transparency.

Oddly, disagreement is key to building trust and fostering innovation. Allowing employees the space to express differing ideas and opinions ensures that the topic under discussion is viewed from as many different perspectives as possible. Active listening, complete with phrases like “Tell me more,” “I like where you're heading,” and “Yes, AND...” demonstrates that you value their input. Appreciating those who speak up, and even challenge the ideas already on the table, shows that their contributions matter.

Model the Behavior You Want to See

Leading by example, i.e. modeling the behavior you want to see can be exhausting, but it is essential. An effective leader demonstrates ethical behavior, honesty, and accountability. Valuing diversity and inclusion by respecting different backgrounds and perspectives promotes respect and inclusivity. Encouraging work-life balance by setting realistic expectations and supporting down time creates a culture of well-being - which means not answering emails on vacation. Yes, I am looking at you.

On-going investment in your own professional development and life-long learning supports the same behavior in your team members. Likewise, your own volunteering and supporting local causes can inspire a culture of social responsibility. This is all simply leading by example.

Recognize and Give Credit for Contributions

Tempting as it may be to take credit for your team's success, focusing the spotlight on your team members instead builds confidence, trust, respect, and a sense of accomplishment. Giving credit where credit is due also shines a spotlight back on you as the team leader, for creating a positive work environment, making employees feel valued and appreciated, and enhancing teamwork and collaboration.

We all know, things do not always go as hoped. An effective manager must be willing to take responsibility when things don't go according to plan. This means taking one for the team, rather than pointing fingers. In these instances, your role becomes not only taking responsibility publicly, but privately helping the team understand what went wrong and come up with ways to prevent it from happening again. Removing your ego from the equation in this fashion creates a culture of support, collaboration, and encouragement among team members.

Listen More Than You Talk

Listening more than you talk is a powerful way to build trust, foster collaboration, and drive better outcomes for your team. But this requires active listening, which means being fully present, quieting your mind, and focusing your

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attention entirely on the speaker. Showing genuine interest in the ideas and concerns of others helps build trust. Taking time to digest what you've heard and following up later gives others the space to shine. As Nancy Kline, author of *Time to Think*, wisely said, "Allow people to access their own ideas first...not interrupting allows people to really search their own minds and think better around you."

Acknowledging that you do not have all the answers and asking questions that clarify the issue can uncover valuable insights. Asking more questions than you answer encourages a collaborative mindset and invites team members to share their thoughts and ideas.

Practice Makes Perfect

All of us, whether we are board members, managers, or team members, interact with others. The principles outlined here are not only valuable for anyone in the workforce, but they are also straightforward and, with practice, simple to implement.

Here are some specific ways in which you can build your leadership muscles or make yourself a more valued team member:

- Study emotional intelligence. Use Google, YouTube, or even AI to help you understand the principles of emotional intelligence and ways to incorporate it in your own interactions.
- Build trust by demonstrating competence and reaching out to others when you have a question or need clarification.
- Allow others to share their ideas even when they are not in agreement with yours. Seek input from others with phrases like: "What am I missing?" or "What other points of view should we consider?"
- Model the behavior you seek in others. Whether or not you intend it, your behavior will be a model for others. If you constantly complain about others, guess what will happen to your team.
- Recognize there is no shame in admitting you are struggling with an issue or topic. It is not only ok, but essential for you to ask for help. Asking questions is key to learning. Being open about what challenges you face frees your co-workers and team to do the same.



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- Always acknowledge the good work and successes of your colleagues and employees. Praise and thanks might seem inconsequential, but to the receiver they can be enormous. Taking time for recognition instills pride, boosts morale, and makes those doing good work feel valued and appreciated.

- Listen to the ideas and the intent of those around you. If you are listening actively, you will hear not only what someone is saying but what is behind it such as, enthusiasm and excitement or disillusionment and frustration. Listening actively is a single-minded activity. You cannot text, look at your phone, or formulate your response while someone is speaking and expect to understand what they have said to you. Simply put, active listening is a sign of respect.

These are practices that you can demonstrate regardless of your position in your organization. Responsible leadership is all about how you interact with others. Taking time to reflect on how you show up can have a positive impact on those around you. The four principles outlined above may seem like inconsequential soft skills, but they are key to creating engaging and cohesive work environments and successful teams.



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 Wednesday, October 16, 2024
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PRELIMINARY PROGRAM



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January 23-25, 2025 | Hyatt Regency Chicago

151 E. Wacker Drive, Chicago, Illinois

ILparksconference.com

2025

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Illinois Association of Park Districts

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WELCOME



WELCOME AND GREETINGS!

Right now, in one of your parks, a child is swinging upside down, dreaming of becoming the next Simone Biles. Another is swimming laps, hoping to surpass Michael Phelps' record 28 Olympic medals. Countless others are on courts, fields, golf courses, ice rinks, and trails, perfecting their skills in hopes of someday standing on that coveted, world-renowned podium.

It can happen.

Just ask Deerfield native Paul Juda, a member of the now historic 2024 American men's Olympic gymnastics team that ended a 16-year medal drought by capturing the bronze; or 4x200 swimmer Anna Peplowski, hailing from Germantown Hills, who helped Team USA take the silver.

Those of us committing our time and talents to Illinois park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation, and special recreation agencies are providing the foundation for athletes who may develop into future Olympians. We get to be a part of dreams come true, and it doesn't get more rewarding than that!

Just as elite athletes train to be the best, so do our board members and professionals. One of the best training programs we have is the IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference, the largest state park and recreation conference in the nation.

Our Joint Conference Committee, volunteers, and staff have been working for more than a year to create a power-packed program with an impressive 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 320 vendors.

We are excited to present this Preliminary 2025 Conference Program, complete with details about Thursday night's social featuring One Night Band and newly added games to inspire friendly competition; Friday afternoon's Awards Luncheon, recognizing the stars of our field; Saturday morning's Keynote Address with Gregory Offner, 'dueling pianist turned award-winning speaker'; and Saturday evening's Closing Social at the awe-inspiring Griffin Museum of Science and Industry.

Download our conference app through 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 more!

A heartfelt THANK YOU goes out to the many exceptional conference volunteers, as 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 secure a promising future in which our park, recreation, and conservation agencies will thrive as we continue to play a critical role in helping the greatest of dreams come true.

We look forward to seeing you January 23-25 at the Hyatt Regency Chicago.

ROBERT L. JOHNSON SR.

President-at-Large
Peoria Park District

DAWN KRAWIEC, CPRP

Superintendent of Recreation
SEASPAR

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SCHEDULE - AT - A - GLANCE

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23

8:00 am – 5:00 pm	Conference Registration Open
10:00 am – 11:00 am	Conference Sessions (0.1 CEUs)
10:00 am – 12:00 pm	Conference Workshops (0.2 CEUs)*
11:00 am – 12:00 pm	Exhibit Hall Dedicated Hours
11:00 am – 5:00 pm	Grand Opening of the Exhibit Hall
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Conference Workshops (0.2 CEUs)*
1:30 pm – 2:30 pm	Conference Sessions (0.1 CEUs)
3:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Conference Sessions (0.1 CEUs)
4:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Exhibit Hall Dedicated Hours
5:00 pm – 6:00 pm	IPRA Section Meetings
5:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Professional Connection
5:45 pm – 7:15 pm	IPRA Conference Kick-Off
9:00 pm – 11:30 pm	Welcome Social featuring One Night Band

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24

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

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25

7:30 am – 8:30 am	Core & More Fitness Class
7:45 am – 12:00 pm	Conference Registration Open
9:00 am – 10:00 am	Keynote General Session (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 at Griffin Museum of Science+Industry*

* Ticketed Event

** By Invitation Only

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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 need 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 **no later than January 13, 2025**. 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 (includes dessert ticket). 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 13, 2025

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 \$60 nonrefundable fee (per table) to participate, which must be paid when registering for the conference. **If you plan to invite your legislator(s) to join you at your table(s), 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 13, 2025**, table reservations WILL NOT be accepted, and **no on-site requests will be made.** All tables will be set for twelve people.

Non-reserved tables for open general seating will be noted. 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.



Since 2009, Agency Showcase has highlighted the brightest ideas exhibited by parks, recreation, and conservation agencies.

This professionally judged competition recognizes Illinois agencies for their marketing and communication efforts ranging from print to multimedia.

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. First place will be announced at the Awards Luncheon on Friday.

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
- Print Communication - Informational
- Print Communication - Promotional
- Social Media Campaign
- Videography Long Form
- Videography Short Form
- Website
- Writing

For more information on the Agency Showcase competition, please visit ILparksconference.com.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

ANNUAL MEETINGS FOR IPRA AND IAPD

The Illinois Park & Recreation Association's (IPRA) Annual Meeting will be held on Friday, January 24 at 5:00 pm. The Illinois Association of Park Districts' (IAPD) Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, January 25 at 3:30 pm.

