



SESSIONS

Friday, January 24, 2025

15

Mastering the Art of Leadership: Cultivating Essential Metaskills for Success

Topic Track: Leadership/Management

Location: Regency Ballroom B, West Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): Marcy Fortnow, CEO, Engaging Play, LLC

In today's dynamic and rapidly changing world, the most successful leaders are those who possess not just technical skills, but the ability to adapt, inspire, and lead with vision. These abilities are encompassed in what we call "metaskills." Metaskills are high-level abilities that transcend specific contexts and tasks, such as emotional intelligence, critical thinking, adaptability, and effective communication. They are the cornerstone of impactful leadership, enabling leaders to navigate complexity, foster innovation, and drive their teams towards excellence.

Join us for an immersive session designed to elevate your leadership journey by delving into these critical metaskills. This workshop is your gateway to leadership excellence, offering a fresh perspective on what it truly means to lead with impact and inspiration.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify and Develop Core Leadership Metaskills: Participants will be able to recognize the essential meta skills necessary for impactful leadership.
- Implement Actionable Strategies for Enhanced Leadership: Participants will learn and apply practical strategies and tools to enhance their leadership.
- Create a Personalized Continuous Development Plan: Participants will design a customized action plan for ongoing development of their metaskills.



SESSIONS

100

So You Want to Stay Out of Jail? What Park District Leadership Must Know About Ethics Requirements

Topic Track: Boardmanship

Location: Grand Suite 3, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): John O'Driscoll, Partner, Tressler LLP; James Hess, Senior Counsel, Tressler LLP; Caitlin Frenzer, Associate, Tressler LLP; Jey Claudio, Associate, Tressler LLP

This session will provide elected officials, officers, and employees with critical information on the Gift Ban Act, prohibited political activities, conflicts of interest, official misconduct, whistleblower protections and executive session confidentiality.

Learning Objectives:

- Attendees will learn the key components of the Gift Ban Act, prohibited political activities, and several other critical areas of the law.
- Attendees will learn about the latest court opinions involving the ethical requirements of public officials.
- Attendees will discuss a number of real world hypotheticals.



SESSIONS

104

Board Member to Board Leader Part I

Topic Track: Boardmanship

Location: Acapulco, West Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): Dannielle Wilson, Consultant, BerryDunn

At the heart of every Park Board and Foundation Board is a good-intentioned citizen who wants to give back to their community. Whether a new eager-beaver or a seasoned veteran, board members share the same desire to do a fantastic job. This session will help individual board members ensure that they are being impactful in a positive way. If you're looking for a session that goes beyond the nuts and bolts and digs into real, meaningful, and applicable board topics, then look no further! As a former park board secretary and a current park board commissioner, practical experience on both sides of the table will be shared with an engaging, insightful, and lighthearted approach. This is just what you need to acquire new skills and energize yourself for a successful Board tenure!

Learning Objectives:

- Participant will be able to identify tactics they would like to employ in their boardmanship.
- Participant will be able to explain their peers' number one leadership strategy.
- Participant will be able to display renewed energy and enthusiasm in their leadership role.



SESSIONS

107

Girl Power - Get Your Questions Answered

Topic Track: Leadership/Management

Location: Grand Hall J, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): Carrie Fullerton, Executive Director, Arlington Heights Park District; Maryfran Leno, Executive Director, Itasca Park District; Lisa Sheppard, Executive Director, Glencoe Park District; Sue Rini, Executive Director, Carol Stream Park District

Navigating your career and today's work environment can be challenging. Join this panel of seasoned professionals and bring your best questions. We will be ready to give you a multi-faceted perspective on topics you want to know more about!

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will learn about new concepts/ideas related to their career trajectory from both fellow professionals and peers.
- Participants will have the opportunity to ask their questions and receive responses from a variety of professional perspectives.
- Participants will have the opportunity to explore topics related to their career that they may not have considered.



SESSIONS

110

Legal/Legislative I

Topic Track: Governance/Legal

Location: Regency Ballroom A, West Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): Jason Anselment, General Counsel, Illinois Association of Park Districts ; Derke Price, Equity Partner, Ancel Glink

In this session, legal experts will discuss new laws and recent court decisions that affect park districts, conservation districts, forest preserves, recreation, and special recreation agencies. Changes to the Park District Code and other new legal requirements affecting district operations and facilities, labor and employment, and financial procedures will be discussed along with other statutory changes that may impact your agency. Recent tort liability cases that provide guideposts in your agency's day-to-day operations will also be covered. You will also receive information about the latest developments from the state capitol. Stay current on a wide variety of changes in the law and learn how these changes will affect the operation of your agency.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify recent legal changes that impact day-to-day operations.
- Understand how these legal changes and other developments will affect your agency's operations.
- Determine how to adapt to the requirements of new laws while following the best practices.



SESSIONS

131

Tips for Avoiding Claims of Harassment /Discrimination in the Workplace

Topic Track: Governance/Legal

Location: Grand Hall K, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): Elizabeth Wagman, Partner, Tressler LLP; Kathleen Gibbons, Senior Counsel, Tressler LLP

In this session the participants will be provided with the legal requirements surrounding harassment/discrimination in the workplace including all relevant legal updates.

Learning Objectives:

- The presenters will provide real life scenarios to demonstrate best practices.
- Detailed discussion of hypothetical matters and an opportunity for Q&A with presenters.
- Discussion of how the latest trends actually impact the workplace on a day-to-day basis.



SESSIONS

208

Putting the Puzzle Pieces Together: Elements of Park Master Planning

Topic Track: Parks/Natural Resources

Location: Comiskey, West Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): Steve Konters, Senior Principal, Hitchcock Design Group; Lara Barnas, Senior Associate and Park Designer, Hitchcock Design Group; Tim Beckmann, Division Director of Park and Facility Services, Glenview Park District

Planning for new parks, renovations, or expansions can be challenging. This session will provide insight into some best practices for park planning to balance working within your budget, understanding site and jurisdictional constraints, building consensus with staff, engaging community and stakeholders, meeting community needs, and setting up the project for funding opportunities.

Learning Objectives:

- Learn various methods for engaging resident, park user groups, and key staff in the planning process.
- Understand key steps involved in park master planning to have a successful outcome for implementation.
- Take away action items that you can bring back to your organization.



SESSIONS

302

Human Resource Orienteering: Learn to Navigate Recruitment & Onboarding at Your Agency

Topic Track: HR/Risk Management

Location: Gold Coast, West Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): IPRA

In this session, Executive Director at the Oak Brook Park District, Laure Kosey, and Marketing & Communications Manager at the Oak Brook Park District, Haley Colucci, will walk session attendees through their experience navigating and developing an inclusive recruitment, hiring, and onboarding process. Many people often ask the same question on their first day at a new job – “So, what do I do now?” Sometimes supervisors and/or managers don’t always have the tools to help guide new staff through unfamiliar terrain, and the process can be challenging and lack efficiency. This may often result in a confused new employee and a stressed manager! Learn how they have mapped out their process and implemented tools that not only empower new staff to be successful in their new role but answer that very question everyone has on their first day. The speakers are excited to share their “New Hire Orientation Passport Experience” booklet that is distributed to their new full-time employees!"

Learning Objectives:

- Create an inclusive recruiting and hiring process.
- Develop tangible material to help guide new staff.
- Tools needed to design your own passport experience for your agency.



SESSIONS

315

Financing the Fun: An Introduction to Municipal Bonds

Topic Track: Finance/Information Technology

Location: Grand Suite 5, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): Andrew Kim, Director, Public Finance, PMA Securities, LLC; Kent Floros, Partner, Chapman and Cutler LLP

This session will provide an overview of the basics of municipal bonds, one of the most essential tools used to finance the fun at your park district. Topics include: (i) the participants involved in a transaction, (ii) an overview of the Preliminary Official Statement, and (iii) the general process by which municipal bonds are sold. We will also discuss other hot topics impacting the current municipal bond market, including the rules that guide the allowance of arbitrage on bond proceeds, as well as regulatory and enforcement updates.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand basics of issuing bonds, including the participants in a bond issue and overview of Preliminary Official Statement.
- Understand IRS rules guiding when a park district can earn and keep positive arbitrage on bond proceeds.
- Become familiar with recent notable SEC enforcement cases and other regulatory updates in the municipal bond industry.



SESSIONS

317

Productive Transition: Navigating Employee Transitions in the Workplace

Topic Track: HR/Risk Management

Location: Water Tower, West Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): 0

When someone resigns, it can be stressful for the managers left to pick up the pieces. This can lead to feelings of resentment, fear, and hurt. This can also lead to further toxic workplace behaviors by both employees and managers. However, as At-Will employers who want the ability to let employees when we want, we must acknowledge that our employees get the right to leave on their time as well. Change the status quo of long-time beliefs on how we can and should respond as managers & leaders when our staff tells us they are leaving. Explore steps to take to keep your cool, maintain the respect of your remaining team members, and make the transition as productive and least disruptive as possible.

