

### PARKS AND RECREATION

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



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#### FROM THE **EDITOR**

I am not sure if you have noticed by the high temperatures, but it is the height of summer and families are headed to the nearest water activity they can find! Luckily, Illinois park districts have some fantastic offerings. It has become almost a tradition to feature aquatics in the



summer months because there are always new trends emerging and timeless lessons to share.

In this issue of IP&R magazine, the Rockford Park District has partnered with a force that has enabled residents to participate in one of the hottest new activities to hit the water since the water ski. Don't miss this story on page 14!

This is also a great time to remind everyone of the importance of swimming safety and that swimming lessons are essential for EVERYONE. Learning to swim is so important because it prevents accidental drowning and it really is a life skill that can come in handy. The St. Charles Park District has developed a strong swimming program that puts that theory into action. Read about their success on page 16.

There is also a great story about how the Park District of Franklin Park created a swim team to help accommodate the diverse population in their community on page 20. Also, check out the WebXtra on page 22 and learn about one of the newest forms of low-impact training that is helping athletes of all types with a program called Fluid Running.

Last, but certainly not least is a story that is very close to my heart. On page 24, see how Westmont Park District honors beloved Board President, Diane Main. She is one of the sweetest, most dedicated people I know and everyone at IAPD is overjoyed to see her recognized for more than four decades of service to the community. Congratulations, Diane!

So, to all of you who are in the middle of your summer busy season, try to take time to enjoy the fruits of your labor. Get out there and make a splash!

Enjoy the rest of your summer!

Warm regards,

Rachu Laur

- Rachel Laier, Editor



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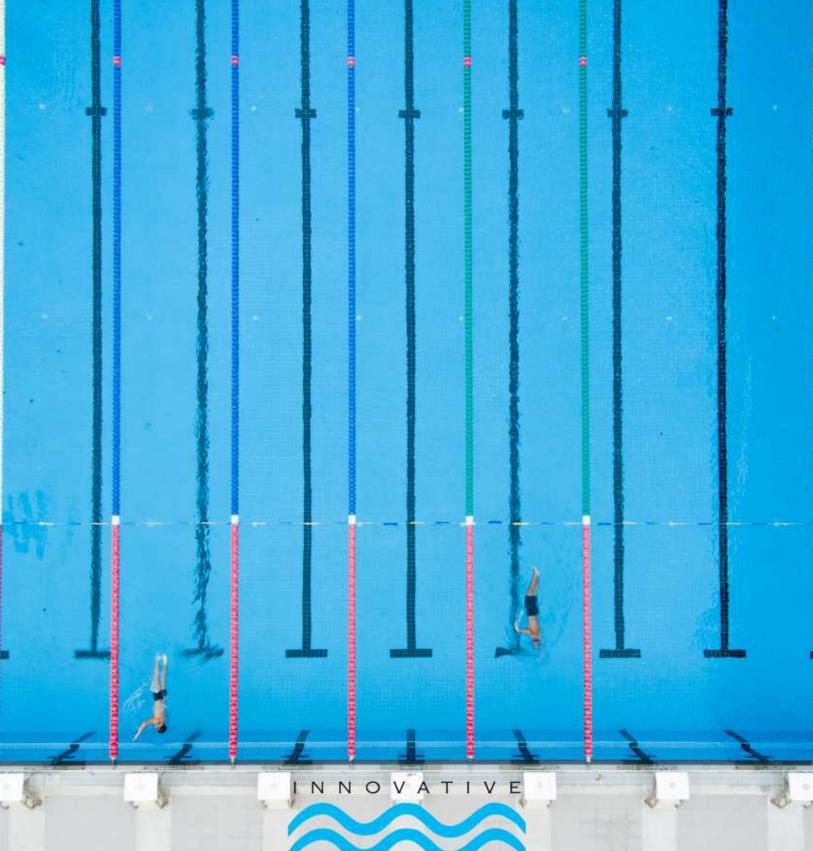
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#### GET ON BOARD



## The Successful Board President

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

What does it take to be a good board president? What criteria do board members use in selecting the president? For example, is the individual a good leader? Will the person look at this as a responsibility and an obligation, or will the individual take advantage of the powers of this position? Is the person organized? Does the individual know Roberts Rules and Parliamentary Procedures? Has the individual been associated with the agency long enough to know its goals and objectives? Does the individual have a hidden agenda or represent a special interest group? Use the criteria discovered in this article as guidelines, but remember that it is rare to find the perfect board member who has all the qualifications.

### Who should hold the Position of Board President?

Not everyone can, or should, be president of the board. It should not be viewed as an honorary title to take turns with. The president is a leadership role and should be someone who can lead the board and represent the board with the public, governmental agencies and the business community.

The president should be a motivator and create an atmosphere that is conducive to positive, productive deliberations. He or she also needs to be a good spokesperson, organizer and a great facilitator. The president needs interpersonal communication skills because he or she will need to diplomatically talk to fellow board members who might not be fulfilling their responsibilities. The president should also be a counselor for board members who are at odds with each other.

The board president should lead by example. He or she should work at building relationships with board members and the executive director and encourage meeting participation by all members.

### How Much Power Will Your Board President Have?

What should be the duties and responsibilities of the president? Some presidents want to be the chief executive. Others don't want to do anything and can barely lead discussions at a meeting. Still others feel that they have the power to make decisions between board meetings without consulting the board. Your board president will reflect the power granted that position. Describe these powers in detail in your board manual. The primary focus of the board president should be that of leadership and not power.

#### What Do You Expect from the President?

Many times, the president's job description will read: *The president shall preside at all meetings of the park district board. The president shall, subject to the approval of the board, appoint all committees,* 

and shall be an ex-officio member of the committees. However, a responsive and effective board president also:

Serves as a spokesperson and should know how to deal with the public. Some boards prefer the executive to be the lead agency spokesperson, and the president serves as an alternate spokesperson. At other agencies, this is a shared responsibility. If the president is comfortable with the media and experienced in public relations, boards are more likely to use the president as the spokesperson for the board, while the executive remains the spokesperson for the agency or for matters that are not related to board policy, but everyday operations.

A good leader is not interested in having his own way, but in finding the best way.



- Assists the chief executive in preparing the board meeting agenda.
   The president will generally allow the chief executive to develop the agenda, but will provide input for the agenda and review it before the board meeting.
- Blends in a business-like manner with a congenial and cooperative atmosphere at all board meetings. The president starts the meeting on time, follows the agenda, speaks clearly, and insists on courtesy for all members.
- Presides at all board and executive committee meetings. The
  president keeps the business flowing, diplomatically guards
  against wasting time, knows the issues, and leads the board to
  effective decisions. If a board member gets bogged down in trivial
  matters, the president intervenes by indicating that the board
  should leave the details of this matter to the chief executive, the
  person hired to solve or resolve problems.
- Obtains motions as soon as possible and focuses discussion on the topic at hand. A renowned board member for the Champaign Park District, once said, "We don't want to approve the minutes and waste the hours."

