

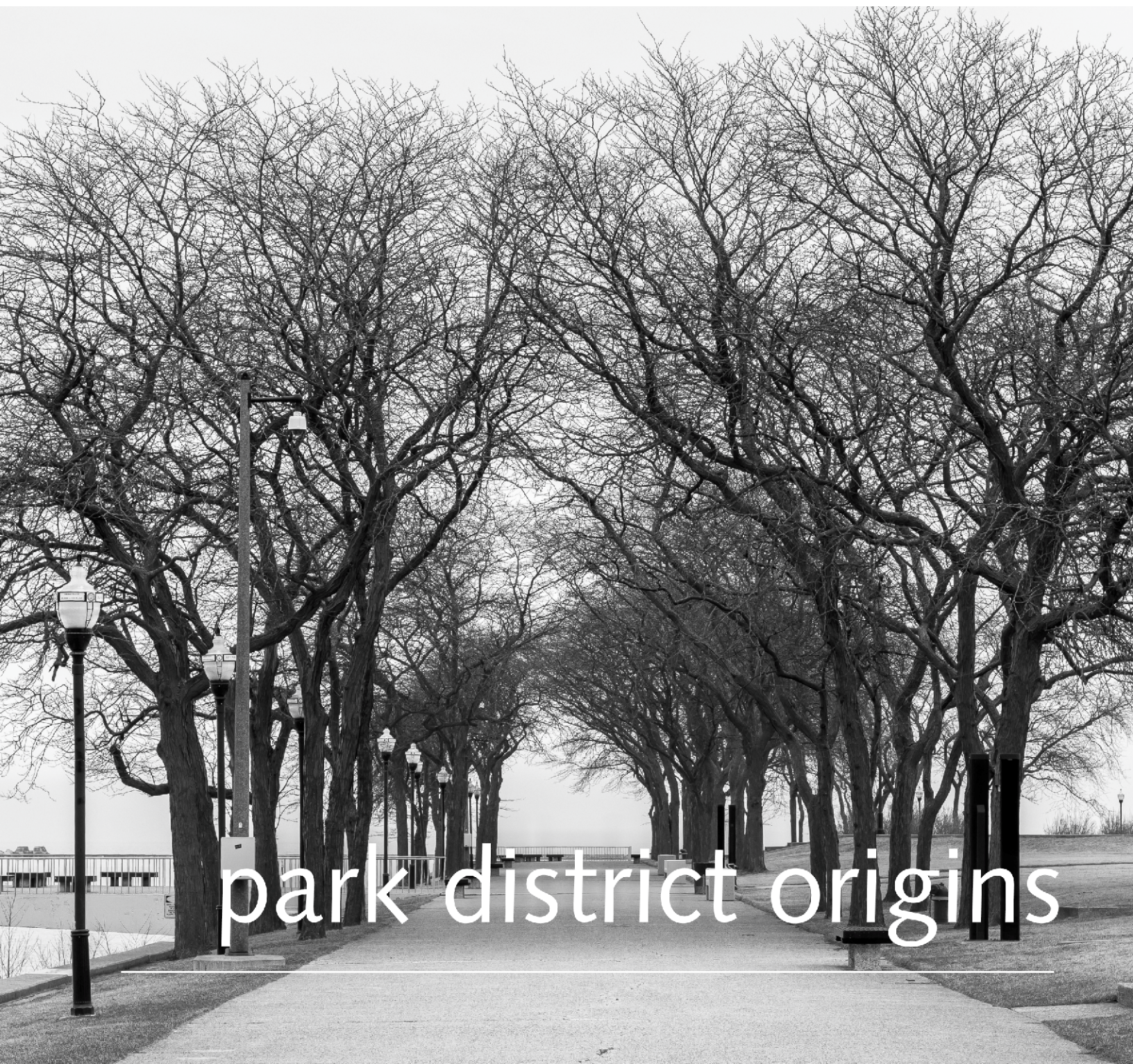
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Volume 56, Number 1 | January/February 2025



PARKS AND RECREATION

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



park district origins



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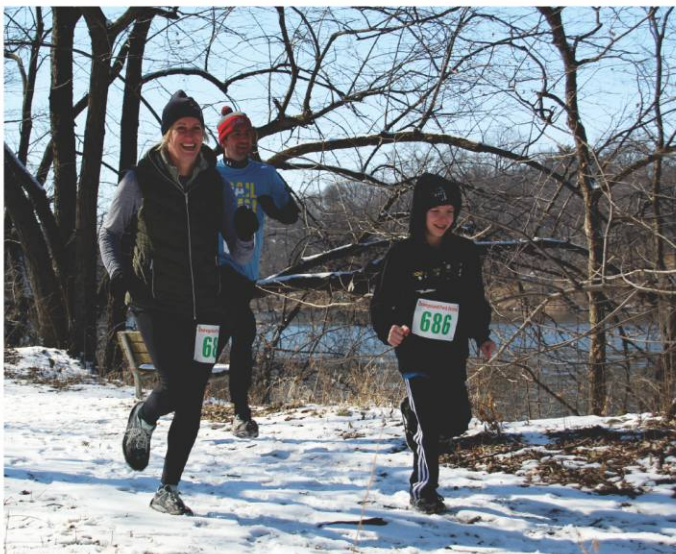


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FROM THE EDITOR

Capturing the Past

The word “legacy” is one that carries incredible significance and weight. Your agencies and associations are regularly being tasked with creating places and programs that will last a lifetime, which is no small feat.



Creating something that becomes a part of the fabric of your community is something park districts in Illinois have been doing for more than 100 years. In the span of that century, park districts, forest preserve districts, conservation districts, recreation, and special recreation agencies have followed and at times spearheaded societal trends as demographics and needs shift.

It is the shared history of the work of these professionals and elected officials that have helped create a sense of pride in their respective communities. It is through history that we all learn how to make better decisions and avoid repeating mistakes.

