

illinois

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PARKS AND RECREATION

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



aquatics



IPARKS

Illinois Parks Association Risk Services



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Photos courtesy of
S. Barrington Park District

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FROM THE EDITOR

Once Upon a Poolside



One of my fondest memories of my childhood was getting together with my friends and hopping on bikes to go to the local pool, where we would spend a majority of our day splashing around. I can remember doing flips off of the diving boards, getting all kinds of concession goodies, and overall having a feeling of community that was unique to the summer season.

It's so funny to me how I can vividly remember briskly walking over the hot concrete as it felt like my feet were burning before hopping into the pool and feeling the beating heat of the sun dissipate in the water of my local pool. In southern Illinois, those summers were always humid, and there was no better place to be than the pool.

Park districts throughout the state know their role in the summer season and are continuing to find new ways to provide water-based excitement to residents. From upgrading swimming pools, to incorporating new features such as splash pads and water slides, to completely altering an old water feature into something new, there's something for everyone to appreciate during those sunny summer days.

This issue is looking at aquatics and the various facets that make it such a crucial element of any park district. On page 14, the Springfield Park District details how it used an Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development grant to breath new life into a pool that originally opened in the 1960s. On page 20, Tim Oldenburg of the Red Cross details how you can build a culture of safety for aquatic facilities. On page 24, the Park District of Forest Park unveils a unique splash pad with a theme that's incredibly sweet. On page 28, learn about Unplug Illinois Day.

Our digital edition will include stories from the Collinsville Parks and Recreation Department and the Glen Ellyn Park District, so be sure to give those a look!

I'm already making my summer plans and I hope you are, too! Thanks for reading!

— Wayne Utterback, Editor

Photo Credit: Cover image taken by Shelby Mepham of the Park District of Highland Park. This photo was submitted for the 2022 Give Us Your Best Shot Photo Contest and won first place in the Recreation/People at Play category.



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*—Oakbrook Terrace
Park District*



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

Lead with Intention: Stewardship vs. Ownership

As park boards welcome new members after the consolidated election, it is important to remind ourselves that we are stewards of the agency and not owners. This is demonstrated by the axiom that no individual board member is empowered to act unilaterally but only collectively as part of the board decision-making process. Many times, the question of “What are the responsibilities of a board member” is posed, and while there is no hand and fast rule, I would like to offer the following for your consideration.

Board Responsibilities

- Determine the agency's mission and vision.
- Select the paid executive (not the staff).
- Support the executive and assess performance periodically (usually measured against the strategic plan).
- Ensure effective organizational planning.
- Monitor and strengthen the agency's programs and services.
- Promote the agency's image.
- Ensure legal and ethical integrity and maintain accountability.
- Make sure no one person dominates the board.
- Be aware that the board collectively arrives at decisions.
- Ensure that as a board member, you understand your complete duties and responsibilities.
- Work for mutual respect between fellow board members and the executive.
- Promote the spirit of cooperation and teamwork.
- Try to make fellow board members feel a sense of belonging by showing that their input is wanted and that they are appreciated.
- Show confidence in the executive and properly evaluate his or her performance in meeting goals.

- Ensure adequate resources (funds, time, volunteers, staff, technology, etc.).
- Assist the director in the recruitment and orientation of new board members and assess board performance.

THE BOARD MEMBER'S CREED

As an individual member of the board, I will:

- recognize the integrity of my fellow board members and the merit of their work.
- be motivated only by a desire to serve the people of my community.

“Stewardship is leaving a system better than you found it.”

— Michael Barber



- recognize that it is my responsibility, together with that of my fellow board members, to see that agency services are properly run and not to run them myself.
- work with the executive of the agency, not over or around him/her.
- conduct board business only in board meetings legally called.
- remain politically non-partisan on park, recreation and conservation issues.
- attend continuing education programs to inform myself on the proper duties and functions of a board member.

In performing my proper functions as a board member, I will:

- deal in terms of general agency policies.
- function, in meeting the legal responsibility that is mine, as a part of a legislative, policy forming body, not as an administrative officer.

In maintaining desirable relations with other members of the board, I will:

- respect the opinions and decisions of fellow board members.
- recognize that authority rests with the board as a whole, not as an individual.
- make no disparaging remarks in or out of meetings about fellow board members.
- recognize that to promise in advance of a meeting how I will vote on any proposition under consideration is to close my mind and agree not to think through other facts and points of view that may be presented in the meeting.
- make decisions in board meetings only after all sides of the question have been presented.

In meeting my responsibility to my community, I will:

- attempt to appraise fairly both the present and the future park and recreation needs of the community.
- attempt to procure adequate financing and support for our parks and recreation programs, facilities, and services.
- interpret to fellow board members and the chief executive, as best I can, the needs and attitudes of the community.
- insist that business transactions of the agency be on an ethical, open, and above-board basis.

In working with the executive, I will:

- hold the executive responsible for the administration of the agency and give him the authority commensurate with his responsibility.
- expect the agency to be administered by the best trained professional people it is possible to procure.
- participate in board decisions only after considering the recommendations of the executive.
- expect to spend more time in board meetings on policies, programs, and procedures than on business details.
- give the executive friendly counsel and advice.
- refer all complaints to the chief executive.
- present any personal criticisms of employees to the chief executive and not to the employee.

- refer all employee complaints to the executive.
- provide adequate safeguards around the executive and other personnel so they may perform the proper functions of park and recreation services on a professional basis.

Understand Your Role

Use the 80/20 rule as it applies to strategy dialogue versus monitoring. (That is, spend 80 percent of the board's time strategizing and 20 percent monitoring.)

Great board members recognize the difference between oversight (monitoring) and micro-management, and they spend their time and talent on issues that really matter. So, focus your energy on a more global perspective (stewardship vs. ownership). Results: shorter board meetings and more valuable engagement.

Develop Core Competencies

- Develop the ability to communicate to the public and each other, and sustain a shared vision for the agency.
- Strive for integrity, responsibility and accountability to your fellow board members and the community.
- Develop the ability to negotiate fairly during times of disagreement among the board. You don't get harmony if you all sing the same note, but speak with one voice after a decision is reached.
- Develop open lines of communication with the executive director and with your fellow board members, but not with the staff.
- Work towards teamwork and collaboration within and without the agency. Many times great ideas are achieved while working with community groups or other units of local government.
- Grow your leadership and motivational skills to encourage others to deliver the best services possible.
- Innovation moves you from good to great.
- Hone problem-solving skills.
- Have intentional conversations on big topics.
- Nothing will work unless you do. Be prepared to participate.

Thank you for all you do to advance the quality of life in your community. I look forward to seeing you at one of the many IAPD events in the future!



Jason Anselment
IAPD General Counsel

IAPD Resources Are Available to Assist New and Seasoned Commissioners

Most park commissioners find their position to be very gratifying because of the positive impact park districts have on their communities. With so many new commissioners recently taking office, it is a good time to recount that these rewarding positions also come with great responsibility.

For instance, a crucial aspect of fulfilling the commissioner role is understanding and adhering to legal requirements that impact the office, the board, and the day-to-day operations of the district. Staying up to date on these laws can be challenging because they are always changing, and the scope of a park district's operations naturally means there are a multitude of statutes that affect IAPD member agencies. Rules governing open meetings, tax levies, budgets, audit and financial disclosures, labor/employment, purchasing, construction, and ethics are just some of the topics that impact agency decisions.