- Tries to include all board members in the discussions, especially those with minority views. The president serves as the moderator when disagreements arise. The board president needs to be prepared to take the lead in resolving conflicts within the board. The president should possess conflict management skills, be well regarded by all the parties, be viewed as impartial toward the parties and be objective about the issues. A discussion that begins as a difference in members' views on a business issue can quickly become intense and personal. Some board members may make personal attacks or embarrass others as they argue their points. The negative feelings created by public embarrassment perpetuate the dispute, even when the conflict can be settled easily. The president must make sure that meetings deal with the issues, not personalities.
- · Knows that when the exchanges get personal, it becomes difficult for the opposing board members to communicate constructively, and uninvolved board members grow uncomfortable as they observe the bitter exchanges. A skilled president encourages the parties to resolve their issues away from the boardroom. Small conflicts left unresolved tend to simmer into a stew of resentment. Early intervention by the board president can help prevent this.
- Tries to avoid closely contested actions for board decisions. If the votes appear to be even, the president should consider postponing action for the next meeting. Or, the president may appoint an ad hoc committee, representing both points-of-view to study the matter and make a recommendation for a mutually acceptable solution. Boards make decisions together on issues that impact the agency. The decisions are the result of careful study, discussion, sharing of perspectives, planning and personal opinions. Each board member has equal say in the collective decision-making process. Every board member has only one vote and that applies to the president, although the president usually gets the last vote and can decide whether to vote to break a tie or to abstain from voting.
- Understands that the president of a park board also does not have the authority to veto any action of that governing body. While it is a general rule in deliberative assemblies that the presiding officer shall not participate in the debate or other proceedings in any other capacity, the president of the park district board should participate in discussions of matters, similar to the rights of other commissioners. There is nothing improper in this practice.
- Summarizes the discussion on an issue for the record, and state the motion correctly prior to calling for a vote by the board.
- · Signs authorized contracts.
- Appoints all committees subject to board confirmation. Serves as an ex-officio member on all board committees. The president attends as many committee meetings as possible to become familiar with an issue, but does not preempt the committee chairman.
- Provides advice to the chief executive. The president has no independent authority to influence the chief executive; advice is unofficial and lacks a vested authority. It is the presidents task to administer the board, and the chief executives task to administer the agency.

Acting as board president for your agency can be a challenging but also a fulfilling and rewarding experience.

Board presidents should always consider themselves as stewards not owners of the agency.

If you look around the board table and see a leader in every chair, then you have truly become one of the top park board presidents in Illinois.

#### **2017 CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

Saturday, August 19, 2017 Park District Conservation Day IL State Fairgrounds, Springfield

Saturday, August 26, 2017 IAPD Legislative Picnic Joliet Park District and Wheeling Park District

Monday, August 28, 2017 IAPD Summer Golf Tour #3 GolfVisions Mgt. Inc. Tanna Farms Golf Club, Geneva, IL

Monday, September 11, 2017 IAPD Summer Golf Tour #4 Lockport Township Park District's Prairie Bluff Public Golf Club

September 26-28, 2017 NRPA Congress Ernest M. Morton Convention Center New Orleans, LA

Friday, October 13, 2017 IAPD Best of the Best Awards Gala Wheeling Park District's, Chevy Chase Country Club

Thursday, November 9, 2017 IAPD Legal Symposium McDonald's University/ Hyatt Lodge

January 18-20, 2018 IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference Hilton Chicago





#### EYE ON THE **PROFESSION**

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



### Water - Good for the Soul, the Family, and the Community

By Debbie Trueblood, CAE

The theme of this issue is aquatics and the importance of swim lessons. For me, I learned to swim taking swim lessons at the Brandywine neighborhood community pool in Villa Park, IL. As a teenager, I tried out jet skiing and had the time of my life. I have always loved being near water.

The importance of swim lessons goes much further than preparing oneself and one's family for water recreation, it also prevents drowning. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s website, "Every day, about ten people die from unintentional drowning. Of these, two are children aged 14 or younger. Drowning ranks fifth among the leading causes of unintentional injury death in the United States." Further, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), "Drowning is the 3rd leading cause of unintentional injury death worldwide, accounting for 7% of all injury-related deaths...Globally, the highest drowning rates are among children 1-4 years, followed by children 5-9 years." So it's important that everyone learn to swim. But, there are some populations who are at greater risk. For example, according to the National Autism Association, "Drowning is among the leading causes of death of individuals with autism." For children with autism, learning to swim can protect them from losing their lives to drowning.

But, aquatics is far more than the value of swim lessons, it is about importance of WATER. In my travels recently, an IPRA member, Kathy Renfro from the Carbondale Park District shared with me the book, "Blue Mind: The Surprising Science That Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do" by Wallace J. Nichols. In the book, the author's research shows that human interaction with water is calming and can even help people think more clearly.

This isn't news to us. There is all sorts of research out there that supports the physical and psychological benefits for human beings in just being close to water. Dating back to the 1800's doctors have recommended "sea air" for a variety of ailments. There have been so many studies on the benefits of nature for our lives in the way it makes us feel. We need to remember that being with water, like trees, has numerous health benefits for us.

President John F. Kennedy said, "All of us have in our veins the exact same percentage of salt in our blood that exists in the ocean, and, therefore, we have salt in our blood, in our sweat, in our tears. We are tied to the ocean. And when we go back to the sea — whether it is to sail or to watch it — we are going back from whence we came."

"There have been so many studies on the benefits of nature for our lives in the way it makes us feel. We need to remember that being with water, like trees, has numerous health benefits for us."



Water is more than health, it is also about family and community. My mom and I seem to find ourselves seeking water together at some point most summers. This year she traveled with me to Wilmington, North Carolina in late spring where I was representing IPRA at the International Mentoring Conference. We went out a few days early to enjoy the town and the first thing we did was a boat tour in the water. When I was at the conference, she went to the beach. For dinner one night, you guessed it, dinner at a restaurant on the water. A few years before, we went together to Saugatuck, Michigan for a "girls' weekend". We stopped at a farmers market, picked up some cheese and berries, and I fondly remember us just sitting in the sun on the beach, snacking, catching up, and solving all the problems in the world. We were watching the families with the kids, we observed that a common behavior among dads was "dipping" their young children in the water to give them a sense of the water without the fear of being swept away in it. The kids would squeal with delight and beg for more. We saw all combinations of people, moms, dads, grandparents and siblings helping little ones build their sculptures in the sand. The water and the beach, it just brought everyone together. It helped everyone to open their minds to talking, being together, and relaxing in a way that TV shows at home will never

Water bring families and communities together. It brings back memories of a summertime without homework or responsibilities when kids spent the day at the pool playing in the water. The work you do in aquatics helps people learn to swim, have confidence in the water, gives people the opportunity for that healing touch of water, and brings together families and communities. The work you do matters. It brings together families and gives them a place to be together to make those great summertime memories that will last a lifetime.