As a bonus, we will discuss a few strategies to handle this if you are the employee seeking to give your own notice. After all, it's not "if" an employee will leave it's "when." The same goes for yourself; it's not "if" you'll leave your current organization, it's "when." Challenge the status quo and find solutions to productive voluntary employee transitions in the workplace.

Avoid toxic behaviors that can leave scars on both the employees & remaining managers, and the person who resigned. Create a transition that keeps yourself and/or your org moving forward.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will leave the session with concrete strategies for leading their teams when a team member resigns with or without notice.
- Participants will learn measures to take to ensure a smooth transition from the workplace for themselves that will strengthen their reputation.



SESSIONS

410

Permit Problems - Managing Illegal Park Use

Topic Track: Recreation

Location: Michigan 3, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): Angus Shields, Director of Recreation, Lombard Park District; Cameron Edelman, Athletic Manager, Arlington Heights Park District; Meri Shea, Athletics Manager, Northbrook Park District

Join us for an insightful lecture session focused on the growing issue of illegal users accessing athletics fields and courts. This session will explore the challenges and implications of unauthorized park use: including its impact on park resources, field use disputes, liability, and lost revenue. We will discuss past experiences, tips for identifying unpermitted use, how to take a proactive approach, and steps to convert unauthorized park users into revenue generating renters.

Learning Objectives:

- Negatives of having unpermitted users on athletic fields and courts.
- Proactive steps to limit unauthorized use of your parks.
- How to convert an unpermitted users into a renter.



SESSIONS

416

Theming For Success

Topic Track: Recreation

Location: Grand Hall GH, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): Shay Remus, Superintendent of Recreation, United City of Yorkville Parks and Recreation Department

Are you not entertained?! With endless entertainment opportunities our communities can spend their time and money on, event planners need to become more innovative to capture their attention and interest to ensure events are unique, well-attended and meet revenue goals. This session will show you how strategically theming your events will help achieve these goals while also having A LOT of fun with your community and staff. It will reveal the "secret formula" that has proven successful for the United City of Yorkville Parks and Recreation Department which keeps our community asking for more!

Learning Objectives:

- Demonstrate how theming has successfully impacted the overall growth in participation, sponsorship and revenue at the United City of Yorkville.
- Outline implementation steps, resources and details that bring your theme to life and give your community a memorable experience.
- Provide event examples of when these strategies were successfully implemented.



SESSIONS

504

Staff Development Across Different Stages of Employment. How to Keep Staff Engaged, Invested and Coming Back for More

Topic Track: Therapeutic Recreation

Location: Roosevelt 3AB, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): Michelle Smith, Speaker, Coach & Consultant, Z&B Consulting, Inc.

Michelle Smith of Z&B Consulting, Inc. comes into organizations to provide interactive training & coaching for staff & volunteers. She's spent decades helping organizations get better results for those they serve & knows firsthand how important it is to keep staff engaged, invested and coming back for more. During this session, Michelle will share tips & resources for developing staff across different stages of development. You'll leave with ideas & tools that can immediately be put into action & transform your staff team. Engaged and invested staff have an energy that's contagious and results in the clients you serve having better experiences.

Learning Objectives:

- New ideas for ways to keep staff engaged, invested and coming back for more.
- Tips on how to communicate with different generations in ways that relate to them.
- Resources for staff development.



SESSIONS

610

Leveraging AI Tools and Virtual Assistants for Parks & Recreation

Topic Track: Facilities

Location: Grand Hall I, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): Ryan Chen, Co-Founder/CTO, DoubleSpot Inc.

In today's fast-paced digital age, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual assistants can revolutionize the management and operation of parks and recreation services. This session is designed to provide parks and recreation professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively utilize AI tools and virtual assistants to enhance visitor experience and streamline operations.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand AI fundamentals.
- Enhance visitor experience with AI.
- Improve operational efficiency with AI.



SESSIONS

904

The Constant & The Cutting-Edge: A Marketer's Guide to Traditions & Trends (2025 & Beyond)

Topic Track: Marketing/Communications

Location: Randolph AB, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): Gabriel Castillo, President/CEO, RecStar Consulting

In today's rapidly evolving marketing landscape, navigating a delicate balance between established practices and emerging trends is crucial. This session provides a comprehensive framework for navigating the "constant & the cutting-edge." Delve into the enduring power of traditional marketing principles like brand storytelling, customer focus, and strategic communication. We'll then explore the latest marketing trends in 2025 and beyond, encompassing areas like personalization, AI-driven automation, and the rise of immersive experiences. Learn how to effectively integrate these trends with your marketing foundation, creating a future-proof strategy that resonates with your audience and drives growth.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify emerging marketing trends for 2025 and beyond, including personalization, AI automation, and immersive experiences.
- Learn strategies for integrating trends with your existing marketing foundation.
- Discover how to leverage storytelling, brand building, and customer relationships to fuel effective marketing campaigns.



SESSIONS

1004

Equitable Youth Suicide Prevention

Topic Track: Diversity

Location: Grand Hall L, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): Linda Henderson-Smith, Founder and Principal, ATC Consulting LLC

Death by suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for those 10 - 24. As staff working with youth, there is information you should know and techniques that can be used to work towards prevention of suicide. This session will provide the most up to date information on youth suicide as well as considerations for addressing suicide amongst diverse populations of youth and techniques that can be used.

Learning Objectives:

- Define the current youth suicide crisis.
- Explain considerations for addressing suicide amongst diverse populations.
- Describe techniques for staff to use for equitable youth suicide prevention.



SESSIONS

1110

Brief Encounters of the Best Kind

Topic Track: Forest Preserve and Conservation

Location: Toronto, West Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Speaker(s): Robert Carter, Certified Interpretive Trainer, National Association for Interpretation

Naturalists, camp counselors, interpreters, rangers, docents, recreation leaders, for our purposes, I will refer to them collectively as educators. All whose primary job description focuses on direct interaction with the public frequently do it through planned programs served up in timed packages of 30 to 90 minutes or more. However, interaction with the public is not limited to just those pre-planned opportunities. Many brief encounters may occur throughout a day. They can happen in passing, at the information desk, during an activity, gallery station, or during roving interpretation. Each interaction with the public, however brief, offers the educator an opportunity to enhance the visitor experience and promote a positive image for the agency.

Not all interactions with visitors begin with, “where’s the bathroom?”. Many visitors are often searching for other information, such as the location of a trail head, a meeting room location, program start time, a place to eat, or even the exit. Regardless, an educator prepared for such encounters can not only provide the requested information but can use the brief interpretive opportunity to chat about a feature of the site or other information that might pique the visitor’s interest. Call them what you will: elevator talks, nuggets, nutshells, vignettes – educators who carry a selection of these mini programs in their figurative hip pockets are ready to take visitor engagement to a higher level for everyone.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will be able to identify themes based on their agency’s mission which can be used during brief visitor interactions.
- Participants will be able to create a narrative that could be used during brief visitor interactions.
- Participants will learn storytelling techniques.



SESSIONS

4

Executive Director's Roundtable: A Chat with Neelay

Topic Track: Leadership/Management

Location: Regency Ballroom B, West Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Neelay Bhatt, Founder, Next Practice Partners; Tim Reindbold, Executive Director, Warrenville Park District; Susie Kuruvilla, Executive Director, Gurnee Park District; Sarah Sandquist, Executive Director, Champaign Park District

Whether you are a new executive director or a seasoned veteran, this session will provide a confidential peer-to-peer forum for exchanging ideas, problem-solving, and crowd-sourcing answers to some of your toughest agency challenges. Hosted by IAPD and IPRA, and facilitated by Neelay Bhatt, this highly interactive session will offer participants the opportunity to seek advice, share stories, highlight accomplishments, and learn tips and strategies from others' shared experiences.

Learning Objectives:

- Discuss timely, sensitive issues as they related to parks, recreation, and conservation.
- Gain new perspectives and strategies from others' shared experiences.
- Connect with peers from different parts of Illinois.