The best places for new commissioners to obtain an overview of their legal duties and responsibilities during their first few months in office are the IAPD Boot Camps, which were held regionally in May and June. While the Boot Camps are a valuable training course for new commissioners, they also offer an excellent opportunity for seasoned commissioners and executive directors to review their roles and responsibilities as well. If you are unable to attend in-person, a virtual option is still available so please visit the IAPD website for more information.

Although the Boot Camps provide a solid foundation, IAPD offers numerous other resources upon which to build. These include other educational programs such as webinars, the IAPD Legal Symposium in November, and the annual IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference in January.

These educational programs are probably the best way to ensure that commissioners and professionals stay current on an annual basis, but IAPD's legal publications complement this training and help members protect their agency and its local officials, employees, and taxpayers against exposure to liability while ensuring effective and efficient governance throughout the year.

One of IAPD's two most popular publications, the *Illinois Park District Law Handbook*, consolidates the body of complex laws impacting park districts into a single, user-friendly volume that explains these statutes, codes, and regulations in layman's terms. The answers to most questions concerning laws that govern the day-to-day operations of park districts can be found in this nearly 300-page resource. In addition to eleven chapters of content, the latest edition contains 23 legal forms that your agency can use as a template. New commissioners will find this resource most helpful, but every commissioner, local counsel, and upper-level professional should have a copy of the *Law Handbook* at their fingertips when making park district decisions.

While the *Illinois Park District Law Handbook* provides an overview of laws impacting park districts using common terms, the actual text of the law is often helpful. IAPD's *The Park District Code* contains the text of all thirteen chapters of the Park District Code, 70 ILCS 1205/1-1 *et seq.*, and it also includes the most relevant provisions of another 55 statutes such as the Freedom of Information Act, the Prevailing Wage Act, the Open Meetings Act, and the Public Officers Prohibited Activities Act to name a few.

The 10 volumes of compiled statutes that members typically see behind my desk during Legislative Update videos weigh more than 50 pounds, so it would be quite a workout for commissioners to lug all these books to every meeting. Instead, *The Park District Code* combines the most relevant sections of these 10 volumes into a single book that is less than 2 pounds making it much more manageable.

The *Illinois Park District Financial Procedures* guide is the most comprehensive compilation of the laws and rules pertaining to a park district's annual financial processes and procedures. This simple guide serves as an easy-reference tool to help simplify the complexities associated with the budget and appropriation ordinance, tax levy, rate limits for tax cap and non-tax cap districts, Truth in Taxation process, audit and annual financial reporting,

annual statement of receipts and disbursement, investments, bonding ability, and short-term borrowing.

This guide covers some of the most important decisions that park boards make on an annual basis. Consequently, commissioners and professionals have found it very helpful to have this publication available at board meetings to help find answers or facilitate quick referral to an appropriate statutory section.

Perhaps no two Illinois laws evoke more legal questions from members than the Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act. IAPD's newly revised *Guide to Open Meetings Act and FOIA* provides an easy-reference tool to help simplify the complexities of these two laws by summarizing procedures and providing practical guidance and tips to reduce the risk of errors. This valuable membership resource is presented in an outline format, which makes these occasionally cumbersome laws easier to navigate. In addition to answering most questions, the guide also contains useful tips and best practices.

While many prefer hard copies, all four of these publications are offered digitally as well.

In addition to these legal publications, IAPD has developed the Legal section of the IAPD website into a repository of information on a wide array of legal topics. Subsections include "Member Resources" with sample policies, legal notice templates, primers, and legal outlines on various topics, all of which have been developed exclusively for the IAPD membership. Other subsections of the Legal Resources pages include "Public Resources" with easy access to online statutes and other federal and state resources, "Legal Tools," which are organized by topic and contain access to dozens of resources, answers to common member inquiries, calendars and more. A designation is added as new materials are posted. In total, the Legal section at ILparks.org now contains more than 400 different resources on approximately 100 topics.

IAPD recognizes that this may be the first elected office many new commissioners have held, and at times shifting legal responsibilities may seem difficult. These IAPD resources and many more will help new and seasoned commissioners meet these challenges, and we are always just a phone call away. Congratulations to all newly elected commissioners. IAPD looks forward to serving you!

CPI Rate for 2023 Property Tax Levy Year is 5.0%

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) "cost of living" or inflation percentage to use in computing the 2023 tax levy (taxes payable in 2024) 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 2023 tax levy year (taxes payable in 2024), the CPI to be used for computing the extension limitation is 5.0%. The CPI is measured from December 2021 to December 2022. The U.S. City Average CPI for December 2021 was 278.802 and for December 2022 was 296.797. The CPI change is calculated by subtracting the 2021 CPI of 278.802 from the 2022 CPI of 296.797. That amount, 17.995, is then divided by the 2021 CPI of 278.802, which results in 6.5% 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 "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.

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	296.797	6.5%	5.0%		2023	2024



A New Section Structure for our Association

By Barbara Arango, CAE
IPRA Executive Director

IPRA members have a long history of providing outstanding volunteer service back to the association. Over the years, this service changed as needs changed and has taken different forms in order to best meet the challenges of the time. For the past decade or so, our Association has been supported by a section structure that has been successful at standardizing processes across the sections and bringing new volunteers up through the ranks. The section leadership teams have been supported by the Membership Council which links the sections to the IPRA Board of Directors. Although this structure has served IPRA well in the past, there have been difficulties that have arisen.

Over the past two years, the Membership Council and section leaders have been discussing the challenges with the current section structure and devising potential solutions. This topic was originally brought up in 2021 and was echoed across multiple sections.

The shared concerns included:

- Section meetings do not offer much value in their current format.
- Section Directors have lost some of their leadership responsibilities to Membership Council representatives.
- The Treasurer has very little responsibility, as IPRA Staff handle most of the duties.
- The Member-at-Large and Director-Elect responsibilities are limited or non-existent.
- Sections often have absent board members, and often lack a quorum.
- It can be a challenge finding people to run for elected offices.
- There is a need for more inter-section communication and coordination of education.
- It is important to provide mentoring opportunities and a pipeline for individuals to move up through section leadership roles.

The Membership Council has met multiple times to discuss ways to address these issues and provide a better experience for section volunteers. Feedback from each of the sections was incorporated with staff and IPRA Board of Directors recommendations, and a new framework has been developed. Below is a look at the new framework that will roll out with the upcoming elections.

The main benefit of moving to this new structure will be an increased definition of the section leadership roles and responsibilities. The new structure will ensure that each section only elects one director per year which will also simplify the election and recruitment processes. In addition, well-defined committees will improve the volunteer experience and better distribute the workload. This framework will also provide additional mentoring opportunities for our members.

Section Leadership

Section leadership will be made up of the three directors (Section Director, Section Education Director, and Section Communications Director) and standing committee chairs.

ILLINOIS PARK & RECREATION ASSOCIATION SECTION STRUCTURE FRAMEWORK



These director roles will be functionally based and have a clear outline of responsibilities. Each Section will also have standing committees to oversee the work of the section and various special interest committees depending on the needs of the section. Directors and standing committee chairs will meet quarterly at Section Board Meetings.