That's why we are spotlighting a few of these agencies in this issue of Illinois Parks and Recreation magazine. We learn about the visionary push to create a park district in Building on the Foundation of Recreation on page 14. Driving the Path of Recreation looks at the creation of the Taylorville Community Pleasure Driveway and Park District on page 18. Lastly, The History and Importance of Preserving Pekin's Mineral Springs Park on page 22 details just how a community's history can tell the story of the determination that is needed to make a good community into a great one.

Thanks for reading!

— Wayne Utterback, Editor

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PARKS AND RECREATION

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4 Illinois Parks & Recreation

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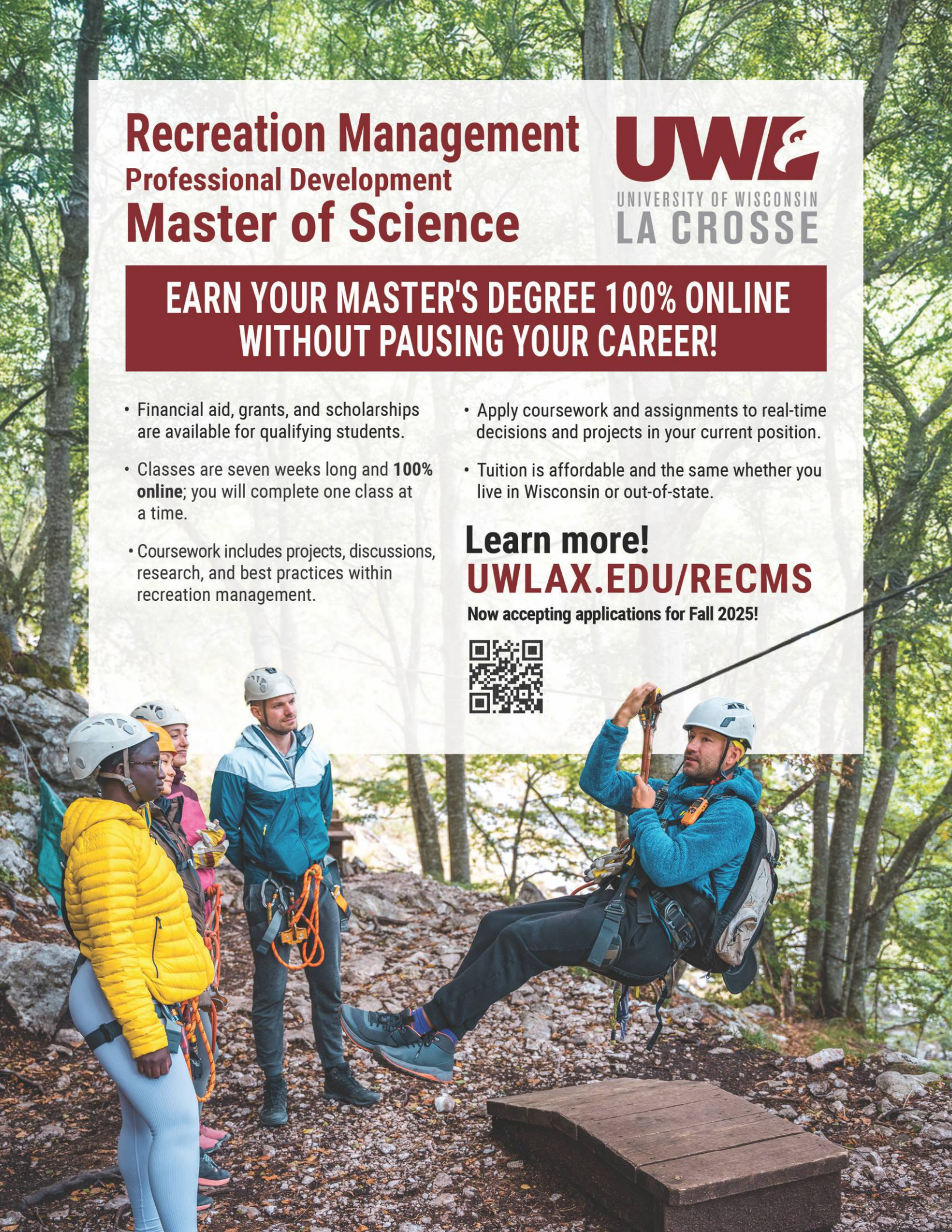


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GET ON BOARD

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

THE FOUNDATIONS OF SUCCESS

The IAPD staff has combined 164 years of working for your association, which means that our outstanding programs, services, and events are created with a history of experience that is second-to-none. We place a high priority on listening to feedback and continually improving everything that we do to keep our members coming back for the training, education, and connectivity that helps them successfully achieve their goals.

We had another outstanding year marked by a series of remarkable accomplishments that have garnered glowing reviews from our membership.

This year, IAPD continued to ensure that our member agencies have the funding needed to bring their dreams to fruition. When the Governor proposed to sweep next year's dedicated Real Estate Transfer Tax receipts for the Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development Program (OSLAD), we sprang to action, highlighting the devastating impact of this proposed sweep through our Legislative Breakfasts, Parks Day at the Capitol, Legislative Conference, and meetings with key legislators and legislative staff. As a result of our persistence, a sweep was avoided and an additional \$24 million was allocated to this critical program, bringing the total FY 2025 OSLAD grant amount to \$54 million.

Our PowerPlay! grant program awarded IAPD member agencies with \$30,000 in 2024. Since the program's inception, 594 grants totaling \$857,450 have been awarded by IAPD to member agencies, benefiting nearly 59,000 children statewide.

IAPD's educational programs continued to provide our members with the knowledge needed to advance their goals and objectives with more than 1,100 commissioners and professionals participating in our timely webinars, highly acclaimed Leadership Institute, renowned Legislative Conference, and the 45th Annual Legal Symposium. And our complimentary advocacy forum for new executive directors received an enthusiastic response.

