

illinois

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PARKS AND RECREATION

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



diving into  
**aquatics**

PLUS: COVID-19 Pandemic Updates

It's about  
giving them a

# Safe Place to make Memories



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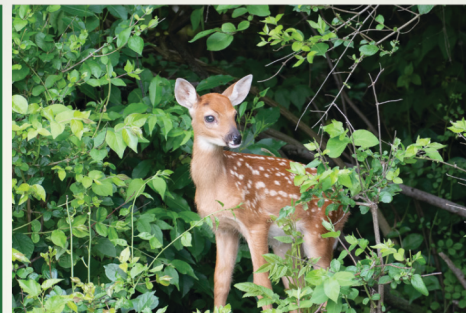
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## FROM THE EDITOR

For myself, and I imagine for many others, this time of the year is when we all start going outside more. From visiting parks to attending outdoor events and everything in between. We are all now having a vastly different spring season.



Social distancing, working from home, postponed events, and so much more are becoming everyday occurrences and we are all adapting to these changes, both in our personal and work lives.

That's why it is important to continue working hard and leading the charge during this pandemic. When our parks open back up, when our events can continue as normal, and when our communities look to us to provide those crucial services that we offer, we must be ready to deliver.

For my family, this time of year serves as a precursor to those wonderful warm summer days and trips to our local park district's swimming pool. I can only hope that as we work through this challenging time, we can move closer to getting back to the outdoors and those facilities that so many of us rely on for healthy and happy lives.

This issue explores topics related to aquatics and shines a light on the many opportunities our agencies have to deliver the perfect cool escape to the usual summer heat.

In this issue, Autism and Water Safety on page 20 discusses the best ways to make water facilities accessible to everyone, including those with Autism Spectrum Disorder and/or sensory processing disorder. Making the Most of Your Water Facility on page 12 explores options for water play features to upgrade out-of-date facilities. On page 16, Meeting the Standard: Keep Your Splash Pad Up-To-Date details the new NSF standards for splash pad surfaces.

I hope that by the time you read this, we are one step closer to getting back to normal in our every day lives. When the time comes, you can rest assured I'll be hopping into the nearest pool.

— Wayne Utterback, Interim Editor



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

## IAPD Resources During the COVID-19 Outbreak

At the time this article is being written, Illinois, along with the entire country, is dealing with an unprecedented public health crisis: the outbreak and spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). With the state under a stay-at-home order that limits public movement to essential activities, outdoor spaces like those provided by park, recreation, conservation and special recreation agencies are more important than ever.

I would like to commend our member agencies for operating with tremendous leadership and outstanding resourcefulness under these conditions. The Illinois Association of Park Districts is continuing to provide support by sharing **accurate, reliable information** with our membership.

While the Illinois Department of Natural Resources closed all state parks on March 16, individual park and recreation agencies were allowed to remain open under Governor JB Pritzker's March 20 stay-at-home order last updated on April 30. Restrictions were in place on playgrounds, community centers, and recreation centers, but the green spaces and trails at our member agencies have provided an essential outlet for the public during trying times.

With information about COVID-19 changing daily and sometimes hourly, IAPD created a COVID-19 Resource Page at [ilparks.org/COVID-19](http://ilparks.org/COVID-19). This page contains an array of resources including: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions regarding the Stay at Home Order, Guidance on the Open Meetings Act & FOIA, a hyperlink to the Illinois COVID-19 Resource Hub, Employment Resources and other information helpful to local park, recreation and conservation agencies in Illinois. We are constantly adding new resources as they become available.

### Webinars

To keep members informed and prepared to tackle the various issues that arise during and will remain after the spread of COVID-19, IAPD hosted a series of free webinars on topics such as employment (paid sick and FMLA requests, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, furloughs and layoffs, unemployment benefits, etc.) and finances (budgeting in the wake of COVID-19, implications

of a federal stimulus package, etc.). These webinars and related materials can be found at [ilparks.org/COVID-19](http://ilparks.org/COVID-19).

### IAPD Leadership Institute

IAPD's Leadership Institute is a premier educational series designed to foster leadership skills, boardmanship and professional success. This year's in-person seminar, "Improve Your Likeability – Improve Your Impact," is intended to guide you in becoming the best "you," so that you can make positive, likable connections through effective communication strategies. IAPD will be offering all Leadership Institute webinars free of charge as a complimentary member benefit during these difficult times.

In order to still provide these valuable learning resources while prioritizing public safety, we are revising the IAPD Leadership Institute schedule as follows:

#### Webinar #1 - Messaging and the Media in Crisis

Thursday, May 14, 2020  
11:00 a.m.

#### Webinar #2, High Focus Communication for Face-to-Face and Email

Thursday, June 18, 2020  
11:00 a.m.

#### Improve Your Likeability → Improve Your Impact

Thursday, July 23, 2020  
6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.  
Schaumburg Park District  
Schaumburg Golf Club  
Chandler's  
401 Roselle Rd.  
Schaumburg, IL 60194  
(847) 885-9000

Visit [ilparks.org](http://ilparks.org) to register for any of these important leadership educational opportunities.

### Legends Video Series

In these difficult times, our member agencies are fortunate to have citizen volunteers and park board members who have dedicated years and, in some cases, decades of service to their communities.

The IAPD Legends video series records and memorializes the experience and dedication of these outstanding individuals. In a time of uncertainty, it may be uplifting to be inspired by their service and work to improve the lives of those in their community.

