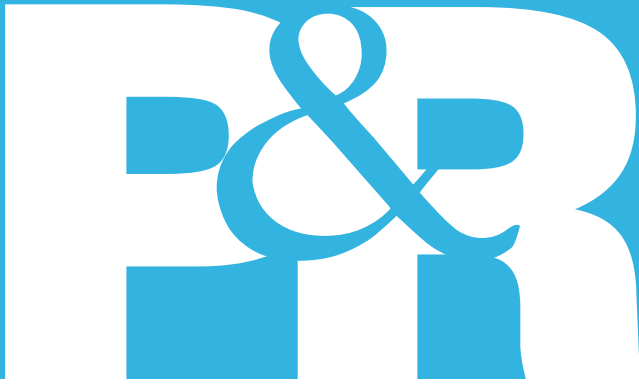


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PARKS AND RECREATION

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



aquatics



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FROM THE EDITOR

As COVID-19 vaccines continue to be administered and agencies are beginning to open doors to residents, aquatics facilities will be hot spots for many families who missed out on the experience last year.



I can remember last year, where families were buying pools at a rapid rate, simply because the venues where they typically swam and played were unable to open. The desire to have water-based activities was glaringly obvious.

This year, as restrictions continue to get lifted, we can expect families to be looking to park districts for all their aquatics needs. Fortunately, Illinois park and recreation agencies consistently deliver valuable and memorable experiences when it comes to aquatics.

This issue is focused on aquatics and we have a wonderful selection of articles exploring the topic. In "Safe Pool Water is a True Balancing Act," Spear Corporation investigates how to keep water clean and safe for residents. In "Opening in a Pandemic," the Vernon Hills Park District sheds light on how it managed to keep its aquatics center open during a pandemic. Finally, in "So You Want to Build an Aquatic Center?," the Des Plaines Park District breaks down the process of opening a brand new aquatics center.

Stay safe, stay cool, and thank you for reading!

— Wayne Utterback, Editor



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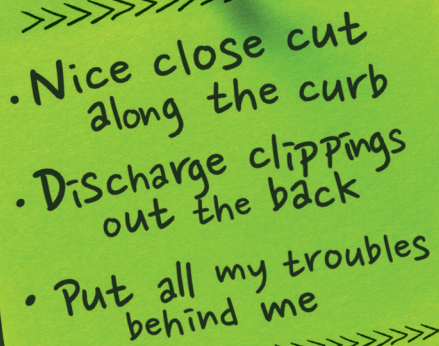
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- 
- Nice close cut along the curb
 - Discharge clippings out the back
 - Put all my troubles behind me



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

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Board Meetings

Exciting times are ahead as we transition into more normalcy in a post pandemic Illinois. I know we are all elated with the rise in capacity limits and the exclusion of those vaccinated from the counts. At IAPD, we are looking ahead to in-person educational events for which there is really no good substitute. Parks and recreation is an industry that does best when networking takes place in-person. Pivoting to virtual helped bridge the gap and enabled us to reach members who had limitations on the ability to travel. For the first time in our history, both our state conference and commissioner Boot Camps went virtual. The only meeting casualty was the Legislative Conference as the result of the Capitol being inaccessible to members of the public.

The focus of my article this month is evaluating the effectiveness of board meetings. This topic should periodically be revisited by park boards as part of their dedication to excellence.

It is important that board members establish criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of their board meetings and review it annually.

Rules of Etiquette. It's important to establish rules of etiquette for meetings. Each new member joining the board should receive a list of meeting rules. These could include such things as raising your hand when you want to speak, listening to what other board members say, being courteous to guests, not interrupting a fellow board member, and supporting board decisions. Meeting etiquette rules make board sessions much more orderly and enjoyable.

Social Interaction. Although it's important to stick to the agenda, you can also overreact and make meetings super efficient but with no social interaction. According to Robert's Rules, the social aspect of board meetings is important for creating board camaraderie. Meetings certainly should not drag on, but they shouldn't be finished so quickly that there is no interaction. Board members feel better about a meeting when they have had an opportunity to talk and do not feel rushed.

Conflicting Opinions. Conflicts will arise at board meetings. When arguments erupt, board members should keep in mind that they need to remain objective. It's easy to make up your mind and refuse to listen to another board member's opinions. You must listen carefully. That's one of your roles as a board member. And don't be too sensitive. If another board member is critical of your idea, you don't have to respond in a negative fashion. It's important to see what other board members think about your idea. If most board members show agreement with the board member who opposes your view, maybe your idea wasn't so great after all.

“An effective board is multiple minds speaking with one voice.”



Conflicting Personalities. Don't let personalities disrupt board meetings. If there are two people who don't get along outside the board room, chances are they won't agree inside. Board members must set personal animosities aside in the board room otherwise they will make board meetings miserable for everybody.

Conflict Resolution. Don't let board disagreements go unresolved. Tackle divisiveness immediately. Don't try to sweep your problems under the rug. You should take a proactive approach to solving problems otherwise they continue to fester and build. In some cases, you may want an outside consultant to review the situation with the board. The consultant can address the board's concerns and oftentimes a third party can give a more objective point of view. The board shows integrity by recognizing that there is a problem, then enlisting help to solve it.

Meeting Postmortem. The executive director and president of the board should sit down and do a postmortem on the meeting. Post-meeting discussions enable individuals to determine what went wrong while the events are still fresh in their memories. Each meeting gets better because you can talk about problems and how to avoid them in the next meeting.

Board Input on Meeting Structure and Flow. Periodically all board members should be asked to formally evaluate their meetings, utilizing a questionnaire to do this. Formal evaluations performed two times a year can help you find a meeting structure that satisfies everyone. Each board member should also evaluate their own performance following a board meeting. At the end of the meeting, you might want to ask yourself, “Was this a good meeting or a bad one?” Then assess your contribution. Were you prepared for the meeting? Were you able to discuss each agenda item?

Pet Projects. Occasionally pet projects or pet issues become apparent at board meetings. In evaluating your effectiveness as a board member, you need to ask yourself whether you let your head—not your heart—influence your decisions. Were you as objective as you possibly could be in the decision-making process? If there is an issue on the agenda that you are emotional about, you need to recognize it. Prior to the meeting, review in your own mind how you are going to handle the situation and the comments that you are going to make and try to assess whether or not you are objective. As a board member you should listen to every side of an issue and then base your action on what is best for the agency and the people you serve. You must always consider whether this project is within the strategic or comprehensive plan.

The Team Ethic. The right decision on issues at the board meeting isn't always the easiest one to make, but each board member needs to assess, “Are we operating as a team or are we operating as adversaries?” Everyone should recognize that in order to get things done they must work together and not pull in different directions. When board members work as a team, they are able to talk freely about issues without worrying about hurting feelings when disagreements arise.

Here are other questions you can ask yourself when evaluating the effectiveness of board meetings:

- Was the meeting conducted in a businesslike manner resulting in actions that resolve problems?
- Were agenda items submitted to the board in advance with reports covering all items on which the board would make decisions? Were the reports succinct, clear, and well-prepared?
- Were all board members given an opportunity to participate in the discussion?
- Was the agenda strictly followed?
- Did the board discuss policy matters rather than day-to-day management decisions?