Parks Day at the Capitol was once again a sold-out event.

IAPD displayed banners on light posts surrounding the Illinois State Capitol in a month-long public awareness campaign encouraging legislators, media, and the public to Discover the Power of Parks. Banners featured photos from member agencies with four banners displayed year-round in high traffic locations for maximum exposure to the Illinois Legislature.

The 31st Annual Park District Conservation Day at the Illinois State Fair brought park district talent from throughout the state to perform on stages across the fairgrounds.

The 18th Annual Best of the Best Awards Gala was an inspirational evening with nearly 300 guests celebrating IAPD member agencies, commissioners, businesses, partnering organizations, and citizen volunteers who dedicate their time, talents, and resources to parks, recreation, and conservation.

Park Cast, IAPD's engaging podcast, now features 58 episodes highlighting the work that IAPD is doing in partnership with our members to advance parks, recreation, and conservation. Park Cast accrued 3,135 total listens in 2024 and has amassed 9,382 listens since its inception.

The 2024 IAPD Golf Guide was created as a convenient promotional digital resource with comprehensive information about 120 member golf courses including links to photos, addresses, phone numbers, websites, and staff. New this year was the inclusion of drone footage showcasing aerial views of five featured courses.

IAPD's content-rich videos are excellent catalysts to promote parks, recreation, and conservation. This past year, IAPD videos received 3,000 views, logging 192 hours watched.

IAPD provided its members with 31 Legislative Updates and Legal News to keep members current on news from the State Capitol, grant information, new legal requirements, and other legal/legislative developments. Video updates were shared during times of increased legislative activity.

IAPD collaborated with our membership to promote advocacy initiatives resulting in the addition of two Platform Bills signed into law, bringing the total number of IAPD Platform Bills in the 103rd General Assembly that are now law to seven.

The Governor's office announced more than \$28 million in Park and Recreational Facility Construction (PARC) grants to 13 park districts, conservation districts, and other recreation agencies this year. PARC was funded through the 2019 Rebuild Illinois capital plan and was the direct result of IAPD's advocacy efforts.

We reviewed each of the 2,882 bills and 1,678 amendments introduced in the second year of the 103rd General Assembly. We tracked 1,556 bills for their impact on IAPD member agencies.

Forty-three legislators attended the Soaring to New Heights All-Conference Awards Luncheon.

A total of twelve Legislative Breakfasts were organized by twelve member agencies, attracting 412 participants from 144 distinct agencies, with the attendance of 45 legislators at these events.

Our Sample Board Governance Policies, <https://www.ilparks.org/page/BoardPolicies>, was created as a complimentary resource to assist IAPD members in implementing best practices. The 193-page document includes a comprehensive set of board governance policy examples collected from park districts throughout the state on an array of topics including board meetings, financial policies and procedures, and park and facility guidelines and procedures.

The IAPD Election Calendar was published for the 2025 Consolidated Primary and Consolidated Election.

We updated our database with 58 new categories of information including the latest employment, financial, tax levy, and other data available from the Illinois Department of

Revenue and Comptroller. Agencies contemplating tax levies or other key metrics can utilize this for benchmarking against similar agencies.

We responded to 465 legal/legislative inquiries from 154 different member agencies on a wide range of issues.

IAPD's latest research project, a statewide W-2 Employment & Revenue Analysis, investigated the role that local park districts, forest preserves, conservation districts, recreation departments, and special recreation agencies represent as employers and job generators in their communities.

Our exclusive member resources were enhanced this year, including our Referendum Results webpage, which now enables member agencies that are considering pursuing a referendum to search 25 years of election results by referenda type with each report detailing the county/jurisdiction, description of the initiative, outcome, and more.

The positive feedback that we received this year from members across Illinois reinforces our commitment to excellence and reminds us that building a good member experience does not happen by accident ... it happens by design.

Please take some time to read the 2024 Annual Report, Glowing Reviews, which we sent to all members and can be found on our website here: https://www.ilparks.org/page/annual_report.

We hope that you will learn more about the many ways IAPD serves as the one stop resource for strengthening your skills and enriching your experience as we work together to create vibrant places to live, work, and recreate.

The new year brings great opportunities for creative and nimble service to your constituents. That service can be enhanced by attending IAPD's many opportunities to learn and by upping your game and growing your influence by tapping into IAPD's bank of knowledge experts at one of our many upcoming events.

The new year is upon us. Please take advantage of your IAPD membership today!

"What gets measured gets done, what gets measured and fed back gets done well, what gets rewarded gets repeated."

— John E. Jones III



EYE ON THE PROFESSION

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

By Suzi Wirtz, IOM, IPRA Executive Director

START THE YEAR WITH A WINNING MINDSET

As we turn the page to 2025 (or scroll, and maybe even still on TikTok!), it's time to reset, refresh—and renegotiate with yourself. While some community members will join your agency's fitness center, start to eat healthy, or make more time for family and friends, my challenge to you is to take a few minutes daily to reflect on small achievements and set yourself up for success by launching a winning mindset. In this rapidly shifting landscape, the key to sustained success is not just about technical expertise or knowledge, but rather the mindset that individuals cultivate and maintain throughout the year. A winning mindset is now considered one of the most crucial assets a professional can possess in the modern world.

What is a Winning Mindset?

It's literally all in your mind. It's a mental framework that empowers you to overcome obstacles, adversity and continuously grow. It involves a blend of resilience, adaptability, positivity and a drive to constantly improve. While a positive mental attitude (introduced in 1937 as "PMA") is important, it's not the only thing. To start winning, think about:

- **Resilience:** Being able to bounce back from setbacks and stay focused on long-term goals.
- **Adaptability:** Being open to change and capable of adjusting to new circumstances, technologies and trends.
- **Emotional intelligence (EQ):** Manage your own emotions and understand the emotions of others, model better communication and promote good relationships in the workplace.
- **Optimism and mental toughness:** Maintain a positive outlook, especially in the face of adversity, and push through challenges without losing focus.