SESSIONS

103

Illinois Sunshine Laws: FOIA and Open Meetings Act

Topic Track: Boardmanship

Location: Grand Hall L, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Leah Bartelt, Public Access Counselor, Office of the Illinois Attorney General

Spending records, personnel files, emails: Any of these records could be the subject of the next FOIA request your district receives. Responding to FOIA requests on time and properly increases public confidence in governmental institutions. This session will summarize the basic requirements of FOIA, including deadlines, the handling of burdensome requests, and common exemptions applicable to park district and recreation association records. We'll also discuss the Open Meetings Act (OMA), which is the law that ensures that the public receives advance notice of and the right to attend and participate in Board meetings. We will review agenda/notice posting requirements, proper closed/executive session topics, and public comment. The Public Access Counselor (PAC) in the Office of the Illinois Attorney General is charged with providing advice and education with respect to FOIA and OMA, and resolving allegations that public bodies have violated those acts. The PAC also creates and updates the electronic training that all Illinois FOIA officers and OMA designees have to complete annually. This session does not replace the online trainings required by section 3.5 of FOIA and section 1.05 of OMA, but expands on that information, and provides an opportunity to discuss these complex issues with a representative of the PAC.

Learning Objectives:

- Legal requirements of FOIA.
- Legal requirements of OMA.
- Apply FOIA and OMA to records commonly requested and common meeting scenarios.



SESSIONS

108

Girl Power - What's Holding You Back?

Topic Track: Leadership/Management

Location: Grand Hall J, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Carrie Fullerton, Executive Director, Arlington Heights Park District; Maryfran Leno, Executive Director, Itasca Park District; Chris D'Alessandro, President (Retired), Heritage Travelware, LTD.

Join our presenters from the public and private sectors to identify what is really holding you back from going for that job you really, really want. Learn how to push past those hurdles so you can grab that position you've been dreaming about. If not YOU, then who?!?

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will learn what constraints are keeping women from investigating, applying for and getting the positions they want.
- Participants will learn strategies to overcome challenges that stop them from moving ahead.
- Participants will learn techniques to gain the confidence they need to get their dream job.



SESSIONS

111

Legal/Legislative II

Topic Track: Governance/Legal

Location: Regency Ballroom A, West Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Steven Adams, Partner, Robbins Schwartz

Review the many new laws, regulations, court decisions and PAC opinions issued in 2024. We will explain how the new laws work, how they impact your agency, and tips and strategies for staying in compliance.

Learning Objectives:

- Learn about new laws impacting your agency including OMA/FOIA, employment law, human rights, property tax and more.
- Identify policies, practices and procedures impacted by the new laws.
- Maintain compliance with changes in the law.



SESSIONS

123

Direct & Deliberate: How to Successfully PASS a Referendum

Topic Track: Governance/Legal

Location: Grand Suite 3, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Lauren Raspanti, Director of Marketing & Community Engagement, Lemont Park District; Louise Egofske, Executive Director, Lemont Park District; Paul Hanley, Managing Director, Beyond Your Base; Keri-Lyn Krafthefer, Partner, Ancel Glink

Is your district or agency going on the ballot soon? Hear from a park district, consultant and their legal team how they passed their \$17M referendum with over 70% positive response in only a 25% voter turnout election. Go through the steps of getting to the referendum process, working with a consultant and leading the way to the end...all with a successful finish. Hearing from all perspectives of parties involved really will help the audience understand how this process can be not (so) intimidating, a great way to connect with community and elevate the agency to a new level.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will learn more information on what a referendum can be used for and how it can impact their district.
- Participants will learn tools to get you to pass a successful referendum.
- Participants will hear from all perspectives involved to get a great view regarding the referendum process.



SESSIONS

132

Your IMRF Benefits

Topic Track: HR/Risk Management

Location: Michigan ABC, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Michael Scaramelli, Member Education Counselor, Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund; Rebecca Alanis, Member Education Counselor, Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund

An IMRF Member Counselor will provide information that explains the IMRF benefit program. Topics include IMRF participation and contributions, Voluntary Additional Contributions, and Disability, Retirement, and Death benefits.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand how your pension is calculated.
- Understand how the Voluntary Additional Contribution Plan works.
- Learn what benefits are available to you.



SESSIONS

138

Understanding Your Tax-Capped Levy

Topic Track: Boardmanship

Location: Grand Suite 5, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Mitch Bowlin, Director of Finance, Park District of Oak Park; Andrew Kim, Director, Public Finance, PMA Securities, LLC

This session will provide an overview of the factors that determine your district's tax-capped levy and how those factors can impact future property tax revenues. Specifically, we will look at the Park District of Oak Park's (PDOP) levy to see how PDOP has utilized its levy projections to inform its capital planning.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the various factors that impact how a tax-capped levy might change from one year to the next.
- Learn how the Park District of Oak Park incorporated its levy into its capital planning efforts.
- Learn how a referendum for a limiting rate increase will impact your District's financial future.



SESSIONS

201

Contracting for Rookies

Topic Track: Parks/Natural Resources

Location: Water Tower, West Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Thomas Rychlik, Senior Project Manager, Gewalt Hamilton Associates

Presented by Tom Rychlik from Gewalt Hamilton Associates, Inc. "Contracting for Rookies" offers an insightful journey into the fundamentals of contracting within public works and engineering projects. This presentation demystifies the contracting process, from the initial stages of project planning to the complexities of bid management, awarding, and execution, with a focus on managing expectations and unlocking the often-perplexing jargon of the industry.

Rychlik leverages his extensive background in civil engineering to guide participants through the essential steps of developing a successful project. The presentation explores the specifics of the bidding process, highlighting advertisement requirements, handling bidder questions, and the nuances of bid opening meetings. It further explores the critical elements of project manuals, including instructions to bidders, general conditions, and technical specifications, providing rookies with the knowledge to navigate contract documents.

Learning Objectives:

- Develop a bid schedule for a project, from board award, bid notice, to construction start.
- Understand the terminology used in public bidding.
- Communication strategies to manage expectations for public contracting.



SESSIONS

303

Understanding the Pathway to Violence: Preventing Targeted Attacks through Behavioral Threat Assessment

Topic Track: HR/Risk Management

Location: Randolph AB, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Mike Zegadlo, Senior Instructor, RJM Strategy Group; Ray McGury, President, RJM Strategy Group

Violent incidents like active shooters, though rare, could affect your organization. They are not, however, spontaneous, sudden events which occur without warning. They are predictable and, consequently, preventable. Patrons, employees, or others who visit your property may exhibit risk factors or observable behaviors that would indicate they are on the “pathway to violence.” This program will provide participants with a basic understanding of the behavioral evolution of an active shooter and help them to recognize potential signs or cues that may indicate an individual is in distress, in need of help or may be planning violence.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will gain an understanding of basic threat assessment principles applicable to the workplace environment.
- Participants will explore examples of risk factors and observable behaviors common in active shooters that could be predictive of an attack.
- Participants will apply concepts in a practical scenario exercise to assess an evolving threat.



SESSIONS

320

Ransomware ... Now What?

Topic Track: Finance/Information Technology

Location: Acapulco, West Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Randy Wilson, Network Manager, PDRMA

Whether you work in IT at your Agency or not, if your Agency is held for ransom, it impacts everyone. This session will cover how the ransom got onto your systems, what the next steps should be and the path to getting your Agency restored. If this happens at your Agency, many moving parts must be put into motion immediately. Getting professionals in your corner who know how to handle these situations is critical to your Agency being able to restore operations as quickly and with as little loss as possible.

Learning Objectives:

- Understanding who your immediate contacts should be following discovery of an incident.
- What information your Agency should release to the public and what information needs to not be released.
- What you can do to protect yourself or prepare for the incident before it happens.



SESSIONS

413

"Breakaway" from the traditional basketball league

Topic Track: Recreation

Location: Toronto, West Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Mike Contreras, Superintendent of Recreation, Oak Brook Park District; Brian DeWolf, Recreation Manager - Athletics, Oak Brook Park District; Greg Ktistou, Owner/Founder of Breakaway Basketball, Breakaway Basketball

Something good came out of COVID. The Oak Brook Park District and Breakaway Basketball collaborated to create the "Get Better" Basketball League. This is a 3-on-3 basketball league that allows the Breakaway coaches not only to run the practices but also control the games. Each practice consists of up to 28 kids that are split into 4 teams of 7 players on game day. We call these our "pods." Breakaway coaches evaluate the talent level within each pod and divide players up evenly. Parents are still involved to help coaches during practice and on the bench during the games. Most levels have multiple pods, so the schedule is done in two 4-week intervals. For the first 4 weeks, we schedule normally. In the second 4-weeks, we try to put the better teams and the not-so-great teams to play against each other. This relationship has grown, and we can offer many other opportunities for our community. Having skilled coaches has elevated our program to nearly 1,500 kids over 3 sessions.

Learning Objectives:

- Coaches provide the same training/message to all participants.
- Strengthen your program and eliminate referee fees.
- Increase the number of participants per time block.



SESSIONS

414

Engaging Communities with Mobile Augmented Reality

Topic Track: Recreation

Location: Grand Hall I, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Sonica Ruiz, Program Specialist, Chicago Park District; Anna Scheck, Sales Lead, Agents of Discovery Inc.

