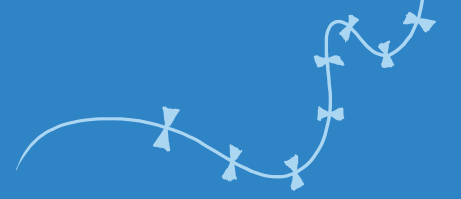
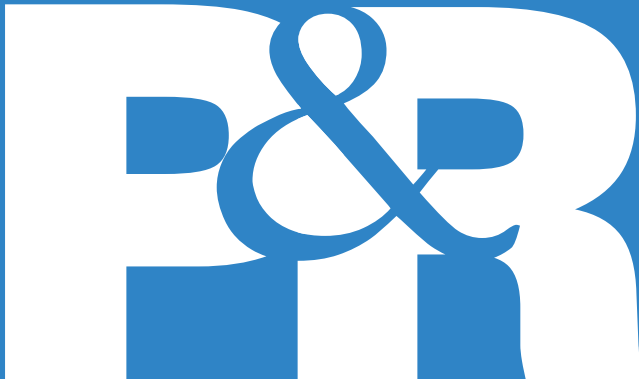


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PARKS AND RECREATION

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



the new
workplace



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FROM THE EDITOR

What is Normal?



When COVID-19 hit, everyone started talking about the “new normal.” Working from home, minimizing contact with the outside world, and finding ways to cope with a pandemic were just another day on the job.

What many of us didn't think about was what “normal” would look like as mask mandates started to loosen and transmission rates started to diminish. Coming out of a pandemic, so much of what we do has changed from flexibility to work from various locations all the way to how we all maintain cleaner environments for not only ourselves, but for our coworkers and those we serve.

This issue looks at “The New Workplace” and how things have changed, some for the better and some for the worse. Ultimately, we are all finding our footing as we step back out into what we hope is the tail end of this pandemic and we are all trying to find out what the best practices are to maintain a high quality of work while remaining safe and vigilant against a future outbreak.

In this issue, Elmhurst Park District's Kari Felkamp looks at some of the ways things have changed coming out of the pandemic in The New Workplace on page 20. Itasca Park District Executive Director Maryfran Leno looks at the shifting landscape of today's office and some of the challenges it presents in How Do We Move Forward After a Pandemic on page 24. Finally, we have two features on new technologies, with Park Protector: The Future of Public Park Safety presenting a new way to inspect your equipment on page 32 and For The Global Transportation Segment, The Future is Electrifying spotlighting electric cars and their rising prevalence on page 28.

I hope these stories give you some insights and spark some ingenious thoughts that you can use to boost your agencies effectiveness from day to day!

Thanks for reading!

— Wayne Utterback, Editor



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Photo Courtesy of: Niles Park District



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

Leading by Example

It is said time accelerates as you get older, but I think it is more a function of how busy you are, and park districts, forest preserves, and conservation districts are always busy.

IAPD is no exception, and I am amazed at how this year is off to a flying start. The state conference was a mere eight weeks ago at this writing, and we already have had a full schedule of legislative breakfasts and have completed a very successful in-person Legislative Reception and Conference.

For those in attendance at the first Springfield event without a mask mandate, I want to thank you for your commitment to advocacy. Engagement in the legislative process is what makes parks and recreation in Illinois the best in the nation!

Our success would not be possible without a collective voice, and in Illinois with your collective voice, everything is possible – which is one of the reasons the OSLAD grant program is funded at a historic level of \$56 million, and why, since the inception of the program, more than \$1.2 billion dollars has been invested in the recreational infrastructure of the state of Illinois by all of you.

IAPD's very popular Leadership Institute had its first course on April 7th which was in-person and will be followed by three additional virtual webinars. I encourage you all to take advantage of this great opportunity to build your leadership skills with the entire series being available on-demand.

There is nothing quite like the positive energy of the dedicated commissioners and professionals who contribute countless hours to improving lives through parks, recreation, and conservation.

Those of us who attended the *Soaring to New Heights Conference Awards Luncheon* witnessed this firsthand as we heard inspiring stories about remarkable award winners who exude the park, recreation, and conservation spirit and reflect the energy and enthusiasm of those who have answered the calling to play a leadership role in this great field.

It is an honor to collaborate with these remarkable individuals, and I would like to take a moment to congratulate and recognize IAPD's award winners.

Melissa Victor, Vice President of the Cary Park District's Board of Commissioners, is our **2021 Rising Star**. Melissa's involvement began in 2016 as a director on the Cary Park Foundation Board. Her leadership in this position led to popular new activities such as *Light Up Cary for a Cause* and the *Pars Under the Stars* night golf event. Thanks to her ingenuity, the foundation has donated more than \$25,000 to the park district and more than \$15,000 in scholarships to college-bound students. Melissa was elected to the park board in 2019, and she has held herself to high standards, attending every educational opportunity that she can and getting involved on the state level as a member of the IAPD Program Committee. Her 'get it done' attitude shines through every new endeavor.

Author Rachel Wolchin said,
"Surround yourself with people
who reflect who you want to
be and how you want to feel,
energies are contagious."



Jeff Fougerousse, Executive Director of the Vernon Hills Park District, is our **2021 Honored Professional**. Jeff has dedicated four decades to the park and recreation field, and he has an outstanding ability to build strong relationships that advance the mission, goals, and objectives of his agency. He encourages board member education through IAPD, and he has enthusiastically hosted several IAPD legislative breakfasts. His idea to create a quarterly local officials' get-together has strengthened bonds with other units of government and increased intergovernmental agreements. Jeff has authored articles for *Illinois Parks and Recreation* magazine and has presented several conference sessions. These things only scratch the surface of his great impact on the field.

Maryfran Leno, President of the Arlington Heights Park District's Board of Commissioners, received our **2021 Mike Cassidy Commissioner Community Service Award**. Maryfran was elected to the board in 2001, joining on the heels of a successful \$30 million referendum to replace three outdoor pools and renovate an indoor pool. She has overseen golf course improvements, renovation to Lake Arlington, and numerous OSLAD projects. She shares her expertise with a diverse array of community organizations, and she orchestrated a collaboration with the school district to purchase synthetic turf, which has increased school and community play and improved ADA accessibility. She helped create the *Hersey Heroes Virtual 5K* in support of local veterans with more than 400 participants. Maryfran's heart and soul are devoted to community service.

Jeff Rigoni, President of the Lockport Township Park District's Board of Commissioners, is our **2021 Commissioner of the Year**. Jeff has served his community faithfully for nearly 25 years. During Jeff's tenure, his park district achieved Distinguished Accredited Agency status, developed Prairie Bluff Golf Club, expanded their fitness facility, and opened the Dellwood Park Community Center. Jeff played a key role in an 80-acre land acquisition from the State of Illinois for \$1.00, which now features multiple soccer and softball fields and a spray park. His ingenuity in pursuing alternative energy has saved his park district more than \$30,000 annually. Jeff is a Vice-Chairman on the IAPD Board of Trustees and volunteers on six IAPD committees and two joint committees. He is a Master Board Member through IAPD's Board Member Development Program. Jeff emanates the spirit of volunteerism, and his selfless dedication is highly regarded by all those that know him.

We are extremely fortunate to be surrounded by these incredibly motivating individuals who are shining examples of who we want to be and outstanding reflections of how we want to feel.