Directors are elected to a three-year term by the entire membership. Terms will be staggered so there is only one open position per section per year. Terms will begin and end at the IPRA Annual Business Meeting at the Conference in January.

Director Councils

Each Director will be part of a cross-section council to ensure communication across sections and facilitate intersectional events and education. The Section Director Council will replace the Membership Council.

Committee Structure

Each section will have the same six standing committees to support the standard functions for all sections. These include conference education, section education, awards, leadership development, marketing, and networking/special interests. Sections will continue to have the special interest committees they currently support (aquatics, athletics, cultural arts, etc.)

Elections

Elections this year will look different from past years. Section leaders and staff are working to determine the open positions to ensure stability with currently elected board members while moving the sections to the new structure. More information about the elections will be shared in August.

We're excited to roll out these changes to our sections. We know this will provide a better experience for our volunteers and encourage more members to get involved. If you have any questions about the new structure or the opportunities to fill a role in the section leadership team, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at barbara@ilipra.org. We thank you in advance for your patience and support as we work our way through this transition.

IPRA Upcoming Events

Lunch & Learn - Placemaking: Destinations that Promote Health and Well-Being

June 23

The research is clear- high-quality play and recreation destinations can serve as catalysts for creating a healthier, happier communities. Explore innovative design best practices that encourage social and environmental change, meet the diverse needs of society, and create sustainable, innovative outdoor spaces that delight and surprise visitors.

Recruitment and Retention: Today and Tomorrow's Challenge

July 12 & 20 - Webinar

This session will explore several methods in which to find applicants, develop a streamline approach to interviewing and establishing a culture to retain high quality employees.

5th Annual Unplug Illinois Day

July 15

Locations throughout Illinois

We encourage people throughout Illinois to take a break from their electronic devices and "unplug". Visit the IPRA website for details.

Visit Ilipra.org for more information and to register.

Cracking the Case of Career Advancement

Register at Ilipra.org

ipra Professional Development School
November 5-8, 2023

Customer Service

Establishing a Mentor

Setting Goals

CAREER SUCCESS

Communication Skills

Financial Management

Being a Team Member

ipra ILLINOIS PARK & RECREATION ASSOCIATION
2023 Professional Development School
Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa, Galena, IL



By Duane Smith, CPRP
IPRA Education Director

Appreciation for Aquatic Professionals - They Deserve It!

In anticipation of the warm and sunny summer months ahead, I'm reminded of all the good times to be had with friends and family at the local public pool. As a child, I frequented the Bridgeview Park District pool to meet up with friends, compete for the best front one-and-a-half dive on the 1-meter springboard, and eat unlimited amounts of over-steamed hot dogs, rock-hard taffy, and partially melted ice cream bars. I can still recall the distinct aroma of sunscreen mixed with chlorine, and the sound of the lifeguard's whistle when we were caught running on the pool deck racing to the diving boards or playing a game of shoulder wars in the shallow end of the lane pool. Looking back at those wonderful memories gives me great appreciation for our aquatic professionals and the tireless, oftentimes thankless work they do to create safe recreational opportunities for their communities.

In parks and recreation, operating a public pool or an aquatic facility is nothing short of a daunting task that requires adaptable leaders with strong organizational and interpersonal skills. There are numerous quantities of staff to secure, train, and manage for various positions within the facility, important operational items in and around the pool with routine inspection and maintenance needs, and documentation requirements critical to securing and maintaining operational licensing with regional and state health departments. Additionally, water-based programs offered through the agency are subject to changing weather conditions and typically offered at leisure times for residents, requiring pools and aquatic facilities to be open past typical weekday business hours and on the weekends.

Under the authority of the Illinois Swimming Pool and Bathing Beach Act, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is responsible for licensing and inspecting pools and aquatic facilities due to the risk of disease transmission from contaminated water and the dangers associated with water activities. IDPH designates regional inspectors to enforce these water quality and safety standards through rigorous and unannounced audits during the summer season, so it's

imperative that everything is in proper working order with up-to-date documentation for a pool to remain operational for its residents. Understanding the IDPH licensing criteria and maintaining a high standard of pool maintenance and safety requires proper training and certification.

The two most common and widely-accepted pool management certification programs for aquatic professionals are the Aquatic Facility Operator (AFO) and Certified Pool Operator (CPO) certifications. AFO is regulated by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and is a five-year certification focused on the systematic approach to pool operations including pool chemistry, management, pool safety and risk education. CPO is regulated by the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA) and is a five-year certification focused on the operational efficiencies, hazard (chemical, electrical, biological, and physical) reduction, and regulation compliance. While Cook County only recognizes CPO certification, both AFO and CPO are recognized in all other areas of Illinois. In March of 2023, the Illinois Park & Recreation Association offered its first AFO course in at least ten years at the Buffalo Grove Community Arts Center where twenty aquatic professionals from Illinois and Michigan proudly achieved their AFO certification.

By the time you're reading this article, it is likely your pool or aquatic facility is already operational for the summer season. Certification has been achieved, licensing has been secured, support staff have been hired and trained, plans for inevitable inclement weather have been finalized, and long days have commenced. I encourage you to connect with your agency's aquatic professional to give thanks and share appreciation for their dedication in ensuring a positive and safe experience for residents at your agency's pool. If they appear tired and overwhelmed at times, you understand why, so offer a lending hand, cheer them on, and remind them they are creating memories that will make kids smile 30 years later when they think of impending warm summer months on a chilly April day.

Arlington Heights Park District

Phone System Enhances Communications and Lowers Operating Costs

Arlington Heights Park District serves the community of Arlington Heights, IL. Established in 1925, the park district serves over 78,000 residents with 58 parks and related facilities.

RAM Communications has been privileged to work with the park district for over 15 years. In that time, RAM has served as a resource for the IT staff helping select and manage various voice and internet providers. In 2018, Arlington Heights approached RAM for help researching a new phone system. For financial and technological reasons

management decided it was time to look for a replacement of its phone system. The system had served reliably but technology and maintenance costs had become prohibitive. The IT Staff approached RAM and asked for an assessment of new systems. Initially, RAM was asked to research and select both hosted and premise-based phone systems.

After conducting careful research, RAM was able to make a few important determinations. While hosted phone systems have grown to dominate the industry, the overall cost of ownership (monthly licensing fees) were found to far exceed the longterm cost of a premise-based phone system.

RAM's challenges were mainly threefold: improve the distributed phone network (among 16 locations) for internal call handling; design and implement a system with redundant PBX servers and provide mobile connectivity for Arlington Heights' staffers working in the field.

The Allworx Connect Platform provided a dialing plan similar to the park's old system. This made the transition much easier for the staff because they could keep their extension lists in place.



RAM's partners, ACI and Masergy Communications, were integral to designing and implementing the overall solution. Redundant PBX servers were installed at two separate locations to protect against power and service disruptions. With considerable testing, the RAM Team was able to design the solution in a way that was manageable for AHPD's IT staff. Now, uptime is improved and both the IT staff and RAM's support team can access the Allworx phone system remotely to address issues and make changes.