This summer, as you fill your ranks with seasonal and part time summer staff, take some time to talk to them about parks and recreation as a career choice. Show them the videos IPRA made about parks and recreation as a career, and all the "day in the life of" videos of different aspects of the profession (e.g. marketing, finance, safety, etc.). They are all available on our website or on YouTube, just google, "Illinois Park and Recreation Association Day in the Life" or go to www.youtube.com/user/IPRAssoc1815 and you'll find them all, or better yet, sit down with your summer staff and tell them your story, why you chose this profession and they will surely see your passion and maybe consider following in your footsteps.

As you enjoy the rest of your summer, I hope you make time for recreation in your personal life to spend time with your friends and families, and maybe even enjoy a local pool or water park, so that you too can have memories that last a lifetime.



### **Upcoming Events**

August 9 & 17, 2017 **Skills Development Webinar** Series (August): Survey Says: **Writing Questionnaires and Avoid- ing Common Pitfalls** director canvassing your community for feedback on its a program manager looking for feedback from program childhood professional interested in gathering input data. This session will provide in- sight into how to best survey, as well as which types of questions to choose and how to word them.

#### October 11 & 19, 2017 **Skills Development Webinar** Series (October): Improving Morale in Good Times and

From rewards and reprimands cost of poor morale along with your own personal motivators while unlocking the keys to elevating attitude and

#### October 20, 2017 **Facility Management** Workshop

The Facility Management program for IPRA members in 2017! It is a learning diverse background such as centers, athletic centers,

Attendees will receive quality agencies, learn how to create a facility portfolio, and walk away with resources that will help them enhance operational efficiencies.

#### November 8 & 16, 2017 **Skills Development Webinar** Series (November): **Emotional Intelligence in the** Workplace

By assessing your individual gain new understanding of interactions between coworkers and customers. Learn the characteristics of Emotional Intelligence and how to use the knowledge to workplace situations.

#### November 12 - 14, 2017 **Professional Development**

School (PDS) is the longest standing educational and networking opportunity offered by the Illinois Parks and Recreation Association. The tradition of park and recreation professionals attending Professional Development School goes back to the 1980's creating thousands of PDS graduates. Professional Development School provides park and recreation professionals the opportunity to gain practical application education in a small, student-focused atmosphere. PDS is committed to providing park and recreation professionals the skills, knowledge base and networking opportunities needed for personal advancement s



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

#### STATEHOUSE INSIDER

ISSUES & INSIGHTS FROM THE LEGAL/LEGISLATIVE SCENE



## Carefully Review Annual Audit and Financial Reporting Laws to Ensure Compliance

Jason Anselment
Legal/Legislative Counsel

The majority of park districts completed their fiscal year within the past several months, so now is a particularly busy time for those involved with audit and financial reporting procedures. That is because laws such as the Governmental Account Audit Act (Audit Act) and the Public Funds Statement Publication Act require certain financial documents like the audit report, annual financial report and the statement of receipts and disbursements, i.e., treasurer's report, to be completed and filed with the appropriate office within 180 days or six months after the close of a district's fiscal year.

Compliance with these audit and financial reporting laws is extremely important and requires a detailed analysis because some rules are different depending upon the amount of an agency's annual revenues. Additionally, recent legislative changes have tied some of the requirements under one law to the other. Some of those legislative changes were the direct result of IAPD's advocacy efforts at the Capitol and help save agencies much needed tax dollars.

Therefore, it is important to carefully review these annual requirements with your local counsel, accountant, finance officer or other business official to ensure compliance.

#### **ANNUAL AUDIT**

The audit requirements under the Audit Act differ depending upon the amount of an agency's annual revenues.

#### A. Annual Revenues of at Least \$850,000

The Audit Act requires local governments with annual revenues of at least \$850,000 to have an annual audit of the local government's accounts and funds, including the accounts of any officer of the governmental unit who receives fees, handles funds or who spends money of the local government. The audit must be made by a licensed public accountant and meet the minimum requirements set forth in the Audit Act.

A district's audit must cover the immediately preceding fiscal year and begin as soon as possible after the close of that fiscal year. The audit must be completed and the audit report filed with the Comptroller within 180 days after the close of the fiscal year unless a written extension of time is granted by the Comptroller.

The Audit Act requires the licensed public accountant making the audit to submit not less than three copies of the audit report to the governing body. Copies must be filed with both the Comptroller and the county clerk of the county where the governmental unit's principal office is located. The governmental unit must also make the audit report and the financial report discussed below part of its public records and open to public inspection. III

The Audit Act also requires the audit report to be filed with the Comptroller electronically unless the governmental unit provides the

Comptroller's Office with sufficient evidence that it cannot do so, in which case the Comptroller may waive the electronic filing requirement. However, typically the accountant or accounting firm who performs the audit will complete the filing as part of their contract for services with the district.

It should be noted that the Audit Act authorizes the Comptroller to charge fees for overdue or delinquent reports.  $^{^{\text{IV}}}$ 

#### B. Annual Revenues Less than \$850,000

The Audit Act's requirements for annual audits are different for agencies that receive less than \$850,00 in revenue during any fiscal year. The Audit Act does not require these smaller agencies to have an audit every year. However, many may be required to do so contractually by bond covenants, grants or other agreements. Some smaller agencies may choose to have an audit as part of their internal policies even though one may not be required.

While an audit is not required every year for smaller units of government that receive annual revenues less than \$850,000, recent changes to the Audit Act add new requirements. Beginning with fiscal year 2016, the Audit Act now requires these smaller units to either:

- i) conduct an audit once every four years in addition to submitting an annual financial report (AFR) to the Comptroller every year; or
- ii) have their governing board approve the AFR by a 3/5th vote, in which case an audit every four years is not required. To use this option, a copy of the AFR must be provided to each member of that governmental unit's board of elected officials, presented either in person or by a live phone or web connection during a public meeting.

When the legislation proposing this new requirement was introduced during the 98th General Assembly, it did not provide for the second option and instead would have required governmental units receiving annual revenues less than \$850,000 to conduct an audit of their accounts at least once every four years. As a result of concerns raised by IAPD regarding the potential costs of these audits in proportion to a smaller unit of government's budget, the legislation was amended to allow agencies that receive annual revenues less than \$850,00 per year to continue to file the AFR every year in lieu of the audit as long as the governing board approves that AFR by at least a 3/5ths vote.