In this session, you'll join Sonica Ruiz, Program Specialist at Chicago Park District, and Anna Scheck, Sales Lead at Agents of Discovery, to learn how Chicago Park District is using the Agents of Discovery app and mobile Augmented Reality (AR) to engage visitors.

In this age of constant technological advancements which often serve to distance us from reality, AR can provide an alternative to the metaverse and connect players to the real world around them. It empowers municipalities and public space managers to link locations to learning and create engaging, fun, and safe learning environments on-site or at home. Because mobile devices offer additional accessibility features like text-to-speech and language options, incorporating them into outdoor programming can also be a great way to boost accessible access to local parks and recreation facilities.

As part of the session, participants will have the opportunity to play a demo "Mission" on their smartphone through the free Agents of Discovery app.

Learning Objectives:

- Demonstrate how mobile AR can be used to get communities interested and engaged in content created by parks & public lands.
- Leverage mobile technology to increase program accessibility.
- Describe how mobile AR can be used to create educational mobile games that can be used in a variety of ways, including for special events.



SESSIONS

507

Engaging the Next Generation: Recruiting Students to Major in Recreation Therapy

Topic Track: Therapeutic Recreation

Location: Roosevelt 3AB, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Rachel Smith, Instructional Assistant Professor, Illinois State University; Sydney Sklar, Professor, University of St. Francis

Higher education programs in recreation therapy/therapeutic recreation (RT/TR) have seen declines in enrollment leading to multiple University program closures in the recent past. Simultaneously, hiring managers within the profession have reported significant challenges to recruiting qualified professionals with RT/TR degrees and the CTRS credential. If these trends continue, the profession will continue to face challenges filling open practitioner positions with qualified individuals. This session will share a current strategic statewide initiative to recruit students to RT/TR majors in Illinois. Additionally, participants will explore and generate ideas to support student recruitment both locally and nationally.

Learning Objectives:

- Explain the causes of declining recreation therapy student enrollments.
- Discuss the impact of student enrollments on the profession.
- Explore effective strategies for recruiting students to majors in recreation therapy.



SESSIONS

609

Curveballs to Comebacks: Navigating Patron Challenges in Facilities

Topic Track: Facilities

Location: Grand Hall K, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Mary Stallings, Adult Activities Manager, Dundee Township Park District; Keith Schmerer, Facilities Manager, Palatine Park District; Andrea Masoncup, Asst. Superintendent of Recreation - Norris Recreation Center, St. Charles Park District

We all have experienced situations with patrons in our facilities and senior centers whether it be cognitive issues, homelessness or unfortunate life circumstances. In this session, there will be scenarios presented that have been experienced in our field and how they have been dealt with and guidance that was given to effectively manage the situations whether negative or positive outcome. It seems to be a growing concern and we need to be prepared. We are all in this together.

Learning Objectives:

- To find out background of people/situations before assuming the worst.
- Community resources: what they are and where to reach out.
- Tactics to assess and determine next steps.



SESSIONS

905

Communication Management: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly in Telling Your Story

Topic Track: Marketing/Communications

Location: Gold Coast, West Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Johnathan Skinner, Director of Community Services, Lake Elsinore Department of Community Services; Sven Leff, General Manager; Nikki Ginger, BerryDunn

This session was an NRPA Online Learning session by Johnathan Skinner, Director of Community Services from the City of Lake Elsinore, on the various nuances of working through and with news agencies and telling the story that have many challenges. All speakers will share their experiences on navigation with the public, agencies, and the community in a positive way.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the "5 W's" of communicating with the news media.
- Through open discussion, participants will share their experience on work with and through the news media to "Tell Their Story."
- Learn different ways to communicate .



SESSIONS

1010

Conversation on Implicit Bias

Topic Track: Diversity

Location: Grand Hall GH, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Tracey Crawford, Executive Director, Northwest Special Recreation Association;
Oralethea Davenport, Irwin Center Manager, Homewood-Flossmoor Park District

We all have biases, whether it's our favorite sports team or more complex, such as reacting to certain types of people or their actions. This session will identify these unconscious biases, through exercises and discussion to help discover implicit biases, determine our various levels of privilege, and examine the impact on our professional interactions.

Learning Objectives:

- Learn the differences between the many different types of biases and microaggressions.
- Learn about our own power and privilege.
- Learn about allyship and the type of ally that you are.



SESSIONS

1106

Cultural Landscapes and Historic Structures: A Preservation Approach

Topic Track: Forest Preserve and Conservation

Location: Comiskey, West Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Speaker(s): Explore the preservation precepts that inform development of recommendations for treatment of cultural landscapes and historic structures.

The National Park Services defines a cultural landscape as “a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.” Cultural landscapes can be natural or designed and range from urban parks and neighborhoods to historic farmsteads, industrial sites, battlefields, and cemeteries among other historic places. Historic structures are defined by the National Park Service as “constructed work usually immovable by nature or design, consciously created to serve some human activity” and include buildings, monuments, roads, railroad lines, canals, bridges, forts, ruins, fences, and outdoor sculpture.

Cultural landscape studies provide a basis for the preservation and rehabilitation of the landscape and its features. Historic Structure Reports provide a similar methodology for evaluating and developing treatments for historic built resources. This presentation will address the approaches used to document, evaluate, assess significance, and develop treatment recommendations for historic landscapes and structures. The presentation will be illustrated with a range of examples from projects completed by the speakers and their colleagues, including a designed landscape, a historic military park and national cemetery, structures within forest preserves, and an abandoned coal mining site, among others.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify the variety of resources that make up a cultural landscape associated with a historic event.
- Understand the processes followed to document, evaluate, and analyze cultural landscapes and historic structures.
- Explore the preservation precepts that inform development of recommendations for treatment of cultural landscapes and historic structures.



SESSIONS

16

Leadership Lessons We Can Learn From Ted Lasso

Topic Track: Leadership/Management

Location: Grand Hall J, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 12:15 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Speaker(s): Lisa Swan, Cultural Arts Coordinator, Palatine Park District; Cheryl Lufitz, Communications & Marketing Manager, Palatine Park District

How can a tv show change work relationships? In the time it would take you to watch an episode of "Ted Lasso," the presenters will share the best lessons learned from everyone's favorite optimist. Learn fun and easy tips to add to your workplace playbook. From the benefits of being curious to unlocking the potential in others, Ted's examples will have you believing doing the right thing is never wrong.

Learning Objectives:

- Learn ways to build relationships with co-workers/team members.
- Developing your coach mindset.
- How to unlock the potential in others.



SESSIONS

18

Be Fleet on Your Feet: 7 Keys to Spontaneous Thinking to Benefit You and Your Agency

Topic Track: Leadership/Management

Location: Grand Hall L, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 12:15 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Speaker(s): Sameera Luthman, Director of Marketing and Communications, Naperville Park District; Katie Sepe, Director of Human Resources, Naperville Park District

Do you endeavor to be more spontaneous in conversations or confidently respond to on-the-spot answers to questions in meetings? Learning how to think on your feet is essential. In this 30-minute speed session, two senior park and recreation leaders will highlight 7 essential factors for developing adeptness in spontaneous thinking. Professionals across all departments and with varying levels of experience will learn the necessary skills and confidence to enhance both their personal and professional personas.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the professional and personal benefits of developing the necessary skills to be more spontaneous in meetings and conversations.
- Discover the seven keys to developing the skill of “thinking on your feet.”
- Prioritize which keys need to be learned/refined and create an action plan for further individual development following the session.



SESSIONS

206

Sustainability Planning for Parks & Recreation

Topic Track: Parks/Natural Resources

Location: Grand Hall K, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 12:15 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Speaker(s): John Mlade, Director of Sustainable & Healthy Environments, Wight & Company; Ananya Jain, Sustainability Analyst, Wight & Company

For many Park Districts, sustainable practices are a part of everyday activities. From programs that support open space acquisition and natural resource management, to community recreation, Park Districts frequently support local ecosystem services and surrounding communities with access to nature and physical activity opportunities. Layered on may be initiatives to promote recycling, educate community, install renewable energy, and/or reduce carbon emissions. All throughout, a common sustainability thread is woven within Park District operations.

But there is always more to do. Community needs change, grants and other incentives become available, technology advances, and market dynamics shift, creating a need to re-evaluate your approach to sustainability. How are your activities optimized? Should alternate activities be prioritized? Are you telling your story effectively? Many Park Districts have the right initiatives in place but lack formal sustainability plans to document and share their efforts. This session will describe a process used by Wight & Company to engage Glenview Park District stakeholders, prioritize sustainability programs and activities, and consolidate initiatives into the Glenview Environmental Sustainability Plan.