The most recent video features a conversation with Past-Chairman of IAPD and Mundelein Park & Recreation District Commissioner Wally Frasier. View his and all other videos at [ilparks.org/legends](http://ilparks.org/legends)

### Response Act

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act was signed into law on March 18 to provide relief for families unable to work due to the COVID-19 outbreak. It took effect on April 1. Currently, public and private employers with fewer than 500 employees are subject to the requirements of the bill. The IAPD provides resources with information about this bill and how it may affect your agency on our COVID-19 Resources Page. While restrictions on business operations may have eased by the time this magazine is printed, the Act is effective through December 31, 2020, so agencies would be wise to familiarize themselves with its provisions. Visit our COVID-19 Resource page to learn more.

### Open Meetings Act and FOIA

Like many public bodies, our member agencies are working hard to balance the safety measures required to stem the spread of COVID-19 with their responsibility and commitment to transparency.

An Executive Order issued by Gov. Pritzker issued on March 16 temporarily suspended the Open Meetings Act requirements that “members of a public body” must be physically present” and the limitations on when remote participation is allowed. Public bodies were also encouraged to postpone or cancel public meetings.

Similarly, agencies have been working to fulfill their requirements under the Freedom of Information Act while protecting their employees and the public. To respond to limited staff and/or staff working remotely, agencies were allowed to extend their response time to FOIA requests or possible claim exemptions to fulfilling them.

More detailed information can be found at [ilparks.org/COVID-19](http://ilparks.org/COVID-19).

It is my fervent hope that by the time everyone reads this column, our state and country are able to reopen and that people in Illinois are looking ahead to a fun summer spent utilizing the numerous resources our member agencies provide. Nonetheless, the effects of COVID-19 will linger, and we at IAPD remain committed to providing you with support and information. Should you have any questions, please reach out to me personally at 217-523-4554 or [pmurphy@ilparks.org](mailto:pmurphy@ilparks.org).

Thank you again for your leadership and dedication.

## 2020 CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND MEETINGS

**Thursday, May 14**

**IAPD Leadership  
Institute**

Webinar #1: Messaging  
and the Media in Crisis

11 a.m. – Noon

Complimentary for IAPD  
Members

**Saturday, August 22**

**Park District  
Conservation Day at  
the Illinois State Fair**  
Springfield, IL

**Monday, August 24**

**Fox Valley Park District  
Golf Tour**

Orchard Valley Golf Course  
Aurora, IL

11:30 a.m. – Registration

12:30 p.m. – Shotgun Start

**Thursday, June 18**

**IAPD Leadership  
Institute**

Webinar #2: High Focus  
Communication for Face-  
to-Face and Email

11 a.m. – Noon

Complimentary for IAPD  
Members

**Thursday, September 17**

**IAPD Leadership  
Institute**

Driving the Future of your  
Agency: Vision, Leadership  
and Engagement

Schaumburg Park District  
Schaumburg Golf Club  
Chandler's

6-9 p.m.

**Thursday, July 16**

**IAPD Leadership  
Classic**

Hoffman Estates Park  
District's Bridges of Poplar  
Creek Country Club  
Hoffman Estates, IL

10:30 a.m.

Registration/Warm-Up

11:30 a.m. Shotgun Start

11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. Lunch  
available at turn

4:30 p.m. Reception,  
Dinner & Awards

**Monday, September 21**

**Channahon Park District  
Golf Tour**

Heritage Bluffs Public  
Golf Club

24355 W Bluff Rd.

Channahon, IL

11 a.m. – Registration

Noon – Shotgun Start

**Thursday, July 23**

**Improve Your Likability  
→ Improve Your  
Impact**

Schaumburg Park District  
Schaumburg Golf Club  
Chandler's

6-9 p.m.

**Friday, October 16**

**2020 Best of the Best  
Awards Gala**

Wheeling Park District  
Chevy Chase Country Club  
Wheeling, IL

6-10 p.m.

**Monday, July 27**

**Cary Park District  
Golf Tour**

Foxford Hills Golf Club  
Cary, IL

11 a.m. – Registration

Noon – Shotgun Start

**Thursday, November 5**

**Legal Symposium**

McDonald's U/Hyatt Lodge

Oak Brook, IL

**Jan 28 - Jan 30, 2021**

**IAPD/IPRA Soaring to  
New Heights Conference**

Hyatt Chicago, Chicago, IL

**Thursday, August 13**

**IAPD Leadership  
Institute**

Webinar #3: Your Board  
and Your Strategic Plan

11 a.m. – Noon

Complimentary for IAPD  
Members



By Debbie Trueblood, CAE  
IPRA Executive Director

## IPRA is Here for You and Together We Will Rebuild

Our world has recently been turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic. For some of you, you or your loved ones may have been personally affected by the illness. Our primary focus, first and foremost, is that of the health and safety of our members, and our hearts go out to those who have been sick or exposed to the virus. Second only to that concern, is the great respect we hold for the whole spectrum of essential workers from grocery workers to municipal workers, all of whom have bravely taken risks for the greater good. Every day, I look for the good news in this crisis and I see it in all the ways people are taking care of each other and doing their part for the safety of others.

Eventually, we will create a new normal for the parks and recreation community in our state. As I write this in mid-April, I cannot predict what will happen in the coming months. But, regardless of what happens with summer programming, we will always have parks and recreation and we will always want to help people in our communities make memories together and seek out parks and open spaces. Summer 2020 will be different than anyone could have planned or predicted, hopefully we will all stay strong and weather this like a summer storm, knowing after the rains our communities will come together to rebuild as one.