Though not part of the Audit Act, those park districts, forest preserves and conservation districts that conduct annual audits now have an opportunity to save thousands of dollars each year in newspaper publication costs by publishing a short notice of availability of their audit in lieu of publishing the lengthy treasurer's report as discussed in greater detail below.

#### **ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT (AFR)**

Regardless of its annual revenues, all local governments must complete and file an annual financial report, or AFR, with the Comptroller within 180 days after the close of the fiscal year unless a written extension of time is granted by the Comptroller. Like the audit, these AFRs must also be filed electronically unless the governmental unit provides the Comptroller's Office with sufficient evidence that it cannot do so, and the Comptroller waives the requirement.

For agencies that receive less than \$850,000 in revenues, the AFR is the primary financial reporting requirement under the Audit Act.

The AFR is intended to be a short form that provides details about a local government's revenues, expenditures and other financial data. The Audit Act states that the Comptroller must design the form so that professional accounting services are not required for its preparation, but those familiar with the AFR know that it requires a significant amount of demographic and financial information about nearly every aspect of a district's funds and accounts. Consequently, if an agency is required to have an annual audit it may want to include preparation and filing of the AFR as part of the contract for services with the agency's licensed public accountant.

All AFRs filed with the Comptroller are readily available on the internet through the Comptroller's Local Government Warehouse. These reports provide a wealth of information to the public about every local government. Local governments may also use this financial information to benchmark their agency against similar local governments.

#### STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS (TREASURER'S REPORT)

The Audit Act is not the only law that contains financial reporting requirements triggered by the close of a district's fiscal year.

#### A. Preparation and Filing Requirements

The Public Funds Statement Publication Act requires each public officer who receives and disburses public funds in the discharge of government debts and liabilities to prepare a "statement of receipts and disbursements" at the end of each fiscal year that includes the following:

- (1) all monies received and from what sources received (giving items, particulars and details);
- (2) all monies paid out where the total amount paid during the fiscal year exceeds \$2,500 in the aggregate (giving the name of each individual to whom paid and the amount paid to each person);
- (3) all monies paid out as compensation for personal services (giving the name of each individual to whom paid and the total amount paid to each person); and
- (4) A summary statement of operations for all funds and account groups.

To satisfy the requirements contained in (3) above, the public officer can elect to report the compensation for personal services by listing the name and compensation of each employee in categories of \$25,000 intervals as follows:

- (A) under \$25,000.00;
- (B) \$25,000.00 to \$49,999.99;
- (C) \$50,000.00 to \$74,999.99;
- (D) \$75,000.00 to \$99,999.99;
- (E) \$100,000.00 to \$124,999.99; or
- (F) \$125,000.00 and over. vi

Note that names and addresses of persons to whom child support or maintenance was withheld and paid from an employee's wages must not be disclosed.vi

This statement of receipts and disbursements, which is commonly referred to as the "treasurer's report," must be subscribed and sworn to by the public officer and filed with the county clerk within six months after the expiration of a district's fiscal year.

#### B. Newspaper Publication Requirements

Until 2012, all districts were also required to publish a copy of this entire statement in a newspaper published in the district within six months after the expiration of its fiscal year.

Because of IAPD's advocacy efforts back in 2011, park districts. forest preserves and conservation districts now have the option to publish a "notice of availability" of their annual audit instead of publishing the treasurer's report. viii

Unlike those lengthy documents, the Notice of Availability of Audit only needs to contain the time period covered by the audit, the name of the firm conducting the audit and the address and business hours of the location where the audit report may be publicly inspected. Smaller agencies that are not required to perform the audit can choose to do so and publish the Notice of Availability or they may continue to publish their treasurer's report.

On average, IAPD member agencies save more than a \$1,000 each year as a result of our efforts in eliminating the most costly newspaper publication for most park districts, conservation districts and forest preserves. A model Notice of Availability of Audit form is available to IAPD members under the Legal Assistance section of the IAPD website at ILparks.org.

As its name suggests, the option to publish the shorter Notice of Availability of Audit is only an option if the district conducts an audit. That means that all agencies with at least \$850,000 in revenues are automatically eligible because they must have an annual audit.

However, if a district does not complete an annual audit because it is not required, and thus, cannot publish a Notice of Availability of Audit, the district still must publish a copy of its annual treasurer's report in a newspaper published in the district within six months after the expiration of its fiscal year. To summarize, agencies with less than \$850,000 may publish a Notice of Availability of Audit if they had an annual audit; otherwise they still must publish the treasurer's report.

It is very important to remember that while Public Act 97-146 saves park districts, forest preserves and conservation districts much needed dollars by allowing the option to publish the much shorter Notice of Availability of Audit in lieu of the lengthy treasurer's report, it does not eliminate the obligation to prepare and file the treasurer's report with the county.

The statement still must be prepared and filed with the county clerk within six months of the end of their fiscal year. Failing, neglecting or refusing to follow the Public Funds Statement Publication Act can result in a Class A misdemeanor and monetary damages between \$25 and \$500. In counties under 500,000, the county treasurer can withhold payment to the public official of any funds the district receives from the county collector, county treasurer, or township collector until the public official complies.x

<sup>50</sup> ILCS 310/0.01, et seq.

<sup>&</sup>quot;30 ILCS 15/0.01, et seq.

<sup>50</sup> ILCS 310/6

<sup>50</sup> ILCS 310/4

http://warehouse.illinoiscomptroller.com/

<sup>30</sup> ILCS 15/1(3)

<sup>30</sup> ILCS 15/2.1

Note that municipalities and school districts must complete similar reports under separate statutes that do not relieve those agencies of this newspaper publication notice.

<sup>30</sup> ILCS 15/5, 15/6

<sup>30</sup> ILCS 15/3a

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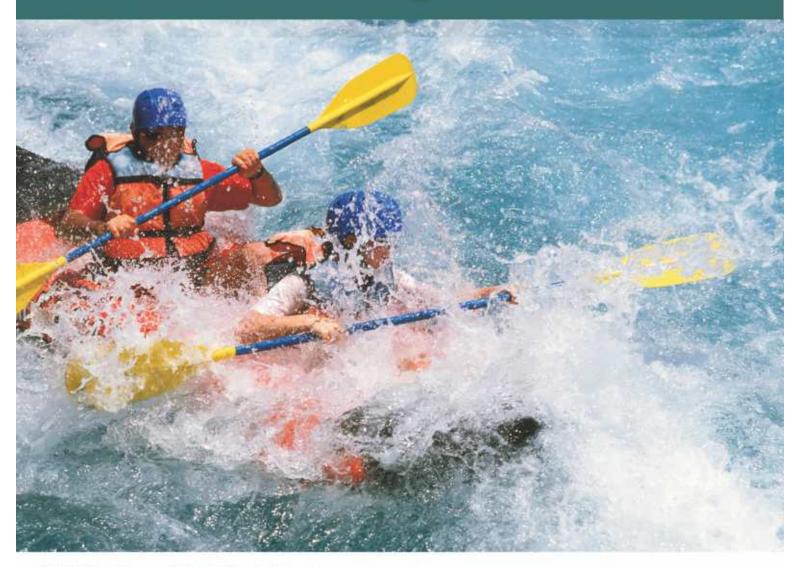


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## NO BOAT? NO PROBLEM?