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

IPRA CONFERENCE KICK-OFF: A HOSTED HAPPY HOUR!

**NEW
THIS
YEAR!**

Attention all IPRA members!

Please join us on Thursday, January 23 at 5:45 pm. Be a part of our inaugural IPRA Conference Kick-Off to network with your fellow conference attendees and have a drink on us to kick off an amazing first day of conference! IPRA Board and Staff will be in attendance to celebrate with members.

COMMISSIONERS' RECEPTION

Attention all IAPD members!

Please join us on Friday, January 24 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 Digital!

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 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 1.3 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) by attending a variety 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.
- Track CEU progress on demand in the mobile app. Official CEU transcripts will be emailed 3-4 weeks after conference. 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 \$60 plus registration
- (4) CLE credits are \$80 plus registration
- (7) CLE credits are \$140 plus registration
- (8) CLE credits are \$160 plus registration

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



GENERAL INFORMATION

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 with 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 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)

EXCEPTIONAL WORKPLACE AWARD 2024

The Exceptional Workplace Award was developed to help agencies identify and achieve a high level of health and wellness for their employees, and to recognize their achievements. Park, Recreation, and Conservation agencies applying for the Exceptional Workplace Award (EWA) must complete an online survey, consisting of a series of 48 questions. Surveys must be completed by November 9, 2024. The application fee is \$50.

If the park and recreation agency meets the award criteria, the recognition as an IPRA Exceptional Workplace is five years. Park and recreation agencies may re-apply five years after receiving the IPRA Exceptional Workplace award for subsequent consideration. If a park and recreation agency does NOT meet the minimum award requirements during their application year, they may re-apply the following year at no additional cost.

Agencies that meet the criteria will receive the Exceptional Workplace Award at the 2025 *Soaring to New Heights* Conference, during the IPRA annual business meeting.

If you have questions about the EWA program, please contact: Shannon Tovey, SEASPAR, stovey@seaspar.org.

EXHIBIT HALL

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

Visit more than 320 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 the largest exhibition of any state park and recreation conference in the country. Be sure to visit!

Back by 'PUP'ular demand!
adoptable pups in the exhibit hall

HINSDALE HUMANE SOCIETY

EXHIBIT HALL HOURS

Thursday, January 23:

11:00 am – 5:00 pm, Grand Opening
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm; 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm (*Dedicated Hours*)

Friday, January 24:

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

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 \$133 Single/Double; \$143 Triple; \$153 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 **IAPD0125** when making a reservation by phone.

Rates \$133 Single/Double; \$163 Triple; \$193 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](https://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 6, 2025. 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, 2024. After this date there will be no refunds for cancelled rooms.

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

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.

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 12/31/24. **IPRA memberships not renewed for 2025 will be charged 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.**)

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, or the Keynote General Session.

GENERAL INFORMATION

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Early Bird Registration Deadline Friday, December 13, 2024

Registration Deadline Friday, January 17, 2025

Registration Methods:

- Online at ILparksconference.com; online registration **must be** accompanied by credit card for payment.
- Complete the Advance Registration Form and mail it with your check to 2025 IAPD/IPRA CONFERENCE, 1460 Renaissance Drive, Suite 209, Park Ridge, IL 60068

Registration Information:

- Mailed, and online registrations will be accepted until January 17, 2025.
- **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 23 8:00 am – 5:00 pm
- Friday, January 24 7:00 am – 5:00 pm
- Saturday, January 25 7:45 am – 12:00 pm

Registration Questions?

Contact CTE, our conference registration company, at either ilparks2025@cteusa.com or (847) 957-4255.

SILENT AUCTION

The Illinois Park and 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 hold a Silent Auction at the IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference to provide support and funding for educational programming and 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.

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 no later than January 17, 2025.

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 23 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Don't 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 is a great opportunity to learn about current and upcoming internships. Everyone who attends is invited to the inaugural IPRA Conference Kick-Off for complimentary drinks. To register, see page C32 of the registration form.

Mock Interviews/Resume Review

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24 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 24 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 C33 of the registration form.

GENERAL INFORMATION

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Volunteering at conference offers numerous benefits, including the opportunity to expand your professional network by connecting with industry leaders and peers. It provides a platform to enhance your skills, gain hands-on experience, and demonstrate leadership qualities. By contributing your time, not only do you become an important part of the conference team, but you also gain visibility within your industry, which can lead to future career opportunities and personal development.

We need your help! The conference team is recruiting volunteers for registration, session moderators, the awards luncheon, and the dessert reception in the Expo Hall. Upon completion of on-line registration, conference delegates will have the option to sign up for several different opportunities.

QUESTIONS?:

Registration: Alan Howard, ahoward@ilparks.org

Moderator: Duane Smith, duane@ilpra.org

Luncheon or Expo Hall: Lindsay Thomas, lthomas@wilpark.org

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QUIET ROOM

The Quiet Room is intended as a quiet, calm space where conference attendees can spend time away from noise, lights, and other stimuli of conference spaces. The quiet room is not available for conversations or meetings.



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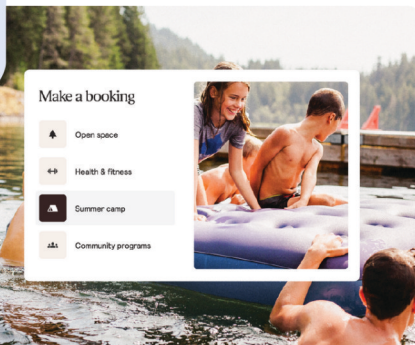
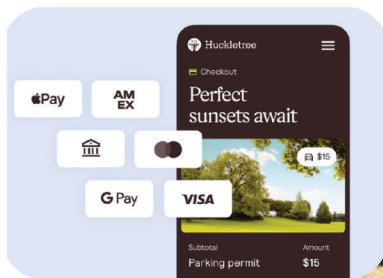
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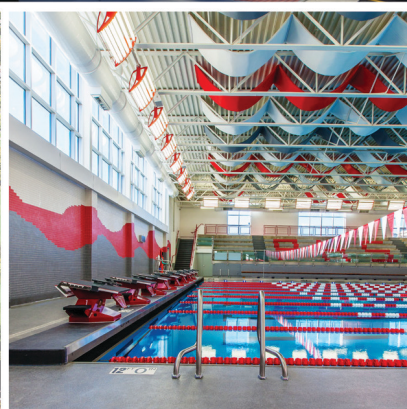
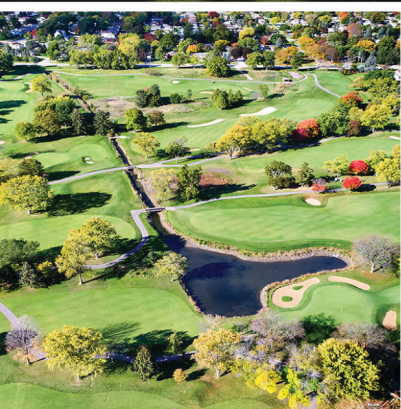
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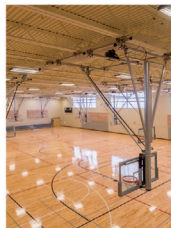


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CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

All conference workshops award 0.2 CEUs. Pre-registration is required. Register online at ILparksconference.com or see page 32.

01

AI in Parks and Recreation: The Next Level

Join us for an engaging and dynamic session on the latest updates in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its transformative impact on the park and recreation industry. Building on the foundational concepts presented last year, this session will delve deeper into cutting-edge AI technologies and their innovative applications within our field. Discover how AI is not just a tool of the future but a present-day game changer, driving efficiency, enhancing user experiences, and unlocking new potential in park and recreation management. Be prepared to explore exciting new case studies, witness live demonstrations, and engage in forward-thinking discussions that will equip you with the knowledge to leverage AI for your organization's success.

Track: Leadership/Management

Speakers: **Neelay Bhatt**, Founder & CEO, Next Practice Partners; **Scott Crowe**, Executive Director, Huntley Park District

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to ...

1. Deeper Understanding of AI Applications: Gain insights into the latest AI technologies and their specific, advanced applications in parks and recreation.
2. Exploring Innovative AI Use Cases: Understand how cutting-edge AI applications are revolutionizing the park and recreation industry by exploring industry case studies.
3. Implementing Cutting-Edge AI Solutions: Learn practical strategies and best practices for successfully adopting and integrating the newest AI solutions.

03

Building Innovation: A LEGO® Serious Play® Workshop for Park District Professionals

Unlock your creative potential and spark new ideas with our interactive LEGO® Serious Play® workshop, designed specifically for park district professionals. In this hands-on session, we will explore innovation by using LEGO® bricks to visualize and brainstorm solutions tailored to your unique challenges and opportunities.

Discover how play can drive serious insights and transformative thinking, empowering you to lead your park district towards a more innovative future. Whether you're looking to enhance park programming, improve community engagement, or streamline operations, this workshop will equip you with the creative tools and collaborative spirit needed to turn innovative concepts into reality. Come ready to build, share, and transform your approach to innovation in the park district industry!