- Did the board seek counsel on matters that have legal ramifications?
- Was the meeting room conducive to a comfortable meeting? Is it large enough to accommodate visitors?
- Are board meetings regularly attended by all board members?
- Are we working together? How well do we do as a team?
- Is there always controversy? Why? Should we hold occasional educational programs on conflict management and boardmanship? Should these programs be held separately from the board meeting or should they be a part of every meeting?
- Do we use the expertise of our chief executive or do we constantly go over every detail? Are we wasting time on petty details?
- Are we addressing big issues and looking at the bottom line of the agency? Are we establishing achievable goals? Are we making major decisions? Are we concerned with the agency's future?

Thank you to all board members and professional staff for all you do to make Illinois a great place to work, live and play!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Monday, June 28, 2021
Golf Tour #1
 Hoffman Estates Park District
 Bridges of Poplar Creek
 1400 Poplar Creek Dr.
 Hoffman Estates, IL 60169
 11:00 a.m. Registration
 12:00 p.m. Shotgun Start
 4:30 p.m.
 Reception/Dinner/Awards

Monday, July 19, 2021
Golf Tour #2
 Deerfield Park District,
 Deerfield Golf Club
 1201 Saunders Rd
 Riverwoods, IL 60015
 9:30 a.m. Registration
 10:30 a.m. Shotgun Start
 2:45 p.m. Awards/Lunch

Monday, August 16, 2021
Golf Tour #3
 Rockford Park District, Aldeen
 Golf Club
 1902 Reid Farm Rd
 Rockford, IL 61107
 11:00 a.m. Registration/
 Warm Up
 12:00 p.m. Shotgun Start
 4:30 p.m. Reception/Dinner/
 Awards

Saturday, August 21, 2021,
 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
IAPD Conservation Day
 Illinois State Fair
 Springfield, IL 62702

Friday, October 15, 2021, 6:30
 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
**IAPD Best of the Best
 Awards**
 Wheeling Park District's Chevy
 Chase Country Club
 1000 N. Milwaukee Ave.
 Wheeling, IL 60090

Thursday, November 4, 2021
 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
IAPD Legal Symposium
 Hyatt Lodge/Conference Center
 2715 Jorie Blvd
 Oak Brook, IL 60523

January 27-29, 2022
**2022 IAPD/IPRA
 Soaring to New
 Heights Conference**
 Hyatt Regency Chicago
 151 E. Upper Wacker Dr
 Chicago, IL 60601



Dear Summer Staff, Welcome to Our Professional Community!

By Debbie Trueblood, CAE
IPRA Executive Director

As you may have heard, I have resigned from IPRA as of May 27, 2021, so this will be my last magazine article. I fell in love with the parks and recreation community, and will miss the warm camaraderie of the IPRA family. I'm so grateful for the members, the board, and the staff for all that we were able to accomplish together. Parks and recreation will always have a special place in my heart. I hope to take the things I learned here and help many more people in other associations.

Barry Franks, IPRA's Finance Director, has been named Interim Executive Director. Barry has been with the Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA) since 2009 as Finance Director. He has his MBA from DePaul University, a certificate in Banking Policy from the George Washington University – School of Business, has over 20 years' experience in non-profit association management, and over 30 years' experience in Finance and Accounting. Barry is an active volunteer – he is a proud 'Big Brother' through the Illinois Big Brother Big Sister program and has served on the Board of Directors for the American Camp Association-Illinois. He is currently on the board of the Lincolnway Special Recreation Foundation.

In his free time, Barry enjoys spending time with his family – camping and exploring national parks. He loves the feeling of community with IPRA members and is excited to lead IPRA through this transition.

This issue is dedicated to your summer staff. Please share it with them as part of their orientation.

Professionals, do you remember the first day you came to work in the field of parks and recreation? Based on the numerous stories I've heard, it sounds like many of you reading this came to park and rec as your first job, maybe a summer job when you were in high school. Put yourself in their shoes and think back to your first day. As a teen summer employee, do they understand the long-term career paths available to them to join our professional community? **How is it that parks and recreation industry is the state's largest employer of teens, yet our colleges**

and universities tell us that parks and recreation is a "discovery major" that students transition to after coming to school with a different plan in mind? Let's close the gap on that. Let's take a moment to share with our summer staff that each of them has the potential to do what they love, serve their community, and be a part of the park and rec community year-round. I encourage you to share this article with your summer staff as part of their orientation experience, to educate them about the opportunities available in a career in parks and recreation.

Share this article with your summer staff as part of their orientation experience, to educate them about the opportunities available with a career in parks and recreation.



Summer Staff, welcome once again to the field of parks and recreation! There may be many reasons why you chose to spend your summer serving at your local park and recreation agency; maybe your friends are working there too, maybe you enjoy being out in the sun, maybe you love working with kids, or getting your hands dirty working outside. Whatever the reasons, we're so glad you're here with us! On behalf of the professionals across Illinois who call parks and recreation their career of choice, we would like to take a quick minute to invite you to join us. Maybe you have your career plan all worked out and you know exactly what you want to do down the road, or maybe you're still seeking the right fit, you'd be surprised how many people find themselves working at a park district, forest preserve, special recreation association, municipal department or other park and recreation agency at some point in their careers.

In Illinois alone, we have several four-year degree granting institutions for parks and recreation majors. According to

NRPA, the following schools have accredited programs: Chicago State University, Eastern Illinois University, Illinois State University, University of St. Francis, and Western Illinois University. Additionally, there are other recreation degree programs at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. And Moraine Valley Community College has a program for Recreation and Sports Management. So, for students interested in pursuing a college education in a major which will prepare them for a career in our field, there are many local options all over our state.

For those of you who may be learning about us for the first time, it is the mission of the Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA) to provide and promote exceptional standards of education, networking, and resources for all professionals in the Illinois park, recreation, and conservation communities. Most of our members work in public parks and recreation at park districts, forest preserves, municipal departments, and special recreation associations. Our job is to serve professionals in Illinois by providing educational opportunities and other resources to help them to do their jobs better. If you decide that the fun you're having this summer as a seasonal employee at your local park and recreation agency is something you want to pursue as a career, there are many different professional positions within our field to choose from. Park and recreation careers include Recreation Programmers, Athletic Supervisors, Inclusion Coordinators (to ensure people with disabilities have fulfilling opportunities for recreation), Park Specialists, Water Park Managers, Facility and Event Managers, Fitness Center Managers, Park Police, Museum Managers, Aquatic Managers, etc. As well as in fields such as finance, marketing, customer service, IT, administration, and human resources, which are found in parks and recreation as well as the private sector. To view a list of jobs and internships in our field that are currently available, take a look at our statewide job board at <http://jobs.ilipra.org/>.

If you are a summer seasonal employee who is interested in exploring the career opportunities available in parks and recreation, you might seek out the agency's summer intern who can give you some real-world stories about what their classroom experience is like. Or you can reach out to the full-time employees at the agency to hear about their careers.