Learning Objectives:

- Attendees will recognize the importance of sustainability planning to manage limited Park District resources.
- Attendees will understand a process for engaging stakeholders around sustainability.
- A peer benchmarking study that reveals a variety of ways to approach and measure sustainability will be shared.



SESSIONS

207

Everyone Can Be Salt Smart: Resources for Park Districts for Winter

Topic Track: Parks/Natural Resources

Location: Grand Suite 5, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 12:15 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Speaker(s): Hanna Miller, Watershed Project Manager, The Conservation Foundation

Once salt goes down, it doesn't go away. Salt levels are rising in lakes, streams, and rivers. Overuse of salt during the winter can damage park infrastructure, landscaping, turf grass, and natural areas. We can protect our parks and reduce salt use without sacrificing safety. Paving the way to better practices is a multi-faceted endeavor. Park Districts have an opportunity to infuse salt smart practices into their operations, policies, communications, and outreach. Salt smart practices are industry accepted best practices for winter maintenance that are proactive and protect vital park infrastructure, landscaping, and natural areas. Learn about all of the resources available to Park Districts from the Salt Smart Collaborative, like the Salt Smart Certified program, trainings, and targeted outreach materials and opportunities, that can support your winter operations and adoption of the best practices for salt use.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand how oversalting during the winter impacts key park infrastructure, landscaping, turf grass, and natural areas.
- Learn about trainings available to Park Districts and Park District Staff on the best practices for winter maintenance.
- Learn about Salt Smart educational resources and outreach opportunities available from the Salt Smart Collaborative.



SESSIONS

309

Listen Up! Leveraging Employee Surveys for a Happier, More Productive Workplace

Topic Track: HR/Risk Management

Location: Grand Hall GH, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 12:15 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Speaker(s): Gabriel Castillo, President/CEO, RecStar Consulting

Keeping your employees engaged and productive in today's competitive landscape is crucial. But are you truly hearing their voices? This interactive workshop will equip you with the skills to design, implement, and analyze employee surveys, transforming them from a chore into a strategic tool for building a thriving workplace. This workshop is perfect for HR professionals, managers, and anyone who wants to leverage the power of employee feedback to create a happier, more productive workplace.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will learn how to design engaging and targeted employee surveys that elicit honest and valuable feedback from their workforce.
- Participants will learn how to translate survey data into actionable plans for improvement.
- Learn how to understand how to differentiate between surface-level responses and deeper employee concerns.



SESSIONS

419

Managing Recreational Waterbodies – Keeping Everyone Pleased! A Case Study for Diamond Lake, Mundelein, Illinois

Topic Track: Recreation

Location: Grand Hall I, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 12:15 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Speaker(s): Ron Salski, Executive Director, Mundelein Park and Recreation District; Lisa Woolford, Director of Business Development, ILM Enviroments

Are you tasked with managing a large recreational lake? Do your constituents have various water sports and aesthetic interests that tug at you in different directions? Diamond Lake is a 153-acre glacial lake located in Mundelein, Illinois. It has multiple inlets, streams, and ponds that drain into the lake that require management. Managers at the Mundelein Park and Recreational District took a new watershed-wide approach to managing these valuable resources, resulting in a healthier lake and improved recreational activities, including fishing, water skiing, paddling, and nature watching.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the basic lake managment requirements.
- Understand the value of constuent engagement.
- Learn the value of partnerships with your vendord.



SESSIONS

502

Occupational Therapy's Role in Accessible Parks and Recreation

Topic Track: Therapeutic Recreation

Location: Randolph AB, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 12:15 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Speaker(s): Jessica Kronberg, Occupational Therapist, M Street

Occupational therapy (OT) has a distinct role in accessible and inclusive design in the community. This session will discuss the OT lens working with individuals with disabilities and how they interact with their environment. Many factors are brought into consideration when designing for those with disabilities such as vision, hearing, physical disabilities and cognition to name a few. OTs are able to collaborate with parks and recreation in order to assess a variety of factors to create an accessible space for all types of individuals to benefit from and create inclusion.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will understand the role of occupational therapy.
- Participants will learn how to collaborate with occupational therapists on accessible designs.
- Participants will increase their knowledge on needs of the disability community as it relates to parks and recreation.



SESSIONS

602

Maintenance Round Table

Topic Track: Facilities

Location: Regency Ballroom B, West Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 12:15 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Speaker(s): Erin Chapa, Superintendent of Facility Operations, Schaumburg Park District; Fred Gonzini, Manage of Trades, Schaumburg Park District; Jay Mueller, Manager of Facility Operations, Schaumburg Park District; Kelly Conte, Supervisor of Procurment, Schaumburg Park District

Join us for a pivotal round table discussion focusing on the current challenges and innovative solutions in facility Maintenance for park districts. This session is designed to bring together facility maintenance professionals or facility managers who oversee the maintenance contractors for their facilities to share insights, strategies and practical solutions to enhance the maintenance and management of recreation facilities. Attendees will have the opportunity to engage with peers and experts, exchange ideas and explore new perspectives on cost effective ways to maintain their facilities.

Learning Objectives:

- Sustainable Maintenance Practices: ecofriendly solutions, green technologies, sustainable material used in maintenance operations.
- Technology and Innovations: explore cutting edge technologies, AI and predictive analytics, and how they are transforming facility operations and BAS.
- Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of the common challenges in maintaining park district facilities and will leave with a network of contacts.



SESSIONS

903

SHOW ME THE MONEY! Sponsorship and Finance Tracking

Topic Track: Marketing/Communications

Location: Roosevelt 3AB, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 12:15 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Speaker(s): Stacey Fontechia, Sales and Sponsorship Manager, Naperville Park District; Jeremy Link, Finance Manager, Naperville Park District

In this 30-minute speed session, you'll learn the behind the scenes of what happens to sponsorship revenue once the contract is signed and it's turned over to the hands of the finance department. Hear from the Naperville Park District Sales and Sponsorship Manager and Finance Manager on good practices for revenue tracking, reporting, invoicing, and how funds get assigned to each program within your district.

Learning Objectives:

- Working with your finance department on ways to track sponsorship revenue & year over year reporting.
- Allocating sponsorship revenue to different accounts/programs within your district.
- Good practices for invoicing for sponsors.



SESSIONS

1111

Prescribed Fires: Balancing Safety and Ecological Benefits in Urbanized Settings

Topic Track: Forest Preserve and Conservation

Location: Michigan 3, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 12:15 p.m. - 12:45 p.m.

Speaker(s): Adam Carlson, Assistant Manager of Ranger Operations, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County; Martin Jandura, Manager of Ranger Operations, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

This 30-minute lecture will explore the complexities and safety considerations of prescribed fire management in an urbanized setting. Attendees will engage in discussions on best practices, public safety, and community engagement. The session will begin with a quick overview of burn procedures at the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County (FPDDC), followed by an exploration of case studies, and conclude with time for discussion. The case studies will illustrate the complexities of applying prescribed fire in NE Illinois and offer strategies for managing specific challenges. Key topics for discussion include public roadway safety, post-burn monitoring, communication, resources, and public engagement strategies. The session aims to foster collaboration and share knowledge to enhance fire management practices, ensuring both ecological benefits and public safety. By the end of the session, participants will have identified patterns, established consensus on best practices, and explored opportunities for improved communication and shared education.

Learning Objectives:

- Improved public safety and communication.
- Building interagency collaboration.
- Analyzing case studies for practical application.



SESSIONS

10

Innovations that Lead to BIG Changes

Topic Track: Leadership/Management

Location: Regency Ballroom B, West Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Nikhil Reddy, Co-Founder & CEO, Kaizen Labs

Now more than ever, Parks & Recreation departments across the country are asked to rapidly evolve as the demands and needs of our constituents change. Adapting to trends like artificial Intelligence, tackling technology accessibility and social inequities, catering to booming sports like pickleball and cricket, and driving resident satisfaction have become ingrained in our DNA. How do we gear up for these changes and continue to innovate when budgetary and staff resources are limited? Technology can and should be an ally. This session will explore various emerging trends in parks & recreation through roundtable discussions, and how departments across the country are leveraging simple but effective uses of technology to tackle challenges and unlock efficiency.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants craft innovation definitions, exploring human-centered design principles for practical use in daily roles as colleagues and leaders.
- Participants discover strategies for enhancing tech accessibility and usability, promoting equitable outcomes for parks & recreation patrons.
- Participants explore shared experiences, tackling challenges like engagement, revenue goals, and customer service improvements across initiatives.



SESSIONS

305

Part-Time Staff: The Crux of Our Success! They Matter... A LOT

Topic Track: HR/Risk Management

Location: Grand Hall GH, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Emma O'Meara, CAP, Camp & Preschool Manager, Arlington Heights Park District;
Troy Lukas, Training and Safety Supervisor, Arlington Heights Park District

We all love our part-time staff, but how much are they a part of your decision-making process? How often are their views represented at the table? Join us to learn some key strategies to engage and empower your part-time team members. We will cover ideas on advising committees, benefits, program involvement, and employee recognition.

