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Volume 50, Number 4 | July/August 2019



PARKS AND RECREATION

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



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FROM THE EDITOR

As a parent of three boys and an 8-month old Labrador, I have learned to be suspicious of the silence.



Typical sounds in the Hill house include the uncanny voice of SpongeBob SquarePants on the television; boys yelling into their video headsets, "Look out! He's behind the wall! He has a grenade!" (thank you, Fortnite); and the frantic jingling of Kimber's dog tags during a mad case of the 'dog zoomies.'

When the house becomes quiet, it usually means that someone is turning blue in a headlock, sneaking junk food or eating my shoes.

On Saturday, September 30, 2006, parents statewide likely became suspicious of the silence. That was the day park districts partnered with IAPD and the American Heart Association in support of the Let's Just Play Go Healthy Challenge, a joint venture between Nickelodeon and The Alliance for a Healthier Generation. These organizations worked together to coordinate activities for Nickelodeon's Worldwide Day of Play, an event designed to encourage kids to turn off the television and play outdoors. Nickelodeon and its sister channels suspended programming from 12:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m., and the following message scrolled across the screen: "Yes, your TV is working. Yes, this is Nickelodeon. And yes, this is Nickelodeon's Worldwide Day of Play - a celebration of all things active - an entire day devoted to play!"

Sixty Illinois park districts and recreation agencies hosted Worldwide Day of Play events in their communities. The campaign was a great success, with houses throughout the state falling silent as kids took to the outdoors to enjoy long-forgotten activities like riding bicycles, playing catch, shooting baskets, playing pick-up baseball games, and enjoying other physical activities in the fresh air because their televisions had gone dark.

Illinois park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies are models for other organizations when it comes to joining forces to enhance the health and well-being of their citizens. This issue of Illinois Parks and Recreation contains some excellent examples.

What's Go-ing On? on page 12 describes how the Gurnee Park District developed a partnership for a walking initiative that created a ripple effect of healthful programs to get people up and moving. The Oak Lawn Community Garden; a 'Growing' Partnership on page 16 outlines a community-wide project that provides produce for needy families and has significant outgrowth potential. And, Palatine StoryWalk: A Partnership to Promote Literacy in our Parks on page 20 summarizes a creative collaboration that invites people to play in the parks while supporting literacy and family fun.

There is a meme that reads, "Silence is golden, unless you have kids. Then, it's just suspicious." While I have found this to be true on many occasions, I have also found that sometimes silence in the house is a good thing. It means that the kids have ventured outdoors to play some basketball, go for a swim or throw the ball a few hundred times for the dog.

On behalf of parents everywhere, I extend a heartfelt "thank you" to those of you generating endless opportunities for kids – and adults alike – to get out of the house and live healthier lives.

That kind of silence truly is golden.

— Bobbie Jo Hill, Interim Editor



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Illinois Parks and Recreation (ISSN 0019-2155) is published bimonthly at 211 E. Monroe Street, Springfield, Illinois, by the Illinois Association of Park Districts and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association. Annual subscription rates: \$12 for IAPD/IPRA members; \$50 for non-members; \$60 foreign; \$20 educational institutions. Single copies: \$2 members; \$10 nonmembers. Periodicals postage paid at Springfield, Illinois and additional post offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Illinois Parks & Recreation, 211 E. Monroe Street, Springfield, IL 62701-1186. Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily express the official views of the IAPD/IPRA. Likewise, the publication of any advertisement is not to be construed as an endorsement of the product or services offered. Members of the IAPD and the IPRA and other interested persons are encouraged to submit articles and illustrative photos for possible publication in the magazine. Send for manuscript guidelines and deadline dates: Editor, Illinois Parks & Recreation, 211 E. Monroe Street, Springfield, IL 62701-1186, 217.523.4554, iapd@ilparks.org, www.ilparks.org. By submitting articles for publication, authors are assigning the copyright to the Illinois Association of Park Districts.

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

The Keys to Successful Board Service

Serving on a voluntary board can be demanding, but it can also be one of the most rewarding experiences you can have, for it repays the individual, not in dollars, but in even rarer attributes - the gratitude of those you serve and the inner peace that comes from service given freely for the benefit of all.

BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

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

HOW NOT TO BE AN EFFECTIVE BOARD MEMBER

If you're looking for ways to alienate yourself from your fellow board members and the executive, here are a few suggestions that will probably guarantee success.

- Talk too much and listen too little.

- Criticize a board decision that was voted on and passed by the majority of the board, but that you did not specifically support.
- Demonstrate to fellow board members that you have all the answers for every issue.
- Refuse to change your mind on any issue regardless of the evidence that is presented.
- Fail to read board packets and prepare for board meetings.
- Divulge information from an executive board meeting.
- Refuse to compromise when decisions have stalemated.
- Ridicule past board members and the decisions made by the board before you became a member.
- Try to give instructions to the executive as an individual board member.
- Hold grudges against fellow board members who don't agree with you.
- Try to dominate the conversation at every board meeting.
- Resent the salary of the executive because it is more than you make, or more than your spouse makes.
- Arrive late at board meetings and leave early.
- Remind fellow board members, "It's always been done this way in the past."
- Appear at the agency giving orders to employees.
- Want the agency to be a haven for hiring friends and the politically deserving.
- Constantly criticize and question board policies and executive decisions, and compulsively dissent on almost every issue.
- Do not try to know or understand other people who serve on the board with you.
- Have no interest in being educated on good boardmanship.

There is no such thing as knowing all you need to know about the diverse and complex job of serving as an effective board member. You were elected or appointed to the board and you are expected to be well versed and educated on issues affecting the agency. You have volunteered for the job, but the job demands that you are knowledgeable about the issues for which you need to make decisions and policies.

I find that the following Board Member's Creed creates a framework for successful board service.

THE BOARD MEMBER'S CREED

As an individual member of the board, I will:

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

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

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

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

- respect the opinions and decisions of fellow board members.
- recognize that authority rests with the board as a whole, not as an individual.
- make no disparaging remarks in or out of meetings about fellow board members.
- recognize that to promise in advance of a meeting how I will vote on any proposition under consideration is to close my mind and agree not to think through other facts and points of view that may be presented in the meeting.
- make decisions in board meetings only after all sides of the question have been presented.
- consider unethical and will thus avoid "secret" sessions of board members held without presence of the executive.

In meeting my responsibility to my community, I will:

- attempt to appraise fairly both the present and the future park and recreation needs of the community.
- attempt to procure adequate financing and support for our parks and recreation programs, facilities, and services.
- interpret to fellow board members and the chief executive, as best I can, the needs and attitudes of the community.

- insist that business transactions of the agency be on an ethical, open, and above-board basis.
- act as a fiduciary of taxpayer dollars received by the agency.

In working with the executive, I will:

- hold the executive responsible for the administration of the agency and give him the authority commensurate with his responsibility.
- expect the agency to be administered by the best trained professional people it is possible to procure.
- participate in board decisions only after considering the recommendations of the executive.
- expect to spend more time in board meetings on policies, programs, and procedures than on business details.
- give the executive friendly counsel and advice.
- refer all complaints to the chief executive and insist that they be presented in writing to the board as a whole.
- present any personal criticisms of employees to the chief executive and not to the employee.
- refer all employee complaints to the executive.
- provide adequate safeguards around the executive and other personnel so they may perform the proper functions of parks and recreation services on a professional basis.

2019 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Saturday, August 17, 2019
**IAPD Park District
Conservation Day**
Illinois State Fair

Monday, August 26, 2019
**IAPD Summer Golf Tour
Outing #3**
GolfVision
Management Inc.
Settler's Hill Golf Course

Wednesday, September 18,
2019
**IAPD Summer Golf Tour
Outing #4**
Glenview Park District
Glenview Park Golf Club

September 24-26, 2019
**NRPA Congress &
Exhibition**
Baltimore, MD

Friday, November 1, 2019
**Best of the Best
Awards Gala**
Wheeling Park District
Chevy Chase Country Club

Thursday, November 14,
2019
Legal Symposium
McDonald's U/Hyatt Lodge

January 23-25, 2020
**2020 IAPD/IPRA
Soaring to New
Heights Conference**
Hyatt Regency Chicago

IAPD
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IPRA's 75 Conversations Tour is Traveling Statewide to Meet You

By Debbie Trueblood, CAE
IPRA Executive Director

IPRA has spent this calendar year partnering with members all over the state as part of our 75 Conversations Tour. This is just one of the ways that IPRA is celebrating our 75th anniversary this year. As part of this tour, I have spent much of the year traveling to member agencies and regional meetings across the state, touring facilities, meeting staff, and spending time getting to know IPRA members, and to listen to your feedback about how we're doing.