Our professional community is a place where people from all backgrounds are welcome. Some of our colleagues love sports and participate as athletes themselves while others may prefer to spend their recreation time traveling or pursuing fine arts. There is no single "right way" to be a parks and recreation professional.

Welcome to the field. Our hope for you as you enjoy your summer, is that you have fun, and you see the value in the work you are doing as an essential service to the community.

Upcoming Events

Unplug Illinois Day

July 10, 2021

Locations throughout Illinois

Join us in celebrating Unplug Illinois Day! You can choose to highlight and promote the many activities your park and recreation agency has to offer, or you can choose to celebrate Unplug Illinois Day with a special event – it's up to you! Unplug Illinois encourages people to get out, unplug, play and engage with one another through experiences at local park and recreation agencies. Whether a person is biking with friends on local trails, playing a sport, taking in a class or simply cooling off at the pool, Illinois is home to thousands of park and recreation facilities that can help people live a happier and healthier life. Learn more at UnplugIllinois.org.

For details on these, and other upcoming events, please visit ILipra.org

Customer Service Transformation - Case History in Action

July 14 or July 15, 2021 Webinar

Customer Service Transformation: Case History in Action, is presented by Neelay Bhatt and Nikki Ginger, and they are going to share the evolution of their massive customer service and leadership training program, and how they had to convert it to an on-line program in the midst of the pandemic.

CPRP Virtual Exam Prep Series B

Weekly, August 3-September 7, 2021 - Webinar

IPRA is offering virtual exam prep programs with six classes each that will train and prepare participants to sit for the CPRP exam. Each class will focus on a specific learning module found in the CPRP study guide: Human Resources, Communications, Finance, Programming, and Operations. Come learn and network with aspiring CPRP's and join an elite group of professionals that have committed to advancing the field of parks and recreation.

save the date

SUPERVISOR SYMPOSIUM

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2021

visit ILipra.org for registration info

Keynote Speaker
LENNY DAVE

Nationally-recognized
comedy historian, speaker,
humorist and creative
thinker





Jason Anselment
General Counsel

Advocacy is an Important Role for Board Members

With new park commissioners taking office and seasoned commissioners beginning new terms, it is an excellent time to discuss one of a park board member's primary responsibilities.

Although park commissioners wear many different hats, one of their most important is to serve as strong advocates for their agencies. This means championing the district's causes locally and supporting IAPD's efforts at the statewide level. The commitment by IAPD members to this leadership role is critical to IAPD's success in advancing park districts, forest preserves, conservation districts, recreation, and special recreation agencies.

Three Tips to Successful Advocacy

Like most leadership qualities, advocacy skills develop over time. However, all commissioners and professionals, whether seasoned or new, have the necessary traits. If you are doubtful, simply call to mind the reasons you ran for office in the first place and why the park district means so much to your community. With that mind frame, here are three tips for success.

1. Tell Your Agency's Story

Stories are very powerful advocacy tools, particularly when they involve people. In this respect, IAPD members have a distinct advantage because park district programs, facilities, and services are all about people.

When telling a story, it is often helpful to back it up with research, and that is one of IAPD's many membership benefits. In the past decade, IAPD has conducted numerous studies such as those related to facility and program usage, citizen satisfaction, employment and revenue data, capital needs, and tax levy statistics just to name a few. All of these studies, including easy-to-use five-panel brochures, are available to IAPD members through the IAPD Research webpage and can be utilized in a variety of ways in your advocacy efforts.

The essential services your agency provides to the community are a major part of its story. While this is always

true, the pandemic has highlighted these efforts. For instance, local parks have played a critical role during the pandemic as one of the only sanctuaries for the physical and mental health and well-being of your residents. Agency support for working families and school districts with e-learning, vaccination clinics, before/after school programs and other childcare, services for seniors and programs for people with special needs are just a few of the many ways park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation, and special recreation agencies have served citizens during these trying times.

It is always worth reminding citizens that these services are provided with only a small portion of their property tax bill and even that modest amount pays for itself by helping residents save through a variety of other ways. For example, afterschool and summer programs are typically much more cost effective for working families than other alternatives, while membership costs for local park and recreation facilities are also likely more affordable than other options. As my own family can attest, local parks and playgrounds provide hours of recreation without extra cost, but advocates should never assume that they do not need to tell this part of their story.

It is also important to recount that the hundreds of facility use agreements and partnerships that park districts have with school districts and affiliate organizations provide substantial cost savings to these organizations. Without these agreements, those organizations would have to invest millions of dollars to construct and maintain comparable facilities; shared use agreements are a cost-effective alternative that is a win-win for local communities.

Other park and recreation programs and services relieve pressures on the State and other local governments. As cities and villages struggle to meet their public safety costs, your recreational programming helps reduce the burden on local law enforcement by offering children constructive alternatives when they are not in school. IAPD has been encouraging members to talk about our health and wellness benefits for many years because we cannot overemphasize the importance of convenient and affordable access to recreational facilities and programs as

the best way to reduce Medicaid and other health care costs that burden state government. And the time is always right to discuss environmental and other benefits that open space and trees have on stormwater mitigation and air and water quality.

Lastly, no story would be complete without discussing the positive economic impact. Park and recreation agencies employ thousands of workers and their construction projects generate additional revenue through job creation and the purchase of building supplies and materials. As you tell your story and work with other local governments, be sure to remind them of your agency's contributions to the local economy by creating jobs and promoting tourism, which helps local small businesses, while also generating sales, hotel/motel, food and beverage, motor fuel and other tax revenues for cities, villages, and counties.

Whether saving individual citizens money on much needed services, reducing expenses for the state and other local governments, or generating additional revenues for these governments and local businesses through tourism and other economic activity, park districts and other conservation and recreation agencies provide a tremendous return on investment – and that is a story worth telling at every opportunity!

2. Being Informed on Legislative Issues

What happens at the Capitol has a direct impact on your agency. In fact, all park board powers are affected by state law. Everything from the way the board conducts its meetings to its power to levy and collect taxes comes from statutes. The district's exposure to liability and state mandates are also established by state law. In fact, one only needs to thumb through the latest edition of IAPD's *The Park District Code* to realize that the list of laws that impact their agency's day-to-day operations is quite long.

Laws originate in the General Assembly, and for this reason being a strong advocate requires leaders to be both informed about current legislative issues and to effectively articulate the specific impact proposed legislation would have on their agency. When it comes to this part of advocacy, the amount of information can seem overwhelming. For instance, during the past spring session alone, approximately 7,000 bills and more than 1,500 amendments were introduced.

Volunteer board members and professionals that are busy running their agencies do not have the extra hours it would take to review all this legislation. A major IAPD membership benefit is our review of all legislation to determine the impact on member agencies. Based on that review, IAPD informs members about the status of relevant legislation and any necessary calls to action through Legislative Updates and Alerts. The status of all the bills we are tracking is updated regularly and is available to members anytime through IAPD's website. These services alone save agencies thousands of dollars each year in the

time and expense that it would take to keep up with proposals that have a major impact on their agencies.