These traits, when combined, are instrumental as professionals define personal, professional and team success. In 2025, where disruption is everywhere, having a mindset that embraces uncertainty and views failure as an opportunity for growth is what will set you apart.

Let's Bounce, Adapt and Grow

As we've all seen, AI, machine learning, automation, and remote working models are reshaping industries and job roles. You've got to be okay with failing sometimes—while

simultaneously being resilient enough to handle changes and challenges, and this is key: stay engaged and motivated through difficult periods. Learn from setbacks and re-evaluate your strategies.

One of the defining features of a winning mindset in 2025 is a commitment to continuous learning—and IPRA is here to help with that. This year, we unveil a new CommUnity, with features and components similar to current social media platforms. For IPRA groups, sections, committees and boards, the ability to communicate and learn from your peers has always been part of the mission. Check out the IPRA CommUnity! Later in 2025, we will introduce a learning management system (LMS) to members. The rapid pace of technological change means that skills can quickly become obsolete, so the ability to adapt and learn new skills will be more important than ever. The LMS will feature career pathways, core competencies and unique ways to upskill or reskill in the field of parks and rec. A winning mindset embraces lifelong learning, and you'll have plenty of opportunities with IPRA in person and online. Many of the IPRA strategic plan initiatives focus on growth and innovative projects—so that all members can benefit.

Oh, You're SO Emotional and That's a Good Thing

Daniel Goleman, a psychologist and author who helped popularize the concept of emotional intelligence, said, "Leaders who are guided by emotional intelligence create a climate of trust and innovation, and inspire their teams to excel." The ability to lead with empathy and emotional intelligence will be undeniable in 2025, whether you are in a traditional leadership role, act as a volunteer or are part of a team. A winning mindset understands the importance of human connection.

Ask your colleagues (or friends) what they value in a leader and good team mate. I'm betting it's someone who can understand and respond to the emotional needs of their teams. Every day, for the communities you serve, you stay in tune and create programming with individuals' well-being and mental health. Add morale and you've got that winning mindset that fosters an environment where everyone feels valued, heard and supported. Emotional intelligence isn't just about seeing others; it also means being self-aware. Do you understand your own emotions,

biases and motivations? Take time to reflect on you, administer self-care and adjust behavior. Discover stress management techniques to remain effective in high-pressure environments. In short, prioritize well-being.

Take Care of your Networking and Personal Brand

It's long been said, it's not just what you know ... it's who you know. Building and maintaining a strong professional network is essential for career advancement. When first starting out, it's what sets you apart; as you move up the ladder, those with a winning mindset place a high value on maintaining relationships, networking, and taking proactive steps to build a personal brand. IPRA volunteering opportunities exist for this reason and you can find descriptions online at www.ilipra.org. In addition, we've implemented a Volunteer Interest Form where you can indicate what you'd like to become involved with to build your strategic relationships and give back.

The best opportunities often arise from strong relationships with mentors, peers, and at times, even competitors. Networking is about building meaningful connections with individuals who can provide insights, advice and opportunities. Professionals with a winning mindset will invest in these relationships and foster mutually beneficial partnerships. Establishing and nurturing a personal brand—whether through content creation, thought leadership, or engagement on professional platforms—will be a key factor in long-term success. As we work together to bring more professionals into the parks, rec and conservation world, IPRA will provide digital toolkits for agencies to reach out to communities, colleges, community colleges and high schools to encourage and draw people to the field.

Time to Grow and Be Tough

You may have heard this story, but it's pretty cool. Thomas Edison, likely one of history's greatest inventors, is famous for his belief in the power of persistence and learning. When attempting to invent the light bulb, he faced numerous failures. Instead of giving up, he viewed each failure as a learning opportunity. His famous quote, *"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work,"* perfectly reflects a growth mindset. Edison's mindset was rooted in the belief that skills and knowledge could be developed through persistent effort, learning, and improvement.

While they are distinct qualities, both a growth mindset and mental toughness are interconnected and often work together in achieving success. A growth mindset is based on improvement, which encourages you to persist and persevere. Mental toughness helps you stay focused and endure challenges along the way.

This year, I plan to maintain a winning mindset, and I hope you will, too. IPRA is here to help!

IPRA Upcoming Events

Lunch and Learns

February - December, 2025

Aquatic Facilitator Operator (AFO) Course

March 5-6, 2025

Certified Playground Safety Inspector - Spring B

March 11-13, 2025

Supervisor Symposium

Friday, April 11, 2025

Diversity Education Institute

Friday, April 25, 2025

Financial Sustainability - Part I

May 14-16, 2025

Forest Preserve & Conservation (FPC)

Signature Education

Thursday, May 15, 2025

Playground Maintenance Course - Metro

May 21, 2025

Visit ILipra.org for more information.

2025 Skills Development Webinar Series

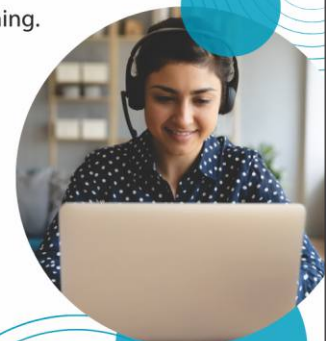
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Jason Anselment
IAPD General Counsel

Integrate Your Agency's Efficiency Reports Into Your Advocacy Efforts This Year

Last month, I was invited to speak with advocates from several other states to discuss serious legislative issues confronting their park districts. Their concerns hit close to home. Just as we have encountered legislation that seeks to drastically reduce local government property tax revenues and to consolidate or eliminate local governments altogether, these other states are facing these same threats. Because we have dealt with these issues numerous times during the past decade, I was happy to share our experience and a way to turn challenging legislation into an opportunity for advocacy.