Finally, Arlington Heights sees significant productivity gains from the new system. The Allworx Reach App provides professional call handling features for staffers on the go. Users receive their voicemails on their smartphones and email as required for the park's productivity and privacy needs. Now users can handle messages faster and easier than ever before. Ultimately, the mobile app makes it easier for park staff to stay connected to their patrons and vendors.

Project Highlights

- Reduced Total Cost of Ownership by 65%
- Provided true system redundancy for AHPD's phone services
- Added unified messaging for simplified voicemail handling
- Added remote call handling software for field users
- Continues RAM's tradition of top customer service and consulting support



The Allworx Reach App allows Arlington Heights Park District to provide desk phone use on their staffers' smartphones. All of the desk phone features are available for proper call processing. Park employees who work in the field stay better connected to their fellow workers and patrons.

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BY DEREK HARMS, CPRP - EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - SPRINGFIELD PARK DISTRICT

BRINGING AQUATICS TO THE MODERN AGE

AS STEWARDS OF PUBLIC RESOURCES, PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES HAVE THE DISTINCT HONOR OF SERVING OUR COMMUNITIES BY PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE AND DIVERSE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES. SOUNDS SIMPLE, RIGHT? HOWEVER, LIKE MANY PUBLIC AGENCIES, THE SPRINGFIELD PARK DISTRICT (SPD) FACES CHALLENGES THAT REQUIRE CREATIVE SOLUTIONS. ONE OF THESE CHALLENGES IS THE NEED TO MAINTAIN AND UPDATE AGING PUBLIC AQUATIC FACILITIES.

VETERANS MEMORIAL POOL - IN SEASON



THE NEW FACILITY WILL INCLUDE CONCRETE PLAZAS AND WALKWAYS, PARK SHELTERS, PUBLIC GATHERING SPACES, LIGHTING, SITE FURNISHINGS (BYOB BAGS, CHASE LOUNGERS, HAMMOCKS, PICNIC TABLES, BENCHES, LITTER CANS, RECYCLE CANS, AND BENCHES) AND LANDSCAPING ALL ENCOMPASSED BY A VINYL COATED CHAIN LINK PERIMETER FENCE.

There was a time in the 1960s when neighborhood swimming pools were constructed not just for recreation, but as an investment opportunity. The Sun 'n Fun Swimming Club in Springfield was on the cutting edge of this trend, or so they believed. They constructed two admission-based outdoor swimming pools in the early 1960s with the hopes to generate profit and take their model nationwide. They quickly learned that managing seasonal neighborhood pools in central Illinois was not a profitable venture and their business model soon failed. Understanding the recreational value of aquatic facilities, the SPD later purchased one of the facilities including a traditional “Z” shaped 50-meter lap pool with two diving boards and a small drop slide. The facility also included a bath house, stand-alone baby pool and small picnic shelter. After investing resources to modernize the bath house and filtration system, the SPD reopened the facility under the new name - Veterans Memorial Pool. Located in Gietl Park, this pool has been a beloved and popular public attraction serving families in the Northgate neighborhood and Springfield community ever since.



GOVERNOR PRITZKER ANNOUNCES FY23 OSLAD GRANT AWARDS AT SPRINGFIELD PARK DISTRICT'S GIETL PARK, SHOWCASING THE VETERANS MEMORIAL POOL REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT.

Flash-forward nearly 60 years after construction, operational expenses are increasing exponentially and there is a looming demand for a large investment of capital resources just to keep the facility open. A major section of the pool floor had previously been replaced but, the remaining concrete pool shell was original construction and had deteriorated beyond the limits of the annual “patch

and repair” program. Replacing the remaining sections of the pool shell would cost several hundred thousand dollars. The filtration system is now outdated, making parts difficult to acquire, often resulting in large gaps of service after minor equipment failures. Like many public aquatic facilities throughout the nation, we were also facing serious lifeguard shortages forcing us to reduce public swim times in recent years.

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The compounding effect of the minimum wage law was placing an increasingly larger demand on the operating budget. As the pool aged, the cost to maintain, repair, and staff the facility was placing an undue burden on limited capital resources, often competing with the demand to update other aging public assets (many of which were also constructed in the 60's) including four golf courses, two ice rinks, zoo, indoor pool, outdoor pool, carillon, botanical gardens, 34 playgrounds, an expansive public park system and much more. Continuing to operate the facility was unsustainable and repairing the pool would be fiscally irresponsible. In other words, the pool had passed its useful life.

However, permanently closing public facilities is a sensitive issue and never an easy choice for staff and publicly elected boards, especially when they are as beloved and deep rooted in the community as Veterans Memorial Pool. Veterans Memorial Pool was also home to important community aquatic programs such as long course competitive swimming programs and a learn to swim program that taught critical life skills to children and adults. An effective solution would require a creative approach.

Meanwhile, we had embarked on an extensive planning and community engagement process to develop a comprehensive master plan for our parks and recreation facilities. We held numerous community input meetings, conducted public surveys, hosted focus groups, initiated stakeholder meetings, and created online engagement opportunities to gather valuable feedback from residents. Through this process, it became evident the public loved Veteran's Memorial Pool. However, as a public agency, we had a fiduciary responsibility to use our limited resources wisely and equitably. Hence, we needed to craft a solution that would not simply take away a valued public facility but would instead provide a modern and accessible public asset that would better meet the needs of the neighborhood and the community.

After considering numerous options, we decided to demolish the existing outdoor pool and bathhouse. In its place, we plan to construct a large modern splash pad designed for multiple age groups (toddler, children/pre-teen, family and adult). The new facility will include concrete plazas and walkways, park shelters, public gathering spaces, lighting, site furnishings (BYOB bags, chase loungers, hammocks, picnic tables, benches, litter cans, recycle cans, and benches) and landscaping all encompassed by a vinyl coated chain link perimeter fence. Traditional aquatic programming opportunities the community loves and expects from the SPD will be provided at the district's two other aquatic facilities.

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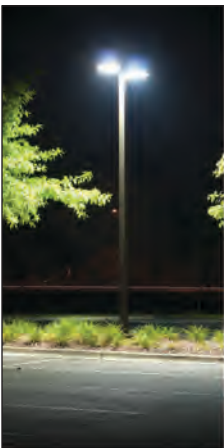
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The splash pad will be a new state-of-the-art aquatic facility the neighborhood can be proud to call their own. Gietl Park (home to Veterans Memorial pool) is located in a distressed part of our community, an area that needs access to affordable and safe recreation opportunities. By reducing expenses associated with operating a traditional pool, the new splash pad will be free to the public, eliminating the financial barrier that can prevent families from accessing important public resources. The splash pad will provide a modern and accessible alternative to a traditional pool allowing for diverse recreation opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. It will be a place where families can spend quality time together, where children can cool off during hot summer days, and where people can gather and socialize. The new splash pad will promote inclusivity making it a place where people of all ages and abilities can gather and participate in physical activity encouraging healthy and active lifestyles and reducing the risk of childhood obesity and related health problems. It will also promote community engagement and socialization, helping to build a strong and resilient community.