Track: Leadership/Management

Speakers: **Marcy Fortnow**, CEO, Engaging Play LLC

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to ...

1. Cultivate Creative Problem-Solving Skills: Utilize LEGO® Serious Play® techniques to think creatively and develop innovative solutions.
2. Enhance Communication and Collaboration: Engage in collaborative activities that promote open communication, ensuring that all voices are valued.
3. Apply Play-Based Methods for Professional Growth: Understand how to incorporate LSP to foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.

300

Effective Communication Principles Before, During, and After Critical Incidents

Effective communication during a critical incident is crucial for minimizing risk, ensuring everyone's safety, and facilitating a swift and successful recovery. By prioritizing clear, consistent, and targeted communication through various channels, communicators can navigate challenging situations effectively and maintain trust with their community.

Track: HR/Risk Management

Speakers: **Christopher Covelli**, Deputy Chief - Court Security Division & Public Information Officer, Lake County Sheriff's Office

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to ...

1. Explain the importance of building rapport with the community and media before a critical incident.
2. Identify how to effectively communicate during a critical incident.
3. Understand how to manage misinformation.

400

Beam Me Up Recky! – Travel Through Time into Inclusive Mindset Succession Planning

Step into the future of parks and recreation leadership with our dynamic session, Beam Me Up Recky!, designed to equip professionals with the tools needed to lead with inclusivity and strategic foresight. This engaging session will take you on a journey through time, helping you develop an inclusive mindset for succession planning that embraces generational diversity and prepares your organization for future success. Transform your approach to leadership and programming, ensuring your parks and recreation organization is prepared for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. Embrace the future with confidence and inclusivity!

Track: Recreation

Speakers: **Lydie Gutfeld**, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services, City of San Bernadino

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to ...

1. Foster better communication and understanding across generations in the workplace.
2. Prepare for succession planning by recruiting and retaining younger generations.
3. Reflect on the evolution of the parks and recreation profession and envision its future.

500 TIME MANAGEMENT for People Who Don't Have Time to Take a Time Management Course: Real Secrets to Getting Things Done

This nationally acclaimed, creatively presented, no-nonsense session demonstrates six groups of outstanding tools that has received rave reviews by professionals for their flexibility, practicality, and ease of use. Boost your productivity right away while reducing unnecessary stress. You don't have to use all of the techniques every day – just when you need them. They can be applied quickly and tailored to your individual needs and work habits.

Track: Therapeutic Recreation

Speakers: Michael Brandwein, CEO, MB

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to ...

1. Identify special techniques to defeat procrastination, reduce interruptions, increase productivity and efficiency.
2. Explain how to get more accomplished and never have a day when you got “nothing done”.
3. Organize what needs to be done in a new and better way that replaces the usual “to do” list with something simple that helps you produce high quality work more efficiently.

600 Field Trip: Sustainability by Design

Join us as we visit two cutting-edge centers owned and operated by the Park District of Oak Park. Nestled in the heart of Oak Park, the Community Recreation Center (CRC) was opened in 2023 (thanks to a capital campaign) as a welcome and open space for all Oak Park residents to enjoy. From a free walking track to teen after school programming, and inclusive locker rooms to the building's net-zero footprint, the CRC was built with the community and its collective wellbeing in mind. The Carroll Community Center is a recently renovated 90-year-old facility that has met criteria for Passive House Design designation, and its the second verified Net Zero facility in Oak Park. The Carroll Center is home to many preschool and afterschool programs during the school year.

Tour the facilities and learn how your district can utilize sustainable design when renovating or building new facilities. In addition to talking about the sustainability features we will highlight the programming and uses of the buildings.

Track: Facilities

Speakers: Maureen McCarthy, Superintendent of Recreation, Park District of Oak Park; Chris Lindgren, Superintendent of Parks & Planning, Park District of Oak Park; Jan Arnold, Executive Director, Park District of Oak Park

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to ...

1. Understand how to reimagine an existing facility through a sustainability lens.
2. Learn how to design a new facility using a sustainability lens.
3. Tour 2 different facilities to gather ideas on how to plan for sustainability features.

900 Built on People: The Impact on Going from Personal Brand to Community Brand Mindset

According to a study by the University of California, people who build their brands around a sense of community are likelier to feel a sense of belonging and connection. 90% of brands tend to fail after three years due to struggles with personal well-being. This presentation examines what causes people to quit, how to build confidence, feel connected, transfer emotions, and contribute toward their brand's growth.

Track: Marketing/Communications

Speakers: Zack Colman, CEO, Creative

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to ...

1. Learn How to relieve burnout through self-worth and brand management.
2. Understand how to align with oneself and become a better leader through brand values.
3. Discover how to build your brand's voice through self-discovery and communication.

1000 From Awareness to Action: Promoting Disability Inclusion

During this two hour workshop, learn how to promote and ensure disability inclusion in the workplace. The workshop will start with a presentation on disability awareness and common disability-related microaggressions in the workplace. The second part of the workshop will discuss how to make facilities more accessible for people with disabilities. Through guided discussions and interactive activities, participants will be able to understand different types of disabilities, learn how to recognize and combat ableism, and gain practical tips on designing inclusive facilities, ensuring accessibility for all. There will be time throughout the workshop for participants to ask questions and share resources.

Track: Diversity

Speakers: Samyuktha Neeraja, American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to ...

1. Demonstrate an understanding about the various types of disabilities and the diverse experiences associated with living with a disability.
2. Describe examples of disability-related microaggressions & ableism, and be able to employ effective strategies to dismantle them.
3. Identify 2-3 practical measures to enhance accessibility in parks and recreational facilities for individuals with disabilities.



CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

All conference workshops award 0.2 CEUs. Pre-registration is required. Register online at ILparksconference.com or see page C32.

02

Leadership Through Laughter: The Power of Listening & Collaborating

Join us for a dynamic workshop led by professional speaker and comedian, Ethan Blumenthal, founder and CEO of Knuckleball Comedy. This engaging session combines keynote insights with interactive activities designed to enhance leadership skills through humor, active listening, and collaboration. Attendees will be on their feet laughing and participating in fun, engaging exercises that foster a sense of camaraderie and creativity. They will leave not only with valuable leadership takeaways but also with the joy of having had a great time learning. Discover how to create an environment where ideas flourish, fostering a culture of open communication and teamwork. Embrace the power of laughter and collaboration to transform your leadership style.

Track: Leadership/Management

Speakers: **Ethan Blumenthal**, Founder & CEO, Knuckleball Comedy LLC

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to ...

1. Learn techniques to become better listeners, fostering a more inclusive and effective leadership style.
2. Understand how to create a supportive environment where team members feel safe to share and build on ideas.
3. Discover how to incorporate humor into their leadership approach, boosting team morale and communication.

200

Field Trip: Get Growing with Public-Private Partnerships

The Chicago Park District builds relationships with private sector institutions to ensure support for the ongoing success of our facilities. We work with environmental organizations, cultural arts organizations, and sports institutions to deliver quality service for our taxpayers. Public-private partnerships take on many forms, from simple one-year contracts to multiple year agreements. Areas of involvement include programming, operations, and fundraising. In this workshop, you'll learn how to identify potential partners, chose the right partnership model, and work with your partners to weather challenges together. This workshop will take place at Garfield Park Conservatory. It will include presentations from two non-profit conservatories' partners: Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance and the Lincoln Park Conservancy, as well as the Director of Conservatories for the Chicago Park District. The discussion will focus on what each organization brings to the table and how all groups work together to deliver a positive visitor experience. The workshop will include a tour of beautiful Garfield Park Conservatory to witness partnership in action and is limited to 40 participants.

Track: Parks/Natural Resources

Speakers: **Mary Eysenback**, Director of Conservatories, Chicago Park District; **Jen Van Valkenburg**, President, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance; **Rafael Rosa**, Executive Director, Lincoln Park Conservancy

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to ...

1. Learn two different models of partnership under which Chicago Park District conservatories operate.
2. Identify potential partners outside "friends of the park" groups, such as health organizations, economic development, arts groups, etc.
3. Discover ways to work together with partners to solve unanticipated challenges or conflicts.

301

Eliminating Annual Performance Reviews: Embracing Continuous Feedback, Agile Goals, and Shifting Priorities

I'll bet you love performance management season. Doing your self evaluation, providing feedback to employees, and completing endless forms. I'll bet you wouldn't expect an HR professional to tell you to ditch the performance management approach you have been using your whole career.

There is another way to do it. It's less painful and less time consuming. It helps support remote employees, can be used with seasonal staff, and encourages your team instead of demotivating them. The process of using continuous feedback, agile goals, and shifting priorities helps you and your team not only perform better but enjoy what you are doing even more. We are going to come out of this workshop with actionable steps to take to remove the quagmire that is the annual performance management process.