May their energies indeed be contagious!

2022 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

EVENTS & EDUCATION

April/May

Flying 4 Kids Months
Statewide Kite Fly

Aug. 20



Park District
Conservation Day
State Fairgrounds
Springfield, IL

Oct. 14



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

Sept 20-22

NRPA Congress
& Exposition
Phoenix, AZ

Nov. 3



Legal Symposium
Hyatt Lodge/
Conference Center
Oak Brook, IL

Jan.
26-28



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

The IAPD Leadership Institute

Thursday, May 12, 2022
Webinar #1
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, June 9, 2022
Webinar #2
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, July 14, 2022
Webinar #3:
6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.



By Barbara Arango, CAE
IPRA Executive Director

Let's Take a Moment to Celebrate

It is an honor to be named the new Executive Director of the Illinois Park & Recreation Association. I have been blown away by the welcome I have received as a new member of the parks, recreation and conservation industry and I thank you all for that!

My background is in association management, but I am new to this amazing industry. What I've learned so far is that you all like to have fun! Even more than fun, though, is the genuine sense of mission you share. Your work brings people together, helps them grow, and provides them with programs to improve their health and well-being. These are all integral facets of building community – which is exactly what is most needed these days. It's a privilege to support you in all the important work that you do.

As I learn more about this incredible organization, I'm so grateful to the board and staff for positioning IPRA as a leader among the states and setting us all up for success. Opportunities abound for providing education and resources to you, and I know we're up to the task. It's evident that IPRA is blessed to have such a capable and dedicated group of professionals on board. I truly thank them for their efforts.

It was energizing to meet so many members at the IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference. I had the pleasure of hearing from you and learning how IPRA can best serve you during this critical time of change and opportunity. My main objective this coming year is to continue having those conversations with as many members as possible and solidify the direction of our association.

I've been so impressed by the breadth of educational offerings and programs available to members. Just a subset of the list includes:

- ProConnect
- Skills Development Webinar Series
- Professional Development School
- Section Education Programs
- Learning Labs

There really is something for everyone. I hope you will all participate in a new opportunity this year and encourage your colleagues to do so as well.

A new program for 2021 was the partnership we formed with Western Illinois University for their Summer Opportunities Fair. We were able to provide grants to 22 agencies to support their participation in the Fair. This program worked out so well that we would like to continue exploring participation with additional fairs in the future. Amidst this “Great Resignation”, IPRA will continue to look for ways to make connections and help our members fill their workforce needs.

At IPRA we value a culture of continuous improvement and will be examining all our educational offerings for ways to serve you better. We will also be exploring ways to maintain the Soaring to New Heights conference as the premier park, recreation, and conservation event in the nation. Being the best comes with the obligation to provide a leading-edge experience for our attendees and embrace opportunities to improve an already outstanding event. Your feedback is always important, so reach out and let us know how we can enhance your experience in future years.

As we prepare for a busy summer, please consider celebrating the 4th Annual Unplug Illinois Day on Saturday, July 9. Unplug Illinois is IPRA's public awareness campaign designed to encourage people to get out, unplug, play, and

engage with one another through experiences at local park, recreation, and conservation agencies. We encourage you to include Unplug Illinois Day activities to programs already scheduled for the day, plan a dedicated “Unplug” community event, or share the message to get your community out to enjoy your parks, facilities, trails, and programs. More information can be found at UnplugIllinois.org or on the IPRA website.

While you're out there, join in the fun with IPRF's “Take 5 – Give \$5 – Tag 5” challenge. Donations raised through this initiative will fund grant applications for projects that support positive mental health, accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion. The program will run from March 5 – November 5. More information is available at iliprf.org.

Looking back over the past year, I would like to recognize IPRA's flexibility as we have all adjusted to living with this pandemic. We have continued to utilize the webinar format for some programs and have found increased participation using this content delivery option. Taking advantage of technology gave us the ability to easily reach our members in all parts of Illinois. This has been an unexpected benefit that we plan to maintain where possible. When feasible, we have also begun bringing people back together by hosting many of our signature events and the IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference in person. The team worked hard to balance inclusivity and safety to provide the value our members wanted and the connection we have all missed.

So much of what IPRA offers is dependent on you volunteering your time and talent to this association. Your contributions are wonderful examples of members supporting each other and giving back to this community. In the coming year, one of the areas I want to focus on is making sure our volunteers have an outstanding experience and can contribute to whichever area is of interest at whatever level works best. There are many ways to get involved via our Sections and Committees. I guarantee you will find the work rewarding and make some new friends in the process. You can easily complete the Volunteer Form, available on the IPRA homepage, to get started. Just think of what we can accomplish together!

I'd like to end with a Leslie Knope quote. I'm sure you all are tired of the Parks and Rec references, but I'm new – so indulge me. "Now go find your team. Get to work. Whatever that work is that you find worth doing. Do it and find some people to love who'll do it with you." I feel blessed to have found this “team” to work with, learn with and laugh with. What an honor to be part of this community.

IPRA Upcoming Events

May 11 or May 19 Emerging Technologies for Integrating Nature and Health Webinar

Presented by Teresa Penbrooke, Founder of GreenPlay, LLC. Parks & recreation can provide front line access to the benefits of nature. This session includes a brief introduction to Nature Therapy, along with how equitable access to nature can be measured, managed, and increased.

June 8 or June 16 Micro-Aggressions and Unconscious Bias Webinar

Presented by Tracey Crawford, Executive Director at Northwest Special Recreation Association.

As we learn to embrace diversity, equity and inclusion in our workplaces and lives, we cannot tolerate offensive language, actions or deeds if we truly intend on building a work culture and environment where every employee feels they can be their true selves.

June 30, 2022 Safe Zone Conversation: LGBTQ+ Webinar

In celebration of Pride Month (June), you are cordially invited to participate in IPRA's member-wide Safe Zone Conversation on the topic of LGBTQ+. It is an environment of mutual respect and inclusivity, a safe place for people to speak their minds. Registration is limited to the first 40 people, so don't miss out!

For details, and to register, visit ILipra.org



Unplug Illinois Day Saturday, July 9, 2022

On Saturday, July 9, 2022, communities across Illinois will celebrate Unplug Illinois Day! People will ditch their electronic devices and ‘unplug’ to enjoy everything their local park, recreation, and conservation agencies have to offer.

Unplug Illinois encourages people to get out, unplug, play, and engage with each other through experiences at local park, recreation and conservation agencies.

What's your outlet?
unplugillinois.org





Jason Anselment
General Counsel

Take Advantage of a Rare Opportunity in the Coming Weeks

The General Assembly's accelerated legislative schedule this spring prompted numerous changes to our annual legislative awareness events. In fact, right now we would be fast approaching the IAPD Legislative Conference and Reception, which are typically held in May. Of course, this spring's events were necessarily moved to March because the General Assembly's adjournment date on April 8 meant lawmakers would not be in Springfield this May.

The Joint Legislative Committee was also fully prepared to return to an in-person legislative breakfast format in February and March, but the condensed legislative calendar left only a handful of non-session dates for hosting this year's breakfasts. Consequently, five regional breakfasts were held rather than the twelve that are ordinarily hosted locally. Travel time to regional breakfasts during an already accelerated session schedule, which also included legislative committee hearings on non-session days when breakfasts are held, would likely have precluded many legislators from attending in-person events. So, this year's breakfast program was held virtually to accommodate the legislative schedule.