Come Visit The Wake Park!

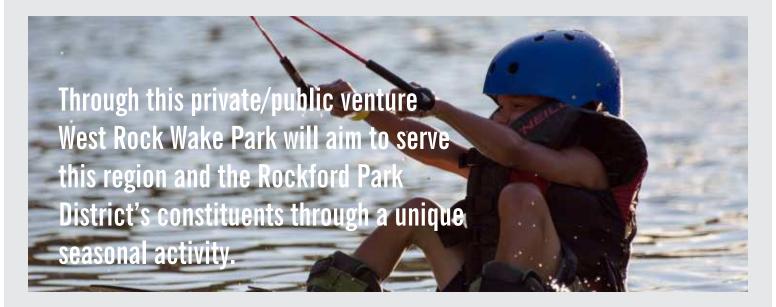
By Daniel Jarrett, West Rock Wake Park-Rockford IL

#### History:

Located on Rockford's southwest side, Levings Park was once a 135 acre farm with Kent Creek flowing through the heart of it's hilly, tree-lined landscape. In 1919, Thomas Goodsman Levings donated the farm to the Rockford Park District, and shortly after the park commissioners voted to renovate the park. Through the Federal Workforce Progress Administration program, 700 men built a dam and excavated a large area by hand that is now known as Levings Lake.

Since its conception, Levings has been an anchor in the Rockford area to many families that have enjoyed the wide array of amenities surrounding the lake's shore. In addition to being a beautiful park to walk and jog in Levings Park features: rental shelters for large gatherings and reunions, bbq grills, playgrounds, fishing, sand volleyball, basketball and tennis courts and more. Central to Levings programming is a live music series for two wonderful talent showcases: Live at Levings and Domingo en el Parke. Levings Park is truly a snapshot of what Rockford has to offer for natural beauty and cultural diversity.





Not long after Levings Lake was made, Bruno Rixen, an addicted water-skier, developed a cable system in Germany in an effort to popularize a historically cost prohibitive sport. He had seen the tourism impact on snow ski lifts during the winter months, understood the market research about the cost of boating and restriction, and aimed to bring this expensive and limited sport he loved to the masses. His design would allow multiple water-skiers the opportunity to ride at the same time around a lake, and provide investors the ability to build a business around a timeless sport with other ancillary uses surrounding the cable park. Since then, cable parks have grown tremendously around the globe with approximately 80 installations in Germany alone, 60 in France, 35 in the United States, Bali, Thailand, Philippines and many more.

In 2006, Sesitec developed a smaller modular two-tower cable system, called the "System 2.0". This innovative and technically mobile System 2.0 revolutionized what was once unthinkable for water skiing/wakeboarding by making it possible to take the sport anywhere. They have been set up in large, indoor venues like boat shows or for exhibitions in unique locations. But most importantly, the system 2.0 can be placed on smaller lakes, making lakes such as Levings, ridable. Although rider capacity is limited to one rider at a time, the System 2.0 provides a safe, quiet, and personal way to learn—Truly the easiest way to learn how to waterski. For the firsttimer and pro alike, progression happens quickly due to the amount of uninterrupted time on the water, riding continuously back and forth between each tower.

#### **Opening Season:**

Through a small group of investors that make up West Rock Wake Park, and in partnership with the Rockford Park District, city of Rockford, and Winnebago county, two linear System 2.0 cables were installed at Historic Levings Lake in the summer of 2014. With the lake's design, already established amenities and infrastructure, and proximity to bypass 20, Levings Park has proven to be a great place for a cable wake park. West Rock has served riders from all over the region and surrounding communities, truly living up to the mission of taking a historically cost prohibitive sport to as many as possible. For customers that already own boats, riding "cable" provides a more accessible opportunity to ride and also progress on one of the many features (ramps, jumps, etc), which are not found in open bodies of water. Many customers will book a reservation on their lunch break, ride, and head back to work, others will book private group sessions on the weekends and make wakeboarding a weekly routine to their summer activities, or some simply participate in many of the special events, contests, or as a great total body workout! Due to the fact that riders start close to the operator (as opposed to starting 50'

behind a boat alone), West Rock has been able to teach many riders with autism, amputees, and other disabilities and all ages (4 to 78!). In 2015, the Rockford Park District donated a specific chair made specifically for adaptive wakeboarding.

#### 2017 Expansion & Stewardship:

With a need for increased traffic flow and from market demand, West Rock is expanding to a full cable system, Summer 2017. Moving away from a reservation based system, riders will be able to show up any convenient time during open business hours, and larger groups will have a much easier time enjoying the facility. In some ways the facility will be like the snow ski environment but for the lake. West Rock will keep both linear System 2.0's as "bunny hills" training first time riders on basic skills prior to heading over to the full cable, and will look to add more concessions, day camps, and other amenities for folks not riding the cable system.

As expansion plans have progressed, West Rock and the park district have learned that this is about much more than simply adding another great offering for the citizens of Rockford and region beyond. The lake is central and crucial to the livelihood of the park, the families that use it for recreation and fishing, and is in need of preservation for the next generation. Levings Lake is a 30-acre body of water, fed through a 7,376 - acre watershed from Kent Creek in Southwest Rockford. As a byproduct of productive land uses upstream, nutrients and sediment wash into Kent Creek and ultimately settle in Levings Lake. The riding itself will help circulate and aerate the water improving water quality for riders and improve the habitat for fishing. Additionally, a product will be added to the lake called Biohavens from Floating Island International, which mimic the wetland effect in nature to remove excess nutrients from the water. Not only will local students be able to now have wakeboarding as a team sport they will also be able to study the many aspects of watershed development and conservation.

#### Beyond:

Waterskiing isn't necessarily up to baseballs' level as a heritage sport but it certainly has been around for a long time. Through this private/public venture West Rock Wake Park will aim to serve this region and the Rockford Park Districts' constituents through a unique seasonal activity. West Rock's proximity to and customer base from Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago is surely encouraging from a tourism aspect, but also being located near some of Rockford's most underserved areas has also highlighted the need for a mission to bring unity to a town separated by another river where families have driven over for years watching water skiers go by.