Track: HR/Risk Management

Speakers: **Kristin Strunk**, President and Principle, Regent Leadership Group

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to ...

1. Understand how we got here and why we need to change.
2. Explain how to meet the needs of all of your different stakeholders and develop your team at the same time.
3. Identify how do you do it even if your organization won't change.

501 PURPOSEFUL PLAY: Quick, Cool, Original No-Prop Games that Teach Young People (and Staff!) Skills for Life & Leadership

We come to play, and when we leave we've learned! In this active session, national award-winning staff trainer and best-selling youth development author Michael leads us in some of his best original and creative presentation of games that go "beyond fun" and which you can use with all ages, indoors and out.

Track: Therapeutic Recreation

Speakers: Michael Brandwein, CEO, MB

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to ...

1. Each activity is mission-directed: participants will be having too much fun to know they are practicing essential social-emotional and life skills like communication, making friends, positivity, resilience, leadership, respect, collaboration, and more. The key secret to staff retention and motivation and the conversation and planning that makes it happen.

2. Demonstrate outstanding game leadership techniques that can be used with any activity we lead, including clear communication, grabbing and keeping attention, maximizing participation, and more.

1001 Building and Supporting Staff Resilience

Burnout is high, turnover is high and staff morale is plummeting - some due to the world we live in and some due to the work environment and expectations that staff are dealing with everyday. This session will discuss what causes burnout and other staff workplace experiences, some individual techniques for addressing your own resilience and some organizational and leadership techniques to create an environment to build and support staff resilience.

Track: Diversity

Speakers: Linda Henderson-Smith, Founder and Principal, ATC Consulting

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to ...

1. Define staff concerns and workplace experiences.

2. Explain the impact of workplace experiences on staff.

3. Describe individual and organizational techniques to support staff resilience.

1002 Parks, Pools, and Open Spaces for All: Designing for a Neurodiverse Community

Workshop participants will discuss and apply creative strategies to design parks, aquatics, and open spaces that support neurodiverse communities. The case will be made for "why" this matters, and "how" designers and operators can successfully balance the unique perspectives of neurodivergent individuals to incorporate a spectrum of vibrant, engaging, and multi-sensory experiences.

Track: Diversity

Speakers: Terry Berkbuegler, Sr. Vice President, Confluence Inc; Jen Gerber, Vice President, Water Technologies Inc; Katie Hench, CEO, InfiniTeach Autism Innovation; Mo Convery, Landscape Architect, Confluence Inc.

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to ...

1. Understand the unique profiles of neurodivergent users.

2. Learn how neurodivergent people experience parks and open spaces and how to evaluate existing facilities.

3. Learn how to implement strategies to improve the design of inclusive parks and recreational facilities.

1100 Empowered Boundaries: The Authority of the Resource

Who has the most contact with the people on your sites? You might be surprised to learn that it is not always recreation or education team members. Our maintenance, land management, law enforcement, and concessions team members are often the first and sometimes the only personal interaction visitors have with our agencies. This makes it vital to ensure they can speak to the authority of the resource and share mission-based information, while ensuring rules and regulations are met.

This workshop builds on the work of the National Park Service and the National Association for Interpretation to provide best practices for providing high-quality experiences with and in the resources we provide. During this workshop, participants will participate in a series of interactive activities designed to develop communication skills and visitor engagement strategies. We will then learn how to turn daily visitor interactions into positive reflections of our agency.

Track: Forest Preserve and Conservation
Speakers: Robert Carter, Certified Interpretive Trainer, National Association for Interpretation

Learning Objectives:

Participants will be able to ...

1. Identify how various roles in an organization support an agency's mission.

2. Learn techniques for effective communication, including active listening, questioning techniques, and non-verbal communication.

3. Develop strategies for connecting with diverse audiences and adapting to meet visitors' needs.





One Night Band

Thursday, January 23 9:00 pm – 11:30 pm
Hyatt Regency Chicago, Grand Ballroom, East Tower/Gold Level

One Night Band creates a high energy evening to remember while you shake it to decades of Rock n' Roll, cut a rug to Motown's finest, bust a move to some hip hop, get down with a lil' country and sing your heart out to a Pop Rock guilty pleasure. With a diverse repertoire of Top 40's hits spanning over 6 decades the band can customize a set list to fit your needs. From Sinatra to Snoop Dogg - One Night Band has you covered.

*One Night Band performs 100% Live (no backing tracks or pre-recorded audio)

NEW THIS YEAR!

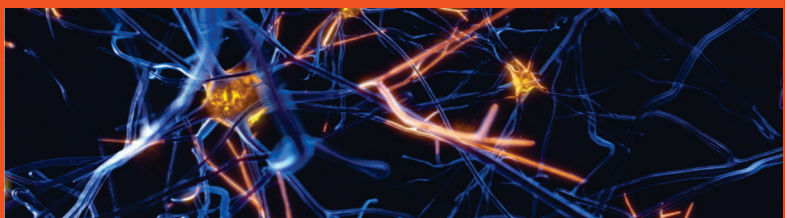


Come test your skill at lawn games! We have inflatable glow in the dark axe throwing, corn hole, Giant Jenga to name a few!

This is not a ticketed event... everyone is welcome!
Get to know your fellow conference attendees in a relaxed atmosphere!



GRIFFIN MUSEUM OF SCIENCE+INDUSTRY



Explore a World War II German submarine. Mingle below historic aircrafts. The Museum of Science+Industry (MSI), is one of the largest science museums in the Western Hemisphere! Join us for an extraordinary evening as we celebrate the close of conference at this year's premier destination.

Saturday, January 25
7:00 pm – 10:00 pm
Griffin Museum of Science+Industry
5700 S. DuSable Lake Shore Dr.

THIS IS A TICKETED EVENT!

Ticket includes:

- Dinner buffet with unlimited beer, wine and soft drinks
- 400,000 square feet of hands-on exhibits designed to spark scientific inquiry and creativity!
- A great night of entertainment, networking and fun!
- Round trip shuttle service from the Hyatt Regency Chicago

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 \$135 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

- Government Finance for Non-Finance Park and Recreation Leaders
- Understanding Your Tax-Capped Levy
- Minutes Shouldn't Take Hours
- The Agenda: In What Order Should Business Take Place
- Illinois Sunshine Laws: FOIA and Open Meetings Act
- Board Member to Board Leader Part I
- Board Member to Board Leader Part II
- Boardmanship Essentials Part I
- Boardmanship Essentials Part II
- So You Want to Stay Out of Jail? What Park District Leadership Must Know About Ethics Requirements
- Having a Healthy and Prosperous Relationship with your Executive Director
- Affiliates: A Blessing or a Curse?
- Board Policy Manuals: Why They Are Essential For Your Agency

DIVERSITY, EQUALITY & INCLUSION

- Bridging Communities: Empowering Diversity through Parks & Recreation
- Equitable Youth Suicide Prevention
- Navigating the AI Landscape: A Leadership Blueprint for Parks and Recreation
- Stepping Away From Stigmas and Spotlights: Veterans in Outdoor Spaces
- Tennis for All: Leveraging USTA Resources for Community Impact
- Innovative Programs, Quality Instructors, and Healthy Communities: The Role of Parks Professionals in Growing Tennis
- Welcoming Immigrants & Offering Culturally Pertinent Programming - 3 Different Perspectives from 3 First-Time Latino Commissioners to Sit on Board
- Conversation on Implicit Bias
- Improving Operations through Intersectionality and Systems Change

FACILITY MANAGEMENT

- Aquatics Roundtable
- Maintenance Round Table
- Creating a Safety Plan: Mitigating Risks and Ensuring Safety
- When Soft Surface Becomes Too Hard – Challenges in Maintenance, Repairs, and Replacement of Soft Surface Playground Systems
- Elevating Skills: The Vital Role of Continuing Education for Trades Employees in Parks and Recreation
- Bridging Generations: Customer Service Excellence and Facility Management in Recreation
- 21 Secrets to Master F&B Sales & Profits
- Improving Health and Wellness in the Workplace: Understanding & Implementing the WELL Building Standard
- Curveballs to Comebacks: Navigating Patron Challenges in Facilities
- Leveraging AI Tools and Virtual Assistants for Parks & Recreation
- Build the Foundation of Your Fitness Facility Programming with Health Coaching Services

SESSIONS AT-A-GLANCE

Please visit ilparksconference.com for session dates and times.