Despite these obstacles, all these events were highly successful as the IAPD membership engaged with a total of 90 legislators in a matter of five weeks.

While the accelerated session calendar created challenges during the first few months of 2022, it now presents a rare opportunity for IAPD member agencies. Normally lawmakers work very long hours at the Capitol during the entire month of May, but this year they will be back in their legislative districts. This means there will be time to welcome your legislators to tour your facilities in the spring and invite them to events during the Memorial Day holiday weekend when they are almost always in Springfield.

As we have often stated, inviting legislators to your facilities for a personalized tour is one of the best ways to raise awareness about your agency and provides legislators with their own personal experiences. Offering a firsthand look at your programs, facilities, and services gives legislators a unique perspective and provides memories they can recount as they consider your agency's needs. Then, as they debate future legislation that impacts your agency's ability to offer services, they will be able to recall the positive images of your program and facilities.

Similarly, when you contact your legislators about an issue, they will associate you and your agency with those positive images. Tours of your facilities create those connections. With IAPD member agencies in every legislative district, this important step can have a major impact on our advocacy efforts if all IAPD member agencies participate.

A site visit can also help demonstrate some of the ways in which investments in park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation, and special recreation agencies pay significant economic dividends. For instance, activities like youth sports tournaments generate business activity for hotels, restaurants, convenience stores, and retail establishments while also helping to create jobs. The spring and summer are good seasons to showcase the important role that teens play in your agency's operations. These jobs offer valuable training and experience for our future workforce as teens serve as lifeguards, referees, umpires, and junior camp counselors, which teaches responsibility, leadership, and other life skills.

While touring your facilities, you can highlight the critical role your agency has played during the pandemic while validating other essential services that are delivered to the community at all times. For example,

- Convenient and affordable access to health and wellness programs and recreational facilities help citizens maintain healthy lifestyles and reduce medical costs.
- Before and after school care programs offer safe, convenient, and affordable places for children of working families during critical hours when school is not in session.
- Accessible parks, playgrounds, recreational facilities, and programs provide critical support for children and adults with special needs.
- Senior services offer opportunities to participate in activities that provide physical and mental stimulation as well as valuable socialization.

Again, these are only a few ideas, and agencies should also highlight the essential services they provided during the pandemic.

With legislators returning to their districts in April rather than June this year, there is an expanded opportunity to have them out to programs and events they may have missed these past two years because of the pandemic. Moreover, many new faces have joined the General Assembly since the beginning of the pandemic, so some legislators may never have had the opportunity for an official visit.

Please let IAPD know about your site visits by emailing me at janselment@ilparks.org so we can continue to track our collective outreach.

Update Your Illinois Park District Law Handbook
Order Online at ILparks.org

CPI Rate for 2022 Property Tax Levy Year is 5.0%

As agencies are planning for their annual tax levy process, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) “cost of living” or inflation percentage to use in computing the 2022 tax levy (taxes paid in 2023) under PTELL is 5.0%.

Section 18-185 of the Property Tax Code defines CPI as “the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers for all items published by the United States Department of Labor.” This index is sometimes referred to as CPI-U. Section 18-185 defines “extension limitation” as “the lesser of 5% or the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index during the 12-month calendar year preceding the levy year” (emphasis added).

For the 2022 tax levy year (taxes paid in 2023), the CPI to be used for computing the extension limitation is 5.0%. The CPI is measured from December 2020 to December 2021. The U.S. City Average CPI for December 2020 was 260.474 and for December 2021 was 278.802. The CPI change is calculated by subtracting the 2020 CPI of 260.474 from the 2021 CPI of 278.802. That amount, 18.3, is then divided by the 2020 CPI of 260.474, which results in 7.0% CPI. PTELL limits the CPI adjustment to the lesser of 5% or the actual percentage increase, so this year’s CPI rate is 5%.

Information on PTELL may be accessed through the Illinois Department of Revenue’s Web site at www.tax.illinois.gov under the “Local Governments” link, and the “Property Tax” link and then under “General Information and Resources”. Choose the “Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL)” link under the “General Information” heading. You can also visit the Tools page of the IAPD website at ILparks.org for additional information.

Year	December CPI-U	% Change From Previous December	% Use for PTELL	Comments	Levy Year	Year Taxes Paid
1991	137.900					
1992	141.900	2.9%	2.9%		1993	1994
1993	145.800	2.7%	2.7%	(5 % for Cook)	1994	1995
1994	149.700	2.7%	2.7%		1995	1996
1995	153.500	2.5%	2.5%		1996	1997
1996	158.960	3.6%	3.6%		1997	1998
1997	161.300	1.5%	1.5%		1998	1999
1998	163.900	1.6%	1.6%		1999	2000
1999	168.300	2.7%	2.7%		2000	2001
2000	174.000	3.4%	3.4%		2001	2002
2001	176.700	1.6%	1.6%		2002	2003
2002	180.900	2.4%	2.4%		2003	2004
2003	184.300	1.9%	1.9%		2004	2005
2004	190.300	3.3%	3.3%		2005	2006
2005	196.800	3.4%	3.4%		2006	2007
2006	201.800	2.5%	2.5%		2007	2008
2007	210.036	4.08%	4.1%		2008	2009
2008	210.228	0.1%	0.1%		2009	2010
2009	215.949	2.7%	2.7%		2010	2011
2010	219.179	1.5%	1.5%		2011	2012
2011	225.672	3.0%	3.0%		2012	2013
2012	229.601	1.7%	1.7%		2013	2014
2013	233.049	1.5%	1.5%		2014	2015
2014	234.812	0.8%	0.8%		2015	2016
2015	236.525	0.7%	0.7%		2016	2017
2016	241.432	2.1%	2.1%		2017	2018
2017	246.524	2.1%	2.1%		2018	2019
2018	251.233	1.9%	1.9%		2019	2020
2019	256.974	2.3%	2.3%		2020	2021
2020	260.474	1.4%	1.4%		2021	2022
2021	278.802	7.0%	5.0%		2022	2023



2022
IAPD/IPRA
**SOARING to
NEW HEIGHTS**

CONFERENCE AWARDS

IAPD

The Illinois Association of Park Districts recognized the shining stars of Illinois parks, recreation, and conservation at the 2022 *Soaring to New Heights Conference*. Congratulations to all our individual and agency winners, and thank you for going above and beyond to keep Illinois park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation, and special recreation agencies among the nation's best!

COMMISSIONER OF THE YEAR



Jeff Rigoni, Lockport Township Park District

MIKE CASSIDY COMMISSIONER COMMUNITY SERVICE



Maryfran Leno, Arlington Heights Park District

RISING STAR



Melissa Victor, Cary Park District

HONORED PROFESSIONAL



Jeff Fougousse, Vernon Hills Park District

IAPD OUTSTANDING LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP AWARD

Senator Cristina Castro
Senator Donald P. DeWitte
Representative Marcus C. Evans, Jr.

ILLINOIS DISTINGUISHED PARK AND RECREATION ACCREDITED AGENCY AWARD

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On January 28, 2022, the Illinois Park & Recreation Association (IPRA) honored the following individuals and park and recreation agencies for their commitment and excellent service to parks and recreation in Illinois.