Towards that end, I have visited several of the colleges and universities who have a park and rec or therapeutic recreation degree program. I have spent time on campus, meeting with students at the University of St. Francis, Illinois State University, University of Illinois, Western Illinois University, Moraine Valley Community College, and Southern Illinois University at their John Allen Symposium. Along the way, I have met with many students and faculty and presented to classrooms about the value of participating in your state association and the ways it can help students and early career professionals advance in their careers. I was excited to witness the University of St. Francis induction of students into the Alpha Iota Chapter of Rho Phi Lambda, the park and recreation honor society for students. Congratulations to inductees Caleb Campbell, Caeley Grady, Tyler Keene, and Marina Uher! And I was humbled to receive the Outstanding Service Award from the Southern Illinois University-Carbondale Department of Public Health and Recreation Professionals. Following a visit to Western Illinois University, I sent a letter to the WIU Board of Trustees in support of the department during a time of budget cuts which could affect faculty. At ISU, I met with the Park and Recreation Student Society, and saw how their club is successfully supporting park and recreation students. At Moraine Valley, I attended a Park and Recreation Advisory Board meeting. Each school displayed great commitment to educating students and preparing future park and recreation professionals. I am scheduled to visit Chicago State University in the fall.

In other visits, I have had one-on-one meetings with professionals including Trisha Breitlow as she transitions from Deerfield Park District to Maine-Niles Association of

Special Recreation and retirees/consultants, including Ray Ochromowicz and Chuck Szoke. I also met with IPRA's three newest board members, Margaret Resnick (Mundelein Park & Recreation District), Andy Thurman (Geneseo Park District), and Andrew Dallner (O'Fallon Parks and Recreation).

IPRA is celebrating Our 75th Anniversary this year, we hope you will join us in the celebration on the 75 Conversations Tour. See you at the tour stops!



I have done agency visits, spending a few hours at each one including: SEASPAR, Village of Hawthorn Woods, Worth Park District, Park District of Park Forest, and Geneseo Park District. I also visited the Vernon Hills Park District and presented an in-service for their staff on public speaking. At the Bolingbrook Park District, I attended their administrative staff meeting and updated them on IPRA news. At the Plainfield Park District, after touring their facilities, I enjoyed a few minutes of horseback riding at their equestrian center - a fun highlight of the tour so far! At the Lemont Park District, I participated in their Arbor Day celebration. At the Oak Lawn Park District, I attended their new inclusive park dedication, made possible in part by the playground grant program through IPRA.

I also attended several IPRA events and met with members there. I attended a Recreation Section meeting in Carol Stream. Section Chair Dan LoCascio ran a great meeting and various committee members spoke about their projects. I presented at the IPRA ProConnect culmination ceremony in Schaumburg, and met with St. Charles Park District intern Nick Lobosco and retiree Jeff Boubelik there. I attended the Leadership Academy graduation in Naperville and met with Team Level graduate Mary Liz Jayne and longtime Board of Regents member Laure Kosey.

I attended some events outside of IPRA as well. I attended the Central Illinois Directors meeting in Morton and met with Joel Dickerson from the Morton Park District and foundation board member, Jarrod Scheunemann, from Campfire Concepts. I presented on "Glass Ceiling" issues at the Women in Leisure conference in Forest Park and met with Andrea Griffin and Rachel Hubsch, who were leaders in planning the event. I attended a Southern Illinois Park and Recreation Association (SIPRA) meeting and met with Lyndsey Younger from the City of Belleville and Jerry Sauerwein from the Kingsbury Park District. I attended the IAPD Legislative Conference and had conversations with professionals and commissioners. And at Parks Day at the Capitol, I was pleased to get to talk with Pam Falco and Debbie Greninger, from the Carol Stream Park District (my hometown park district). At a dinner in Springfield, I met with commissioners, professionals, and legislators affiliated with the Rockford Park District including Sen. Dave Syverson and Rep. Maurice West. I also enjoyed attending a statue dedication at the Urbana Park District for Robin Hall, IPRA's Past President who served in 1981.