FINANCE/INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- Beyond the Noise: AI in Parks and Recreation
- Tech-Forward Parks & Rec: Transforming Recreation with AI and Innovation
- Ransomware ... Now What?
- Bodacious Building Blocks of Parks and Recreation
- Financing the Fun: An Introduction to Municipal Bonds
- Funding Capital Projects: Bonding vs. Spending Reserves in the Current Market
- Municipal Market Update in the Post Election Environment
- Microsoft's AI Vision
- Planning for a Referendum: Available Options, Key Points and Milestones
- Innovate and Automate: Creating Custom Apps and Automations for your Organization

FOREST PRESERVE & CONSERVATION

- City Nature Challenge - Connect Your Community
- Harnessing Passion & Collaboration: Elevating Community Engagement & Education to New Heights via Social Media
- Exhibits on Any Budget
- How Trends in Volunteerism Can Facilitate Recruitment and Retention in Our Programs
- Recreational Hunting: An On Ramp for the Conservation Highway
- Inclusion: Be More Than A Buzzword
- Balancing Environmental and Historic Preservation Goals at Fullersburg Forest Preserve
- Cultural Landscapes and Historic Structures: A Preservation Approach
- Tech Trek: Enhancing Efficiency, Effectiveness & Engagement in Parks and Recreation
- Brief Encounters of the Best Kind
- Prescribed Fires: Balancing Safety and Ecological Benefits in Urbanized Settings

GOVERNANCE/LEGAL

- Direct & Deliberate: How to Successfully PASS a Referendum
- The NEW Americans with Disabilities Act Mandates: Can Parks and Recreation Agencies Keep Up? Part II
- Park District Finance - It's Not Intuitive
- Social Media & The Law: Facebook? Instagram? X?
- Responding to First Amendment Audits
- So You're Thinking About Going Solar
- Legal/Legislative I
- 2025 Employment Law Update
- Can We and Should We Have Video Surveillance in Parks and Facilities?
- Legal/Legislative II
- Tips for Avoiding Claims of Harassment / Discrimination in the Workplace
- Real Estate 101: What You Need to Know About Acquiring, Selling and Using Property
- The NEW Americans with Disabilities Act Mandates: Can Parks and Recreation Agencies Keep Up? Part I
- Beyond the Basics: Navigating Politically Sensitive Community Projects and Issues
- Regulating Controversial Park Activities
- Crossing the Line: What Park Districts Need to Know about the Migrant Crisis

HR/ RISK MANAGEMENT

- Human Resource Orienteering: Learn to Navigate Recruitment & Onboarding at Your Agency
- Understanding the Pathway to Violence: Preventing Targeted Attacks through Behavioral Threat Assessment
- Part-Time Staff: The Crux of Our Success! They Matter... A LOT
- Beyond the Offer: Mastering Onboarding and Orientation for Long-Term Success
- Illuminating Parks & Rec: Attracting Applicants, Keeping Good Employees, and Amplifying Career Pathways
- Developing a Lifeguard Audit Program for Peak Performance
- Listen Up! Leveraging Employee Surveys for a Happier, More Productive Workplace
- The Power of Paid Leave: Boosting Employee Happiness and Retention through Parental and Emergency Leave Policies
- Safety Savvy: Training Organization and Compliance
- Managing Employee Leaves of Absence and Accommodations
- Productive Transition: Navigating Employee Transitions in the Workplace
- Your IMRF Benefits
- Recognizing Substance Use and How Recovery Connects to Parks and Recreation
- Addressing Employee Mental Health Conditions
- Large Event, Festival and Parade Security

LEADERSHIP/MANAGEMENT

- Innovations that Lead to BIG Changes
- From Burned Out to Fueled Up – Five Tools to Spark Engagement & Wellbeing
- Encouraging Silly & Fun in the Workplace is a BIG DILL
- The Power of PechaKucha
- Engaging the New-Collar Worker
- Mastering the Art of Leadership: Cultivating Essential Metaskills for Success
- Leadership Lessons We Can Learn From Ted Lasso
- Leading When Promoted from Within
- Be Fleet on Your Feet: 7 Keys to Spontaneous Thinking to Benefit You and Your Agency
- Executive Director's Roundtable: A Chat With Neelay
- Q&A is the Best Way to National Certification Exam Success
- Journeying Together: Navigating Professional Development As Mentor and Mentee
- Agency State Accreditation - A Blueprint to Excellence
- Lessons From the Ballot Box
- Unified Actions: Managing Protest Scenarios through Municipal Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Girl Power - Get Your Questions Answered
- Girl Power - What's Holding You Back?

MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

- True Life: Sponsors Tell All
- Parks and Recreation Marketing with AI
- SHOW ME THE MONEY! Sponsorship and Finance Tracking
- The Constant & The Cutting-Edge: A Marketer's Guide to Traditions & Trends (2025 & Beyond)
- Communication Management: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly in Telling Your Story
- Better Engagement, Less Effort
- You Can, Canva! Unlock Creativity & Efficiency at Your Agency
- Marketing (Taylor's Version)
- Practical Steps to Build Your Personal Brand Today
- Build a Better Board Report: Communicating Your Digital Marketing Success to Your Board
- Build Community Trust by Leveraging the Power of Parks, Planning and P.R.
- Inclusive Marketing Strategies: Promoting Special Recreation Programs for All
- Unplug Illinois Day - Boost Community Engagement at Your Agency
- Parks Reinvented: Harnessing the Potential of Your 501 © (3) Nonprofit

SESSIONS AT-A-GLANCE

Please visit ilparksconference.com for session dates and times.

PARKS & NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- Contracting for Rookies
- Best Practices in Tree Planting
- Stopping the Spread of the Invasive Weed Lesser Celandine: Planning, Control, Evaluation and Community Engagement.
- Creating Impactful Service for Any Organization
- Sustainability Planning for Parks & Recreation
- Bridging Parks, Facilities and Marketing for Community Impact
- The Journey from Parks to Executive Director
- Everyone Can Be Salt Smart: Resources for Park Districts for Winter
- Grant Update for 2025
- Putting the Puzzle Pieces Together: Elements of Park Master Planning

RECREATION

- Little Thinkers: Keeping Young Minds Focused and Engaged
- Just Be In The Room
- "Breakaway" From the Traditional Basketball League
- Nurturing Passion: Connecting Youth Interests to Meaningful Recreation Activities
- Crafting Learning Journeys: Preschool Curriculum Following the Understanding by Design (UbD) Model
- Engaging Communities with Mobile Augmented Reality
- Teens: Too Old for Camp, Too Young for Counselor. What to do with them?
- Active Adults/Senior Programming: "Start Where You Are- Build an Active Adult/Senior Membership from within"
- Our Leadership Role in Quality Youth Sports
- Health, Happiness, and the Great Outdoors
- Permit Problems - Managing Illegal Park Use
- Theming For Success
- It is All in the Details: Going the Extra Mile
- Art Without Boundaries: Identifying and Overcoming Barriers in Cultural Arts Programming
- Survival Kit for Recreation Rookies: Navigating the Good, the Bad, and the Unknown
- Volunteer Coaches: Attracting, Training, and Retaining the Heart of Your Sports Leagues
- Engaging Holistic Wellness Programs for Older Adults that Enhance Brain Health
- Summer Camps: What are the People and the Data Saying in a Post-Pandemic World?
- Esports Ecosystem
- Managing Recreational Waterbodies – Keeping Everyone Pleased! A Case Study for Diamond Lake, Mundelein, Illinois

THERAPEUTIC RECREATION

- Occupational Therapy's Role in Accessible Parks and Recreation
- Supporting Those Experiencing Domestic Violence
- The Power of a Micro-Credential: Understanding Veteran Culture in Therapeutic Recreation
- Soaring to New Heights with The Alliance and Self-Advocacy!
- Staff Development Across Different Stages of Employment: How to Keep Staff Engaged, Invested and Coming Back for More.
- Engaging the Next Generation: Recruiting Students to Major in Recreation Therapy
- How to Have Difficult Conversations and How to Mentor and Guide Others (part time staff) Through the Process
- Anatomy of a Meltdown
- ABA 101

Keynote General Session with Gregory Offner

Saturday, January 25, 2025

9:00 am – 10:00 am

CEUs: 0.1

Sponsored By:



The Tip Jar Culture: An Inspiring Approach to Rediscovering our Passion

Today, volunteer board members, professionals, and employees are facing critical challenges including historically low morale, lack of engagement, and feelings of disconnection from priorities and responsibilities.

Globally, businesses spend \$20 billion each year attempting to improve morale and retention across all organizational levels. Even with this sizable financial investment, less than 30% of the workforce is actively engaged and working toward success. What most people see as problems with the volunteer or workforce culture (or even with themselves) are actually only *symptoms* of the real problem: *the experience*.

In this unforgettable keynote, Gregory Offner, former 'dueling pianist turned award-winning speaker,' reveals three principles of engaging experiences - used in piano bars - and demonstrates steps you can take to bring them into your everyday experience - whether you are leading a team or searching for more enjoyment and excitement in your endeavors.

About the Speaker

Gregory Offner is an author, workforce strategist, and award-winning keynote speaker. He is the founding partner of the Global Performance Institute, a boutique consulting firm supporting organizations and executives seeking to get the most out of their workforce. Gregory previously held leadership roles in the outsourced services and risk management industries, developing future leaders and advising some of the most recognizable names in business.