Creative ideas are the foundation of positive change, but an effective action plan requires funding. Overall project costs including demo of the old site and construction of the new splash pad was estimated to exceed \$800,000. Securing outside funding was critical to getting this project off the ground. While splash pads may be an atypical Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant project, with research in-hand, support from the community and a clear vision for what this area could become we were well positioned to communicate our vision to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) through the grant application process. Ultimately, the construction of the new splash pad was made possible by securing a \$600,000 OSLAD grant and committing \$200,000 in capital funds. This funding was essential to make this vision a reality. We are grateful for the vision of the Springfield Park District Board of Trustees, our dedicated and creative staff, support from the community, the partners who helped make this project possible, and funding from IDNR through the OSLAD grant program.

This new splash pad will be a testament to the power of community input and collaboration. This was not a decision that was made in a vacuum, but one that was made with the needs and desires of the community at the forefront. It is a decision that will have a positive impact not just on the neighborhood but on the community at large. As stewards of public resources, it is our fiduciary responsibility to ensure that we are making the most efficient use of our limited funds. While it was not an easy decision to replace the beloved Veterans Memorial Pool, it was the right one for the community. By continuing to invest in new recreational facilities, we are reducing the demand for financial resources and helping to build a stronger and more vibrant community for our residents.



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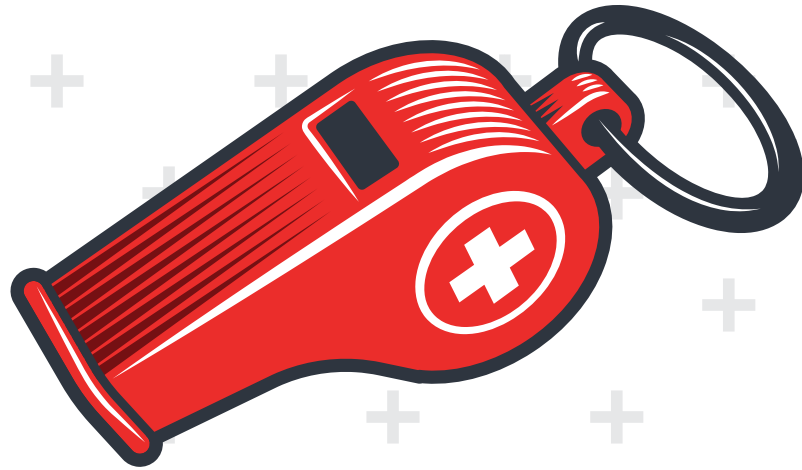
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BUILDING A CULTURE OF
SAFETY
FOR AQUATIC FACILITIES

By **Tim Oldenburg**, Red Cross Strategic Account Executive

“A culture of safety is as good as its standards. You want to make sure you’re holding true to your standards,” says William D. Ramos, PhD, member of the American Red Cross Scientific Advisory Council and associate professor, Indiana University School of Public Health.



“We are very cognizant of the need to nurture a recreation and work environment that is a safe, respectful and inclusive space for all our patrons and employees...”

Dr. Ramos managed aquatic facilities for more than 30 years and he knows why cultures take time to develop. In addition to developing strong safety protocols and prioritizing them, there are supporting elements: employee engagement; diversity and inclusion of external stakeholders; communication; accountability; and setting expectations.

The Chicago Park District's aquatics department spans across the entirety of the City of Chicago into community areas with diverse demographics as well as varying levels of swimming abilities, skills and programming interests. Its 280 year-round employees, with more than 700 employees in the summer, are spread across 26 miles of lakefront, 27 indoor pools and 49 outdoor pools.

Whether it is public expectations for scheduling or specific amenities at a site, every location requires a slightly distinct approach in addressing patron concerns and needs.

Set safety rules must be followed at all locations as well as special rules that might only apply to one or two locations to address specific requests and nuances at those sites. The district's beaches also attract millions of people during the summer.

“Many visitors are not used to our standard of preventative lifeguarding,” says Andrew Walsh, manager of beaches and pools for the Chicago Park District. “Acclimating tourists to

our local rules and safety regulations can present itself as a challenge for our lifeguards.”

So how does the Chicago Park District manage all of the aforementioned supporting elements?

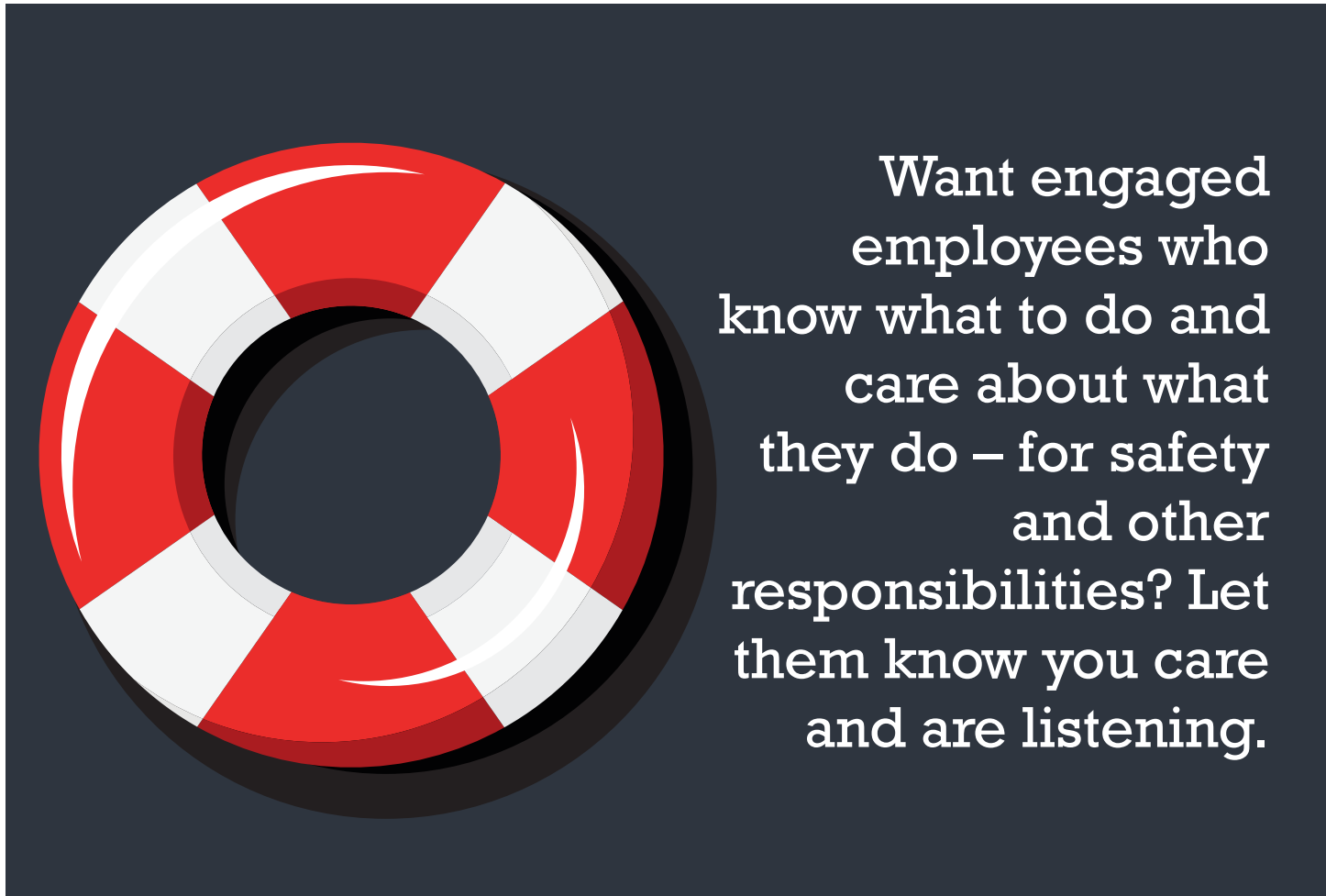
Being an “Ambassador of Safety”

For the Chicago Park District, a culture of safety means having a workplace where every employee feels secure, has clear expectations for appropriate conduct and understands the procedures created to address safety concerns in a timely manner.