All Conference Awards Luncheon Winners

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR



Erika Rubo - Itasca Park District

PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR



William McAdam - Downers Grove Park District

COMMUNITY IMPACT



Julie Rhodes - Woodridge Park District

ROBERT ARTZ LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Michael Clark - Palatine Park District

CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE



Oak Brook Park District

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING AWARD WINNERS

Outstanding Park & Facility Overall Winner

Community Park District of LaGrange Park - Memorial Park Multi-Sports Complex

Outstanding Park Division

Northfield Park District - Clarkson Park

Outstanding Park Division II

Naperville Park District - Wolf's Crossing Community Park

Outstanding Facility Division I

Byron Forest Preserve District - PrairieFire Golf and Grill

Outstanding Facility Division II

Northbrook Park District - Techny Prairie Activity Center

Outstanding Program & Special Event Overall Winner

Fox Valley Park District - eCARE

Outstanding Program Division II

Plainfield Park District - Scout's Summer Fun Hunt

Outstanding Special Event Division I

Byron Forest Preserve District - PrairieFire Invitational

Outstanding Special Event Division II

Geneva Park District - Santa's Special Delivery

Exceptional Workplace Award

Bloomington Park District
Plainfield Park District
Naperville Park District
Woodridge Park District

A&F Section Distinguished Member of the Year

Laure Kosey - Oak Brook Park District

C&M Section Distinguished Member of the Year

Laura Finch - Oswegoland Park District

DIV Section Distinguished Member of the Year

Manuel Aguilar - NWSRA

FM Section Distinguished Member of the Year

Katy McKinnon - Lombard Park District

PNRM Section Distinguished Member of the Year

Dave Brooks - Schaumburg Park District

REC Section Distinguished Member of the Year

Theresa Grodsky - Six County Senior Games

TR Section Distinguished Member of the Year

Jill Mukushina - NWCSRA



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The 2021 IP&R Magazine Photo Contest Awards

Congratulations to all our 2021 Give Us Your Best Shot Photo Contest Winners!

The *Give Us Your Best Shot* photo contest winners were announced at the Soaring to New Heights Virtual Conference.



SPORTS

1st Place
Amy Weiland
Oswegoland Park District
"Soccer Shots"

2nd Place
Cassidy Schmidt
Palatine Park District
"Focus & Power"

3rd Place -
Mike Terson
Buffalo Grove Park District
"Sweet Swing"



WILDLIFE

1st Place
Nicholas McCarney
Sycamore Park District
"Bunch of Bobos"

2nd Place
Justin Sienkiewicz
Schaumburg Park District
"Red Tailed Hawk"

3rd Place -
Chad Merda
Forest Preserve District of Will County
"Pileated Woodpecker"





RECREATION/ PEOPLE AT PLAY

1st Place
Ann Marie Buczek
Park District of Oak Park
"Dance Showcase"

2nd Place
Sari Pina
Glenview Park District
"Park Hoppers"

3rd Place -
Geneva Slupski
Rolling Meadows Park District
"I..."





NATURE/ LANDSCAPES

1st Place
Jeff Cohen
Park District of Highland Park
“Not of This World”

2nd Place
Nicholas McCarney
Sycamore Park District
“Fungus Among Us”

3rd Place -
Alexis Di Ulio
Urbana Park District
“The Boardwalk”



A heartfelt thanks to everyone who submitted a photo in 2021.





THE NEW WORKPLACE

BY **KARI FELKAMP**, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING FOR THE ELMHURST PARK DISTRICT

When you're thrust into a worldwide pandemic, it's hard to imagine that any good may come of it. But disruption leads to adaptation, and so many agencies have reimagined how they operate, and many of those concepts are here to stay. The new workplace is an exciting one to say the least! From virtual programming to new technologies and work from home policies, agencies across the state have stepped up their game and proven that, even in the most trying times, the park and recreation industry is thriving!



VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Being efficient is the name of the game. Finding new ways to streamline processes and reach the community is essential. Many agencies have found ways to do just that.

Jessica Cannaday, Executive Director of the Community Park District of LaGrange Park, realized quickly that virtual meetings weren't going away.

"Virtual options are not going to go away for us," Cannaday said, "We hosted a hybrid public input meeting for our Comprehensive Master Plan, and with the use of Google Jamboard, we were able to create a completely parallel experience for those attending virtually and in-person. We had 15 people participate in-person and 40 participate virtually – making this one of the best attended input meetings we've had."

Park Ridge Park District has seen a similar experience and plans to continue virtual options for things like program open houses and community input meetings.

"We found we had better attendance virtually than in person, and we can easily record the meetings, allowing us to then post it on our website to have the information available for all residents to access," said Margaret Holler, Marketing and Public Relations Director.

The Elmhurst Park District management team conducts virtual "huddles" on Mondays and Wednesdays and has no immediate plans to move back to in-person. With staff spread throughout town at various facilities, it has made sense to keep the meetings virtual from an efficiency standpoint.

While some agencies have gone back to in-person board meetings, the Downers Grove Park District continues to allow a Zoom option for the public, and all district-wide trainings and meetings continue to be held via Zoom to assist with efficiency.



TECHNOLOGY'S ROLE IN THE NEW WORKPLACE

Technology has played a huge part in successes as well – and not just from the obvious stand point of Zoom, web cams, and laptops vs. PCs. But organizations have had to adapt and leverage technology to improve employee engagement and recruiting in response to the changing workplace.

Elmhurst Park District recently implemented BambooHR, a Human Resources Information System (HRIS), which allows for greater employee communication, engagement, and streamlines many administrative tasks. Staff has noticed immediate benefits since its implementation in January. Onboarding is now a seamless event. New hires receive step-by-step instructions that are welcoming and easy to understand, and they can even complete their onboarding “paperwork” directly on their mobile devices. Supervisors are able to see the tasks they should complete for the new hire and see responses to fun questions that HR was able to build into the process. As a result, supervisors can customize a welcome basket full of the new staff person's favorite things!

“Announcements, documents, and links that were once limited to those with network access are now available with a mouse click,” said Julie Bruns, Division Manager of HR for Elmhurst, “From an administrative side, tracking trainings is now automated, and this is just the tip of the iceberg! We're excited to see what BambooHR can do for our district!”

THE AGE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

If someone would've asked me two years ago if the printed brochure would go away, my response would've been “Not any time soon.” Many of us marketing professionals in the field knew that the brochure was often our number one marketing tool. Residents regularly told us it was how they preferred to get information about park district programming, and they wanted the copy in their hands. In Elmhurst for example, if the printed brochure copy hit mailboxes even a few days late, residents would call to find out when they could expect it. For many people, there's just something about getting the copy in your mailbox, flipping through it, and then circling the programs you're interested in or ear marking pages ahead of registration.

But again, disruption leads to adaptation. When COVID hit, things were changing so quickly for our agencies, and getting correct information out to the community in a timely manner was essential. Many agencies went purely digital with their brochure at that time, and many of us worried if residents would be okay with that. For Elmhurst, we quickly learned that people had no problem finding the information. In fact, fall 2021 registration numbers were larger than the previous five years of fall registration. When we realized that people were finding the information and registering despite not having a printed copy, we had to assess what would happen to the brochure. So we asked the community. The community told us that they were fine with it either way so rather than going back to printing and mailing 19,000 copies, we gave residents the option. Approximately 2,200 people have since requested a mailed copy, and we now print a total of 3,000 copies per season, which will save the district approximately \$75,000 annually.