In this unforgettable keynote former dueling pianist and award-winning speaker Gregory Offner will demonstrate three principles of engagement—found in a piano bar—then discuss the strategies and stories of organizations who've applied these principles to business with phenomenal results.

Attendees will learn:

- A framework to create a sustainable engagement strategy that appeals to broad and diverse groups of people.
- Three tools to implement simple, but effective shifts in the volunteer or work experience that eliminate the three major frustrations we have.
- Insight into the question that most leaders don't ask, but those working alongside them wish they would.

Join us for a book signing with Gregory Offner immediately following the keynote presentation. Don't miss this opportunity to meet Gregory, get your copy signed, and dive deeper into the insights shared during the talk. First 50 attendees receive a free copy of *The Tip Jar Culture: How to Re-Engage and Re-Ignite Your Workforce*, courtesy of IPRA. See you there!



2025 Conference Registration Form

Register online at ilparksconference.com
 Faxed or mailed registration forms will be accepted until January 17, 2025.

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 Other _____

I would like to moderate an educational offering: Thursday Friday Saturday

IAPD/IPRA make 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 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 23, 2025 (Enrollment is limited - REGISTER EARLY!)

ID#	TITLE	FEE
10:00 am – 12:00 pm		
01	AI in Parks and Recreation: The Next Level	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90
03	Building Innovation: A LEGO® Serious Play® Workshop for Park District Professionals	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90
300	Effective Communication Principles Before, During, and After Critical Incidents	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90
400	Beam Me Up Recky! – Travel Through Time into Inclusive Mindset Succession Planning	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90
500	TIME MANAGEMENT for People Who Don't Have Time to Take a Time Management Course: Real Secrets to Getting Things Done	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90
600	Field Trip: Sustainability by Design	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90
900	Built on People: The Impact on Going from Personal Brand to Community Brand Mindset	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90
1000	From Awareness to Action: Promoting Disability Inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm		
02	Leadership Through Laughter: The Power of Listening & Collaborating	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90
200	Field Trip: Get Growing with Public-Private Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90
301	Eliminating Annual Performance Reviews: Embracing Continuous Feedback, Agile Goals, and Shifting Priorities	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90
501	PURPOSEFUL PLAY: Quick, Cool, Original No-Prop Games that Teach Young People (and Staff!) Skills for Life & Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90
1001	Building and Supporting Staff Resilience	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90
1002	Parks, Pools, and Open Spaces for All: Designing for a Neurodiverse Community	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90
1100	Empowered Boundaries: The Authority of the Resource	<input type="checkbox"/> \$90
SECTION II SUBTOTAL		\$

SECTION III. CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

PACKAGE	EARLY (BY 12/13/24)		REGULAR (12/14/24 – 01/17/25)		ON-SITE	
	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER
Full	<input type="checkbox"/> \$390	<input type="checkbox"/> \$700	<input type="checkbox"/> \$455	<input type="checkbox"/> \$830	<input type="checkbox"/> \$495	<input type="checkbox"/> \$905
No Frills	<input type="checkbox"/> \$330	<input type="checkbox"/> \$580	<input type="checkbox"/> \$385	<input type="checkbox"/> \$690	<input type="checkbox"/> \$440	<input type="checkbox"/> \$800
Thursday Only	<input type="checkbox"/> \$160	<input type="checkbox"/> \$270	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175	<input type="checkbox"/> \$300	<input type="checkbox"/> \$190	<input type="checkbox"/> \$325
Friday Only	<input type="checkbox"/> \$290	<input type="checkbox"/> \$505	<input type="checkbox"/> \$320	<input type="checkbox"/> \$565	<input type="checkbox"/> \$345	<input type="checkbox"/> \$615
Saturday Only	<input type="checkbox"/> \$310	<input type="checkbox"/> \$545	<input type="checkbox"/> \$340	<input type="checkbox"/> \$610	<input type="checkbox"/> \$365	<input type="checkbox"/> \$655
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> \$160	<input type="checkbox"/> \$260	<input type="checkbox"/> \$160	<input type="checkbox"/> \$260	<input type="checkbox"/> \$160	<input type="checkbox"/> \$260
Retiree	<input type="checkbox"/> \$190	<input type="checkbox"/> \$400	<input type="checkbox"/> \$200	<input type="checkbox"/> \$430	<input type="checkbox"/> \$235	<input type="checkbox"/> \$510
Guest/Spouse	<input type="checkbox"/> \$190	<input type="checkbox"/> \$190	<input type="checkbox"/> \$200	<input type="checkbox"/> \$200	<input type="checkbox"/> \$230	<input type="checkbox"/> \$230
A LA CARTE TICKET OPTIONS					QTY.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday, Awards Luncheon Ticket (includes one (1) dessert ticket) • Friday, Dessert Ticket (dessert served in the Exhibit Hall immediately following the luncheon) • Friday, Awards Luncheon Preferred Agency Seating (non-refundable fee) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specify preferred agency table OR preferred legislative table (if you will be inviting a legislator to join your agency). • Saturday, Closing Social Ticket, Adult Ticket \$135, Child’s Ticket (12 years old & younger) \$50 • CLE Credit Packages (3=\$60; 4=\$80; 7=\$140; 8=\$160) ARDC # _____ • Core & More Fitness Class (7:30am - 8:30am) 					<input type="checkbox"/> \$75 x ____ \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 x ____ \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> \$60 x ____ \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Agency <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative \$135 x ____ \$ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> \$60 <input type="checkbox"/> \$80 <input type="checkbox"/> \$140 <input type="checkbox"/> \$160 <input type="checkbox"/> FREE	
SECTION III SUBTOTAL					\$	

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

Professional Connection: Thursday, January 23, 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm (see page C8 for details.)

PCS	Professional Connection – Student	<input type="checkbox"/> N/C
PCP	Professional Connection – Professional	<input type="checkbox"/> N/C
Mock Interviews/Resume Review: Friday, January 24, 10:00 am (see page C8 for details.)		
MIS	Mock Interviews/Resume Review – Student	<input type="checkbox"/> N/C
MIP	Mock Interviews/Resume Review – Professional	<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.

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

**IF PAYING BY CHECK, MAIL REGISTRATION FORM(S) WILL BE ACCEPTED UNTIL JANUARY 17, 2025 AT:
2025 IAPD/IPRA CONFERENCE**

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

**FOR QUESTIONS OR TO MODIFY AN EXISTING REGISTRATION, EMAIL ILPARKS2025@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 Thursday only.

*** 60-minute sessions and access to Exhibit Hall on Friday 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/RETIRES – 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 23, 2024](#), 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.
- Pre-registration ends JANUARY 17, 2025. In order to receive the discounted pre-registration fee(s), registration forms must be postmarked by JANUARY 17, 2025. On-site registration begins at 7:30 am on January 23, 2025.
- [The deadline for Preferred Agency Seating is JANUARY 17, 2025.](#) 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.

POLICY ON MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS

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

- Members of the Illinois Park & Recreation Association in current standing through 12/31/24. **IPRA memberships not renewed for 2025 will be assessed the difference between the member and non-member conference rates.**
- 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.**

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 ilparks2025@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.

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.



2025 EXHIBITORS

Exhibitors as of August 2024

COMPANY	BOOTH#	COMPANY	BOOTH#
All Inclusive Rec	311	Engineering Resource Associates	538
American Camp Association	531	Entertainment Concepts	917
American Ramp Company	237	Eriksson Engineering Associates, Ltd.	430
American Red Cross Training Services	316	ExplorUS	627
Amilia	345	Farnsworth Group, Inc.	615
Anthony Roofing - Tecta America	118	Federal Supply USA	356
 Aqua Pure Enterprises, Inc.	431	Fehr Graham Engineering	522
Aqua Tile	701	FGM Architects	600
Baird Public Finance	354	FieldTurf - Tarkett Sports Indoor	619
Balanced Environments, Inc	712	Fifth Third Bank	346
Battle Company	412	ForeverLawn Chicago	333
 BCI Burke	122	Frederick Quinn Corporation	620
BEAR Construction	607	 Gewalt Hamilton Associates	713
Beary Landscape	336	Gold Medal Products	315
Berliner	609	GovDeals	714
BerryDunn	613	GovTech Innovators, Inc.	452
Bid Evolution	606	Graffiti Solutions, Inc.	730
BLICK Art Materials	633	Greenfields Outdoor Fitness	204
Bluestem Ecological Services	323	H.E. Hodge Company, Inc.	212
 Boller Construction	203	H2I Group	231
Bounce Houses R Us	145	Halogen Supply Company, Inc.	438
Brian Wismer Entertainment	905	Hawkins Inc.	224
Bronze Memorial Company	216	Henry Bros. Co.	444
BS&A Software	351	Hershey's Ice Cream	149
Byrne & Jones Construction	451	Hey and Associates	314
Camosy Construction	602	 Hitchcock Design Group	419
Capri Pools & Aquatics	622	Holtzman Group Hospitality Experts	344
Central Parks	343	HR Source	213
Chicagoland Pool Management	833	IHC Construction Companies LLC	525
Chicago's North Shore CVB	629	Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD)	503
CivicPlus	434	Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund	207
Clowning Around Entertainment	233	Illinois Park & Recreation Association (IPRA)	500
COLUMBIA CASCADE COMPANY	137	Illinois Public Risk Fund	534
ComEd Energy Efficiency Program	834	Imagine Nation LLC	523
CommunityPass	238	Innova Disc Golf	135
 Confluence, Inc.	446	IPARKS	719
Constellation Telecom	123	IRMCA - Illinois Ready Mixed Concrete Association	347
Cooper- Ephesus Sports Lighting	621	iStrike by AnythingWeather	125
Cordogan Clark & Associates, Inc.	143	iZone Imaging	820
Correct Digital Displays, Inc.	116	Jeff Ellis and Associates	209
Councilman-Hunsaker	720	Johnson Commercial Fitness	925
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Dewberry	119	Kiefer USA	604
Direct Fitness Solutions	638	KI Furniture	221
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 DLA Architects Ltd.	220	KWIKGOAL	133
Doty & Sons Concrete Products, Inc.	320	L6 Technology Inc	805
DoubleSpot AI	521	Lake Country Corporation	332
DrillPickle	938	Lamar Johnson Collaborative	428
DuraPlay, Inc.	711	Larson Engineering, Inc.	630
Dyna Dome	626		