“We are very cognizant of the need to nurture a recreation and work environment that is a safe, respectful and inclusive space for all our patrons and employees,” says Tamara Starks, director of the office of prevention and accountability for the Chicago Park District.

“When they do something appropriate, praise it. When they may have missed something, don't let it slide,” adds Dr. Ramos.

Starks sums it up by saying, “Our pool facilities and beaches are workplaces where our employees should feel proud and safe to engage each other. They are also places of recreation where our employees interact with patrons from all walks of life, and our teams are expected to be ambassadors of safety.”



Communication

Constant communication and an open line of dialogue with employees is essential to build trust in the process and address general needs and site-specific concerns in a timely manner.

“The Aquatics Department holds standing meetings with our natatorium instructors, the on-site supervisors at our park pool locations, to listen to their concerns and discuss solutions that can be implemented at a specific site and/or citywide,” says Walsh. “Additionally, assistant managers visit all of our locations to check-in with instructors. Staff at all levels are our eyes and ears on the ground.”

The goal is for Chicago Park District leadership to make themselves available and encourage staff to not only share concerns with management, but also ideas that will help maintain positive, constructive, employee relations, and improve service delivery.

Dr. Ramos reaffirms this thinking, “Make sure there is that two-way communication so [employees] can tell you how they're feeling.”

Employee and community involvement

That two-way communication is key to another safety culture must-have: employee and community involvement. Team engagement in safety initiatives, continuous improvement, and a learning culture is created by showing respect for team members' feelings and building relationships with all employees and community stakeholders.

The Chicago Park District works with a diversity of groups – both internal (employees and managers) and external (advocates and other stakeholders) to create a culture of involvement and feedback.

“Soliciting a range of input is essential in creating change both in the short- and long-term,” comments Starks. “It cannot be solely dictated from the top down.”

Ultimately, Starks advocates for working with what she calls the Park's “most important resource” – its people – for feedback on what needs to change, how best to approach the issues, and deliver the information to them.

Want engaged employees who know what to do and care about what they do – for safety and other responsibilities? Let them know you care and are listening.

Accountability

Of course, all of the employee and community engagement must come with a level of accountability – a safety culture essential. The Chicago Park District considers it part of the mission to create a safe, healthy and productive work environment. But the district goes further than that.

“It's not just enough to articulate a commitment to safety, but we also must hold all employees accountable for making that mission a reality,” states Starks.

From the incident report system to communicating expectations and ensuring follow-through, the district fully expects its safety practices to be consistently applied and, in cases of reporting, handled with care and professionalism.

A culture of learning

The district is focused on the final pillar of a culture of safety – a culture of learning. “We train employees regarding safety and consistently apply those expectations,” states Starks.

Dr. Ramos uses what he calls a “management system” to spur continuous improvement and learning, and his system relies on the extensive line of courses from the Red Cross: lifeguard preparation, lifeguard training, lifeguard management, safety training for swim coaches, first aid, CPR/AED. The Red Cross standard of excellence raises the bar for aquatic facility cultures of safety.

Dr. Ramos concludes, “The guards learn the standards, what they are, through training in the Red Cross programs.”

An aquatics facility won't establish a culture of safety overnight. It takes time to implement the principles described here. But you know a facility has reached that level of excellence when you ask any team member, “What's the culture of safety around here?” And they say, “Just watch us. It's what we do every day.”

Tim Oldenburg is a Red Cross strategic account executive with a specialty in aquatics, first responders and public safety in the Northern Illinois and Wisconsin regions. Visit redcross.org/training for more information about Red Cross aquatic programs.

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PARK DISTRICT OF FOREST PARK AQUATIC CENTER SPLASH PAD

By Jeff Murphy, Superintendent of Business, Park District of Forest Park
Jackie Iovinelli, Executive Director, Park District of Forest Park
Bridget Deatrick, Hitchcock Designs, Inc.

With the opening of the Forest Park Aquatic Center for the 2023 season, pool patrons will be enjoying a colorful new candy kingdom. The new splash pad is a welcome addition to the aquatic center. The new candy-themed splash pad includes 3 unique play zones. The 15,000 gallons of water in the splash pad will be recirculated and heated. The water will be flowing through the system at 125 gallons per minute, turning over the water every 120 minutes. It will breathe new life into an aquatic center with a storied history and an essential place in the hearts of Forest Park residents.



The aquatic center was unique and innovative when it opened in 1996. The original design included a zero-depth entry, two drop slides, two flume slides, a diving board, an interactive play center, and a sand volleyball court. A simple spray ground replaced the sand volleyball courts in 2003.

In 2020, the aquatic center remained closed for the safety of our patrons. Staff still wanted to offer a way for residents to cool off in the summer safely, and they found the solution in the spray ground. Utilizing the spray ground brought to light the idea of expanding and creating an inviting area in a space that was significantly underutilized.

The idea of a new splash pad came to life during the summer of 2020. Staff gathered outside, looking over the existing spray ground, and began an impromptu brainstorming session focused on creating a new experience in the existing spray ground space for our resident's enjoyment. Our initial overarching goals for the new space included:

1. To create something dynamic and attractive.
2. To create a playground in the water.
3. Provide ground-level and tower play experiences.
4. Incorporate community elements. Little did we know getting from the exciting brainstorming session to an operable splash pad wouldn't be all gumdrops and lollipops.

Meeting Community Needs

The Park District of Forest Park Aquatic Center consists of two sections of play, the main pool and the area now known as the Splash Pad. This area was originally a sand

volleyball area, then transitioned to a concrete oval with a few spray features. Staff and board in the past discussed the renovation of the Aquatic Center as a future project. Knowing the time, money, and effort for a complete renovation, staff determined phasing each area would be the most fiscally responsible. As with many projects, it was an idea that was waiting to be implemented.

Before the pandemic, a hot summer day would attract up to 1,000 visitors to the aquatic center, packed in the main pool area. While only a few visitors took advantage of the spray ground.

In 2020, the spray ground became the only usable area in the aquatic center due to the pandemic. This opened the minds of our staff to expanding the deck space and creating a more inviting and open aquatic experience. At the conclusion of that summer, the staff went to the board with their idea, to create an inviting space in the spray ground area. We learned through the pandemic that the existing spray ground space could be better utilized, thus maximizing our entire aquatic center footprint.

The Creation of the Concept

How did this whimsically sweet kingdom come to be? The park district took inspiration from the aromas of the candy being made at the nearby candy company. Early concepts also considered the candy manufacturing process, but ultimately, creating a kiddie wonderland where classic games and candy come to life was too fun to resist. The Park District of Forest Park and landscape architecture firm Hitchcock Design Group worked together to generate the initial splash pad ideas, develop the zones for different age groups and types of play, and usher the vision into reality.