So, while staying informed on legislative issues may seem like a daunting task, IAPD's membership services make this part of a park leader's role much easier.

3. Developing Relationships

Last, but certainly not least, being an effective advocate requires leaders to develop strong relationships with other leaders such as state legislators, members of Congress, and local community leaders.

Again, park districts, forest preserves, and conservation districts have a proud history of establishing and maintaining strong relationships. In fact, connections with other leaders have helped these local agencies lead the way in promoting collaboration through intergovernmental cooperation and partnerships.

Another reason IAPD member agencies have been so successful is because of the strong relationships that park professionals and commissioners have with their park and recreation colleagues throughout the state. These strong networks allow leaders to share best practices and troubleshoot specific problems. When leaders network with one another and share their experiences and ideas, citizens win.

Being a strong advocate for your agency requires you to develop these networks and relationships for the betterment of your agency and the entire community.

One way to develop a strong relationship is to make sure that other state and local leaders are aware of the facilities, programs, and services that your agency provides to the community. This awareness will promote collaboration among agencies and deliver core services efficiently and effectively to taxpayers. Inviting legislators to tour your facilities is one of the best ways to raise this awareness. As the State fully reopens this summer, it is a perfect time to showcase to your legislators the safe way in which your agency serves its community.

These are just a few of the tips and resources for developing your role as an advocate for your agency. IAPD has a wealth of research, educational, and advocacy tools that are available to our members along with many programs and events throughout the year to support you.

By mastering your agency's story, staying up to date on current issues, and developing strong relationships with other leaders, you will be an integral part of IAPD's advocacy program.

Lastly, for those of you who are brand new commissioners, welcome to the IAPD family!