2025 EXHIBITORS

Exhibitors as of August 2024

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LeadingIT	337	Soccer Made In America	309
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Leopardo Construction	229	Spartan Sports Lighting	920
Life Floor	533	Spear Aquatics, LLC	738
Mad Bomber Fireworks	413	Speer Financial, Inc.	239
Matrix Fitness	115	Splashtacular	612
Mesirow Financial, Inc.	400	Spohn Ranch, Inc.	245
MGT	707	Sport Court Midwest	151
Midwest Commercial Fitness	304	Sportsfields, Inc.	240
Midwest Institute of Park Executives	806	Stageline	731
MityLite	722	Starfish Aquatics Institute	244
Modernfold Chicago, Inc. (SKYFOLD)	350	Stifel	734
MSI	614	Straughn Farm Inc.	923
Mulch Magic	210	StreetBond	640
Musco Sports Lighting	319	Studio GC Architecture + Interiors	103
MyRec.com Recreation Software	215	Team REIL Inc	715
Neptune Benson	739	TERRA Engineering	625
NiceRink	339	The Forge: Lemont Quarries	236
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PDRMA	305	Tyler Technologies	610
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Perry Weather	410	★ Upland Design Ltd	219
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Playcraft Systems LLC	232	Visual Image Photography	423
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Playground Guardian	705	Water Technology, Inc.	448
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BY TRACEY JONES, TREMENDOUS LEADERSHIP

FROM CONTRIBUTOR TO LEADER: EMBRACING YOUR NEW ROLE AND THRIVING IN

LEADERSHIP

Congratulations! You have just embarked on an exciting new journey. It is a monumental shift to leave the world of individual contribution and step into the realm of leadership. This new role will challenge you to think and act differently, moving from doing the work to ensuring others do it effectively. Here's your roadmap to embrace this shift with grace, wisdom, and strategic intent.

LEADERSHIP ISN'T ABOUT SIMPLY TELLING PEOPLE WHAT TO DO. IT'S ABOUT INSPIRING, TRAINING, AND SOMETIMES CORRECTING YOUR TEAM MEMBERS TO HELP THEM SUCCEED.

YOU WERE CHOSEN FOR A REASON

First things first: You were selected for this leadership role because you've demonstrated the qualities of a leader. Your diligence, drive, capability, and collaborative spirit have stood out, signaling that you possess the potential to take on greater responsibility. Leadership isn't about simply telling people what to do. It's about inspiring, training, and sometimes correcting your team members to help them succeed. Now, your task is to channel those qualities into cultivating the same strengths in others.

THE PARADIGM SHIFT: MOVING FROM DOING TO LEADING

One of the most significant changes you'll experience is the shift from doing the work yourself to ensuring your team is empowered and equipped to achieve goals. You'll guide, influence, and motivate your direct reports, peers, and other stakeholders across the organization to perform at their best. This new role will involve practical management and mastering the subtle art of leadership.

Remember: Leadership isn't about exerting control but creating conditions where others can excel. You'll no longer focus solely on day-to-day operations but on the bigger picture—strategic planning, long-term goals, and organizational growth.

POLITIC WELL

To be an effective leader, you must understand your organization's internal structure and how decisions are made. Much of what you achieve will come through

collaboration with other departments, teams, and entities. This requires you to navigate office politics well, build alliances, and ensure your voice is heard at the right tables.

Building strong relationships with other leaders is essential. Doing so creates a network of influence that will help you accomplish your objectives more efficiently and effectively.

MASTER THE ART OF MANAGING UP

Managing up is one of the most critical aspects of leadership. Your relationship with your boss will be vital to your success. If you want a better leader, become a better follower. That means being courageous, fully committed, and a critical thinker.

Understanding that your boss needs you to be their ally is essential. This exchange might mean offering honest feedback, proposing solutions to problems, or simply demonstrating a willingness to go above and beyond. Don't just take directions; be proactive in anticipating needs and offering value.

STEP INTO THE STRATEGIC REALM

Moving into leadership also requires you to shift your focus from the immediate tasks at hand to the larger, strategic goals of the organization. You'll be responsible for thinking about where the organization is going and how your team can contribute to that future. This commitment demands a high level of alignment between your personal values and the organization's values.



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Any misalignment, or what is known as "mission drift," can cause significant issues for you and your team. Take time to understand your organization's mission, vision, and strategic objectives so that you can lead with clarity and purpose.

UNDERSTANDING THE FIVE BASES OF POWER

As a leader, you'll need to understand the various power sources at your disposal. These five bases of power will help you influence your team and the broader organization:

1. **Legitimate Power:** This is the authority that comes with your position. People follow you because of your role in the hierarchy.
2. **Expert Power:** People will look to you for guidance if you possess specialized knowledge or skills.
3. **Referent Power:** This is power derived from being likable and respected. When people admire you, they are more likely to follow your lead.
4. **Coercive Power:** This is the ability to enforce consequences or punishment, though it should be used sparingly and with care.
5. **Reward Power:** Leaders can influence others by offering rewards, whether monetary, opportunities, or praise.

Understanding these bases of power helps you navigate different situations effectively. The key is to balance them wisely, knowing when to assert authority, offer rewards, or rely on your expertise and charisma.

FIND YOUR AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP STYLE

Another essential step in your leadership journey is discovering your authentic leadership style. Every leader has a unique approach, and it's crucial to identify yours. Tools such as the DISC personality assessment, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), and StrengthsFinder can help you pinpoint your natural leadership tendencies.

For example, are you more of a transformational leader who inspires change and innovation? Or you lean towards servant leadership, putting the needs of your team first. Knowing your leadership style will enable you to lead more effectively and authentically.

CULTIVATE A DYNAMIC TEAM

Leadership is not just about you; it's about the people you lead. To be successful, you must build and nurture a dynamic, high-performing team. Take time to understand what makes a great team member—this includes their skills, values, and work ethic. Just as importantly, study how to recruit and retain top talent.

Building a cohesive team starts with hiring people who have the right skills and fit into your team culture. Once they're on board, invest in their development. Encourage their growth, provide mentorship, and create a sense of belonging. A great leader knows that the team's success is their success.

INVEST IN YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As a leader, it's essential to commit to continuous learning. Personal and professional development should be a priority. The best leaders never stop growing—they read, seek mentors, and join networking groups to expand their knowledge and capabilities.

Consider investing in a program like the Certified Professional Business Leaders course. This comprehensive 24-week program covers everything from team building and ethics to strategy and beyond. By sharpening your skills, you'll be better prepared to navigate the complexities of leadership.

IN CLOSING

Stepping into leadership is an exciting new chapter in your career. It will challenge you to grow in ways you've never imagined, and it offers a tremendous opportunity to make a lasting impact on your team and organization. By focusing on collaboration, managing up, aligning with your organization's values, understanding the power at your disposal, and investing in continuous learning, you'll be well-equipped to succeed.

Remember, leadership is a journey, not a destination. Stay curious, stay adaptable, and most importantly, stay true to yourself. As you embrace your new role, know that you have the power to inspire others and create a lasting legacy of growth, innovation, and success.

Now, go forth and lead—your team is counting on you!

Dr. Tracey C. Jones is the author of 13 books, an in-demand leadership speaker, consultant, and podcaster, USAF veteran, and publisher. She speaks across the country on igniting organizational excellence through leader/follower synergies. She can be reached tjones@tremendousleadership.com.