As we look ahead, we are excited about Unplug Illinois Day on July 11, 2020! On **Saturday, July 11, 2020**, people throughout Illinois will "unplug" and plug into the fun and activities available at their local park and recreation agencies. Unplug Illinois promotes the value that parks and recreation play in creating healthier communities. **It is not necessary to program specifically for the event** - you can also use the day in overall messaging to promote everything your park and recreation agency has to offer. What do you have planned? The easiest way to let us know is to complete the IPRA Community Calendar Event Form. We would also like to remind you to download the Unplug Illinois Transformation Kit – version 3.0! This digital resource is available free of charge for all IPRA members – visit the IPRA website for access information. It contains updated template press releases, social media posts, statistics, style guide and much more!

In general, we anticipate that our members will need us now more than ever and IPRA is here to support you. Over the last twenty years, I have focused my career on associations in crisis, leading them through turnarounds. I have seen an industry where two thirds of it was shuttered in less than five years. I have seen an association cancel their international conference due to an outbreak of H1N1. I have seen an association's conference attendance drop by a third in one year. In each case, my job was to protect and rebuild the association following crisis. In all these cases, the association turnarounds were successful, and I have presented on association turnarounds several times for my peers. As parks and recreation faces unprecedented challenges now, I bring these experiences to the table. We are planning ahead to serve you and to protect our beloved association so that we can be around for many years to come. Over the last eight years that I have been here, we have prepared for crisis with a healthy reserve, strong technology, and a talented team of professionals who will help us ride this out. I don't know what the future holds, but I know that with careful planning, we will all prevail.

We will always have parks and recreation, and we will always want to help people in our communities make memories together and seek out parks and open spaces together.



Given my experience as a "turnaround executive," as we all begin to rebuild, here is my advice for you:

- Cuts that are "across the board" will often create chaos as all programs function with insufficient resources. Instead, save/protect some and cut others in whole. Figure out what your core purpose is, both what you want it to be as well as what your constituency NEEDS it to be, and focus on that service, cutting everything else.




- Whenever possible, protect jobs. I know that staffing cuts, pay cuts, and benefit reductions may be necessary, but try to consider creative solutions like job sharing and re-purposing talented staff to new programs in lieu of cutting whole positions.
- While budget cuts may be the FIRST step in managing through a crisis, remember that you cannot cut your way to success. You will also need to invest in programs that create new revenue streams, invest in technology that frees up staff time, and invest in innovations to respond to new needs in your community. Investing in your future is critical during a crisis.
- Recognize that the “benefit” of the crisis is that you have an opportunity to relieve your agency of programs that have limited supporters or require significant staff time. You have political “cover” to discontinue programs that are “sacred cows” in the community.
- You likely have some programs that may seem like a luxury to continue but are actually creating excess revenues that will allow you to subsidize essential programs. Instead of cutting these luxury items, leverage the revenue.
- While a flush market breeds competition, a crisis market breeds partnerships. Identify programs you can provide in partnership with your neighboring communities and those who were your competitors so that each of you share in the benefits while reducing the related expenses.
- Remember that you have a network of peers through IPRA. Agencies can take bigger risks when you have the support and the data of your sister agencies and you can act as one.

• Whatever stage of your career, we all need each other. If you face a change in your employment status, **please update your email address on record** with us so that you stay connected and you can continue to receive the benefits of IPRA member connections.

• As you face budget cuts in your agency, remember that the Illinois Park and Recreation Foundation offers scholarships for professionals to attend professional development. Please apply at [www.iliprf.org](http://www.iliprf.org)

Together, we support our communities and our state. Together, we will prioritize the health and safety of our community patrons, our staffs, and our families. Together, we will face the long- term re-creation of our recreation world as one team. We are in this together. And IPRA will be with you every step of the way. We will get through this and we will see the sun shine over our world again.



November 8-11, 2020  
Eagle Ridge Resort and Spa

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL

ipra Professional Development School

Registration ends October 19, 2020

ipra ILLINOIS PARK & RECREATION ASSOCIATION

register at [ILipra.org](http://ILipra.org)



Plug Into Play!

## Unplug Illinois Day

Saturday, July 11, 2020

On Saturday, July 11, 2020, communities across Illinois will celebrate Unplug Illinois Day! People will ditch their electronic devices and ‘unplug’ to enjoy everything their local park and recreation agencies have to offer.

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

What’s your outlet?  
[unplugillinois.org](http://unplugillinois.org)

unplug ILLINOIS ipra ILLINOIS PARK & RECREATION ASSOCIATION



Jason Anselment  
General Counsel

## Pandemic Proves That Parks Are Essential

As I write this article from my remote workspace, daily reports of new COVID-19 cases and deaths have still not reached their projected peak. While the pandemic's impact on our daily lives in the short term is obvious to all, the overall long-term effect is incomprehensible at the present time.

Clearly, the immediate economic toll has already been substantial, and local park and recreation agencies were among the earliest to suffer financial losses. This was initially due to the closure of facilities and the cancellation of programs because of large gathering bans but subsequently due to the statewide stay at home order.

The total detrimental impact of the inability to offer many park and recreation services has not been confined to park district budgets and staffing. Families and individuals who rely on local park and recreation services have also been negatively impacted by the stoppage. The unique challenges the pandemic has presented to park districts, forest preserves and other local park and recreation agencies is a gut-wrenching irony. Typically, these agencies serve as the cores of their communities by bringing citizens together at senior centers, recreational facilities and programs, youth sports, and many other events, but for weeks citizens have been ordered to remain apart for their protection through social distancing.