Coincidentally, at the time of our meeting, the deadline for local governments to complete and file their efficiency reports under the Decennial Committees on Local Government Efficiency Act was quickly approaching. Dozens of agencies were sending IAPD copies of their reports. When the legislation was originally proposed, it focused exclusively on local government consolidation, so I gave these other state leaders the background and discussed IAPD's efforts to amend the legislation to rightly focus on governmental efficiency. I emphasized that even though the requirements were still an unfunded mandate, our members were doing more than simply satisfying the minimum requirements. Instead, many of our agencies were using their efficiency committee and report to educate their communities and lawmakers about their operational efficiencies. The leaders from those other states were particularly interested in our proactive approach to use an efficiency study to demonstrate that no other unit of local government is better equipped to efficiently and effectively deliver park, recreation, and conservation services and as a preparatory strategy for responding to future legislation if needed.

The Time Is Always Right to Showcase your Agency's Efficiency and Success

Park districts, forest preserve districts, and conservation districts have proven track records, and the time is always right to celebrate those successes. As this issue goes to press, the 104th General Assembly is just underway, so it is not yet clear which major legislative issues we may confront this spring. However, we should not wait until there are

specific proposals to diminish essential property tax revenues or to dissolve local governments to discuss governmental efficiencies with legislators.

Although I have not yet had the opportunity to examine every agency's efficiency report, I have reviewed enough to realize that IAPD member agencies met the challenge of treating this as an opportunity as opposed to just another state mandate. The compilation of best practices, intergovernmental agreements and partnerships, benefits, and other successes is quite impressive. Rather than simply letting these documents gather dust on a shelf, I would like to encourage you to use these reports in your advocacy efforts this year.

Take Advantage of a Unique Opportunity

Some agencies have already delivered a copy of their report to their legislators. I am certain legislators appreciate receiving the information, but it is important to remember that legislators receive an overwhelming amount of written material. With thousands of bills already filed for the spring session, that volume will only grow. So, while it is a good idea to provide a copy of your report to your legislators, a personal approach will help maximize your advocacy success.

The reports I have reviewed are well-organized and could easily be used as the framework for a personal visit with your legislators. I do not recommend reading the entire report page-by-page with your legislators, but highlighting key achievements could have a major impact.

1. Intergovernmental Agreements and Partnerships.

Legislators have many issues to deal with, so it is never safe to assume that they are aware of the countless partnerships and intergovernmental agreements that your agency has cultivated. Your report likely provides an impressive list. During your legislative visit, consider selecting a few of your most successful intergovernmental agreements or public-private partnerships, then describe the importance of the relationships and highlight efficiencies. If possible, quantify the taxpayer savings.

2. Best Practices. Often, we take for granted that all governments maintain detailed policy manuals, conduct community surveys, and perform comprehensive master plans. This is not the case. These and other best practices demonstrate that your local government is professional, well-organized, and operates efficiently and effectively for taxpayers. Furthermore, your legislator may be unaware of the extent to which your agency studies and plans before making improvements. Sharing details about your specific plans, survey results, or studies will help reaffirm the state's investment in park and recreation capital grant programs like OSLAD and PARC while affording an opportunity to discuss current capital needs.

3. Benefits and Services. Several reports went above and beyond when explaining the benefits and services their agency provides to their communities. A summary of the programs, jobs, health benefits, and economic and environmental impact reaffirms that your agency provides an excellent return on investment. These key metrics are impactful.

4. Opportunities for Greater Efficiency. Some reports also identified specific inefficiencies resulting from unfunded state mandates and other local government requirements. If your report has specific details such as the cost of non-resident FOIA requests, the financial impact of fees and requirements promulgated by other local governments, or other mandates, make sure your legislators understand that most inefficiencies within your operations are the result of outside forces rather than a lack of internal controls or processes.

There are likely some great stories behind details within your report that would leave a positive impression about your agency and its operations, and you may want to include a tour of specific facilities during the visit that are related to details in the report.

Park districts, forest preserve districts, and conservation districts have proven track records of efficiently and effectively delivering critical services. Your agency's efficiency study and resulting report provide evidence of its success and proof that it is the absolute best form of local government to deliver your services to the community.

In the coming months, invite your legislators to your facilities to discuss your efficiency report and demonstrate that no other unit of local government can deliver your services more efficiently or effectively. Although these reports may provide a solid response to any future shortsighted proposal that suggests another form of local government could provide the same services at a lower cost, there is no reason to wait for such a proposal.

Please let IAPD know the results of your meeting. Lastly, if your agency has not already done so, please send IAPD a copy of your report. Both these tasks can be accomplished by emailing me at janselment@ilparks.org. Congratulations on a job well done!

2025 SPRING SESSION IAPD LEGISLATIVE AWARENESS SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Key deadlines and other important dates are available on the IAPD website at ILparks.org as well as the General Assembly's website at ilga.gov.

In addition to site visits at your agency, there will be numerous opportunities throughout the Spring Session to meet with legislators to discuss important legislative issues and deliver positive messages about the benefits of parks, recreation, and conservation. Please mark your calendar to attend these events and invite your legislators to join you.