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SO YOU WANT TO BUILD AN AQUATIC CENTER?

~~~~~  
**GREAT!**

By **Gene Haring**

Marketing and Communications Manager, Des Plaines Park District

We opened the Prairie Lakes Aquatic Center to a limited number of people on June 18, 2020 to rave reviews—in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. Park and recreation pros know that even in the best of times, opening any new facility takes a herculean effort from everyone in the organization, and 2020 was certainly not the best of times. Here's a glimpse into the project. It's a story of teamwork, community involvement, overcoming incredible and unforeseen obstacles, and pure joy.





## A Little History

The Des Plaines Park District opened its centerpiece facility in 1992. Prairie Lakes Community Center showcased a first-class fitness center, a full gymnasium with an elevated walking/jogging track, a beautiful 298-seat theater designed for live stage shows including an orchestra pit, and sound and lighting booths. There were rooms for programming and rental, two kitchens, a full wing dedicated to the Des Plaines Senior Center, and office space for park district staff. Everything was state-of-the-art. There was a park and a playground, soccer fields, outdoor basketball and volleyball courts, and a 3/4-mile outdoor track. It had everything the community wanted and needed, except a pool. *“Where’s the indoor pool?” “All that money, and no indoor pool?”* And as much as everyone loved and enjoyed the Community Center, for the next 30 years we heard about the absence of a pool. It was at the top of every list of amenities requested by the residents, including the two comprehensive Community Needs Assessment Surveys we conducted in 2006 and 2012.

Notwithstanding our two popular neighborhood outdoor pools and the creation of one of the largest water parks in northern Illinois, the number one request continued to be an indoor pool.

## How We Began

In 2017, the park district created an Aquatic Task Force to investigate the feasibility of building, and paying for, an indoor pool. Our finances were in excellent shape. We had more than 4 million dollars to contribute. We had community support. At long last, the pieces were in place to move forward with an enormous project. The Task Force—made up of park board members and park district staff—traveled, studied, gathered information, and made initial presentations. And, as you would expect, they made revised presentations. We held public forums where we presented detailed designs, and residents weighed in. Designs were altered when we included and enlarged amenities requested by our residents. The point was, of course, to provide the community—our taxpayers—everything they wanted while remaining fiscally



**“It's amazing! My kids LOVE the splash pad! We've waited a long time for this, and it's awesome!”**



responsible. The project expanded. The budget expanded. Cordogan Clark was selected as the architect and Corporate Construction as the construction manager. And, with the requisite amount of fanfare, after two years of planning and development, in March of 2019 we broke ground on the largest, most expensive addition to the park district in our 100-year history with an overall budget of \$12,807,746. We had a great design. We had the financing. We had the community behind us, and we had a grand opening goal: a celebration to cap our 100th Anniversary.

### What We Included, and Why

One of the major responsibilities of the Aquatic Task Force was to inform us of the current amenities that other aquatic centers in the state had found to be successful, and to show us the latest and greatest options available now. We knew that a lap pool was an essential component, but to make this facility a destination it needed to be more. The signature feature of our center is an 8-lane, 25-yard combination competition and lap pool, with all of the equipment required to host local and regional swim meets. Our own Warriors Swim Team won

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their division in 2018, and was drawing more and more participants. We had 12 members in 2014, and today, we have 88 swimmers in the program and a practice home for the team.

To make the lap pool as usable as possible for as many people as possible at all times, we opted for 8 lanes instead of 6, and did not include any diving boards. Throughout the past year of IDPH restrictions, we've been able to accommodate 1, 2, and 3 lap swimmers in each lane. Using a simple online registration system, the lane times are consistently booked solid beginning at 5:30 a.m., 7 days a week.

Like all park districts, we run a wide variety of family-oriented programs. To meet those needs, and to engage more teens, we purchased a number of Wibit inflatables—including the Wiggle Track, Rodeo, and Water Volleyball units—and we installed removable water basketball hoops. Those amenities have been immensely popular. We can now run Family Open Swim, H2O Nights

for ages 11–14 (Middle School), and monthly Fantastic Fridays all year. Limited capacities due to state guidelines have meant that registration for all of these special events fills quickly, but there's no doubt that as restrictions ease we'll continue to see our numbers increase. As an integral part of the competition pool, we installed retractable bleachers that hold up to 150 people. An extra benefit of having those bleachers has been easier social distancing during this unusual year as lap swimmers come and go, teens hang out during their events, and family members watch swim lessons and team practices.

Now that we have our own indoor facility, the district has been able to open the Prairie Lakes Swim School and teach swimming to all ages year-round. Summertime lessons in our two outdoor neighborhood pools are still as popular as ever, but the indoor option means that we can offer our residents more choices, with less chance for cancellations due to inclement weather. Lessons at Prairie Lakes are held in the lap pool and the Wellness Pool, depending on the age and ability of the student.



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Including a Wellness Pool or Therapy Pool was in the plans from the outset. This was one of the areas that expanded as staff and the community reviewed the designs. Our warm-water Wellness Pool is in its own enclosed area of the Aquatic Center. It has three lanes, with a depth of 3-1/2 to 4 feet and a large section with water jets and benches. The pool is now in constant use for our Aqua Exercise classes and Swim School lessons, as well as by water walkers, older swimmers, and patrons just relaxing on the benches while the jet sprays revive their sore muscles. So many of the comments we get from our members are about how important this feature has become to their overall well-being. The larger size we decided on has proven to be worth the extra effort.

### Water Park or Splash Pad?

As the Task Force presented options, the debate included adding what was considered water park equipment—large slides, and a lazy river—to make the Aquatic Center more appealing to residents and create a destination facility. After all, our school day-off programs travel to other park districts to enjoy their indoor water parks; maybe we should have one too. All of the factors were taken into account: space, budget, construction time, and in the end we decided on an indoor splash pad. This connects to a party room, which opens onto a large fenced-in outdoor patio space providing families with a fun place to hold parties that can include water play. The splash pad is also an area that was enlarged from the original design after input from the community and park district aquatic staff. The 3,263 square foot space holds a variety of beautiful and engaging play equipment designed for kids up to 10 years old, and even with limited capacity, it has been booked for parties since we opened. We also use the splash pad for our own programs like Under the Sea Tea Parties, and as part of the Floating Easter Egg Hunt for the youngest age group. Want joy? Watch a child step on a brightly colored pad and laugh as unexpected water sprays up from the ground. It is worth the price of admission, every time.

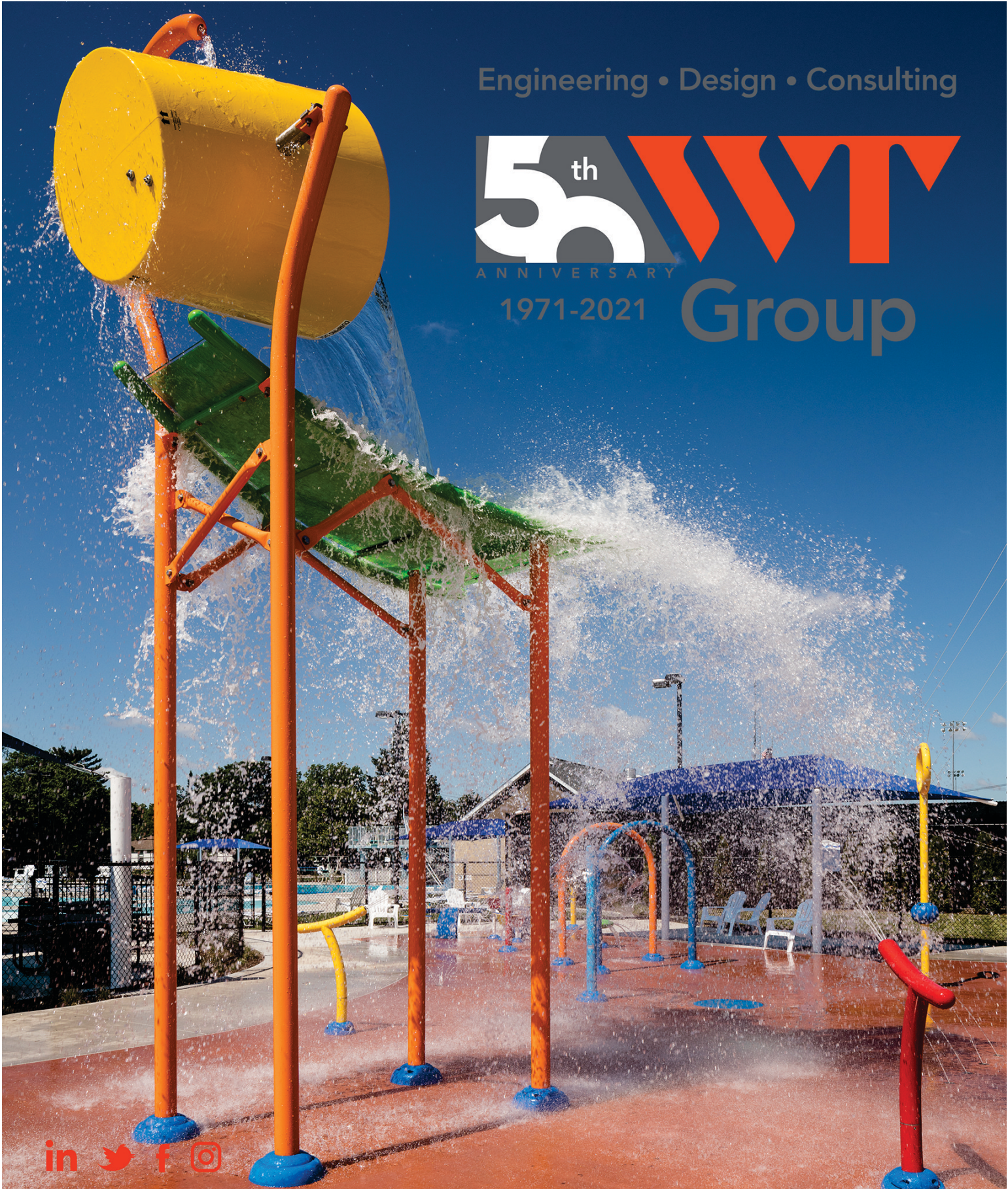
### What Do We Think Now?

The experience was extraordinary. We learned a great deal about ourselves, our community, construction, and operating successfully during incredibly trying times. Ten months ago, we had 243 Aquatic Center members, now we have more than 1,400. Clearly, we did a lot of things right, including finishing the project on time and 100K under budget, and that has made us a better park district.

Our team would be happy to talk with you about this project any time. But, you should really just come see it for yourself. Bring your suit!