On that point, it is important to recognize that just because public health orders utilize certain terminology like “non-essential,” it does not mean that recreational facilities, programs and similar services that ordinarily promote health and wellness are not essential during normal times. Rather, these interim policies simply recognize that these vital services gather large groups and promote human interaction to such an extent that they must be temporarily curtailed to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Conversely, while so many park district services have been temporarily closed, the pandemic is also proving something that park and recreation advocates have always asserted: *parks, trails and open space are not just amenities that improve the quality of life, they are critical to our health and well-being both physically and mentally.*

Indeed, local parks have always been a mainstay for promoting physical health, and one only needs to visit a local park during an ordinary spring day to see multitudes enjoying nature and engaging in physical activities such as walking, jogging, biking and playing. But even in these extraordinary times where playgrounds and other park features are closed, the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered an even greater reliance on local parks because they are nearly the only sanctuary outside a home to exercise and promote physical health.

Although local parks, trails and open spaces are needed to promote physical health now more than ever, their mental health contributions may be even more critical during the pandemic. As a proud parent of four children, my wife and I have known since we were pushing baby strollers just how key local parks are to parental mental health. But with the closure of schools and directives to stay at home, the psychological benefits of parks have never been clearer.

Working from home has presented challenges to millions of employees who are simply not used to it. Countless articles have circulated in the past month with tips and strategies to maximize productivity while working remotely. One common tip is the recommendation to take a walk at the end of the day for a change of scenery. Convenient access to local parks allows people to relax their minds while still practicing social distancing.

Unfortunately, for many people school closures and remote work are not the only reasons to focus on mental health. During the pandemic, anxiety levels are higher than normal. According to the CDC “[t]he outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.”<sup>1</sup> Job losses, stock market declines, and the overall downturn in the economy have added even more pressure to an already tense situation. Local parks and trails serve as a refuge for people and offer mental health support during this difficult time. Fortunately, park districts, forest preserves and other local park and recreation agencies provide Illinoisans with convenient access to more than 400 square miles of open space and more than 3,000 miles of multi-use trails.

Park districts, forest preserves and other conservation and recreation agencies should be proud of their contributions during this crisis. Notwithstanding social distancing and other restrictions on most normal activities that citizens would typically be enjoying this time of year, local parks have still proven to be essential during the COVID-19 crisis.

While we still do not know precisely when the pandemic will subside or exactly what the other side of it will look like, it is already evident that there will be budget challenges at the federal, state and local levels. If history of past budget shortfalls is any guide, we can count on at least a few shortsighted calls for cuts to parks and recreation and possibly proposed sweeps of dedicated dollars to patch budget holes. If that happens, it will be incumbent on park advocates to remind lawmakers of the vital role that our local park system played in supporting mental and physical health and well-being during this pandemic despite substantial restrictions on normal use.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

## CPI Rate for 2020 Extensions is 2.3%

IAPD has begun receiving inquiries regarding what Consumer Price Index (CPI) “cost of living” or inflation percentage to use in computing the 2020 extensions (taxes payable in 2021) under PTELL.

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 2020 extensions (taxes payable in 2021), the CPI to be used for computing the extension limitation is 2.3%. The CPI is measured from December 2018 to December 2019. The U.S. City Average CPI for December 2018 was 251.233 and 256.974 for December 2019. The CPI change is calculated by subtracting the 2018 CPI of 251.233 from the 2019 CPI of 256.974. That amount, 5.741, is then divided by the 2018 CPI of 251.233, which results in 2.3% CPI.

Information on PTELL may be accessed through the Illinois Department of Revenue's Web site at [www.tax.illinois.gov](http://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.

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


By **Barbara LaPierre**,  
Regional Sales Manager, Vortex Aquatics



MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR

# Water Facility

Throughout the ages, water recreation facilities have served as important community centerpieces. But as communities evolve, changing age demographics, accessibility issues and energy conservation concerns have significantly altered the form and function of these public play areas. In addition to these realities, community play-needs have shifted drastically since these structures were designed decades ago. More and more, these spaces no longer harbor the engagement they once did.



Regardless of the nuts and bolts, the goal for Aquatics and Recreation Directors is ultimately the same: to deliver a safe, dynamic facility that maximizes play-value within budget.

Some of the more commonly cited issues are:

#### **LACK OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Often limited in functionality and age appropriateness, aquatic spaces of yesteryear do not offer the dynamic play-experiences our highly stimulated age demands.

#### **NOT MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE WHOLE FAMILY**

Parents often find themselves torn between activities that accommodate the little ones and those that engage older siblings. Modern families are looking for experiences that everyone can enjoy together.

#### **COMPLIANCE ISSUES**

Many pools do not meet current accessibility regulations, which can result in costly legal expenses (in the United States, for instance, some public pools do not meet ADA regulations). And apart from these regulatory headaches, limited pool access means limited attendance.



#### **BURDENSOME MAINTENANCE AND WATER MANAGEMENT COSTS**

Now more than ever, energy conservation is top of mind for municipalities. Many public pools and aquatic spaces were developed long before today's efficacy concerns. These antiquated designs, paired with inevitable wear-and-tear expenses, have increased maintenance costs exponentially over the last many years.

Often sticking points for community planners, these concerns (along with other budgetary and infrastructure issues) prevent neighborhoods from modernizing pools that are quickly approaching eyesore status.