At the Central Region IPRA board meeting, the entire IPRA board and I visited the Decatur Park District and toured several of their facilities. If you haven't been out to see their new Devon G. Buffett Amphitheater, I would highly recommend it. This new facility seats 4,000 including lawn seating and faces out to the water. It is one of the most innovative new facilities I have seen. Several Decatur staff gave us a tour of the amphitheater, as well as the Scovill Zoo.

Finally, at a recent meet and greet between the IPRA staff and our host agency, the Park District of La Grange (where IPRA's offices are located), the staffs of both teams met up to get to know each other. I had great conversations with Leanne Hartung and Terri Kuzel, among others.

The tour has been a great opportunity for me to meet with a variety of IPRA members at every stage of careers in our field. As a reminder of my goals, I want to meet with as many people as possible, I can never count more than two people in a room, and I have to have a real conversation with the person to count them. I very much look forward to continuing in my travels. I have several more agency visits on the calendar coming up. If you would like to be included, please reach out. No agency is too small or too remote. I want to celebrate with you. **I am especially interested in getting out to agencies in Central and Southern Illinois in the coming months. If you would like to be included, please send an email to jean@ilipra.org.** To see photos, follow us on social media. Thank you to each of you who has spent time with me, sharing your stories, teaching me about what is important to you. I am grateful every day.

Upcoming Events

September 4, 2019
CPRP Exam Prep Series B – Operations
 Fosco Park, Chicago Park District

October 9 & 17, 2019
Webinar: The Revenue Game - Strategies for Success

September 11 & 19, 2019
Webinar: Your Agency as Quality of Life System

October 28 & 29, 2019
CPRE Exam Prep Series
 Palos Heights Recreation Center

September 13, 2019
Education Roadshow - Macomb, Illinois
 Lakeview Nature Center - Macomb Park District

November 10-13, 2019
Professional Development School
 Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa

October 2-4, 2019
Certified Playground Safety Inspector Course
 Town of Normal Community Activity Center



For details and registration, please visit the IPRA event calendar at ILipra.org

IPRF JOINT SECTION GOLF OUTING



September 20, 2019
Tanna Farms Golf Club
 \$80/golfer
 \$320/foursome
Register by: 9/13/19
 at ILipra.org



Jason Anselment
Legal/Legislative Counsel

IAPD Concludes Another Highly Successful Spring Session

As this issue goes to press, the dust is still settling at the Capitol after a very busy conclusion to the Spring Session where the General Assembly tackled a number of major issues, including a new state budget and a long-range capital infrastructure bill, during the final days.

IAPD and its member agencies enjoyed another outstanding year of success at the Capitol. All seven IAPD Platform bills were approved by both chambers and our advocacy efforts also resulted in tens of millions of dollars in future grant funding for capital improvement projects and land acquisitions.

\$29 Million for New OSLAD Grants

The Spring Session got off to a great start with Governor Pritzker's announcement of \$28.9 million for 2019 OSLAD grants to 89 agencies. After persevering through grant suspensions, avoiding special fund sweeps, and enduring the historic budget impasse during the past several years, we were excited to have the OSLAD program back on schedule.

However, our excitement was quelled a few weeks later when the next state budget was first introduced with no proposed funding for new OSLAD grants in 2020.

As those of you who attended one of the twelve legislative breakfasts or closely follow our weekly Legislative Updates are aware, IAPD quickly responded by meeting with the governor's staff, House and Senate budget appropriation chairs, legislative leaders and key legislative staff. In addition to testifying before the House and Senate appropriation committees, funding for new OSLAD grants was a main focus of the Legislative Conference.

As a result of our collective and persistent efforts throughout the Spring Session, along with widespread legislative support for OSLAD, the final budget approved by the General Assembly and signed by the governor includes **\$29 million for new OSLAD grants to be awarded in 2020** as well as the necessary reappropriations for existing OSLAD grants. This was an important victory as this amount should fund around 90 projects in the upcoming year.

Millions of Dollars for Park, Recreation and Conservation Projects in Capital Plan

As has been widely reported, the General Assembly worked past its May 31st deadline in order to approve a new \$45 billion "Rebuild Illinois" capital plan. While the majority of funding is designated for transportation-related projects, our advocacy efforts also resulted in substantial funding for local park, recreation and conservation projects.