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# SAFE

# DOWN

# WATER

## IS A TRUE BALANCING ACT

**By Mike Shepherd**

Vice President of Sales & Service, Certified CPO Instructor, Spear Corporation

I must admit, in full disclosure, I have not read *JUNJUGGLED*, so I cannot speak to its content. However, the quote on the next page from which the book is based is one that, to me, truly resonates. Balance is a choice...in daily living, in business, in relationships, in time management and, yes, even in creating and maintaining safe pool water!



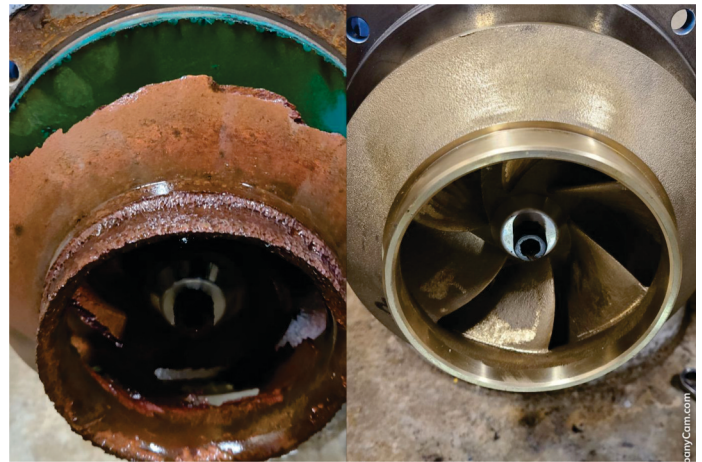


*“Balance is not something you find, it's something you create”*  
– Jana Kingsford, author of UNJUGGLED

### Clean Safe Pool Water Begins with Balanced Water

To begin to appreciate the concept of balanced water, we must have a basic understanding of water in its purest form. Water is often referred to as the universal solvent. In fact, 100% pure, unadulterated water is extremely aggressive. If you will let me personify water, even though it is aggressive, it wants to be kind...to have a balanced life. Pure water, water containing no dissolved materials or minerals, will attack surfaces to which it comes into contact for the sole purpose of trying to balance itself. As we desire balance in our lives, so does water. The problem this can cause in pool water is when, in its attempt to self-balance, it starts to dissolve components of the physical pool and mechanical systems. In an attempt to become “balanced,” aggressive water will inherently attack plaster, tile grout lines, cement pool shells, and iron and copper metals found in piping, pump impellers, valves, heat exchangers, etc. In addition, undesirable by-products of water seeking its own “balance” can include:

- Iron and/or copper staining - dissolved metal ions, now in the water, will tend to plate-out on hard surfaces creating unsightly, difficult to remove stains and discolored water.
- Unsightly, rough surfaces - water that is overly saturated with dissolved material will attempt to reach balance by dropping out calcium carbonate. Also known as scale, this contaminate will attract dirt and plug up filters, heat exchangers, and piping.



Unbalanced water can create conditions that contribute to premature pump failure



Scale in pipes can lead to reduced flow and create unwanted turbulence





It is recommended that commercial pool operations have water test kits capable of at least measuring total alkalinity, pH, calcium hardness, and disinfectant levels.

## Balancing Pool Water – Why and Where to Begin

If I were to ask, “what determines safe pool water,” I would assume most answers would involve proper disinfectant levels and probably some references to pH. Those are not wrong answers but, in and of themselves, are incomplete. Many other factors are involved including, but not limited to, filtration, flow rate, turnover rate, bather load, and water balance. *“Properly balanced water creates an environment that optimizes the disinfection process. It also protects the pool/spa system components from chemical corrosion, thus increasing the useful operating life of equipment. Properly balanced water provides a more enjoyable swimming experience for the pool/spa users.”* – Pool & Spa Operator Handbook, PHTA

To begin the balancing process, we must know the current condition of our water. The key factors which work in synergy to create balanced water are total alkalinity, pH, calcium hardness, temperature, and total dissolved solids (TDS). It is recommended that commercial pool operations have water test kits capable of at least measuring total alkalinity, pH, calcium hardness, and disinfectant levels. In addition, a handheld TDS meter and thermometer/temperature gauge should be available.

### The Balance Factors – In Brief

**1. Total Alkalinity** – Think of total alkalinity as a buffer to maintain pH. When you measure total alkalinity, you are measuring the water's ability to resist unwanted pH fluctuations. If you find your pH readings significantly fluctuating up and down with no stability (pH Bounce) or it is extremely difficult to lower your pH (pH Lock) you can assume that your total alkalinity is out of parameter.

**The ideal total alkalinity range you should target is 80-100 ppm. (100-120 ppm if using trichlor, dichlor, or Bromine)**

- To raise total alkalinity, add sodium bicarbonate.
- To lower total alkalinity add acid (liquid or sodium bisulfate) until target range is attained.

**2. pH** – Literally “Potens Hydrogen” basically means the power of hydrogen. This one factor most greatly influences balanced water and plays a significant role in bather comfort. In addition, properly controlled pH supports the efficacy of the disinfectant and aids in the protection of pool and mechanical components. Most commercial operations are set up with automatic pH control, however, even the best control systems cannot overcome pH bounce or pH lock as a result of improper total alkalinity. Before making any significant adjustments to pH, it is recommended that total alkalinity be adjusted, if necessary, to create the proper buffer for pH stability.

**The ideal pH range is 7.4 – 7.6 (7.2 - 7.8 is acceptable)**

- To lower pH, add acid (buffered hydrochloric or sodium bisulfate preferred)
- To raise pH, add soda ash or sodium bicarbonate

**3. Calcium Hardness** – Here in the Midwest, calcium hardness in water is a very common occurrence. Especially where well water is used, calcium will likely exist in the fill and makeup water. As water travels through limestone and calcite containing aquifers, being a solvent, it naturally dissolves this mineral into solution. Proper calcium hardness levels are critical as low hardness can lead to corrosive water and etching of pool surfaces such as plaster and grout lines. High levels can cause scaling, cloudy water, poor filtration and eye/skin irritation. As calcium hardness increases above the ideal range, it becomes more and more difficult to maintain proper water balance. If calcium hardness exceeds 1000 ppm, it is impossible to attain balanced water. Unfortunately, there is only one viable method for lowering calcium levels and

that is decanting water from the pool and adding fresh water with low calcium levels. This may even involve trucking in water from a low calcium level source. If high calcium is a constant concern, softened water can be used for fill or makeup water. Even though this will help control calcium, it does add another potential concern of raising the TDS factor with sodium ions which replaced the calcium.

#### The ideal Calcium Hardness Range is 200 – 400 ppm

- To raise calcium hardness, add calcium chloride. NOTE: Calcium chloride when added to water generates a large amount of heat. It is recommended to pre-dissolve in a bucket of water and slowly add to the pool's deep end, if available.
- To lower calcium hardness, partially drain the pool and add fresh water that contains low levels of calcium.

**4. Temperature** – Even though water temperature is a factor in determining water balance, since it is physical rather than chemical, it is the one that you typically do not adjust. It takes extreme temperature fluctuations to have a significant effect on water balance, but it must be determined when calculating water balance. Keep in mind that higher temperatures have a tendency to promote scale where lower temperatures can yield more corrosive behaviors.

**5. Total Dissolved Solids (TDS)** – TDS is the weight of all the dissolved or soluble constituents in the water. Dissolved material increasing TDS in pool water comes from many sources including salts (liquid bleach, chlorine generators), swimmer waste (sweat and urine), chemicals added to the water, and even natural wind carried contamination. Poolside, the concentration of TDS can be determined, with a decent amount of accuracy, using a handheld TDS meter. These meters measure the electrical conductivity of the water. The higher the TDS the greater the conductivity. We typically think of water as a great conductor of electricity, but pure water with no TDS is literally an insulator. However, as we recall the aggressiveness of pure water, it takes very little time for even the purest of water to develop some TDS and begin to become conductive. So, what is the big concern of high TDS? With higher conductivity comes the potential for destructive galvanic corrosion to occur in the presence of dissimilar metals. A common example is bronze anchors for stainless steel handrails.

**TDS Ideal Range is not to exceed 1,500 ppm higher than TDS of pool when initially started up**

- To lower TDS, partially drain the pool and add fresh water.

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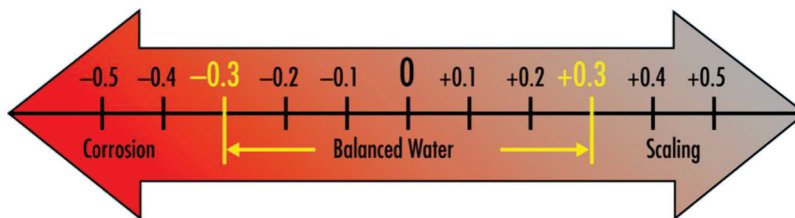
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$$SI = pH + Tf + Cf + Af - TDSf$$