**WATER FUN COMES WITH** 

### AT ST. CHARLES PARK DISTRICT SWIM PROGRAMS

By Erika Young, Public Relations and Marketing Manager, St. Charles Park District

When something exceeds expectations, we say it is going "swimmingly." And if a person is active and energetic, they are known to be in the "swim of things."

There's a reason that the act of swimming is so frequently associated with positivity and energy, good health and vibrancy. It's the fourth most-popular sport in the country, it's the third most-popular fitness activity for all ages, and it's the second fastest-growing sports activity, attracting more than three million new participants.

It also leads the pack in health benefits. From improving flexibility and coordination to burning calories and providing a total-body workout, swimming is a sport that can be enjoyed by all ages and in a variety of environments – from a gym's indoor pool in the dead of winter to a cool mountain lake on a hot summer day.

So, whether you're heading to the ocean with your entire family, going out on a boat with friends, or plunging into one of the park district's splash-tastic pools, you'll have a better time having mastered some essential skills. What better way to enjoy and appreciate this refreshing resource than by knowing how to behave in and around water safely and with confidence?

Using a presentation filled with silly and serious questions about water experiences, children learn and identify how, by following the rules, they can swim safe in different bodies of water from a backyard swimming pool to water rafting on the lake, lounging in a hot tub, splashing around in a creek while searching for tadpoles and even at home in the hath tub.



Swimming only succeeds if it is done safely. That's why the St. Charles Park District has developed a variety of awareness programs and activities designed to reinforce the "Swimming Safe Saves Lives" message. It's a sad statistic, but drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related deaths for children ages 1 to 14. Teaching children to swim is a vital skill for drowning prevention.

Introduced for the first time in 2015, the park district's "Swim Safe" program was implemented in order to share water safety tips and encourage swim lessons for participants of all ages.

Each year, before the summer aquatic fun begins, the park district works closely with a not-for-profit organization, the Pauly D Foundation, to discuss swim safety in local grade school classrooms, as well as the park district's preschool, before school and after school care programs. Presentations are made to nearly 400 students, kindergarteners through 5th grade at five elementary schools and another 200 park district program participants.

The park district's Aquatic Facility Supervisors Rosie Fasching from Swanson Pool and Steve Gard from Otter Cove Aquatic Park engage children in helping to learn five important "Swim Safe" rules which promotes the five basic tenets of water safety awareness:

- 1) take swimming lessons;
- 2) read the rules;
- 3) know the water depth;
- 4) swim with a buddy; and
- 5) swim with a lifeguard or adult on duty.

Using a presentation filled with silly and serious questions about water experiences, children learn and identify how, by following the rules, they can swim safe in different bodies of water from a backyard swimming pool to water rafting on the lake, lounging in a hot tub, splashing around in a creek while searching for tadpoles and even at home in the bath tub. Rosie and Steve encourage children to answer questions with a pat on their head, snapping fingers or giving a round of applause by clapping hands in a circular motion. This activity,

along with showing a variety of pictures and props, such as lifejackets, allows children to interact with the educators; thus making the lesson memorable.

The intent is to introduce students and their families to the "Swim Safe" pledge, wherein patrons commit their support for the "Swim Safe" program when they visit each aquatic facility.

"We have a pledge posted at each facility for patrons to sign, and we keep it posted for public viewing throughout the season," said Jourden-Messerich. "It's a great way of reinforcing the rules and guidelines that should be a part of every visit to any kind of water activity."

Along with a wall poster, which is also signed by all staff members, visitors can sign their own "Swim Safe" pledge form that will be posted nearby. Each aquatic facility displays colorful "Swim Safe" posters, strategically placed throughout the locker rooms, aimed to reinforce water safety awareness. One poster focuses on preventative drowning and is sponsored by the Park District Risk Management Agency, while the other highlights how children can become superheroes – a swimmer with a towel acting as a cape -- when following the "Swim Safe" rules.

The Pauly D Foundation is the creation of Paul and Gianna Delle Grazie, whose 4-year-old son, Paulino, died in a drowning accident in 2014. It is the Foundation's mission to honor Pauly's memory by advocating for water safety and drowning prevention. The Pauly D Foundation aims to increase people's awareness of water safety and the importance of introducing swim lessons as early as possible in a child's life.

In 2017, the Pauly D Foundation is donating \$12,000 to offer free swim lessons for 3- and 4-year old children who register for the park district's Bubble Club Frogs program. Typically run on a 4-day, Monday through Thursday schedule, the 30-minute lessons incorporate a variety of activities, games and songs that encourage children to develop a lifelong enjoyment of the water while mastering essential water safety skills.

"This is the first level of swim lessons where children learn in an environment that's independent of a parent, which is something we find to be very important," said Meg Jourden-Messerich, Assistant Superintendent of Recreation. "It's the perfect age for children to start building their water confidence."

The generosity of the Pauly D Foundation is augmented by another giving program offered by the park district this year. "The Sharing Wave" is a pay-it-forward funding drive that helps children who otherwise could not afford to do so participate in park district recreational and educational programs. Interested individuals, families or groups can make donations during their regular online program registration process or in person anytime at either Swanson Pool or Otter Cove Aquatic Park. Local families can then qualify for assistance through the park district's Financial Aid Program.

"The program's tagline says it all," says Jourden-Messerich. "We really can help one more child, one donation at a time. Being able to provide recreational experiences for children is a wonderful and awesome opportunity."

Awesome opportunities abound in June with "Swim Safe" programs and events for all ages and abilities to further communicate this important message. On select days in June, patrons are welcome to participate in free (with daily admission) drop-in "Splash'n Classes" such as water aerobics, diving and water polo. And then there's weekly "Splish'n Activities" that help expand the aquatic fun while reinforcing the five "Swim Safe" rules. "Color with a Lifeguard," for

example, provides one on one interaction and discussion of water safety with special "Pool Heroes." "Cannonball Contests" stress the importance of knowing the depth of a body of water and help contestants learn the diving board rules. And the "2 O'Clock Conga Line" illustrates how to walk safely on hard and wet surfaces around the pool deck.

Both facilities even offer "Exclusive Tours Beyond the Deck" to learn more about how an aquatic facility operates, giving patrons a sneak peek behind the scenes to see how lifeguards and aquatic staff make the facility safe and fun for everyone. At Otter Cove, Ollie Otter, the mascot, is available for special photo sessions and give high fives to all those who pledge to "Swim Safe." Each experience is designed to enhance and expand water safety in a fun and entertaining environment.

And park district safe swimmers have the chance to be a part of global water safety awareness program by participating in "The World's Largest Swimming Lesson," which is held at both Otter Cove and Swanson Pool in June. St. Charles swimmers will join people from around the world to unite and break the Guinness Book of World Records for the most people participating in a swim lesson.