January 24	Soaring to New Heights All-Conference Awards Luncheon
February 13	Legislative Breakfast Princeton Park District
February 14	Legislative Breakfast Northbrook Park District
February 21	Legislative Breakfast Tinley Park - Park District
February 24	Legislative Breakfast Morton Park District
February 25	Legislative Breakfast Springfield Park District
February 28	Legislative Breakfast Vernon Hills Park District
	Legislative Breakfast West Suburban Special Recreation Association / Park District of Oak Park
March 1	Legislative Breakfast Schaumburg Park District
March 3	Legislative Breakfast Champaign County Forest Preserve District
March 7	Legislative Breakfast Carol Stream Park District
	Legislative Breakfast Fox Valley SRA/Fox Valley Park District
March 14	Legislative Breakfast Southern Illinois via Zoom
April 29	Parks Day at the Capitol State Capitol, Springfield
	Legislative Reception Illini Country Club, Springfield
April 30	Legislative Conference Crowne Plaza, Springfield



By Duane Smith, CPRP
IPRA Education Director

Delivering Impact: A Unique Origins Story

In the December 2024 issue of *Cigar Aficionado*, I came across the recipe for an adult beverage called the French 75, which is a mixture of gin, lemon juice, simple syrup, and champagne, and its typically garnished with a fresh slice of lemon. I thoroughly enjoy varying concoctions of gin, so I decided to do some research on the origins of this new and exciting beverage. Turns out the French 75 has been around awhile and is named after a piece of old French artillery that was known to “pack a punch”, much like the drink itself. I understand this edition of *Illinois P&R* is not about cigars and liquor, though that would be fun, right? I’ll make a recommendation to the Editorial Committee and see if we can slot that in for a future theme. In the meantime, we are here to share stories about origins in parks, recreation, and conservation, and I want to take this opportunity to highlight something else with unique features and has been “packing a punch” in our industry for nearly 100 years: the field house.

Public Broadcast System (PBS) has a great series titled *10 That Changed America*, and if you’re interested in history or just an avid parks enthusiast, I would recommend watching Episode 3 in Season 1. It’s a fascinating journey through the evolution of urban parks in the United States. There are stories about the origins of Central Park in Manhattan, the Riverwalk in San Antonio, and even the unique Gas Works Parks in Seattle. I especially like the story about the High Line in the Lower West Side of Manhattan because it epitomizes the creativity and passion for equity and green spaces that I see from park, recreation, and conservation professionals every day.

My favorite story is about the origins of Chicago’s Neighborhood Parks. In the late 19th Century, the Chicago South Park System along the lakefront was booming with activity and succeeded in providing open-space park benefits to residents in the immediate areas. However, as the city population grew with more immigrant and working-class families, there became a much greater need for social improvements further away from the lakefront. The Olmsted Brothers, whose father helped design Central Park in Manhattan, designed smaller neighborhood parks

that included none other than the field house, or what we more commonly refer to today as the Recreation (Rec) Center.

It Started With a Safe Space

The original field house was instrumental in addressing the social inequity issues of that time and provided access to important programs and services such as education, gymnasiums for sport activities, and spaces for cultural arts. It was a means to bring people together of varying socioeconomic backgrounds and provide resources for myriad of needs. It was a safe space to suspend worries about troubles at home, engage in wonder, and explore the benefits and pleasures of recreation.

I have the unique pleasure of driving around the Prairie State for various IPRA programs and events throughout the year. I continue to be amazed at the Rec Center amenities and services that are being provided to Illinois residents, and the creativity that goes into using these spaces to further broaden the scope of service. We are talking about amenities such as aquatic facilities, not just lap pools, suspended walking tracks, gymnasiums with multiple interchangeable sport courts and screens, dedicated gaming spaces with eSport equipment, classrooms with computers, sensory rooms, indoor playgrounds, and even massage beds, just to name a few. Additionally, not only are more amenities and services available in these newer Rec Centers, but they are also being built with more ADA features and a significantly smaller carbon footprint. It is captivating to see this space’s evolution and its positive impact on the community.

Whether we are talking about the historic origins of the Chicago field house or the innovative uses of Rec Centers today, we know these spaces are more than buildings; they are pillars of community and catalysts for change. As we look to the future, let’s raise a French 75 to celebrate the legacy of these transformative spaces and commit to ensuring their continued role in making our communities healthier, happier, and more connected.

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BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION OF RECREATION

BY CARRIE FULLERTON, Executive Director, Arlington Heights Park District &
AMY LEWANDOWSKI, Director of Marketing and Community Engagement, Arlington Heights Park District





Visionary, creative, ingenious...that's how we'd describe the individuals that had the foresight 100 years ago to start an agency as essential as the Arlington Heights Park District (AHPD).

In 1925, through a petition, the community recognized the need for a structured park district to meet its recreational needs. On June 9 of that year, the AHPD was officially formed, and its first Park Board meeting was held on June 18 with Commissioners Nathaniel Banta, Henry Klehm, Eugene Berbecker, Albert Volz, and Julius D. Flentie.

Early land acquisitions included Memorial Park and leased properties along the railroad tracks. As the commissioners worked to develop these lands, it quickly became clear that financial support was essential. The first levy, collected in May 1926, raised \$1,335.72. That same year, the district appointed its first seasonal parks superintendent and began offering recreational programs.



In 1928, the agency's boundaries mirrored the village's. In 1931, the first bonds were issued for land acquisition and development. A 1934 "straw vote" on the construction of a public swimming pool was narrowly defeated, 215 to 201. The architectural drawings for Recreation Park Pool and Field House were created in 1936 and accepted as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) initiative. Bonds totaling \$43,400 were issued to fund the project and the building was dedicated and opened on June 17, 1939.

By 1950, the district hired a "summer playground director" and by 1957 year-round programming was being offered. A referendum was approved by voters in 1955 to issue \$675,000 in bonds for land acquisition and development (we bet they wish they had an opportunity to apply for an OSLAD grant). These bond proceeds supported the development of Pioneer Park.

The 1960s saw rapid population growth in Arlington Heights, with the town's population increasing by 218%. During this decade, voters passed three key bond referendums: 1962 (\$395,000), 1965 (\$465,000), and

1968 (\$2.8M). These funds supported the creation of numerous facilities, including Hasbrook Park, Recreation Park's bathhouse, the Frontier and Camelot Park Community Centers, swimming pools at Heritage and Olympic Park (now Arlington Ridge Center), and various ballfields, playgrounds, tennis courts, and paths. In 1964, the district acquired the land for Arlington Lakes Golf Club, which opened in 1979 thanks to a \$1.5 million bond referendum in 1976.