Index between - 0.3 and + 0.3 is balanced  
 Index over + 0.3 is increasingly more scale forming  
 Index below - 0.3 is increasingly more corrosive

## The Act of Balancing Water

Wilfred F. Langelier, a professor of Civil Engineering at the University of California - Berkley, quantified the corrosive potential of water and developed the index called Langelier Index. This index has been adopted by countless industries including industrial and drinking water treatment. In the 1970s, the swimming pool industry created a modified version based on adjustments for the pool/spa world, focusing on water balance as it relates to calcium carbonate equilibrium. Thus, we have the Langelier Saturation Index, or LSI, also referred to as Saturation Index (SI).

Now, we finally get to the real question...with all the above information, how do we “balance” our pool water? There is a “manual method” based on a specific formula, using water to test results coupled with a factor chart, which allows you determine Saturation Index. This image shows the actual formula and target range for balanced water.

Those who are Certified Pool Operators (CPO) or Aquatic

Facility Operators (AFO) are familiar with the manual method of determining SI. Although not difficult to learn, teaching the manual calculation process is beyond the scope of this article. **The great news is in this digital age there is an “APP for that!”** (Actually, many apps.) It has never been easier to determine the specific steps required to balance pool water. Simply go to the Play Store or App Store on your device and key in “LSI Calculator” in the search box. These free applications allow you to input the results from your routine tests for pH, temperature, alkalinity, calcium hardness, and TDS and will immediately calculate the current Saturation Index. In addition, the proper corrective action is also recommended to obtain balanced water.

Pool owners or operators have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for patrons to enjoy. One might even say that it is the #1 priority. Clean, safe pool water should begin with balanced water. With the tools readily available to us today, we are truly “without excuse” if we operate our pools out of balance. Create balanced water.

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Residents desperately needed a place to bring their families for fun,

# OPENING IN A PANDEMIC

By Cheryl Buhmann, Marketing & Communications Manager, Vernon Hills Park District

Located in a bustling urban community of 27,000 households and nearly 1,000 businesses, the families in Vernon Hills rely on the park district for recreational opportunities for fun, relaxation, and the chance to slow down and enjoy the outdoors. Our Family Aquatic Center is a popular place to float in a tube around the lazy river, try one or all three of our slides, play in one of the two pools, or relax under a shade structure and enjoy the warmth and sunshine that summer brings.

*Normally*, many residents purchase a season pass to visit the aquatic center numerous times per week throughout the summer. *Normally*, they pack a summer tote with towels and sunscreen and hop in the car or even walk to the aquatic center. *Normally*, they plan to visit the Family Aquatic Center on the Memorial Day opening weekend to celebrate the end of a school year and the start of summer vacation.







# to get out of the house, and to resume some sort of normalcy.

Unfortunately, 2020 was not a normal year, and summer plans were put on hold.

Beginning in mid-March 2020, the park district's normal operation abruptly changed due to the pandemic. Operations halted, doors were temporarily closed, classes cancelled, staff were sent home, and our new normal began. Due to the public schools being closed, the digital world was enhanced ten times over with every child connected to a digital device to attend school remotely. Moreover, parents were homebound too, working remotely and caring for their children.

Two months into the pandemic, the park district began getting calls from residents about when or if the Family Aquatic Center would open. Residents desperately needed a place to bring their families for fun, to get out of the house, and to resume some sort of normalcy. Would we open? As a district, we wondered how we could open during a pandemic and keep visitors and staff safe. How could we handle sanitizing our large aquatic center? How could we afford to open?

Through many discussions with our park board and staff, the overall resolution was, how can we afford *not* to open? We are a service agency, and our residents needed us. We took a wait and see approach and followed state and county guidelines while developing a plan. We communicated to our public throughout the planning process that a decision was forthcoming. The district did not want to make false promises to our community until we were 100% sure it was possible.

So, we went to work.

First, following the prescribed guidelines, we determined that we had two pools that we could separate allowing 50 persons to visit each pool. Portable fencing and temporary barriers separated the two pools. We did not have a way to control visitors to our lazy river or slides, and we realized that it was cost prohibitive to open the entire facility. So it was determined the summer of 2020 would open with two pools only.

We divided the day into three swim sessions, each being 2 hours in duration. We scheduled the sessions with 30 minutes in between swim sessions for sanitation and cleaning. PA announcements were made prior to the swim session ending to allow guests time to gather their belongings. We were limited to 300 guests per day and guests were given colored wristbands to identify the pool area they were allowed to access.

For the safety of our visitors, we removed all lounge chairs. Painted areas on the pool deck indicated where visitors could place their own chairs. The locker rooms were closed, but a restroom building was kept open. We closed our concession and picnic areas. Although in years past we did not allow guests to bring in their own chairs and coolers, 2020 was an exception.

Another challenge was determining how would we secure staff, mainly lifeguards. We were well into May and still had not made a formal announcement to our community. Numerous full-time staff had their





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jobs modified during the pandemic and were willing to work at the Family Aquatic Center. Supervisors were redirected as temporary aquatic managers, and other staff pitched in where needed. Due to half of the aquatic center staying closed, we could hire fewer pool attendants and lifeguards than usual. Further, no money was accepted at the entry, so staff were only needed to check receipts.

In spring of 2020, our fitness center's indoor pool was also closed. To accommodate our fitness members who enjoy lap swim and water aerobics, we designated an early morning swim time at the Family Aquatic Center for these purposes. Registration was limited and only accepted online. Lakeview Fitness was also home to the district's Turtles Swim Team. To accommodate our young competitive swimmers, the aquatic center offered practice time to the swim team after hours.

Logically, on paper, we determined that it was feasible to open the aquatic center with modifications. But how could we offer our guests a simple way to purchase their time? We decided to set up a program utilizing our current registration software for daily admission to the aquatic center. Fifty slots were allotted per pool, per swim session. Persons were limited to one swim session per day, and either the lap pool or leisure pool had to be chosen when registering. Swim sessions were made public for registration every two weeks to allow fairness for all those interested in purchasing a time. Normally, a resident would pay \$10 for a daily admission for the entire day. In 2020, a 2-hour swim session was \$4 for a resident.

Our park board and executive director determined that our aquatic center was ready to welcome guests beginning June 27, one month later than a normal year. It would be open for 7 weeks through August 9, when the majority of our lifeguards would return to the classroom, in-person, or remote-learning at home.

The opening of our Family Aquatic Center was communicated to our community through email marketing, social media, and our website. The media also wrote a story about our efforts. We received positive comments through social media, and our residents were genuinely grateful that we opened to the best of our ability while keeping guests and staff safe and following all guidelines.

The Vernon Hills Park District is planning to replicate the 2021 season with the same process that was incorporated in the summer of 2020. We are planning to adjust our Family Aquatic Center operations as state and county limitations are lifted or altered.