In Park Ridge, the brochure has remained digital, but this year they've added a 16-page piece mailed quarterly to every resident. The piece spotlights special events, new programs, and other information that would be of interest district-wide such as large capital projects. Most importantly, it serves as a prompt to residents that the full brochure will be released digitally. The mailed piece is targeted to be delivered to resident's mailboxes the week the brochure is released online.

Bolingbrook Park District recently launched a new website and brochure information is integrated into the site while also having a virtual flipbook version available. They also print 1,000 copies of the brochure as a segment of their population still prefers that.

"About 75% of people use the integrated version while the rest prefer to view the online version of the brochure," said Kim Smith, Director of Marketing and Customer Care at Bolingbrook Park District, "A small percentage wanted the printed version, but the new website makes it easier than ever to find programs, and as people get used to that, I think they'll move away from the printed version."

THE PHYSICAL WORKPLACE

When the statewide shut down occurred, everyone was forced home. While not all agencies embraced the work-from-home lifestyle, those who did realized that it was possible to keep things running effectively. As time went on, some agencies created policies to allow staff the flexibility to work from home.

At the Deerfield Park District, a Flexible Work Week Program was created that allows for either a telework schedule or a compressed work schedule. The program is open to any full-time staff member if their department's efficiency and effective services are not interrupted by the new schedule. The telework schedule allows the employee to work from home one day a week, and the compressed work schedule allows an employee to work a traditional 40-hour week in four 10-hour days.

"This program has been in the works for a few years to align with the organization's strategic plan and goal of reducing emissions," said Shannon Heidkamp, Human Resources Manager for the Deerfield Park District. "When the pandemic required the shift to work from home, it proved that productivity was still achieved in a flexible work environment."

The ability to work in a different environment has helped many stay focused, and the Deerfield Park District has found that the compressed work week makes others more productive as well.

"Staff feedback has been overwhelmingly enthusiastic noting that it is a great benefit. This is a tangible benefit which enhances the work-life balance. The overall program benefits are twofold: We have happier and more productive staff along with eliminating approximately 925 pounds of CO2 per month!"

The benefits of working from home aren't just for the employee. They extend to the employer in a large number of ways, including streamlined communication, increased job satisfaction, increased productivity and even retention and recruitment, according to indeed.com.

At the Elmhurst Park District, a remote work policy was established in 2021 after it was made clear that certain positions could successfully be done off site. It was important to develop the policy in order to remain competitive in attracting and retaining talent.

"During the last two years, so many people have become accustomed to working from home and proven they can be productive," Elmhurst Park District Executive Director Jim Rogers said, "Our industry promotes and encourages balance in our daily lives, and I think it's important to recognize that staff need that too. We want our employees to have a good work/life balance, and in order to retain our quality staff and attract top talent, we have to allow for that flexibility."

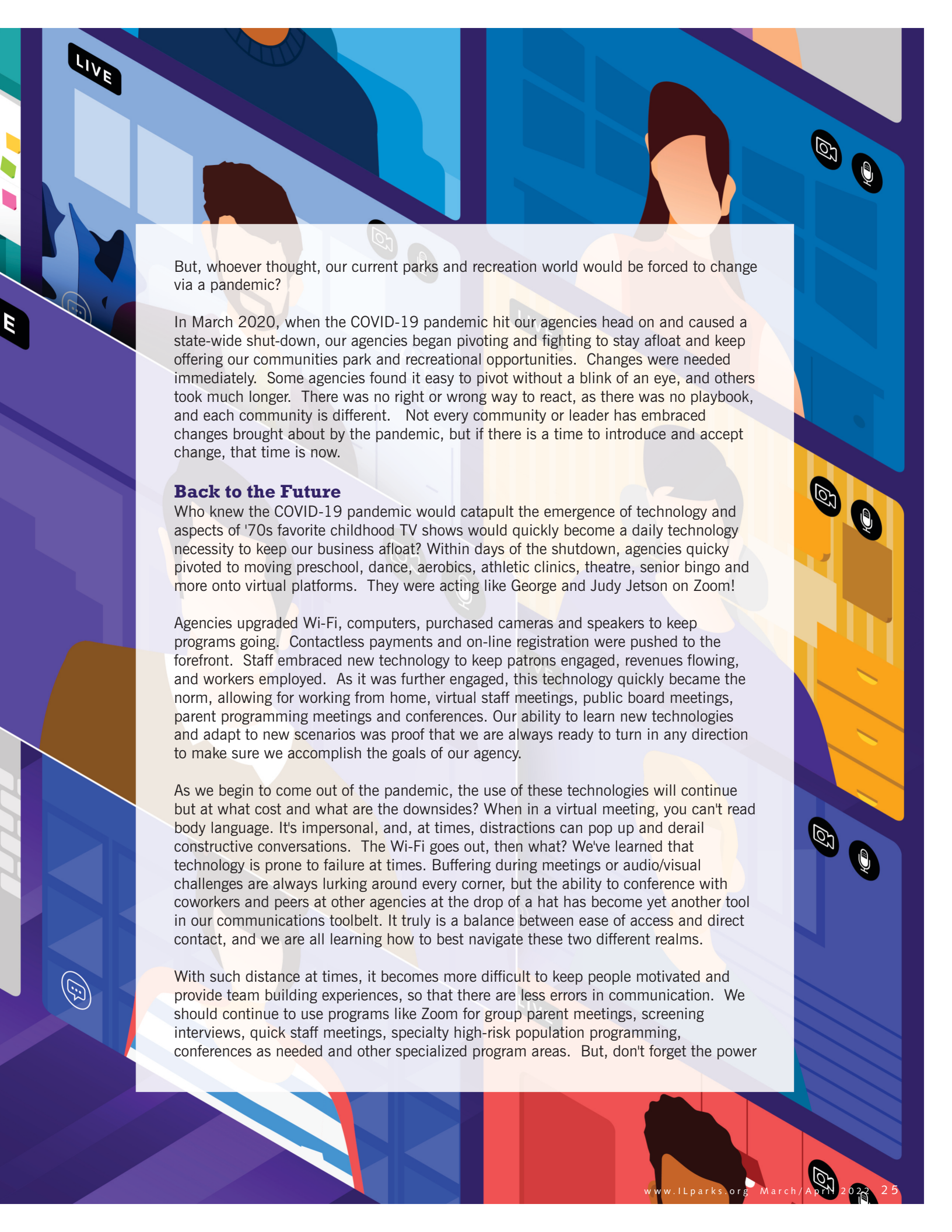
It's exciting to see so many agencies continuing to adapt and thrive as we've navigated these last two years, and I look forward to seeing how our industry continues to adapt and grow!

There is something to be said about agency history, doing things the same way, the safe way, and watching how your agency got to where it is today: iconic community events, evolving recreational opportunities, golf outings, printed seasonal brochures, Memorial Day pool openings, ice rinks and playgrounds at every park, an abundance of parent volunteers and staff to choose from. The list goes on.