A 1971 community survey indicated interest in a synthetic ice rink and indoor tennis, although residents opposed tax increases. The park board issued \$735,000 in revenue bonds to construct Forest View Tennis Club, which opened in 1973. In the mid 1970's, the district began to face a financial deficit and worked to cut expenses. In 1975, a "Save the Parks" referendum allowed the agency to increase the corporate tax rate and issue \$537,000 in bonds for deferred maintenance projects and construction of the maintenance garage at Frontier Park. The district also celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1975 with a "Golden Summer Celebration" at Recreation Park.

The 1980s focused on maintaining and upgrading existing assets rather than expansion. In 1983, the district received its first National Gold Medal. A joint agreement with the village and historical society was signed in 1985 to provide programming at the Arlington Heights Historical Museum. The agency purchased North School in 1987, renovated it, and it now serves at the Administration Building. The "Children at Play" (CAP) before- and after-school program was launched in 1989 to support working parents by offering recreational activities at six sites.

The 1990s marked another significant chapter for the AHPD. The district signed a lease with the Village to program Lake Arlington, a 93-acre site featuring a 50-acre detention lake, an 11-acre native wetland, a boathouse, and a 2.4-mile path for walking and cycling. The district received the National Gold Medal award in 1992 and acquired Nickol Knoll Park, which includes a 9-hole golf course. The district also began programming activities at the Senior Center and launched its website, offering residents convenient 24-hour access to information and registration.

Since the 2000s, the district has continued to grow to meet the evolving needs of its community. In 2001, the Arlington Heights Park Foundation was created. The district has secured over \$10+ million in various grants to fund improvements (with \$5+ million being secured in the last five years), including pool and ballfield renovations, playground upgrades, and more. Notable projects include the renovations of the Camelot and Pioneer Park Community Centers and the 2020 transformation of Olympic Park into Arlington Ridge Center. With the guidance of the 2024 seven-year Comprehensive Plan the district is embarking on key projects at Recreation Park, the ARC and Centennial Park. As it celebrates 100 years of service, the Arlington Heights Park District remains committed to its mission of fostering community well-being, recreation and critical open space.



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Driving the Path of Recreation

By Carolyn Wofford, Administrator, Taylorville Community Pleasure Driveway and Park District

The Taylorville Community Pleasure Driveway and Park District's mission is direct: "To provide recreation and park experiences that enrich the quality of life for our community."

For more than 70 years, the Taylorville Community Pleasure Driveway and Park District has been delivering invaluable spaces, services and programs to its residents.



The Taylorville Community Pleasure Driveway and Park District is the caretaker of three park sites within the Taylorville City limits; Manners Park, Jaynes Park and Don Bragg Sports Complex.

Manners Park, a 55-acre tract, was purchased from the widow (Elizabeth) and daughter (Francis Harder) of C.A. Manners on February 1, 1913. Jaynes Park, an 11-acre tract, was deeded to the City of Taylorville in 1909 as a donation by the Jaynes family to the City of Taylorville. It was through the acquisition of both Manners Park and Jaynes Park that the Taylorville Community Pleasure Driveway and Park District was able to complete an operating park district in 1951.

The formation of the Taylorville Community Pleasure Driveway and Park District was like many of its contemporaries. There was no general act permitting the formation of park districts until 1893 when Illinois legislature passed an act entitled "An Act to provide for the creation of Pleasure Driveway and Park Districts," on June 19, 1893. Shortly after the passage of this act, the Peoria Park District was organized thereunder and in 1900 the Springfield Park District was formed. No other park districts were organized under this act until the organization in 1947 of the Fox River Valley Pleasure Driveway and Park District. Since that time, a number of other districts have been organized under it. This act is commonly referred to as "The Pleasure Driveway Act," and park districts formed thereunder, as "Pleasure Driveway and Park Districts."



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Recreation has long since been a mainstay in Taylorville. Since the late 1850s, the area in and around Manners Park has served as a place for recreation. In the summer of 1856, the Christian County Agricultural Society held its first county fair. In the 1870s, there was a need to have a direct route from Decatur to St. Louis by the Wabash Railroad, who found the northern part of the fairgrounds to be in its way. Arrangements were made with C.A. Manners to use a 55-acre tract, present day Manners Park, and move the fairgrounds south of the railroad. In 1913, this property was purchased by the City of Taylorville, some 25 years after C.A. Manner's death.

In the late 1800s, a historical movement was spreading across the land. This movement was one of the largest ventures in education ever seen. A series of programs designed for all ages included a two-week period of music, lectures, study, and oratory. This movement became known as the Chautauqua celebration. At the center of Manners Park still stands the Chautauqua auditorium. This building was purchased from the Bloomington Chautauqua Society in 1916, then moved to its present location and erected. The Chautauqua Auditorium is presently listed as a historic place by the State of Illinois and the United States Department of the Interior National Park Service.

Manners Park is also the site of an approximately 7-acre pond, or lake, as some call it. At one time, the lake included a beach, fishing and diving platforms and a bathhouse. In the 1910s or early 1920s, the first wading pool was built across from the Chautauqua Dining Hall. The second pool was a full-sized commercial pool built inside the front entrance of the park. The third and present pool was opened in 1962.

Jaynes Park consists of 11.4 acres of open space that meets the needs of those who want to picnic, play baseball on one of three fields, utilize tee ball and pitching machines, or just give children playground equipment to have outdoors fun.

In September of 1967, a proposed lease/buy agreement was accepted to build an 18-hole golf course bordering the southeast side of Lake Taylorville on 160 acres of land. On July 21, 1969, the course was officially named Lake Shore Golf Course.

The park district has also adapted with changing needs over the years through its Don Bragg Sports Complex, which includes the latest addition of the Zaydin Dudra Memorial Skatepark, named after a young skateboarder who lost his life in a motor vehicle accident.