## PEOPLE & PLACES



### Andrew Dwyer

Andrew Dwyer was recently named executive director of the Kewanee Park District.

Dwyer, a lifelong resident of Kewanee, comes to the Kewanee Park District after more than five years of service to the Greater Peoria Mass Transit District as their director of mobility. During his tenure, he oversaw multiple capital acquisitions, a transit center

facility, multiple departments and employees, as well as two fleets totaling 50 vehicles that expanded services while offering better cost efficiency through consolidation of services.

Dwyer believes that expansion of programs and offerings to the community is vital. To accomplish this, he states that responsible spending, community partnerships, and seeking out new funding opportunities are a focus of the park district in the future.



### Antonio Washington

Bloomington Park District recently announced that Antonio Washington has been named the new director of finance. Washington replaces June Fergus, who is retiring in July after seven years of service.

Washington previously served as the superintendent of finance and human resources at Oakbrook Terrace Park District (2015-2021). He also has

spent time as an external auditor associate at Grant Thornton LLP (2010-2011) and a tax professional at H&R Block (2014).

Washington holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from Northern Illinois University, a bachelor's degree in recreational management from Chicago State University, and a master's degree in financial management from Benedictine University. He is a Certified Park and Recreational Professional (CPRP) and currently resides in Chicago with his wife, Tenisha, and their daughter, Nia.



### Brian Johnson

Kewanee Park District Executive Director Brian Johnson has retired after 26 years.

During that tenure, Johnson was able to reinvest the E.E. Baker Trust,

putting it on a better financial footing for future generations. He was also able to secure a Charitable Remainder Trust with a former Kewanee resident who wanted that donation to come back to Kewanee. Additionally, Johnson led the board to pass two separate referendums, including one in 1996 to build a new pool and the issuance of Alternative Revenue Bonds allowed the district to build the pool that Kewanee residents so desperately wanted, he said.

Another bond for \$1.45 million was used to renovate Northeast Park. Similar bonds were used to add a new driving range and install a fairway irrigation system at Baker Park. Two grants from the State of Illinois allowed the district to build the Oasis Family Aquatic Center and provided an additional \$65,000 in renovations to Windmont Park that included the handicap fishing pier, exercise and playground equipment, a new shelter, and an expanded sidewalk.

Johnson also cultivated valuable partnerships with groups like Relay for Life, the Windmont Park Lighting Committee, the Henry County Queen Pageant, the Kewanee YMCA, the Abilities Plus Organization for Special Needs Camp, and more.

Johnson is looking forward to spending more time with his family, golfing, and taking strolls in the parks that he helped to rebuild.



# PEOPLE & PLACES

## In Memoriam



### Dr. Joe Bannon

IAPD and IPRA extend our condolences to the family of Dr. Joe Bannon, who passed away on March 30, 2021.

Dr. Bannon was a bedrock of the park district field. He served as Chief of the Office of Recreation and Park Resources at the University of Illinois from 1966 until 1973, when he accepted the position of Chair of the Department of Leisure Studies.

He was central in establishing an interdisciplinary leisure research program at the University of Illinois in the 1970s that led the way for other programs throughout the country.

Dr. Bannon was a prolific author, writing four comprehensive books in the leisure field, 38 major magazine articles, and serving as co-editor of the *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*.

He was a founding member of The Academy of Leisure Sciences and the American Academy of Park and Recreation Association. He was presented numerous awards for his decades-long service to the park and recreation profession, including the prestigious Pugsley Award.

Dr. Bannon is survived by his two sons, Joseph Jr. and Peter.



### Richie Wolf

Illinois Parks & Recreation extends our condolences to the family of Richie Wolf, who passed away on April 1, 2021.

He joined the Macon County Conservation District in 2013 as Nature Center Manager, and became executive director in late 2019.

Richie Wolf will be remembered as someone who had a passion for the outdoors and for helping the community connect with nature and history. Some of his accomplishments and contributions included leading countless educational programs and field trips, and helping people of all ages explore and appreciate nature. He introduced new programs such as the Rock Springs Summer Concert Series, which the community embraced. Richie also improved the conservation district's summer camp programs, increasing its revenue stream and enabling it to be self-supporting. As executive director, Richie was instrumental in securing a \$400,000 grant from the IDNR Museum Capital Improvement Program for upgrades to the Rock Springs Nature Center's exhibit hall.

Richie will be missed by all who knew him.



## WebXtra

### Kankakee Valley Park District

Kankakee Valley Park District recently reopened its Splash Valley Aquatic Center after six years of inactivity. Learn how this agency brought a building back to life and brought aquatics back to its community.

### Read the Full Story Online

Go to [ILparks.org](http://ILparks.org) and click on "Knowledge Center" at the top then hover over "IP&R Magazine" and click on "Past Issues" to view the digital version of this magazine containing additional content.





### Glencoe Park District Welcomes John Cutrera

The Glencoe Park District is proud to welcome John Cutrera as its' new director of finance and human resources. John is a Certified Public Accountant with an MBA in general management with extensive experience leading teams through government audits and complex operational changes. He is leaving the position of director for BKD, LLP, where he

specialized in assurance and consulting engagements for various governmental and not-for-profit entities, which included conducting audits, providing specific recommendations for governmental entities to improve internal control processes, and evaluating complex technical accounting issues.



### Sandy Gbur

Sandy Gbur, executive director of the Western DuPage Special Recreation Association (WDSRA), announced she will retire June 2021 after more than 43 years of dedicated leadership in the special recreation community.

Her career in therapeutic recreation includes 28 years of service to the West Suburban Special Recreation Association

(WSSRA), 6 years at the South Suburban Special Recreation Association (SSSRA) and the last 10 years at the Western DuPage Special Recreation Association (WDSRA). She has been an integral part of the growth of all three organizations.

Involved in legislative advocacy since 2001, Sandy played a critical role in the passing of Senate Bill 1881, which removed the Tax for Handicapped out of the tax cap and allowed park districts and municipalities throughout the state full access to the levy to support joint programming and accessibility.

She is a well-respected and active member of the Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA) and Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) Joint Legislative Council. She continues to actively work to build relationships with legislators and support legislative action on behalf of special recreation associations statewide. Her most recent legislative efforts resulted in funding for WDSRA's upcoming capital projects that will increase safety as well as improve services and programming.



### Carol Mensinger

Carol Mensinger, Glencoe Park District's Director of Finance and Human Resources, has announced her retirement effective June 30, 2021. Carol's 32-year career has included 22 years at the district, and also included roles as the superintendent of finance and personnel for both the Wheaton Park District (1992-2000) and the Glen Ellyn

Park District. During her tenure at the Glencoe Park District, Carol was instrumental in passing a referendum in 2006 and securing funding to build the Takiff Community Center. She played a vital role in achieving and maintaining the district's AAA bond rating. In addition, her contribution to sound financial policies and practices helped the Glencoe Park District become an IPRA/IAPD Distinguished Accredited Agency and NRPA National Gold Medal Award winner.



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