Learning Objectives:

- How to create your own part-time advisory committee.
- Learn how to engage collaboratively with part-time staff toward shared outcomes.
- Learn about ways to improve benefits, program involvement, and recognition.



SESSIONS

310

Bodacious Building Blocks of Parks and Recreation

Topic Track: Finance/Information Technology

Location: Grand Hall K, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Arnie Biondo, Consultant, Pros Consulting

We, park and recreation pros, excel at running tournaments, maintaining fields, and planning rec programs. But there is also a business side of what we do that is so important to our success. Most of our commissioners and residents work in the business world. They want to know that their park districts and departments have business sense. This session will explore the how to apply business-like “building blocks.” Not accounting or financial or HR systems, but rather how to see the broader picture of parks and recreation— the only retail form of governmental services!

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the vital relationship between earned, non-tax revenue and operational expenses.
- See the broader value of marketing parks and recreation services, while not confusing marketing with promotions.
- Learn to estimate the true cost of delivering services to your community and how to use that data to your advantage.



SESSIONS

401

Little Thinkers: Keeping Young Minds Focused and Engaged

Topic Track: Recreation

Location: Grand Hall I, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Carmen Moran, Chicago Park District; Tricia Orszula, Chicago Park District

Early childhood is a critical time for learning and development. It can, however, be challenging to keep young minds focused. It is important to recognize that the age of your participant can directly affect the amount of time they will focus their attention on any given task or activity. As professionals in the field of recreation, it is our job to create transitions, time friendly lessons and age-appropriate activities for our programming.

Learning Objectives:

- To educate recreational staff on appropriate programming/activities to accommodate toddler attention spans.
- To equip others with tools, concepts, and tips for working effectively with young minds.
- To provide data and relevant statistics related to recreational programming during early childhood.



SESSIONS

402

Nurturing Passion: Connecting Youth Interests to Meaningful Recreation Activities

Topic Track: Recreation

Location: Grand Suite 5, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Erin Huizenga, Founder & CEO, Desklight; Ellen Muench, Director of Learning Design, Desklight

How do you make sure you're making youth programs that will actually interest the youth in your community? This session explores innovative approaches to aligning recreation activities with the diverse interests of young people, empowering them to discover new hobbies, develop essential skills, and forge meaningful connections in a way they'll actually care about! Attendees will learn strategies for: conducting needs assessments to uncover emerging interests and preferences, developing customizable program structures that accommodate a range of passions, incorporating youth voice and choice into the program design process, and fostering self-directed learning and personal growth through passion-driven activities. Through case studies, interactive exercises, and expert insights, this session equips parks and recreation professionals with the tools and mindset to transform their youth offerings into vibrant, engaging, and life-enriching experiences.

Learning Objectives:

- Conduct needs assessments to uncover emerging interests and preferences.
- Develop customizable program structures that accommodate a range of passions.
- Incorporate youth voice and choice into the program design process.



SESSIONS

506

The Power of a Microcredential: Understanding Veteran Culture in Therapeutic Recreation

Topic Track: Therapeutic Recreation

Location: Randolph AB, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Donna Reilage, CEO and Founder, AllenForce; Kris Johnson, Associate Professor of Therapeutic Recreation, Aurora University

Today there are more than 18 million living veterans in the United States, representing about six percent of the country's adult population. Thus, it is imperative that park districts, and recreation facilities, understand the ethos of veteran culture to provide an inclusive environment for veterans and their families embedded within their communities, with whom they serve. An effective means to accomplish this is in the form of a microcredential as a part of an organization's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiative. In fact, microcredentials have emerged as a popular and powerful educational engagement tool for employers who want to rapidly advance their workforce in a timely and cost effective manner. This session will focus on the impact of such.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will be able to identify one benefit of incorporating a veteran culture microcredential into their employee training program.
- Participants will be able to identify three unique aspects of veteran culture that impact recreation programming.
- Participants will be able to identify one way to implement such a microcredential.



SESSIONS

608

Improving Health and Wellness in the Workplace: Understanding & Implementing the WELL Building Standard

Topic Track: Facilities

Location: Grand Suite 3, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Jeff Keppler, AIA, WELL AP, LEED AP BD C - Market Segment Leader, Dewberry Architects Inc.; Beth Keppler, IIDA, WELL Faculty, WELL AP, LEED AP BD C - Senior Interior Designer, Dewberry Architects Inc.

Park and Rec professionals are continually focusing on improving the well-being of the communities they serve and the users of the parks and facilities they manage. Increased emphasis on health and well being should not only apply to individuals using Park and Rec services, but also to department staff facilitating those services. The demands of today's workforce have grown to include remote work, flexible schedules, and alternate work environments, but equally important is providing a healthy and productive workplace for staff. The WELL Building Standard provides evidence-based strategies and processes to deliver healthier facilities to live, work, and play. Through the incorporation of WELL principles and the design of more thoughtful and intentional spaces, occupants are benefitting both physically and mentally, and employers are seeing happier, more productive staff.

Learning Objectives:

- Review the WELL Building Standard's 10 concepts and their health benefits to building occupants.
- How can WELL benefit your organization? Design strategies to consider.
- Which WELL rating system or certification works for you?



SESSIONS

906

Better Engagement, Less Effort

Topic Track: Marketing/Communications

Location: Grand Hall L, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Miles Ramsay, Owner/Creative Director, 52Eighty Creative

Social Media is kinda important these days. Your brand voice and visual style should be the foundation of your social media presence. Been awhile since you've updated your brand? Often, this is a root problem that needs to be addressed before you go forth and conquer the internet.

Don't have a lot of time? You're not alone! Thankfully, there are some wonderful tools (many of them free) that can help you become a productivity wizard!

Thought starters - "I'm just not creative." We've heard that before and while we actually believe that everyone is creative, we understand that starting from a blank canvas can be daunting. We'll share some real world examples that you can draw from, borrow, or straight up steal and put into action immediately!

Learning Objectives:

- Learn how foundational branding is essential to being successful on social media.
- Discover tools that will help you reach maximum social media productivity.
- Hear real world ideas/examples to help you immediately implement some killer new content.



SESSIONS

912

Inclusive Marketing Strategies: Promoting Special Recreation Programs for All

Topic Track: Marketing/Communications

Location: Roosevelt 3AB, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Chelsea Norton, Director of Marketing and Development, Champaign Park District;
Christina Mott, CUSR Manager, Champaign-Urbana Special Recreation

Recreation is for all! Are you a marketing department of one, or lacking a marketing department? Looking to improve inclusion and representation in your agency's messaging and promotion? This session will share practical tips on how to promote special recreation programming, while also covering how all agencies can be more inclusive in their marketing efforts.

Learning Objectives:

- All abilities inclusion in marketing.
- Special Recreation specific marketing ideas.
- Program & event ideas to get the word out about your SRA.



SESSIONS

1101

City Nature Challenge - Connect Your Community

Topic Track: Forest Preserve and Conservation

Location: Michigan 3, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Emily Kenny, Volunteer Services Supervisor, Forest Preserve District of Will County; Cassi Saari, Natural Areas Project Manager, Chicago Park District; Laura Reilly, Managing Director, Chicago Wilderness Alliance

Join us for an exhilarating journey into the heart of nature with the City Nature Challenge, a global citizen science initiative taking place every late April. Open to all with internet access, this project invites participants to capture the wonders of their local environment through photography and share their discoveries on iNaturalist. By contributing observations, you become an invaluable ally to scientists and land managers, aiding in the understanding and conservation of local biodiversity. As we approach the 10th year milestone in 2025, let our seasoned presenters, who have been participants in numerous challenges, guide you in creating a truly unique opportunity for your patrons.

Learning Objectives:

- Discover the various levels of participation in the City Nature Challenge.
- Explore options for inclusion in agency programs.
- Network with partners locally and globally.



SESSIONS

13

The Power of PechaKucha

Topic Track: Leadership/Management

Location: Regency Ballroom A, West Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Mike Selep, Executive Director, Bolingbrook Park District; Kai Wahlgren, Director of Recreation & Facilities, Bolingbrook Park District

Experience a variety of emotions (including a unique surprise) through an official PechaKucha event, which is a fun form of community building utilizing the art of concise storytelling. Discover how this fast-paced, focused presentation style (20 power point slides for 20 seconds) creates opportunities for impactful presentations and engaging events through a series of presentations featuring real park and recreation professionals each sharing their greatest passions in a mere 6 minutes and 40 seconds.