When looking for alternatives to dual-diving-board designs and those mushroom fountains of the 1980s, communities have begun taking cues from the commercial waterpark industry. They're now thinking in terms of guest experiences. To encourage more active engagement and longer visits, planners must start thinking about their constituents as guests, or customers—even if the facility does not use a pay-for-play model. And when it comes to play and entertainment, today's customers expect more thrills and bigger surprises than ever before.



Taking this guest-forward approach, successful refurbishments adhere to three golden rules:

### 1. Optimize your space

Often, redesigning a pool area doesn't require a total overhaul of existing facilities. In many cases, it's just a matter of leveraging wasted space. Here we have a separate lap pool and kiddie pool divided by a cold stretch of concrete. As the children play, parents are required to stand around—unengaged.

By contrast, this space can include features like a beach entry with a play structure, waterslides, waterwalk, a splashpad or a lazy river, all without sacrificing the lap pool.

### 2. Plan for Multiple Thrill Levels

We can't emphasize this enough: young families value activities that engage every member. Kiddie slides can intermingle with higher decks and ground-level features such as hoses and cannons. Not only does this kind of space accommodate older and younger siblings, but it also creates an environment that encourages interaction between all thrill levels.

### 3. Improve Accessibility

In 2010, the Department of Justice updated regulations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These new regulations require accessibility requirements for public recreational facilities such as swimming pools and wading pools. Slow in adopting these measures, municipalities are still investing in these refurbishments.

## KNOWING YOUR ABCs: HOW TO OPTIMIZE YOUR TRANSFORMATION

To understand your specific programming needs, you'll want to first assess your ABCs.

### Available Water Source

When adding play elements to an existing pool, always try to work with what's available. Whenever possible, avoid new pipe installation and the construction work associated with it.

What are you working with: single feature flange, multiple stub-ups, floor inlets, central column supply? Knowing your setup and pipe diameters is essential.

### Budget

Regardless of the nuts and bolts, the goal for Aquatics and Recreation Directors is ultimately the same: to deliver a safe, dynamic facility that maximizes play-value within budget.

When budgeting, think long-term: by incorporating a wide array of activities that appeal to multiple age groups, your facility will entice patrons to stay longer. These prolonged stays justify admission rates, which can, as a result, be used to maintain and even expand your waterpark-like facilities in the coming years. Moreover, word-of-mouth and greater accessibility attract visitors from neighboring communities, who can add to a healthy revenue stream.

### Current Condition

Does the size of your current pool sufficiently meet the needs of your community? Are current conditions ADA compliant?

There are numerous considerations when upgrading your pool, many of which may not be in your peripheral. Here are a few examples of what to look for (not all of them will necessarily apply to your facility but they'll nevertheless give you a good idea of which stones to turn):

### TILE AND COPING

Some pools have a tile border or are entirely tiled. Inspect your pool for possible repair work (often, older coping can present safety issues). Consider replacing current tiles or adding new ones. Tiles enhance the overall look of your pool and make cleaning the waterline a cinch.

### POOL FINISH

There may be years of buildup. You'll want to sandblast and/or wetblast to get to the pool shell. From there, you can assess issues such as hairline cracks, pitting or rot.

### HARDSCAPE

If you have a poured-concrete deck, repairs are usually painless (unless there's substantial breakage). Composite

coverings, on the other hand, will probably need to be replaced if problems are detected.

### FENCE

You will want to determine if your fencing is up to code and whether it needs to be repaired or replaced. Is the gate safe and easy to open and close?

### POOL SURROUNDINGS

Review the space around the pool. Will you need new landscaping or signage? Additional shading or seating around the pool? And what, if anything, will be required to ensure that the pool is ADA compliant?

The takeaways for a recreation facility? The jump in attendance and potential revenues (where applicable) after a renovation speaks for itself. But even if you're a smaller-scale facility that cannot implement a pay-for-play model, consider how the new attraction will benefit your community through overall park attendance. Bigger attendance and greater engagement spills over into other amenities in your public space as well as surrounding businesses. And what's more, features such as a splashpad can implement the most advanced water conservation technologies, thus reducing future costs.

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By Gwen Ruehle, Vice President, Marketing, Life Floor

# Meeting *the* Standard

Keep Your Splash Pad Up-To-Date

In 2019, after four years of research, testing, and careful deliberation, NSF/ANSI 50 has created a new standard for splash pad surfaces.





**According to the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System database, in 2014 alone, there were an estimated 20,000 injuries on pool decks, splash pads, or water parks resulting in an emergency room visit. All over North America, splash pads have been closed due to safety concerns.**

This new standard emphasizes slip resistance, impact attenuation, and durability to perform in the aquatic environment.

This standard was created because experts have seen how similar splash pads and playgrounds are. Children use them in similar ways. The success of playground design standards provides an important template for the future of splash pad safety.

In the late 1970s, there were no rules or industry standards when it came to playground safety. Some 200,000 children visited the emergency room for playground-related injuries annually during the 1970s.

The industry realized it could do better, and in 1981, the Consumer Product Safety Commission published the Handbook for Public Playground Safety. The ASTM published its own guidelines soon after.

Over the past 25 years, splash pads have appeared everywhere.

A new kind of play area has joined the playground at local parks: the splash pad.

Unfortunately, in the rush to meet the growing demand, and without a surfacing product durable enough for aquatics, history has repeated itself. Key safety regulations were not immediately created for splash pads. And people have been injured.

According to the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System database, in 2014 alone, there were an estimated 20,000 injuries on pool decks, splash pads, or water parks

resulting in an emergency room visit. All over North America, splash pads have been closed due to safety concerns.