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A black and white photograph of two women sitting at a small, round, metal-framed table outdoors. The woman on the left is wearing a dark one-piece swimsuit and a swim cap, smiling at the camera. The woman on the right is wearing a patterned one-piece swimsuit, sunglasses, and a towel draped over her lap, also smiling. On the table are two glass bottles and some papers. A large, dark, scalloped-edge umbrella is positioned over them. In the background, a chain-link fence is visible, and beyond that, some trees and a building. The ground appears to be a paved pool deck.

**TODAY, THE PEKIN PARK DISTRICT IS ONE OF
THE LARGEST GEOGRAPHICALLY IN THE STATE
AND SERVES AS A VITAL CORNERSTONE OF
COMMUNITY LIFE.**



THE HISTORY AND IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING PEKIN'S MINERAL SPRINGS PARK

In the summer of 1878, the Pekin Artesian Well Company was founded to drill for mineral springs near a cattle watering hole on the east side of town. The company aimed to capitalize on the purported medicinal value of mineral water, which was a popular belief at the time. Typically, water could be found by drilling 90 to 150 feet, but the company struck water at an impressive depth of 990 feet. Despite this success, their product failed to gain popularity, leading to the company's eventual collapse. This initial venture, however, planted the seeds for what would later become a cherished community resource.

By 1882, there was growing interest among Pekin citizens in developing a public park. Some speculate that this movement was driven by a desire to help the Well Company recover its investment. To enhance the area's appeal, a bathhouse was constructed at the well site, featuring two wings with six tubs, two showers, and two treatment rooms in each wing. Additionally, a small 12 x 20-foot pool, heated by steam, was built, enabling year-round use. Roads were laid out, and two lakes were created by repurposing the cattle pond. The park also featured a charming pagoda, a fountain, and a bandstand in the center of the smaller circular lake. This picturesque area was christened Mineral Springs Park.

Sadly, nature dealt a severe blow to the park's early development. In the late 1880s, a cyclone destroyed the bathhouse, pagoda, and bandstand. Funding was desperately needed for repairs, but private investments fell short. At this critical juncture, a community leader, Thomas Cooper, stepped in. Cooper covered the costs of repairing the bathhouse and then offered to sell the park to the city for \$6,000. The city declined the offer. Financial struggles continued for the park's private operators, culminating in a sheriff's auction on March 11, 1887, to settle outstanding debts.

The park's troubles did not end there. A fire soon destroyed the bathhouse once again, and another offer to sell the park to the city—for \$13,000—was also rejected, this time through a public referendum. Despite these setbacks, the dream of a community park persisted. Finally, in 1902, Pekin residents passed a referendum to establish a new unit of government dedicated to overseeing parks. This marked the birth of the Pekin Park District. On December 14, 1902, the district held its first meeting, where funds were secured through a bond issue, and Mineral Springs Park was purchased.

From these humble beginnings, the park district began to take shape. Shortly after the acquisition, plans were set in motion to transform the park into a true community treasure. The board approved the construction of the iconic Pavilion and an adjacent Palm House, with the project awarded to the lowest bidder at \$12,500. Additionally, a Grounds Superintendent was hired, and the decision was made to drain the existing lakes to create the now-famous Lagoon. Over time, the park district expanded its offerings, making Mineral Springs Park a central hub for leisure and recreation in Pekin.

Today, the Pekin Park District is one of the largest geographically in the state and serves as a vital cornerstone of community life. The park has evolved to meet the needs of generations, offering everything from serene natural spaces to modern recreational facilities. It is a place for families to gather, for individuals to find solace, and for the community to celebrate its shared history.

PRESERVING AND DOCUMENTING PARK HISTORY: A COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY

The story of Mineral Springs Park is not merely about the physical transformation of land into a public resource; it is a testament to a community's resilience and vision. The park's history is a narrative of determination, as residents and leaders worked tirelessly to create something enduring despite natural disasters, financial hurdles, and public skepticism.

Preserving this history is critical. Parks are more than recreational spaces; they are living records of a community's culture, values, and collective identity. By documenting the development and milestones of parks like Mineral Springs, we ensure that future generations can appreciate the challenges and triumphs that shaped their community. Understanding this history fosters a sense of pride and belonging, strengthening the bond between residents and their shared spaces.

Efforts to preserve park history can take many forms, from archiving old photographs and documents to maintaining oral histories from long-time residents. Historical markers, interpretive signage, and community events celebrating the park's milestones can also help keep its story alive. For Mineral Springs Park, commemorating its origins and evolution reminds us of the collective effort that transformed a failed Well Company into one of the most beloved landmarks in Pekin.

Moreover, documenting history supports informed decision-making for the future. By understanding the park's past successes and challenges, park officials can make thoughtful choices that honor its heritage while meeting contemporary needs. This balance between preservation and innovation ensures that the park remains relevant and cherished for years to come.



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IN MEMORIAM



IAPD's board of trustees and membership would like to extend our condolences to the family of Skokie Park District Commissioner **Mike Reid**, who passed away December 6, 2024.

In his 18 years on the park district's board, Reid served as president 11 times and as vice-president twice. Reid provided oversight for hundreds of the Skokie Park District's major

projects and implementation of new programs, including the creation of Skokie's Backlot Bash, the renovation of the Exploritorium, the Skatium Ice Arena, the Park Services Center, the Weber Leisure Center, its Fitness First Health Club, and more than 20 district parks.

In 2017, Reid earned master board member status with IAPD. In 2019, he was then elected to the IAPD board of trustees, helping the association to realize its mission of advancing Illinois park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies in their ability to preserve natural resources and improve the quality of life for all people in Illinois.

Under Reid's leadership, the Skokie Park District has been recognized as an Illinois Distinguished Accredited Agency three times. In 2021, the district won the Illinois Park and Recreation Agency's very first Champions for Change Award for its diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) accomplishments, initiatives very close to Reid's heart.

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