How Do We Move Forward After a Pandemic

By Maryfran H. Leno, Executive Director, Itasca Park District





But, whoever thought, our current parks and recreation world would be forced to change via a pandemic?

In March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit our agencies head on and caused a state-wide shut-down, our agencies began pivoting and fighting to stay afloat and keep offering our communities park and recreational opportunities. Changes were needed immediately. Some agencies found it easy to pivot without a blink of an eye, and others took much longer. There was no right or wrong way to react, as there was no playbook, and each community is different. Not every community or leader has embraced changes brought about by the pandemic, but if there is a time to introduce and accept change, that time is now.

Back to the Future

Who knew the COVID-19 pandemic would catapult the emergence of technology and aspects of '70s favorite childhood TV shows would quickly become a daily technology necessity to keep our business afloat? Within days of the shutdown, agencies quickly pivoted to moving preschool, dance, aerobics, athletic clinics, theatre, senior bingo and more onto virtual platforms. They were acting like George and Judy Jetson on Zoom!

Agencies upgraded Wi-Fi, computers, purchased cameras and speakers to keep programs going. Contactless payments and on-line registration were pushed to the forefront. Staff embraced new technology to keep patrons engaged, revenues flowing, and workers employed. As it was further engaged, this technology quickly became the norm, allowing for working from home, virtual staff meetings, public board meetings, parent programming meetings and conferences. Our ability to learn new technologies and adapt to new scenarios was proof that we are always ready to turn in any direction to make sure we accomplish the goals of our agency.

As we begin to come out of the pandemic, the use of these technologies will continue but at what cost and what are the downsides? When in a virtual meeting, you can't read body language. It's impersonal, and, at times, distractions can pop up and derail constructive conversations. The Wi-Fi goes out, then what? We've learned that technology is prone to failure at times. Buffering during meetings or audio/visual challenges are always lurking around every corner, but the ability to conference with coworkers and peers at other agencies at the drop of a hat has become yet another tool in our communications toolbelt. It truly is a balance between ease of access and direct contact, and we are all learning how to best navigate these two different realms.

With such distance at times, it becomes more difficult to keep people motivated and provide team building experiences, so that there are less errors in communication. We should continue to use programs like Zoom for group parent meetings, screening interviews, quick staff meetings, specialty high-risk population programming, conferences as needed and other specialized program areas. But, don't forget the power



of a meeting or presentation in person, and that face to face, in-person human contact. It's those strong bonds we formed before the pandemic that allowed us to still maintain our high level of work performance during lockdown.

Creating the Office of Today

Work from home? Casual attire? Flexibility? Burn out? Higher pay? The COVID pandemic pushed millions into unemployment, millions to “work from home,” and millions deemed essential who went into work in-person. Agencies were quite flexible with working from home, casual attire in the office, providing needed technology and the abilities to tend to loved ones at home. Two years later, we have an industry filled with worn down employees that have done nothing but attempt to be everything for everyone during this pandemic. The challenges with staffing now point to:

- a lack of employees to fill both full-time and part-time positions
- a need for salary increases to retain existing staff and attract new employees
- fears of coming back into the workplace because of COVID
- a desire to continue working from home
- employees that have been doing jobs of two or three workers, leading to severe exhaustion

Staffing is one of our industry’s biggest problems right now. Burn out is happening at every agency and more executive directors will be retiring in 2023, with less people to fill the vacancies. The COVID pandemic has pushed many people to their limits, feeling over worked and some underappreciated. What cost effective measures can we

put in place to assist with our current staff? Are we training staff to step into our shoes? We must start building our workforce back up to where we were prior to the pandemic and fill those open positions with talented staff who are ready to lead parks and recreation into this new world we are walking into post-COVID.

We should survey park and recreation students and professionals and learn what they are looking for in a “new workplace.” Do we need to change our work environments to entice and retain staff? What types of flexibility are appropriate for certain positions? Is the ability to work from home becoming a necessity? Casual dress everyday or denim on Fridays only? Is it all about the money? We need to answer these questions quickly, and change where we can, so current and future employees continue to be successful in this field.

What Have We Learned and What Will We Retain?

If our employees are successful, then our industry can continue to provide top notch services. Our industry never gave up providing essential programming and services to our communities even during the darkest times. Many changes you will not see go away soon: “Snow days” can now forever be “e-learning days.” Want to get more parents attending pre-season sport meetings? Go virtual! The cleaning and disinfection of facilities will never look the same again. Patron expectations of germ-free facilities will not go away, so an increase in budgets to clean will not disappear. Fitness centers that provided towel service pre-pandemic are now obsolete. Staff will be thinking

twice about facility room capacities, especially with children and senior populations. It will be a long time before there will be high fives or hand shakes between opposing team members – so, for now, it is an elbow exchange or friendly wave from the opposite side of the net or field.

Lastly, park and recreation agency facility space will continue to be successful and efficient spaces for mass community needs, such as vaccinations, flu shots, blood drives and more. During the pandemic, our agencies proved to be crucial in providing not just space for those needs, but also as hubs for activities to boost mental and physical health of residents. We have all seen just how much our communities needed us and now they will look to us to charge forward out of this pandemic with optimism and high quality programs, facilities, open space, and more.

Two years later, as programs are getting back to “normal”, what is the “new norm” for your agency? What do you leave behind and how do you change your agency? What things did we learn during the COVID-19 pandemic that can make things better for staff and the community?

The world has been permanently changed by this pandemic, and park and recreation agencies are no different. Technology, staffing and facilities are just a few of the areas touched by COVID in our industry. It is ok to be uncomfortable, because it means you care and are doing your job to change things for the better. Now that the “new norm” is here, it is now time to continue the change. Step back, look inside, and stop asking yourself, “does it always have to be done this way?” Instead, ask yourself, “how can we make a new path that's even better?”

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FOR THE GLOBAL TRANSPORTATION SEGMENT,
THE FUTURE IS

ELECTRIFY

BY DAVID MACDONALD, WT GROUP, DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

To those less familiar with the history of electric vehicles (EVs), the growing fleet of EV models rolling off assembly lines around the world may look like a new and major technological leap forward. More EV-savvy observers may remind us of the vast numbers of such vehicles on the road at the turn of the 20th century. However, both observations are incomplete. Hard to believe, but Scottish inventor Robert Anderson invented the first crude, electrically powered carriage circa 1832. ⁽¹⁾



CHARGER



SHIF

Throughout the remainder of the 19th century, intrepid inventors experimented with battery-powered vehicles. In the earliest decades of the 20th century, electric automobiles, delivery trucks, ambulances and other vehicles competed with a rising tide of internal combustion-powered transportation. That is, until the advent of cheap, Texas crude rapidly elevated internal combustion to its century-long dominance.

SHIFTING GEARS

But today, change is in the wind, not only in the realm of auto manufacturing and marketing but also in the growing urgency to reduce the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, with the transportation sector historically being a major contributor. While in recent times Tesla led the way, all automakers are shifting strategies toward the design and manufacture of EVs. Introducing the Chevy Bolt in 2016, General Motors has announced plans to phase out all gasoline and diesel-powered vehicles by 2035.⁽²⁾ Ford's F-150, arguably the most popular light truck model ever built, is getting an electric makeover. Even the iconic Mustang now features an electrified variant.