### **A new standard - NSF/ANSI 50**

The safety revolution that transformed playgrounds is long overdue for splash pads.

Following years of rigorous testing and research, NSF created NSF/ANSI 50 (Interactive Water Play Venue Surfacing Systems), concluding that for a surface to meet an appropriate standard for splash pad surfacing, it must fill six unique performance-based requirements:

- Slip Resistance
- Impact Attenuation
- Chemical Resistance
- UV Resistance
- Cleanability
- Impermeability

How is a splash pad surface certified to NSF/ANSI 50?

### **Slip Resistance**

Certified splash pad surfaces must be slip-resisting to minimize slip-and-fall injuries, while providing a minimum level of traction without being abrasive.

A certified surface needs to be independently tested via the British Pendulum Method, the most accurate test for simulating real world conditions.

Testing is conducted with three sets of materials: a controlled sample as well as samples exposed to UV light and chemically treated pool water.



Most of the developed world already uses the British Pendulum Test.

### Impact Absorption

Certified surfaces must be cushioned to absorb inevitable falls. The standard requires a HIC (Head Injury Criterion) value of 750, with a .20 meter minimum fall height.

Keeping the HIC value below 1000 is key. At a HIC of 1000, there is an 18% probability of a severe head injury, a 55% probability of a serious injury, and a 90% probability of a moderate head injury to the average adult.

The test will include virgin samples as well as samples exposed to UV light and to pool water. Each group of samples would be assembled on a grid, with a drop test performed on both the center of a tile, a joint between two adjoining tiles, and a junction where the greatest number of tiles meet.

### Chemical Resistance

Certified surfaces must maintain their traction and impact attenuation even after exposure to harsh chemicals.

To determine this, a surface is independently tested by exposing samples to specifically treated water for 100 days, including three elevated chlorine “shock” periods lasting at least 24 hours each.

### UV Resistance

Resistance to ultra-violet radiation is essential, as many splash pads experience intense, year-long sun exposure.

To determine UV resistance, a surface is independently tested for 750 hours under a fluorescent UV light in accordance with ASTM G154.

Any erosion is not acceptable if it compromises the surface's traction and impact attenuation. Safety messaging must also retain visual clarity.

### Cleanability

A certified surface must respond well to cleaning and sanitization.

To test cleanability, a dirty slurry with two major bacterial groups found in aquatic environments is applied to the surface and any surface joints. These organisms are then allowed to incubate, with one set of samples kept as a control.

The challenge organisms are first counted before placing the samples in a bleach solution. The organisms are counted again after removal from the solution.

This also includes the area between the joints of each tile.

### Impermeability

A certified surface must not absorb water.

According to the standard, a surface must be at least as impermeable as concrete, which is rated as 98.3% impervious, based on how much water a sample may absorb over 24 hours.



### What is NSF/ANSI 50?

NSF International is an objective third party certification group that works with industry professionals and stakeholders to provide public health and safety-based risk management solutions. NSF/ANSI 50 are a set of standards that establish minimum performance requirements for equipment, products, and systems related to recreational water facility operation. The NSF/ANSI 50 standards cover much of the equipment that goes in and around recreational water areas (i.e. splash pads, pool decks) including water sanitation, filtering, pumps, and surfacing.

What are the new standards around safety surfacing within NSF/ANSI 50? The new standard within NSF/ANSI 50 outlines the performance testing characteristics of a safety surface around “interactive water venues” (which is a term that includes splash pads and areas like splash pads). Specifically, the amount of slip resistance, chemical resistance, impact cushioning, UV resistance, cleanability, and impermeability a surface needs in order to be certified to the standard.

### How does this affect aquatic operators?

Currently, 37 states reference NSF/ANSI 50 and an additional four states have counties that reference NSF/ANSI 50.

Additionally, the Model Aquatic Health Code as set out by the CDC has adopted NSF/ANSI 50 standards. In this case, the Model Aquatic Health Code outlines what

specifically is mandatory for facilities to adhere to (the code) and the NSF/ANSI 50 standard provides guidelines on how to comply with the code.

If not mandatory, why should aquatic operators care? It is always in a facility's best interest to adhere to NSF standards in terms of both operational excellence and risk mitigation. Meeting NSF standards for sanitation, health and safety provide facilities additional protection from potential lawsuits. The NSF/ANSI 50 standard reduces the chance of injuries. However, should an injury occur, operators can point to the fact that they were operating under the best and safest practices in the industry.

On a product level, using NSF/ANSI 50 certified products takes the guesswork out of finding safe, high-performing products and services for aquatic operators. Independent testing ensures that a product with NSF certification can be trusted to serve public health.

For further information, videos, and more, visit [lifefloor.com/NSF50](http://lifefloor.com/NSF50).

### About Life Floor:


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**BY MEGAN PEDIGO**  
Director of Marketing, Easterseals Central Illinois



Visiting a public pool or aquatic setting can be an exciting and memorable experience for children. Just the mention of a public pool likely brings back memories of water splashing, whistles blowing, children laughing and the hot sun shining down. For children who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder or sensory processing disorder, these sights, sounds and experiences can have an entirely different impact. It is important for pool staff and administrators to understand the needs of these attendees in order to effectively communicate with them and keep everyone safe.



Children with autism can have decreased awareness of their surroundings and may elope or wander away from adult supervision. Drowning is the leading cause of accidental death for children with autism.