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PRACTICAL PERSUASION:
5 SMALL SHIFTS
CAN DRAMATICALLY INCREASE
YOUR INFLUENCE

BY CHAKISSE NEWTON, PRESIDENT, CARDINAL CONSULTING, LLC

It doesn't matter what your job title is. If you interact with other people, **persuasion and influence are parts of your job**. As a front-facing recreation professional, it may even be *most* of your job. A study by best-selling author Dan Pink found that the average person spends 40% of their time 'selling' their ideas. Many managers spend 70% to 80% of their time trying to persuade others. What about you?



How persuasive are you? And what would it mean personally and professionally if you could be even better? Whether you are sharing the value of your park district, rallying your team to support a new idea, or trying to convince your significant other that tonight's a good night to go out for dinner, five simple shifts in your perspective can make you dramatically more effective:

1. PREPARE FOR PERSUASION.

How often do you walk into a persuasion-situation and speak “off the cuff?” If an idea or request is important to you, it's worth preparing for in advance. Ask yourself:

- What does success look like?
- Who do I need to persuade and what do they care about?
- What's the best time and place to make this request?
- What information do I need in advance?

How does this apply in a park district where no two days are alike and you're constantly managing the unexpected? You can still prepare by thinking of the *general* types of situations you face and thinking through how you can

approach them in advance. You know that at some point you will need to: motivate a staff member, address a member of the public about a program, or make a request for resources to enhance your park district. Why not have some thoughts together about how you can successfully manage those situations?

Don't forget to look for bright spots. Reflect on persuasion situations that have gone well in the past. Use those positive examples to help prepare for the future.

Preparation makes you more confident and more successful.





One of the deepest needs in any relationship is a desire to feel heard. Preparing and asking good questions is usually more persuasive than making a good point.

2. BEGIN WITH YOUR LISTENER IN MIND.

Think about the last time you wanted to persuade someone. Where did you start? Most people set a goal and begin thinking of all the ways they can convince the other person.

Put your goals on hold and think from your listener's perspective. What are his goals? What are his concerns? What questions he will naturally have on his mind before, during, and after your meeting? Are there any "elephants in the room" you need to address? What questions can you ask to learn more about him?

Most importantly, don't start by assuming you know all the answers. Be deeply curious about your listener and question your assumptions. And, during the conversation, ask lots of questions. There is a myth that persuasion is about talking. It's actually about listening and understanding. One of the deepest needs in any relationship is a desire to feel heard. Preparing and asking good questions is usually more persuasive than making a good point.

Beginning with listener's perspective instantly increases your influence and makes both you and your listener feel more comfortable.

3. SET TIERED GOALS.

Yes, you already know that you need a clear goal before you try to influence someone, but *how* you set your goal makes a difference. Many people set win-lose goals: you win if they accept your idea, but you lose if they don't. That limits your thinking and your possibilities.

With tiered goals, you create a range of successful options. Identify your ultimate objective and then ask yourself, "what are small, incremental agreements that could move us toward success?" Your listener could accept your idea, or she could agree to *part* of your idea. You could increase rapport with her, she could agree to attend an event where she would learn more, or she could refer you to someone else who might be a better candidate for your proposal. There are many ways to succeed.

When I was in sales, one of my best clients would barely give me a minute on the phone when I first called her. She was clearly not interested in buying anything. And she told me so! Getting her to agree to a ten-minute meeting was a small success that eventually led to a relationship and ultimately a three-million-dollar sale.

When you have tiered goals, there are many ways to "win" and see progress even if you don't immediately achieve your best-case scenario.

4. MAKE IT EASY TO SAY 'YES' TO YOUR REQUEST.

Wanting someone to say 'yes' and making it easy for them to do so aren't the same thing. I once made a significant pledge to a non-profit I support. But, when they sent me the letter asking for my check, they forgot to include a return envelope or to tell me where to send the contribution.



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What you do during the meeting is important, but don't neglect the subtle shifts before the meeting that can make all the difference.



Do you accidentally erect barriers that make life harder for your listener? Many people do. Barriers include everything from writing an email that's too long, to not making a clear ask, or not clarifying the exact next step your listener should take. Compare that with shopping at Amazon. From one-click shopping, to suggesting related purchases, to having Alexa keep track of your shopping list, it's easy for you to say, 'yes.' (It may even be a bit too easy.)

5. DO A DEBRIEF AFTER YOUR CONVERSATION.

You did all the preparation and had a conversation. Now what? Do a simple debrief and ask yourself what you learned:

- What went well?
- What did you learn from your approach?
- Is there any follow-up you need to do?
- What ideas can you put in your "back-pocket" so you're more prepared next time?

Using a simple debrief process can turn every experience into a learning experience that makes you more successful in the future.

What you do *during* the meeting is important, but don't neglect the subtle shifts *before* the meeting that can make all the difference. Now it's your turn.

Think of someone you want to persuade or influence. If you prepare, begin with your listener in mind, set tiered goals, and make it easy to say 'yes,' you'll **dramatically increase your ability to influence others, be the kind of person others love to work with, and yes, make 40% to 80% of your job a whole lot easier.**

Chakisse Newton was the facilitator for this year's IAPD Leadership Series. She is the president of Cardinal Consulting, a boutique strategy firm that helps organizations achieve their goals by aligning their people, processes, and communications.

She is an award-winning speaker who provides consulting, coaching, and training for groups around the world. Her expertise includes leadership, negotiation, customer service, conflict resolution and strategic communications. She also serves as faculty for the US Chamber of Commerce Institute of Organizational Management, the Buckley School of Public Speaking, and the University of South Carolina.

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PEOPLE & PLACES



Canton Park District Names New Executive Director

Canton native **Brent Wheeler** will become the new executive director of the Canton Park District when he begins his new duties in that role September ninth.

Wheeler replaces Jon Johnson who retired June 28 of this year after serving as executive director since 2006.

He holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice sciences from Illinois State University. In 2010, he earned a master's degree in recreation, sports, and tourism from the University of Illinois. He has been with the Peoria Park District since 2002, first serving as the RiverPlex recreation and wellness supervisor. In 2014, he was named deputy director of parks and recreation and has been in that position until accepting the Canton post.

Wheeler is no stranger to the Canton Park District, having served as a park board commissioner from 2011 through 2021. He has also been an active volunteer locally with several organizations and extensive youth sports coaching.

Want to Read More?

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

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WEB XTRA

Serving Your Community to the Fullest

By Jeremiah Johnson, Commissioner, Waukegan Park District

I have never (nor currently) viewed myself as a political person/influencer. Mainly, because of that reason, running for the park district board of commissioners was a very appealing option for me to help contribute to civic life and activities in my city of Waukegan. Being born, raised, a current resident and business owner in the town gave me the desire to try and do as much as I can for my community. I especially like that the position is a non-paid/pension position and no political affiliation is tied to it. I was lucky enough to grow up and participate in Waukegan Park District programs, sports and camps as a youngster, and then work for them as an employee after college in our main fitness/recreation facility.

After moving on and pursuing other ventures, I still felt the park district itch and decided to run for a board position. I initially lost on my first try, but was appointed about a year later due to someone stepping down. A year after that I was elected to a full 6-year term, and have enjoyed being able to help make decisions and provide programs, facilities and activities that keep our citizens active and engaged in a public setting.

My hopes for people seeking office as an elected park board commissioner are that they do it as an act of love and care for their community and not as a stepping stone. In today's heightened political environment, everyone seems to be forced to pick one side or the other. It is important to remember and emphasize what is best for everyone in your town, and make sure the board is all in line on big decisions. Be ready to have people from the community come and speak up on issues that they believe in. There is not enough public

engagement during official meetings these days in my opinion. Encourage people to attend meetings and write e-mails, the more voices that are heard will lead to a better chance of getting things done that your community wants.

No matter what, people will not always agree on everything. Try not to take it personally, keep an open dialogue, and try to understand the opposing viewpoint. You can't let one thing stand in the way of another, and no matter what, we all have a common ground somewhere so it's important to find that.

Be involved with the programs, facilities and workers that are out there everyday and are the face of your organization. It's often easy to go to meetings and not really know what is

happening in the facilities and programs/events you're putting on. If employees have issues or concerns, board members should know enough to be able to speak to them and help solve a problem without people feeling like they're doing something wrong. And on the converse, don't be overbearing and knit picky. Ultimately a board member is there to make big picture plans and not pick apart day-to-day operations.

I was truly shocked and honored to receive the Rising Star Award. The recognition is truly a reflection of everything that not only our district- but every district- does throughout our state and country. At the end of the day, all we have to do is ensure that everyone has a chance to enjoy green open spaces to appreciate our natural environment, have places for kids to play and have fun both in parks or sports/programs. And all our citizens be able to have access to fun, fitness, activities and the option to recreate in their lives!

“My hopes for people seeking office as an elected park board commissioner are that they do it as an act of love and care for their community and not as a stepping stone.”

- Jeremiah Johnson

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