The momentum is driving legislation as well. President Joe Biden's infrastructure proposal commits \$174 billion to make it easier and more attractive for Americans to choose electric vehicles. About \$50 billion will be directly committed to answering the greatest challenge to widespread EV adoption, the convenient availability of charging stations across the country. Biden's EV initiative will include the building of a national network of 500,000 charging stations by 2030.



IT IS A CERTAINTY THAT EVS ARE HERE TO STAY, WITH BLOOMBERG NET ENERGY FINANCE PREDICTING THAT MORE THAN 500 DIFFERENT EV MODELS WILL BE AVAILABLE GLOBALLY BY THE END OF 2022.

Even the petroleum industry is energized by the profit potential of EVs, as leading energy providers prepare for a transition to a post-petroleum, net-zero future. European oil giants Total, BP and Shell are acquiring assets across the EV value chain, most recently with Shell's agreement to buy 100% of the European charging network ubitricity.⁽³⁾

POWERING AN EV-DOMINATED FUTURE

It is a certainty that EVs are here to stay, with Bloomberg Net Energy Finance predicting that more than 500 different EV models will be available globally by the end of 2022.⁽⁴⁾ And while the universal availability of convenient, fast-charging stations will influence how rapidly the EV market will grow, the race is on among automakers and energy companies to get the necessary infrastructure network built to continue to power the transportation sector's transition to net-zero carbon emissions.

We are energized by the EV Revolution and excited to see park and recreation agencies adopt design and infrastructure initiatives to help make broad EV adoption a reality. Given the growing market penetration of EVs across

America, there is no doubt that existing capabilities for serving the market will expand geometrically. Higher-capacity batteries and a wider, cross-country network of fast chargers will continue to propel the EV marketplace.

As government servants, there is an obligation to provide for the health, safety, and welfare of residents. A park district has an obligation to be good stewards to the community. The park district has an opportunity to lead by example and normalize this new technology. Residents can start to witness more electric vehicles on the streets of their community. Start small with pool vehicles or sedans as those are relatively easy to replace versus dump trucks or heavy, specialized equipment. While EVs require larger investments up front, operationally the district will save money over time. The district will save on maintenance and fuel costs long term.

In short- it's just good government- it's the right thing to do.

WAYS COMMUNITIES CAN CHARGE AHEAD

There are a lot of options when considering EVs in your community. There are a lot of turnkey solutions available for the rapidly growing EV market. When choosing to implement EVs, you need to consider everything needed for the delivery of EV charging stations, from design and permitting to coordination with electric utilities and charging station installation. You will also need to source canopies that help protect charging stations and consumers from the elements.

Many county, state, and federal incentives exist to assist with the cost of purchase and installation of EV charging stations. Incentives can even defray the cost entirely, making the addition of charging stations a win-win solution. Many stations are easy to monetize, if needed, with Wi-Fi connectivity options or credit card processing technology.

There are plenty of great spaces to place chargers:

- Sports fields
- Trail heads
- Parks
- Playgrounds
- Recreation Centers
- Community Centers

What will the future EV landscape look like? In a world increasingly concerned and ready to act to control emissions linked to climate change, anticipate a future in which charging stations pop up everywhere from supermarkets and big-box stores to doctors' offices, hotels and most workplaces – literally anywhere people spend any lengths of time during a typical day. Ultimately, EV fast-charging stations will become virtually universal – convenient, fast and fully able to serve the vehicle fleet of tomorrow.

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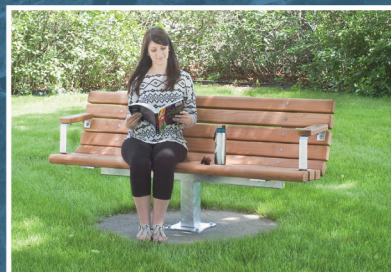
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By Michele Breakfield, Director of Marketing, Playground Guardian

PARK

PROTECTOR

THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC PARK SAFETY



Creating safe, outdoor spaces is the goal of any parks and recreation department. But maintaining a high level of safety with regular public park inspections and maintenance can be costly, time-consuming, and difficult to manage.

At Playground Guardian, we believe that maintaining parks and playgrounds should be simple, affordable, and accessible to every park, no matter its size! We want to shine a light on how innovative new technologies like Park Protector can improve your public park safety.

Traditional Inspection Options for Parks and Recreation Departments

Traditionally, many parks and recreation departments have utilized a third-party inspector to ensure the safety of their parks and playgrounds. These contractors are typically certified playground safety inspectors (CPSIs) who have been trained to inspect components found on playgrounds and in public parks.

However, you may not be able to find a CPSI in your area. And even if you can find a local CPSI, they may be expensive or unavailable. In this case, many parks and

recreation departments opt to train a member of their own team. While this option may be more affordable, certification is still time-consuming. And, if the team member leaves, your department may find itself back at square one.

Park Protector: A Modern Park and Playground Inspection Option

As a third-generation company in the park and playground industry, we've seen park and playground managers struggle with inspections firsthand for decades. We felt there had to be a better way to empower park directors and managers to ensure public park safety without breaking the budget. So, we put our certified inspectors and builders to work creating an innovative solution that truly solved the problems that parks and playground managers face.



The result? Park Protector – a web-based software that guides you through the inspection process so you or a member of your team can tackle park and playground safety with ease.

How it Works:

Park Protector is a comprehensive solution for managing playground inspections, maintenance, and repairs. Here's how it can take your parks and recreation department to the next level:

1. Perform Inspections With Ease

One of the biggest pain points in park and playground inspection is a lack of knowledge. Park and playground managers want to feel confident that their spaces are safe and want the expertise of a certified inspector.

Park Protector guides you through the public park inspection process with easy-to-answer questions and prompts written by our very own CPSIs. Points of inspection include:

- Park playgrounds
- Playground and play area surfacing
- Walkways
- Benches
- Restrooms
- Pavilions and gazebos
- Tennis courts, pools, and other facilities

You need no prior knowledge to inspect your playground safely with Park Protector. And, using Park Protector over time will help you grow your expertise so you can identify problems and hazards faster in the future.

2. Manage Repairs & Generate Work Orders

The next pain point we aimed to solve was translating hazards into simple, affordable repairs that ensure long-term public park safety.

Through the guided inspection process, Park Protector will help you understand the maintenance and repairs required to keep your park in working order. Whether you need a simple fix or a major makeover, you can manage scheduling and track progress all in one place.

Once you have a list of the maintenance items or repairs that need to be completed, you can create work orders directly in the Park Protector software. Add photos and descriptions to help your team or a third-party contractor get to work right away.

And, if you ever need documentation for insurance or legal purposes, you'll have a comprehensive history of your public park safety at your fingertips.

3. Analyze Your Inspection Data

One of the major problems with hiring a park or playground inspector is that they only see your space for one moment in time. They may not be aware of your equipment's history or previous repairs. This limits their ability to see the bigger picture and help you predict issues before they occur.

Not only does Park Protector allow you to track progress on maintenance and repairs, but it also provides comprehensive reports to help you analyze the overall condition of your park over time. These reports can help you predict future issues and mitigate them with a simple preventative maintenance schedule to save you time and money down the road.