The Experience

As visitors enter the splash pad, they encounter the bustling Town, which is the perfect place for young adventurers (2-5 year-olds) to enter the Candy Kingdom. Featuring gentle ground and vertical water features and vibrant gameboard surfacing, the Town is perfect for free unstructured play or the creation of new games – but be careful, if you get splashed, you may have to go back to start! The Jousting Grounds in the middle of the splash pad is the perfect place for aspiring knights to train. Spinning water towers and blasters let kids of all ages spray opponents out of their territories in teams or free-for-all water battles! Of course, the gem of the kingdom is the Candy Castle, located at the north end of the splash pad. Race your way to the top of the castle if you dare! The giant gumball dumping bucket and slippery slides may send invaders into the moat! Visitors will encounter many adventures and creatures in the kingdom, but not every sugary critter is sweet. The gummy bears and gummy worms that live here are just as likely to squirt you as shake your hand! Even the Aquatic Center's signature shark mascot made its way into the splash pad – in gummy form, of course!

The Features

Throughout the process, the user experience was always in mind. The Candy Kingdom splash pad includes a large, shaded area and two smaller umbrella areas to rest and relax throughout the day as well as ample lawn space to spread a beach towel and set up for a day of fun.

Comfortable pool loungers will also be provided around the splash pad so everyone can have a front-row seat for fun. Each of the three splash areas operates independently on activator bollards and timers to ensure the water flows when the zone is in use but turns off when the kids move on to the next activity. The on-site system treats and recirculates the water so the fun can continue all summer long. But one of the most unique components of the Candy Kingdom is the brightly colored LifeFloor surfacing in each of the three areas. This foam material makes the ground plane part of the play experience and provides a more forgiving soft surface.

This park district project faced its challenges. First and foremost, the design was created through Zoom meetings in 2020. An experience neither the staff nor the architect had ever been through. Our next challenge was soon after awarding the contract and learning about the challenges the contractor was currently facing. The park district was implementing a project of this size during a pandemic. Communication was a challenge for all parties involved. Factories were shut down. Companies were closed. Quarries were on strike. What wasn't a challenge? These challenges are now behind us, and the result is a unique facility the park district can offer its residents.

When the idea came about, the staff wanted it to represent the best of Forest Park. Walking through the park on a daily basis is sweeter as you smell the aroma of candy wafting through the air, while watching children splash and play in the land of candy!

WebXtra



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

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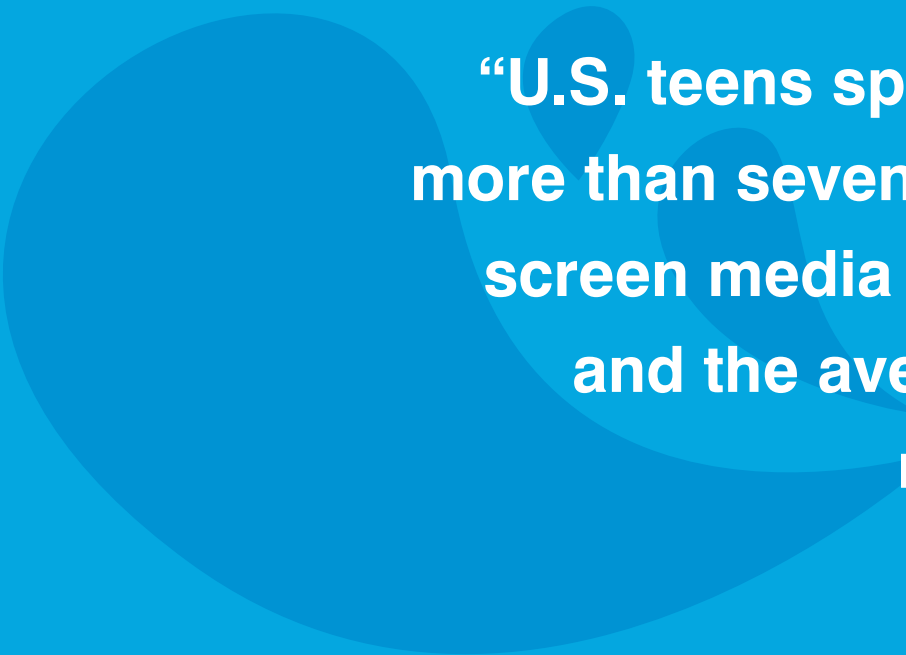


SOME THINGS CAN'T
BE DOWNLOADED:

13 REASONS TO **UNPLUG** AND TAKE A

Plunge this Summer

By now, community pools and ocean and lakefront beaches are welcoming bathers of all ages and abilities eager to squeeze every ounce of fun out of the 13-weeks of the fleeting summertime season in the Midwest.



“U.S. teens spend an average of more than seven hours per day on screen media for entertainment, and the average teen spends nearly five hours.”

- Common Sense Media.

And by now, you've heard that the 5th Annual Unplug Illinois Day will be celebrated across the state on Saturday, July 15th. Recreation and conservation agencies, park and forest preserve districts and special recreation associations will be diving in to encourage Illinoisans to ditch their digital devices and plug into everything they have to offer!

The benefits of swimming are limitless and are particularly useful in therapy, as exercise for people with disabilities and vital for lifesaving purposes. Lucky for you, park, recreation and conservation agencies throughout Illinois provide a plethora of exciting aquatic destinations complete with all the modern comforts and amenities one can imagine.

If that doesn't make you want to grab your pool noodles, slather on the sunscreen and go, here are 13 more powerful reasons to convince you and your communities that there is no such thing as being too cool for the pool!

- 1. Improves your mental health:** Swimming is one of the few sports that demand you leave the outside world, outside. You physically can't look at Instagram in the pool, so one of the biggest benefits of swimming is that it's great for giving the mind time to power down from constant digital stimulation.
- 2. Increases your fitness and muscle mass:** Swimming uses all the muscles in the body so you will get a full body workout. Plus, exercising in water makes your body work harder so 30 minutes in a pool is worth 45 minutes of the same activity on land. Yes, please! Get that 15 minutes back.
- 3. It's lower impact than other forms of cardio:** Sore knees and ankles a common complaint of yours? Water supports up to 90 percent of the body's weight. So, if you sprained an ankle during a flag football game or have a long-term injury, swimming is a brilliant way to stay active.
- 4. It can be music to our sleepy ears:** Swimming, an aerobic exercise, has been linked to better sleep quality and improved sleep duration.
- 5. It's generally a pregnancy-safe exercise:** Generally speaking, one of the major benefits of swimming is that the water supports you and baby bump and can help to reduce swelling in the ankles and feet.
- 6. There's more than one way to do it:** Unlike other forms of exercise where perhaps, there's little variety, there are various strokes you can use to keep your swimming workout fresh, including: breaststroke, backstroke, sidestroke, front crawl, and butterfly. Different strokes will often change the muscles worked.