"It's a great program that brings a little twist to it," said Jourden-Messerich. "How often do you get a chance to break a world's record and learn an important life skill? Working with other swim lesson providers to break a world record is a fun thing to think about while stressing the basics of water safety and swimming lessons."



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# THE NARWHAL'S SWINITEAM

A DEMOGRAPHIC STORY

By Jackie Iovinelli, CPRP, Superintendent of Recreation, Park District of Franklin Park

The Park District of Franklin Park is a diverse regional agency with more than 50 different first languages spoken in the home as identified by High School District 212. Until the late 1980's the community was a typical inner ring Chicago suburb consisting of second and third generation families. Today the Elementary School District is 65% Hispanic and 31% White, included in the white percentage is a 22% Eastern European population. This shift in demographics creates challenges for our current programs to serve the needs of a changed community.

The early declines in Aquatics popularity and participation parallels the demographic evolution. To reintroduce aquatics to a new demographic required a partnership with our schools and eventually a regional outreach to attract sufficient numbers.

Our story begins with a disbanded swim team, a direct result of children aging out of the program during the first wave of new residents. Language barriers and little knowledge of park district services were the initial challenge. Transitions to adjust to new residents started in 2000 with a random sample population/ participation analysis conducted in Spanish and English. Clearly, improved communication was necessary. The agency's first marketing manager initiated a new brochure and newsletter design featuring selective translation. A tri-lingual website in Spanish, Polish, and English followed in 2002.

#### Middle School Partnership

The Mannheim Middle School, one of two local middle schools, is fortunate to have an indoor pool, one of three middle schools in Illinois to operate nine months after the outdoor season ends. Their pool was dedicated in 1976. In 2004, we forged a partnership with the school district overseeing swim lessons, adult aquatic fitness and a family swim night for the community. The partnership essentially gave us the opportunity to offer aquatics year round. Since 2004, the swim lesson program has grown with maximum numbers in two classes of 30. An interesting participation mix also developed; the lesson students are primarily Eastern European, Family Swim Night is mostly Hispanic, while the Adult swim is dominated by female seniors.

Beginning in 2009 we tried to attract the Mannheim Middle School students to take part in a summer outdoor swim team. At that time their numbers had declined. With the majority of the students from low-income families, team fees are a challenge. As a result, current swim team members are primarily Eastern European and White in a primarily Hispanic school.

#### **Renovation Sparks a Rebuilding Effort**

The park district's only swimming pool was dedicated July 26, 1969. The swim team soon followed in 1970. The team was supported by the local high school swim team. Swim team Coach, Fred Gusel, led the competitive teams through the 1990's. His close relationship with the local grade schools and middle school helped the program grow. The popular summer activity was managed by a volunteer parent board. Coach Gusel attributed the participation success to the working relationships with the local schools. Through the years former swimmers became dedicated coaches and ambassadors attracting up to 120 swimmers each summer. Slowly at first, the demographic change had an impact. Swim team enrollment slowed, coaching staff moved and parent leadership waned. The team eventually dismantled in 2000.

Two phases of pool renovation started in 2002 and again in 2008 transforming the 33 year-old neighborhood pool into the "Pool on Pacific."

Knowing there was potential from the Mannheim Middle School experience, revisiting a park district swim team was considered in 2007. A complete renovation in 2008 included a renewed look at programming possibilities. With a design that could accommodate a swim team, the Franklin Park Penguins, following our Ice Arena Mascot, were born. The program foundation was based on a noncompetitive swimming environment. It concentrated on stroke development and held small inter-squad meets. The philosophy was team and athlete centered, parent supported and coach driven.

The team struggled with low enrollment. Our coaching staff came from the local middle school swim team, yet the team had trouble attracting summer swimmers. We tried morning practice, dividing levels, working with the local college and high schools and sibling discounts with modest success.

Through trial and error, the development of a strong foundation for a successful team slowly formed. The staff's passion and dedication to the success of this program was the driving force. As a park district we knew the importance of having this program in the area.

At the conclusion of the 2012 season, our current swim team came to us with ideas and enthusiasm for this program to grow. At that point we created a plan, goals and a time line.

#### **Aguatics Consortium Contributes**

The first and most important goal was to provide the service of a swim team beyond Franklin Park. By reaching out to other local communities, with or without aquatic facilities, it was determined what populations were unable to offer a team. From this research the Western Suburban Aquatics Consortium was created and the first meeting was held in September, 2012. The group consists of the Village of Schiller Park, Veteran's Park District, Village of Elmwood Park, Norridge Park District and the Park District of Forest Park. The group was formed in part to facilitate a regional swim team and to develop strong neighbor relations with other local pools of similar size. Ideas and knowledge in all areas of aquatic facilities were shared. The group now meets every fall and spring. The consortium relationships and experience is shared and valued by each community.

#### A Coach is Found and Mascot Created

As the consortium improved our outlook, we discovered Veronica Drozdowski, a lifeguard with varsity swim team experience and the passion needed to fill our coaching vacancy. With the help of the high school Coach, she developed a program curriculum. Coach Drozdowski was challenged with creating a team mascot. After careful evaluation and research the management and coaching staff presented the Narwhal mascot to the board of commissioners. Narwhals travel in pods and swim and grow in large groups. In competitive situations, Narwhals are remarkably fast — providing great inspiration for our swimmers. They typically have a long spiral tusk that grants them the mysterious nickname "unicorn of the sea."

The Narwhal Swim Team philosophy is based on excellence in instruction and commitment to the athlete. The team promotes sportsmanship, team spirit, responsibility and individual achievement to the level of excellence desired by and within the abilities of each swimmer. The team provides fun, fitness, encouragement and friendly competition in a positive environment.

#### **Swimmers Like to Compete**

Another important goal was joining a swim conference to give participants the opportunity to use their skills and compete and learn from other swim teams. Intra-team meets were not enough. The team petitioned a local conference comprised of several large and experienced teams. The concern was that a small team of swimmers were going to be left behind and lose sight of the ultimate goal - fair competition. Other teams had the same concerns. Within a designated mile radius six teams came together and formed the new Central Suburban Swim Conference. Travel times were cut down for families, and teams would compete against teams similar in size and experience.

In 2013, twenty-six Narwhals attended 6 competitions and hosted 2 home meets. They combined recreation with competition. The swimmers perfected their technique, got stronger and swam faster. Although the team was small, the parents and swimmers grew into a tightly-knit community. That summer, at the home meet against Bolingbrook, the eight and under freestyle swimmers were neck in neck throughout the race. Over 150 enthusiastic parents were standing on their chairs to see the action, and everyone was cheering to motivate the swimmers. All eyes were on the pool as the final swimmer out-touched the visiting team by only fractions of a second! It was more than winning a race. It reflected the team spirit behind the growth of the new Narwhal's team and the promise and potential ahead.