4. Schedule Future Inspections & Maintenance

Finally, managing a public park safety team can be difficult, especially when working with part-time staff members, volunteers, or third-party contractors. Park Protector allows you to manage schedules and add deadlines and reminders for inspections, maintenance, and more to keep your parks and rec safety initiatives on track.

Why Park Protector?

Whether you manage a single playground or an entire system of parks, Park Protector can help you streamline your inspection process and improve the safety of your parks.

All inspection data is saved within our cloud-based system, meaning you can access it anytime, anywhere, and from any device. You can even access your data while offline, so there's no need to worry if you don't have wireless service on-site.

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PEOPLE & PLACES



Eric Bradley Appointed as Executive Director of the Zion Park District

The Zion Park District appointed Eric Bradley as the new executive director at the February board meeting. Bradley will replace current

director Marilyn Krieger. Krieger is retiring on April 30 and Bradley will take over May 1. Bradley has nine years of experience in parks and recreation. Most recently he served as the superintendent of administrative services of the Zion Park District. Eric has a bachelor's degree in finance from Illinois State University and earned his MBA from DePaul University's Kellstadt Graduate School of Business. He is also a licensed CPA.



Marilyn Krieger Retires as Executive Director of the Zion Park District

The Zion Park District recently announced the retirement of its executive director, Marilyn Krieger. Marilyn retired from the Zion Park District

in April after completing 34 years of service. Marilyn began her career at the Zion Park District in May of 1988 as the special recreation director. She then held the title of superintendent of recreation before moving into the executive director role in 2013. She completed her degree in recreation at SIU Carbondale and is a Certified Park and Recreation Professional. As a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist she was very involved with the Therapeutic Recreation Section of IPRA and held the section director role of ITRS in 2000. Her dedication to the district and to the community of Zion is greatly appreciated.

Staff Updates at Naperville Park District



Ray McGury, Outgoing Executive Director

Ray McGury resigned effective February 1, 2022 as Naperville Park District's executive director to pursue another opportunity. Ray led the Naperville Park District as its executive director for more than 13 years. Under his leadership, the district achieved a multitude of accomplishments and received a wide range of awards and

recognition, including national accreditation from the National Park and Recreation Association. He also was responsible for the completion of many key projects that expanded district services including, most notably, Nike Sports Complex, the remediation of Sportsman's Park, Fort Hill Activity Center, Knoch Knolls Nature Center, renovation of Centennial Beach, and the development of the 95th Street Community Plaza and Wolf's Crossing Community Park.



Brad Wilson, Incoming Executive Director

The Park Board of Commissioners has named Brad Wilson, the district's current director of recreation and facilities, as the district's next executive director. Wilson has grown his experience and leadership during his 23-year tenure overseeing the recreation department, which consists of the programming, facilities, customer service, aquatics, and

volunteer divisions. Additionally, he has been primarily responsible for the largest portion of the district's budget and has managed major projects such as the implementation of new registration software, the addition of programming at several park developments including Nike Sports Complex, Frontier Sports Complex, Commissioners Park and Wolf's Crossing Community Park and the addition of indoor programming at the Fort Hill Activity Center, the Nature Center and the 95th Street Center. He also has held primary responsibility for widely visible initiatives including the Community Interest & Opinion Survey. In recent years, Wilson has won several awards recognizing his accomplishments and leadership including the Community Impact Award presented by the Illinois Park and Recreation Association during the 2020 statewide conference held in Chicago and the Paul Harris Fellow distinction from the Rotary Club of Naperville Downtown in 2017.



In Memoriam

Illinois Parks and Recreation magazine extends our condolences to the family of **Waldon O. "Wally" Degner** passed away on February 10, 2022 at the age of 85.

A Palatine Park District commissioner for 36 years, Wally was a vice-president of the Illinois Association of Park Districts for three years during his 12 years on the IAPD Board of Directors in the 1970s and 1980s. He helped draft the agreement between the IAPD and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association that created the Coordinating Council. He is a recipient of the Allan A. Weissberg Award.

A veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, he volunteered with many local organizations throughout his 61 years as a resident of Palatine. Among the groups that benefitted from his commitment to volunteerism is the Palatine American Legion Post. He served in various leadership roles with the Legion for more than 20 years and was the post commander in 2008.

In a eulogy presented on February 15, retired Palatine Park District Executive Director Fred Hall cited the wide variety of organizations Wally served stating, "It would not be an exaggeration to report that Wally donated more than 8,000 hours of volunteer service four full years of a forty hour per week job. He was a great boss; he was an even better friend."



Wilmette Park District Announces New Hires

The Wilmette Park District recently announced new employees.

Mary Liz Jayne, the new recreation program manager. Mary Liz is the touchpoint for several recreation supervisors, and she oversees the operations of programs at the Community Recreation Center.



Niki Koclanes, new program supervisor at the Wilmette Lakefront, will play an active role in the hustle and bustle of summer, running programs and activities including all of our Lakefront Aquatics Summer Camps.



Callie Pekosh joins the district as the recreation supervisor, overseeing programs including general recreation, after school clubs, special events and more. She spent five years at Glenview Park District, last serving as facility manager at the pools.



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ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM





Lonna Converso Hired As Director of Marketing Communications

The Bloomingdale Park District announced the recent hiring of Lonna Converso as the director of marketing communications for the Bloomingdale Park District. Lonna began her responsibilities in February,

2022. Lonna's expertise in marketing spans a professional career of more than 25 years with an emphasis in the leadership of communication strategy, brand development, special event planning, media relations, sponsorships, video production, social media management and the execution of marketing plans to successfully reach goals and objectives.

Lonna will also lead the Parks Foundation efforts working with community leaders and corporate partners on fundraising projects for the park district's scholarship program, capital projects, and the Adopt-A-Park program. She will also further develop the park district's sponsorship program which partners businesses and organizations with recreation programs and events in addition to other park amenities.



Plainfield Park District Announces Retirement

The Plainfield Park District announced the retirement of Recreation Manager of Adult Services **Kathy Whalen** after more than 21 years.

Kathy started at Plainfield Park District in April of 2001 as the first senior citizen coordinator, which was then a joint position between the park district and Plainfield Township. Her start in the parks and recreation field began at Park District of Franklin Park where she was a recreation supervisor for 10 years. While at Franklin Park, Kathy worked with seniors as well as overseeing early childhood programs, preschool programs and special events. She then worked at Darien Park District for approximately five years and was in charge of seniors, early childhood and special events.

The Plainfield Park District Board of Commissioners honored Kathy at the January 12 regular meeting, passing resolution 2022-01 in honor of her service.

WebXtra

Feedback - Voice of the Citizen

By Mike Terrell, Feedback

If run effectively, a parks and recreation agency can turn a normal city into a great city. Their duty of keeping parks, fields, hiking trails, and other public communal areas looking fresh and inviting gives their community a beautiful space to thrive.

When the pandemic hit, parks and recreation departments were forced to adapt just like all other government sectors. Many departments suspended special events, put tape around playgrounds and shut down their athletic leagues. With public services on hold and many workers laid off, traditional systems that were in place began to deteriorate. With COVID concerns relaxing, cities are busy rehiring staff and the reality of the new employee market has created a big problem for many municipalities.



Looking for the latest **Web Xtras**, including additional employment announcements, park district stories and more? Check out the digital version of **Illinois Parks & Recreation** magazine, located at **ILparks.org**.

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