Learning Objectives:

- Gain an understanding of PechaKucha style of presentation.
- Gain an appreciation for PechaKucha through engagement with actual presentations from peers in the field of parks and recreation.
- Discover the applicability of PechaKucha in routine presentations as well as special community events.



SESSIONS

102

Beyond the Basics: Navigating Politically Sensitive Community Projects and Issues

Topic Track: Governance/Legal

Location: Toronto, West Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Andrew Paine, Partner, Tressler LLP; Michael Vargas, Associate, Tressler LLP

This session will provide elected officials and employees with real world guidance on how to handle hot button community projects and issues.

Learning Objectives:

- Attendees will learn tips for navigating contentious public meetings.
- Presenters will discuss the best uses for closed session to balance the District's interests with public transparency.
- Attendees will learn strategies for responding to chronic and/or disruptive FOIA requesters.



SESSIONS

105

Board Member to Board Leader Part II

Topic Track: Boardmanship

Location: Acapulco, West Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Dannielle Wilson, Consultant, BerryDunn

Great volunteers just keep on giving...and then come back for more! (Sound familiar, board members?!?) If you're itchin' for more, this session covers topics that previous years' attendees at Part 1 of the Board Member to Board Member series have requested. We'll dive into NEW topics like working with difficult residents, promoting long-term thinking, advancing agenda items, leading efficient meetings, and assessing your director. Led by a current park board commissioner and former park board secretary, you'll learn from someone with practical experience on both sides of the table in an engaging and lighthearted atmosphere. Whether you've participated in Part 1 before or are new to the series, join us for this not-to-miss session!

Learning Objectives:

- Participant will be able to identify leadership strategies they would like to employ in their boardmanship.
- Participant will be able to demonstrate new approaches to working through difficult situations.
- Participant will be able to bring practical suggestions and tools back to their fellow board members.



SESSIONS

106

Agency State Accreditation - A Blueprint to Excellence

Topic Track: Leadership/Management

Location: Water Tower, West Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Jason Herbster, Executive Director, Crystal Lake Park District; Ron Salski, Executive Director, Mundelein Park & Recreation District

This session will provide attendees with an overview of what is IAPD/ IPRA State Accreditation and the processes, time and requirements necessary to achieve the prestigious status of being a distinguished accredited agency in the State of Illinois. Topics covered will be the application and self-assessment process, the mentor program, as well as helpful hints on how to be successful in becoming accredited. Presenters will also review sample standards to provide insight and details to what documentation is required. Scoring, benefits and history of this statewide program will also be covered.

Learning Objectives:

- The steps of the IAPD/ IPRA State Accreditation process.
- Understanding of the six sections of the accreditation process.
- Understanding of the staff and time commitment to complete the process.



SESSIONS

119

Regulating Controversial Park Activities

Topic Track: Governance/Legal

Location: Grand Suite 3, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Megan Mack, Partner, Ancel Glink; Erin Monforti, Ancel Glink; Tyler Smith, Ancel Glink

Park Districts are responsible for managing many acres of public space, where members of the public sometimes pursue controversial uses. What authority do park districts have to regulate contentious activities, while respecting the individual rights of park patrons? Presented by Ancel Glink's Quorum Forum Podcast, participants will explore scenarios based on real cases, and vote on the topics they want to learn about most, including camping in parks, alcohol, First Amendment Auditors, and more!

Learning Objectives:

- Understand Park District statutory authority to regulate a wide range of emerging uses of Park District property.
- Analyze the constitutional and other rights of individuals using public space.
- Learn best practices to address and regulate controversial uses of Park District property.



SESSIONS

121

Government Finance for Non-Finance Park and Recreation Leaders

Topic Track: Boardmanship

Location: Grand Hall L, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Jason Myers, Director of Finance and Personnel , Arlington Heights Park District;
John Cutrera, Director of Finance and Human Resources, Glencoe Park District

This session is designed to equip board members and non-finance professionals with a practical and proven approach to explaining government finance. The topics covered will include tax levy, budget and appropriation, revenue and expenditure reporting, debt service and bonds, tax increment financing (TIF), and audit. You will gain the basic understanding required to succeed in your role.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the commonly used government finance terms.
- Acquire a solid base of knowledge about the budget and tax levy process.
- Gain an understanding of bonds and the role they play in government finances.



SESSIONS

128

Parks Reinvented: Harnessing the Potential of Your 501 © (3) Nonprofit

Topic Track: Marketing/Communications

Location: Roosevelt 3AB, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Rachel Jones, Corporate and Community Relations Manager, Oak Brook Park District;
Laure Kosey, Executive Director, Oak Brook Park District

Join us for an exciting journey into the creation and operation of 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, specifically designed to elevate your local park district's programming to unprecedented heights! Whether you're a park-loving official, a community superhero, or simply passionate about enhancing public green spaces, this session is your golden ticket to transforming parks into vibrant hubs of recreation, education, and conservation magic. Dive in to uncover the secrets of establishing a rock-solid 501(c)(3), explore the game-changing benefits they bring to park districts, and gain insider tips on maintaining a steady revenue flow and sustaining the fun for years to come!

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will gain an understanding of the essential steps involved in creating and operating a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, tailored specific
- Attendees will discover how these nonprofits serve as catalysts for community engagement, fundraising, and advocacy, ultimately elevating public space
- Participants will acquire practical strategies for maintaining a steady revenue flow and implementing best practices for long-term sustainability and



SESSIONS

205

Best Practices in Tree Planting

Topic Track: Parks/Natural Resources

Location: Comiskey, West Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Sara Earhart, Superintendent of Parks, Community Park District of La Grange Park;
Steve Lane, Principal, Director of Urban Forestry Operations, Great Lakes Urban Forestry

This is an opportunity for parks professionals to learn or review tree planting procedures, site selection considerations, and maintenance of young trees

Learning Objectives:

- Properly select appropriate trees for desired location.
- Properly plant young trees.
- Properly maintain young trees after planting.



SESSIONS

307

Illuminating Parks & Rec: Attracting Applicants, Keeping Good Employees, and Amplifying Career Pathways

Topic Track: HR/Risk Management

Location: Grand Hall GH, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Katie Sepe, Director of Human Resources, Naperville Park District; Lisette Zuniga, HR Administrator, Naperville Park District; Heather Richardson, Support Staff Manager, Western DuPage Special Recreation Association; Dani Hoefle, Superintendent of Parks, Buffalo Grove Park District; Krystina Sarff, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, North Central College

Parks and recreation employers are competing with every other private business and public organization for the same talent pool – whether it’s to address full-time, part-time and seasonal staffing now, or in anticipation of future needs. Learn how to stand out in an incredibly competitive market! This panel discussion format will equip attendees with actionable strategies to enhance recruitment and retention efforts at all levels of the organization, while learning game-changing ideas for attracting potential employees to the parks and recreation field.

Join our panel of experts representing area park districts, special recreation, and higher education as they share strategic methods that worked – as well as those that didn’t. They’ll also discuss key emerging trends while helping to empower attendees to grow and retain a solid workforce while emphasizing the importance of amplifying parks and recreation as a career for people who never expected to work in this industry.

Learning Objectives:

- Learn about tried and true recruiting and retention ideas that can be implemented in the short and long term.
- Understand the importance of retaining and developing staff for long term success and learn how to adapt strategies for your organization.
- Learn how to be a parks and recreation industry advocate and how that can translate to your agency’s success as well as the industry’s.



SESSIONS

311

Municipal Market Update in the Post Election Environment

Topic Track: Finance/Information Technology

Location: Gold Coast, West Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Stephan Roberts, Director, Baird; Anthony Miceli, Senior Vice President, Speer; Bryan Derdenger, Managing Director, Baird

After a turbulent election season, the municipal market could be roiled by policy positions, tax proposals, geopolitical concerns and/or economic shocks. This nonpartisan panel will dive deeply into municipal market trends, expectations on borrowing costs and expected economic data to give the audience the most up to date information on expected borrowing costs, inflation and economic growth.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will understand how the current political environment impacts the economy and interest rates.
- Participants will have a solid basis of understanding of expectations for future economic growth, inflation and interest rate trends.
- Participants will be able to bring their knowledge back to their organizations in order to effectively plan for financing capital needs.



SESSIONS

312

The Power of Paid Leave: Boosting Employee Happiness and Retention through Parental and Emergency Leave Policies

Topic Track: HR/Risk Management

Location: Michigan 3, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Johnathan Kiwala, Executive Director, Kenilworth Park District; Bill Byron, Executive Director, Northfield Park District

In today's competitive business landscape, Park Districts are continuously seeking ways to attract and retain top talent. One of the most impactful strategies is the implementation of comprehensive paid leave policies, especially for parental and emergency purposes. This session will explore the profound benefits of offering paid leave, presenting compelling evidence that supports its positive impact on employee satisfaction and retention.