#### **Looking Forward**

There is more to an effort than immediate results. With the wide range of challenges a new demography demands, small successes and persistence are the building blocks to expand aquatics across cultures, languages, and recreation perceptions. As the Narwhal Swim Team and related aquatic programs continue to evolve, traditional marketing and partnerships will require adjustment and flexibility as the recreation staff find new ways to reintroduce aquatic programs and services to a new community. In the 2017 season, the liveliness and team comradery continued and brought together 65 swimmers through a positive and supportive atmosphere at the Pool on Pacific. We look forward to continuing to grow the participation for years to come.



## WebXtra



### A Whole New Way to Run!

In the fall of 2010, Jennifer Conroyd was preparing for the Chicago Marathon. As part of team "10-10-10 for Ben" she and her 4 siblings were running as a Charity team to raise money for Juvenile Diabetes in support of her nephew Ben who was diagnosed at an early age. Having run 15 marathons, including the Boston Marathon and the completing of an Ironman, this was as she says "the most important race I had ever planned to do".

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-Oakbrook Terrace Park District

### PEOPLE & PLACES

#### DIANE MAIN HONORED WITH WESTMONT PARK DISTRICT DEDICATION



Front Row L-R: Luke Main, Bobby Main, Billy Main Back Row L-R: Taylor Hwan, Diane, Ally Main, Colin Hwan & Anna Main





Diane Main, President of the Westmont Park District and 2015 IAPD Chairman, was recognized on July  $4^{\text{th}},\,2017$  with one of the most prestigious honors an individual can receive: the dedication of a community park in her name. Diane also received a proclamation and a Key to the Village from Westmont Mayor Ron Gunter during the dedication ceremony.

"It is our privilege to rename Twin Lakes Park in honor of Diane Main," said Westmont Park District Director Bob Fleck. "She epitomizes the essence of community service, and we could think of no better way to thank her for the countless wonderful things that she has done for this community during her nearly four decades of service."

Diane has always been passionate about her service to others. She has been instrumental in the park district's growth from 32 acres of parks in 1978 to 137 acres today. She played a key role in the development of Westmont's Ty Warner Park, Twin Lakes Golf Club, Twin Lakes Woods, Westmont Skatepark, Ty Warner Splash Park, Westmont Senior Center and 15 parks throughout Westmont.

"It has been said that sometimes people come into your life for a moment, a day or a lifetime. It matters not the time they spent with you, but how they impacted your life during that time," said Peter Murphy, President and CEO of the Illinois Association of Park Districts. "Diane has made a tremendous impact on the park district field. She is an inspiration, and the strength and perseverance that she has displayed throughout her nearly 40-year career as a commissioner are remarkable and worthy of emulation by all."

Diane has resided in Westmont with her husband Bob for 45 years. Her greatest joys have been watching her children and grandchildren thrive, and seeing the Westmont Park District grow as the hub of the community, providing incredible programs and services for the residents.



#### Jay Lerner Promoted to Executive Director for the Waukegan Park District

The Waukegan Park District is pleased to announce the appointment of Jay Lerner to the role of executive director. Jay has been with the Waukegan Park District since September 1998 when he started as a recreation specialist for youth athletics.

George Bridges, Waukegan Park District President stated, "The park district's professional development program and

Jay's experience prepared him for succession into the executive director position. The board believed we had the best possible candidate for the executive director's position already in our organization, and that was Jay Lerner."

Jay earned a Bachelor of Science in Recreation with concentration in Sports Management and a Master of Science in Physical Education with concentration in Recreation. Both degrees are from Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. He is a Certified Parks and Recreation Executive through the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and a Certified Program Planner through the LERN Network. He completed the NRPA Directors School, Professional Development School, Revenue Development & Management School, and the Executive Development Program at Indiana University. In 2016, he was recognized by the Illinois Park and Recreation Association with the statewide Community Impact Award.



#### Belvidere Township Park District Names Mark Pentecost as the New Executive Director

The Belvidere Township Park District retained the services of the Illinois Association of Park Districts to conduct a search for the new executive director. At the May 23, 2017 Belvidere Township Park District board meeting, the board of commissioners unanimously approved **Mark Pentecost** as their next executive director effective June 19, 2017. He will be

replacing Dan Roddewig who is retiring after 31 years.

Mark came to the district in 2007 as the superintendent of parks and was promoted to the superintendent of operations in 2012. Prior to joining the Belvidere Township Park District, he was with the Hanover Park Park District for seven years. Mark has a bachelor's degree in recreation, park and tourism administration from Western Illinois University. Mark, his wife and their two children have lived in the Belvidere area since 2002 and have enjoyed the opportunity to become more involved with the local culture through opportunities with the district. Mark looks forward to continuing to serve the Belvidere community and to assist with future growth, development and recreational services. "I am excited to take on this new role of leadership in this amazing community and look forward to serving alongside the dedicated community leaders, professionals and residents that make Belvidere such a great place to live."



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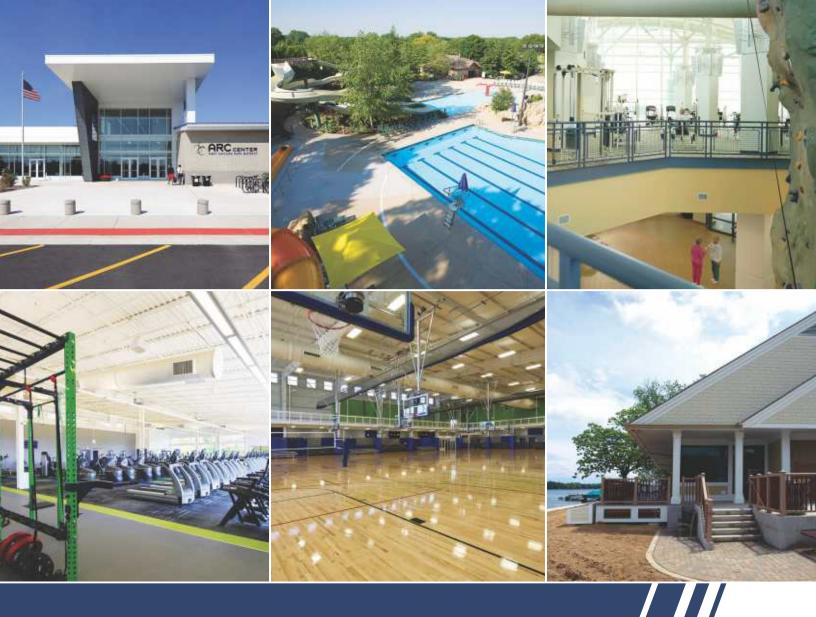
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