#### **What is autism spectrum disorder?**

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that impacts social communication and social interaction. ASD affects an estimated 1 in 59 children in the United States today. There is no one type of autism; it is a spectrum disorder. This means that each person with autism has different strengths and challenges and requires varying levels of support. Children on the autism spectrum may demonstrate difficulty with rigid thinking and have difficulty with transitions or new experiences. A child may demonstrate repetitive behaviors or stereotypical behaviors (i.e. repeating words people have said, scripting lines from movies or songs, flipping objects and lining things up) that may look strange or different to peers or pool staff who are not familiar with autism. Children with autism often have difficulty reading social cues or body language, which can make participation in social settings challenging. A child may avoid eye contact or appear to not be listening when others are talking. Children with autism can have decreased awareness of their surroundings and may elope or wander away from adult supervision. Drowning is the leading cause of accidental death for children with autism. The CDC reports that about half of children and youth with ASD were reported to wander, which can cause significant safety risks around water. Of those children, 1 in 4 were missing long enough to cause concern and were more commonly in danger of drowning.

## What is sensory processing disorder?

Sensory processing refers to how we take in information through our senses and our ability to produce an appropriate response to the situation. A sensory processing disorder occurs when the brain has difficulty organizing and interpreting the information that comes in through the senses. Children with Autism often demonstrate difficulty with sensory processing or may have unusual interests in sensory aspects of the environment, such as enjoyment of watching spinning objects or running water.

A child with a sensory processing disorder might be over-responsive (demonstrating sensitivities or avoidance of things that others are not bothered by), which may be observed as difficulty tolerating loud noises, sensitivity to touch or texture, or dislike of certain smells, or a child may be easily overwhelmed or upset in busy visual environments. These difficulties often make pool settings challenging as a child may resist having a tight swimming suit or life jacket, may hold hands over their ears or cry with whistles or pool sounds (especially in indoor settings), may be very sensitive to hot sand or scratchy concrete on their feet, may be upset by the smells of pool chemicals or may fight or resist having sunscreen applied, and may be fearful or resistive of being splashed by water or having water on their face.

## Why are children with autism or sensory processing disorder drawn to water?

Being in and around water is a full sensory experience. Another type of sensory processing difficulty that may be seen is under-responsive (taking longer to respond, less awareness, high pain tolerance) or sensory craving (high activity level or may seem to need running, crashing, jumping, touching, etc.). These children may seek out water but do not have the safety skills or awareness of danger needed to stay safe. Children may be fascinated by light reflecting on the water surface, the feeling of the water on their hands, the sound of waves splashing, or watching objects move or spin in the water.

## What can lifeguards and pool staff do to make the environment more inclusive?

As we come upon another summer season, it is vital that persons charged with keeping attendees safe at a pool or aquatic setting understand the needs of attendees with autism or sensory processing disorder. Small changes to how we communicate rules or interpret behaviors can make a positive difference for all children, but especially those with autism or sensory processing disorder. Some guidelines are:

- It is better to tell a child what you want them to do, rather than what you want them to stop doing. Rather than say “don’t run,” use the action you would like the child to take: “Walk please” or “Use walking feet.”
- Use one word or very short phrases when giving directions. Rather than saying, “come sit down on the pool step while you wait,” you can communicate the same thing with less words by saying, “sit on step.”
- New places are difficult for children with autism. It can be helpful for a parent to be able to bring their child to a new setting when it is not busy to know what to expect. A tour of the facility prior to the start of the season or prior to opening to the public for the day can help improve tolerance and transitions.
- If unable to give tours, it can be helpful to have actual pictures of different aspects of the facility available to parent in print or on a website so they can prepare their child in advance (including pictures of entrance, changing area, water setting, and a picture of the actual instructor or life guard for lessons).
- Children with autism benefit from use of visual pictures to know what is expected. Small pictures of stop signs or don’t touch symbols can be printed and laminated to be placed on areas or equipment that are not open to the public or could be dangerous.
- Consider creating a social story or picture story that can be downloaded by parents or printed and placed at the front desk that shows pool rules.

### Sample lake social story



When I am near water



I wear my lifejacket



I stay with my parents

### Sample pool social story



When I go to the pool



I use walking feet



and stay safe

## What is a social story?

According to Easterseals Chicago, social situations and expectations can be difficult for individuals with autism spectrum disorder to understand. Social stories are short stories written for a specific individual that help them better understand such situations. They outline the situation and the expected behaviors, as well as strategies to cope with any difficulties that may occur. Social stories are a visual way of clarifying information and allowing the individual to review it repeatedly until it is understood.

We recommend connecting with your local Easterseals affiliate, parent group or school district for more information on how to create a social story specific to your setting or inquire about a brief training for your team. You can search for an affiliate nearby here:

<https://www.easterseals.com/connect-locally/>. There are also a variety of great resources available at [AutismSpeaks.org](https://www.autismspeaks.org).

## The Water Seals Group

Easterseals Central Illinois Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant Lauren Gray recognized the urgent need for water safety for children with autism and sensory processing disorder. To address this, she developed the Water Seals Group. This group is a water safety and aquatic social skills class focused on helping children with autism and sensory processing disorder thrive. The goals of this class include helping children improve water safety, social skills, motor planning and sensory processing ability in a warm water setting. Water Seals is led by a licensed therapist and a swim instructor/ lifeguard. Families receive educational social story videos that correspond with the water safety or beginning swim lessons learned each session. The combination of social stories and other visuals, one-on-one support in the water and the videos modeling behavior has proved successful. For more information on the Water Seals Group and other programs at Easterseals Central Illinois visit [eastersealsci.com](https://www.eastersealsci.com).