Attendees will gain insights into the latest trends and statistics illustrating the positive impact of paid leave policies on employee well-being, reduced turnover rates, and overall organizational success. This session will feature detailed case studies from districts that have successfully implemented paid parental leave for both birth and adoption, showcasing their achievements in cultivating a more motivated and loyal workforce. Presenters will also discuss the experiences of these districts, examining the effectiveness of their paid leave programs and addressing any challenges encountered during implementation.

Learning Objectives:

- Attendees will learn to understand paid leave policies. We will give an overview of paid parental leave and emergency leave policies.
- Attendees will learn about data driven insights on how paid leave improves employee retention.
- Success Stories - Overview of Districts have implemented paid leave, how is it working for them.



SESSIONS

412

Engaging Holistic Wellness Programs for Older Adults that Enhance Brain Health

Topic Track: Recreation

Location: Grand Hall K, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Laura Payne, Professor and Extension Specialist, University of Illinois Extension; LoriKay Paden, Community Vice President, YMCA of Sussex and Dover; Molly Hofer, Extension Educator, University of Illinois Extension; Chelsey Byers, Extension Specialist, University of Illinois Extension

About 25% of Americans report feeling lonely and/or socially isolated. Research suggests the negative health impacts of social isolation are as severe as those of obesity and smoking (Novotney, 2019; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020). Moreover, subjective cognitive decline is an issue for a growing percentage of older adults. Thus, holistic programs that are intellectually, physically and socially engaging/stimulating are important for brain health and overall well-being (Bobitt et al., 2024).

In this interactive and engaging session, we share cutting-edge research on the six factors that affect brain health (physical activity, nutrition, stress, social isolation/loneliness, sleep, and intellectual engagement) and evidence-informed and evidence-based programs that are low-cost, enjoyable, and easy to implement in a variety of community settings. Two programs will be highlighted. Wits Workout (developed by UI Extension Educators) and YMCA Wayfarers (developed by the YMCA). Sample activities from these programs are shared. We also share strategies for recruiting, and training, leaders and marketing these programs for implementation and sustainability. Finally, easy and valid evaluation strategies are shared so that participant outcomes are documented and support the continued funding for brain health and wellness programs.

Learning Objectives:

- Increase knowledge of the six factors that affect brain health and how they are translated into programming elements.
- Increase knowledge of low-cost health and wellness programs that address some or all of the six factors that affect brain health.
- Gain knowledge of recruiting, marketing, and evaluation strategies for Wits Workout and YMCA Wayfarers that enhance sustainability.



SESSIONS

417

Survival Kit for Recreation Rookies: Navigating the Good, the Bad, and the Unknown

Topic Track: Recreation

Location: Grand Hall I, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Kimberly Barton, Superintendent of Recreation, Hoffman Estates Park District; Mark Dolphin, Athletics Manager, Palatine Park District; Cori Veverka, Superintendent of Recreation, Oswegoland Park District

So, you've got a handle on scheduling staff, using your registration software, and booking facilities for your programs. Now what? Join us for an engaging and practical session designed specifically for early career professionals in the parks and recreation field. This session will equip you with a "Survival Kit" filled with essential tools and strategies to help you thrive amidst the joys, challenges, and uncertainties of your role today and extended career. This is an excellent opportunity to learn from experienced professionals, ask questions, and connect with others who are on a similar career journey. Don't miss this opportunity to build your own "Survival Kit," expand your network, increase your confidence, and take the next step in your parks and recreation career with confidence and enthusiasm!

Learning Objectives:

- Discover the must-have tools and resources in your "Survival Kit" to support your professional growth.
- Enhance your ability to tackle unexpected challenges with confidence and creativity.
- Learn effective ways to network within and outside your organization, including tips on attending industry events & joining professional associations,



SESSIONS

508

Anatomy of a Meltdown

Topic Track: Therapeutic Recreation

Location: Randolph AB, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Jennifer Rosinia, President, Kid Links Unlimited, Inc.

It's easy to get overwhelmed, frustrated and even angry when a child is having a meltdown. This experience is hard for both the person having the meltdown, as well as for anyone present at the time. We will begin this workshop with a review of the stress response system and an introduction to sensory processing. Building on this information, participants will learn what happens to the body when feeling overwhelmed, under attack, hijacked and helpless. Three distinct stages of a meltdown will be described and discussed beginning with the identification of some triggers, signs and symptoms that may indicate a meltdown is starting. Appropriate prevention and intervention strategies at each stage will be provided and discussed. By understanding the anatomy of a meltdown, everyone who cares for, works with, and/or teaches children with these types of challenges will be better equipped to offer help and support during these difficult times.

Learning Objectives:

- Learn the differences between a tantrum and a meltdown.
- Describe the stress response system.
- Explain the three stages of a meltdown.



SESSIONS

606

Bridging Generations: Customer Service Excellence and Facility Management in Recreation

Topic Track: Facilities

Location: Grand Suite 5, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Katy McKinnon, Madison Meadow Athletic Center Manager, Lombard Park District; Katie Manheim, Program Manager, Lombard Park District

In today's diverse recreation environment, understanding and meeting the unique expectations of different generational cohorts—Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z—has become essential for effective customer service and facility management. This interactive round table will provide insights into the distinct characteristics and service preferences of each generation, equipping recreation program managers with the knowledge to cater to a multi-generational clientele.

Join us to gain a deeper understanding of how to navigate generational differences in your role, enhance the quality of service, and optimize facility management. Engage with peers in this dynamic discussion to share challenges, solutions, and actionable steps that can be implemented immediately.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the unique customer service expectations of different generational cohorts (Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z).
- Discuss strategies to manage and adapt facility needs to cater to diverse generational preferences.
- Explore roles in balancing customer service excellence with effective facility management.



SESSIONS

1005

Navigating the AI Landscape: A Leadership Blueprint for Parks and Recreation

Topic Track: Diversity

Location: Grand Hall J, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Sean Bailey, Access to Growth Learning Solutions

In the evolving digital landscape, effective integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in parks and recreation management is crucial. Dr. Sean Bailey's session will explore strategic leadership's role in harnessing AI to enhance operational efficiency, deliver personalized visitor experiences, and support strategic decision-making. Participants will gain insights into AI applications that optimize resource management and improve service delivery, while also learning how to foster a culture that embraces technological innovation.

Dr. Bailey will also discuss overcoming challenges in AI adoption, ethical considerations, and the importance of continuous learning and adaptation in leadership roles. This session aims to equip parks and recreation professionals with the knowledge to implement AI effectively, ensuring their organizations are prepared for future challenges and opportunities.

Learning Objectives:

- Gain a comprehensive understanding of how AI can be utilized to enhance operational efficiency, resource management, and visitor personalization.
- Learn effective leadership techniques for fostering an AI-ready culture, including change management, ethical considerations, and engagement.
- Equip with the tools to formulate strategic plans that integrate AI solutions into everyday park management practices.



SESSIONS

1007

Tennis for All: Leveraging USTA Resources for Community Impact

Topic Track: Diversity

Location: Michigan 2, East Tower, Bronze/Concourse Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Amelia Storer, Manager, Tennis Venue Services, United States Tennis Association; Todd Carlson, Director, Tennis Venue Services, Parks, & CTAs, United States Tennis Association

Discover the latest trends in racquet and paddle sports and how the United States Tennis Association (USTA) is helping park agencies leverage tennis infrastructure and participation data to plan for the future. Learn about the USTA and the National Recreation and Park Association's recent partnership and hear how the USTA is collaborating with parks and recreation organizations to grow tennis and inspire healthier people and communities. This session aims to equip parks and recreation leaders with the knowledge and resources to enhance their tennis offerings and foster healthier communities.

Learning Objectives:

- Learn how the USTA is working with parks and recreation organizations to grow tennis and inspire healthier people and communities.
- Discover the free resources and grants available through USTA for evaluating and improving public tennis facilities.
- Gain insights into effective strategies for managing racquet and paddle facilities and planning for future growth.



SESSIONS

1102

How Trends in Volunteerism Can Facilitate Recruitment and Retention in Our Programs

Topic Track: Forest Preserve and Conservation

Location: Regency Ballroom B, West Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Speaker(s): Mary Andrusyk, Volunteer Services Supervisor, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County; Emily Kenny, Volunteer Services Supervisor, Forest Preserve District of Will County

Discuss the current volunteer climate and how it affects recruitment and retention efforts. Explore examples from the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County and the Forest Preserve District of Will County that promote positive results in volunteer recruitment and retention.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will learn about national and local trends in volunteerism.
- Participants will consider the how, what, where, and when of recruitment.
- Participants will realize retention goes beyond April's National Volunteer Appreciation month.