7. **It de-stresses and relaxes you:** According to Women's Health Magazine, many people say that by simply being in the water they feel more relaxed and less stressed. Regular exercise helps reduce anxiety and depression, as it releases "feel good" hormones and keeps our brains working in a healthy way.
8. **It can help individuals with mobility issues:** At one point or another in life you might suffer from reduced mobility and at these times, make a splash! Swimming can offer the opportunity to move in ways that you can't on land owing to the support provided by the water.
9. **Swimming can make you smarter:** Australian research showed that children swimming at an early age were mastering skills like language and mathematics earlier when compared to children who didn't swim.
10. **It's great for general well-being:** Do it with friends, and it's even more fun!
11. **It's sweat-free exercise.**

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The American Heart Association says adults who get 30 minutes of exercise each day increase life expectancy by 3.4 years. No matter your age, ability, or fitness level, the benefits of swimming simply can't be overstated, nor can they be downloaded from an android, iPhone, tablet, or desktop device.

This summer, unplug from your digital devices, take a plunge, and plug into the abundantly buoyant benefits of swimming for yourself. Learn more about Unplug Illinois Day at www.unplugillinois.org.

Credit: This message is brought to you by Unplug Illinois Day 2023.

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The Ridgeville Park District Announces Retirement of Executive Director Brian Rosinski

The Ridgeville Park District, which prides itself on bringing engaging year-round programming for youth and adults while celebrating diversity announces

the retirement of **Brian Rosinski** effective May 31, 2023.

During his tenure as executive director, Brian has provided visionary leadership, strategic planning, and unwavering dedication to the organization's mission. Under his leadership, The Ridgeville Park District has achieved significant accomplishments, including solid financial and fiscal planning without debt service while promoting quality programming for the entire Ridgeville community.



The Ridgeville Park District Announces Hiring of New Executive Director

The Ridgeville Park District is pleased to announce the hiring of **Marlon Rodas**, who will serve as the park district's new executive director. Marlon brings over 20 years of local government experience to the position. Rodas will assume the position of

Executive Director on June 1, 2023.

As executive director, Rodas will be responsible for overseeing the operations of the park district, managing staff, developing and maintaining park facilities, and ensuring that the district's programs and services meet the needs of the Ridgeville community. Marlon Rodas is committed to working collaboratively with staff, community members, and stakeholders in continuing to provide year-round programming for youth and adults while celebrating diversity.



Buffalo Grove Park District Elevates Strojinc to Executive Director

The Buffalo Grove Park District will have a new executive director May 27. The park board selected Deputy Director **Erika Strojinc** to fill the post of retiring Executive Director Ryan Risinger.

Strojinc first joined the district as the Clubhouse assistant director in December 2005 and was promoted to recreation supervisor in May 2008. She was promoted to superintendent of recreation in May 2014, director of recreation and facilities in December 2020, and deputy director in August 2022.

Want to Read More?

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

Want to submit news from your agency for People & Places?

E-mail information and jpegs to wutterback@ILparks.org.

Jpegs should be 300 dpi at about 2 inches tall.



Homewood-Flossmoor Executive Director Debbie Kopas Retiring

After 32 years with the Homewood-Flossmoor Park District, **Debbie Kopas** will retire as executive director on June 30, 2023. Debbie joined the district in 1991 as the part-time accountant and was promoted to business manager in 1993. In

2006, the park board appointed Debbie as the executive director.

Debbie is proud to have been involved in many large projects and accomplishments during her tenure, including three NRPA Gold Medals, Illinois Distinguished Agency Accreditation, several software conversions, financially surviving the pandemic, multiple OSLAD grants, nine new parks, a new golf course and restaurant, a major ice arena renovation, and a new banquet facility.

Debbie has given back to the field of parks and recreation by serving on statewide committees, as well as on the IPRA Board of Directors and the PDRMA Board of Directors. She has a strong belief that you get back more than you give when you volunteer, and the networking opportunities afforded when you get out of your own space make you a stronger professional.

Over her 32 years, Debbie worked to build a strong staff team eager to deliver quality services to the Homewood-Flossmoor community. She is happy to leave the district in a good position for ongoing success.



Homewood-Flossmoor Park District Appoints New Executive Director

The Homewood-Flossmoor Park District Board of Commissioners recently appointed **Doug Boehm** as their next executive director. Doug has been with the

district since 2006 as the ice arena manager, superintendent of recreation, and currently as the superintendent of parks & planning. He has a bachelor's degree in recreation and parks administration from Illinois State University and a master's degree in public administration from Governors State University.

Doug's appointment brings his career in parks and recreation full circle. He was an intern at the Homewood-Flossmoor Park District before starting his career at the Channahon Park District and then the Village of Orland Park.

As a long-time resident of Homewood, Doug enjoys working in his community. He continues to be involved with many local organizations as a volunteer, parent and coach. Doug takes great pride in his work and is excited to take the next step in his career continuing the great traditions of the HFPD.

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Ron Oestreich Resigns as Bolingbrook Park District Executive Director

Ron Oestreich announced his resignation from the Bolingbrook Park District as its executive director in January 2023. Oestreich accepted the position of parks and recreation director for the Town of Farragut, Tennessee, which is a suburb of Knoxville.

Oestreich's tenure with Bolingbrook Park District spanned 27 years, starting as the first full-time aquatic supervisor for Pelican Harbor in 1996. He then served as superintendent of revenue facilities from 2000 to 2012, and finally as executive director since May of 2012. In addition to his work at Bolingbrook Park District, Ron was deeply involved in organizations throughout the Village of Bolingbrook including Rotary, H2O, Kiwanis, Character Counts Coalition, PEHS Band Boosters, and the Foundation for Bolingbrook Parks.



Mike Selep Named Bolingbrook Park District Executive Director

Mike Selep has been named as the new executive director at the Bolingbrook Park District. He has close to 30 years of parks and recreation experience. He recently served as the executive director of the Northern Will County Special Recreation Association (NWCSRA). Prior to NWCSRA, Selep served as the executive director of the

Mokena Community Park District. His other professional experiences include professional services director and interim director with the Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA), program coordinator with West Suburban Special Recreation Association, special projects assistant and accountant/information technology coordinator with the Schaumburg Park District, and the assistant director and superintendent of recreation with Fox Valley Special Recreation Association.

Passionate about growing the field, he is also currently an adjunct faculty member with the University of St. Francis and serves as past president of the American Camp Association Illinois.

Selep is a graduate of DePaul University with a master's in public service. He also holds a bachelor of arts degree in speech communications and political science from Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota.



Shannon Elsey Named Executive Director of Oakbrook Terrace Park District

Shannon Elsey has been named the new executive

director of the Oakbrook Terrace Park District. In her role, she oversees a diverse portfolio of parks and facilities, including the Lake View Nature Center, the Mario Parente Theater at the Heritage Center, and the Fitness Center. The Oakbrook Terrace Park District serves its residents and visitors through weekly recreation classes, nature programs, camps and after school programs, special events, and fitness opportunities. Shannon believes that park districts serve as the center of a community and loves connecting with residents in the parks and at community special events.

Shannon previously served as the superintendent of recreation for the Oakbrook Terrace Park District and spent the early years of her career with the Elk Grove Park District. She enjoys continuing education and giving back to the field. Shannon is currently serving as past chair for IPRA's ProConnect Mentorship Program.

Shannon is a graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with both a bachelor of science and master of science in recreation, sport & tourism. She is proud to have earned her Certified Park & Recreation Executive (CPRE) certification in 2022.

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