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### Margaret Resnick

Margaret Resnick will be retiring at the end of May after more than a decade serving as the executive director of the Mundelein Park & Recreation District.

Margaret began her career in the field of parks and recreation in 1989 as the executive director of the Clyde Park District in Cicero. She went on to become the deputy director at

Bolingbrook Park District and served in her current role for 13 years.

She currently serves on the board of the Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA). She has served on numerous sections and committees including Director of the Administration and Finance Section, Chair of the Joint Distinguished Park and Recreation Accreditation Committee, Chair of the Joint Conference Committee and Board Member of Women in Leisure Services. She received the IPRA Professional of the Year award, presented to professionals who have made a positive impact in their communities, in 2005 and 2015.

Margaret plans to work with the new executive director during his transition and will officially retire at the end of May.



### Kevin Romejko

Kevin Romejko has been named executive director of the Rolling Meadows Park District.

Kevin was most recently superintendent of business services at the Bartlett Park District and previously served as director of administrative services at the Wheeling Park District and human resource manager and safety coordinator

at the Palatine Park District. He has also worked in facility management and programming at park districts in Schaumburg and Northbrook.



### Amy Charlesworth

After nearly four decades with the Rolling Meadows Park District, Amy Charlesworth retired as executive director.

Amy started her career with the park district as a recreation supervisor. Over the decades, her work was

recognized at the state and local level, most recently with the Illinois Park & Recreation Association's Lifetime Achievement award. The award noted that, under Amy's leadership, the Rolling Meadows Park District became a leader in parks and recreation in the state, particularly with its ice and gymnastics facilities.

Under Amy's leadership, the park district added walking and biking paths, updated facilities for ADA compliance, made \$3 million worth of ice arena and parking lot upgrades, and improved nine parks.

### 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](http://www.ILparks.org), and hover over Knowledge Center at the top of the page, then hover over IP&R Magazine, and select People & Places.

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

E-mail information and jpegs to [wutterback@ILparks.org](mailto:wutterback@ILparks.org). Jpegs should be 300 dpi at about 2 inches tall.



**Carrie Fullerton**

Carrie Fullerton has been named executive director of the Arlington Heights Park District. She was previously executive director of the Bloomingdale Park District for 11 years.

Carrie is a mother of four who grew up in Schaumburg and earned her bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

She interned at the Arlington Heights Park District in 1992.

In addition to her previous executive director post, Carrie has also served as director of parks and recreation for the village of Hinsdale, superintendent of special facilities for the Wheaton Park District and division manager for the Schaumburg Park District.



**Ron Salski**

Ron Salski has been hired as executive director for the Mundelein Park & Recreation District.

Ron is a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional and holds a Master of Business Administration from Lewis University. He

also has a Bachelor of Science degree from Illinois State University. Previously, Ron was the executive director for the Lake Bluff Park District, a position he held since 2008. Prior to that, he was the director of park & recreation services at the Wheeling Park District from 2003 until 2008. From 2001 until 2002, he was the division director at the Hoffman Estates Park District as well as the superintendent of recreation from 2000 until 2001.

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<p><b>July/Aug 2020</b> <i>Deadline: May 15</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trends in Conservation, Outdoor Recreation &amp; Nature Centers</li> <li>• Legislative Advocacy</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sept/Oct 2020</b> <i>Deadline: July 10</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2021 Soaring to New Heights Pre-Conference Program</b></li> <li>• Good Governance &amp; Leadership</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nov/Dec 2020</b> <i>Deadline: Sept 11</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Marketing Your Agency for Results</b></li> <li>• 2020 Best of the Best Gala Award Winners</li> </ul>

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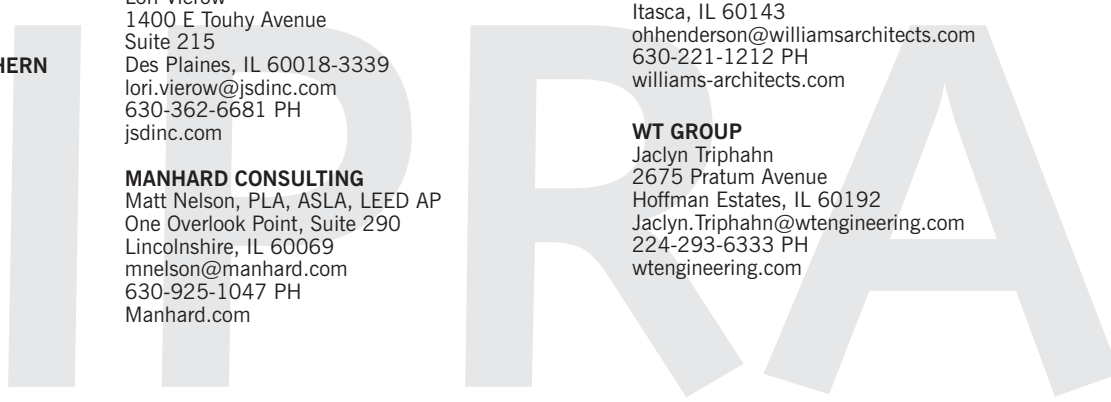
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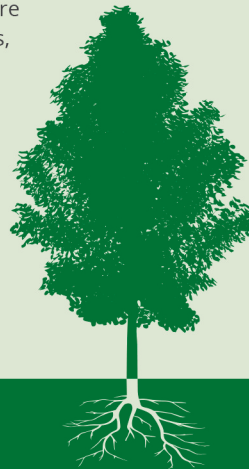


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