In addition to **tens of millions of dollars** for member projects awarded to specific park districts, forest preserves and other local park and recreation agencies, the capital plan includes **\$50 million** for the PARC grant program, **\$50 million** for the Public Museum Grant Program, **\$25 million** for the Open Land Trust, and an **extra \$50 million annually** for the ITEP grant program for pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

All Seven IAPD Platform Bills Headed to the Governor

Although this grant funding will provide much needed long-term support for local park, recreation and conservation projects for years to come, there were also many legislative successes during the Spring Session that will impact the day-to-day operations of member agencies.

The IAPD Legislative Platform is a two-year platform that runs with the General Assembly's two-year cycle. Because of our advocacy efforts and strong leadership by our bill sponsors, **all seven IAPD Platform bills have already been approved by the 101st General Assembly** during its first year – an outstanding achievement for any organization.

If signed by the governor, these bills will help agencies in their day-to-day operations by providing additional flexibility to help save much needed taxpayer dollars, earn additional revenue, or avoid unnecessary and costly litigation.

For example, **HB 2124 (Welch, E. / Bush, M.)** expands the existing Open Meetings Act exception for discussing personnel matters related to specific employees in closed

session to also permit boards to discuss personnel matters related to a specific volunteer or a specific independent contractor who serves in a park, recreational or educational setting. Park districts, forest preserves and other member agencies utilize thousands of volunteers in coaching and other positions. Many gymnastics, tennis or other recreational class instructors that serve in the tens of thousands of programs offered statewide are actually independent contractors and not employees under the law. Currently, there could be sensitive personnel issues with these individuals, but the law does not permit the boards to discuss such sensitive issues in closed session. **HB 2124** will address this issue. Of course, as is always the case, the board would still need to return to open session before taking any final action.

SB 246 (Fine, L. / Willis, K.) would exempt purchases of fuel and petroleum products from competitive bidding requirements, which would allow agencies to save taxpayer dollars by providing the needed flexibility to lock in fuel prices when they are low.

HB 2073 (Butler, T. / Curran, J.) would expand the maximum term for leasing real property that is no longer needed for park purposes from 50 to 90 years. Although long term leases of park property are not common, this flexibility will help some agencies earn additional revenue by obtaining more favorable lease terms for land that is not being utilized for park purposes so that the additional revenue can be put back into existing recreational programs, parks or other facilities.

HB 2129 (DeLuca A. / Castro, C.) would expand the maximum term for leasing equipment and machinery from five years to eight years. This additional authority will allow agencies to lock in lease prices for a longer term to guard against inflationary increases.

Two bills provide important clarifications under the Park District Code. **HB 2081 (Wehrli, G. / Tracy, J.)** ensures the continuation of staggered terms for 7-member park boards when terms are reduced from six years to four years, while **HB 2499 (Manley, N. / Sims, E., Jr.)** would reconcile two provisions of the Park District Code to clarify when a park board may declare a vacancy. Finally, **SB 1273 (Curran, J. / Martwick, R.)** would protect park district taxpayers who do not live within a unit of local government by permitting a park district to sell property to that unit if the purchase price is not less than the appraised value.

Unfunded Mandates and Exposure to Liability Avoided

IAPD tracked 520 of the more than 6,100 bills that were introduced during the Spring Session. In addition to the legislative platform, we were actively engaged on dozens of these measures by meeting with bill sponsors and

committee chairs, offering amendments and testifying in committee. Many of these measures required hours of behind the scenes negotiations. As a result of IAPD's efforts, numerous bills that would have imposed costly unfunded mandates, diminished local control or created exposure to liability were avoided.

For example, as introduced, **SB 1270** would have required every park district, municipal park and recreation agency, and special recreation agency to test every source of potable water for lead contamination and imposed minimum testing requirements, including three separate tests on the same source. Many IAPD member agencies have already tested their facilities, but the introduced version of the bill did not clearly eliminate the requirement to re-test these facilities. The bill would have also mandated specific reporting and ineffective public notification requirements.

As introduced, **SB 2058** would have imposed nearly 20 pages of training, administration and notification requirements on all park districts related to asthma medication, epinephrine injectors, and opioid antagonists used by program participants and would have required each park district to adopt certain emergency response protocols related thereto among many other requirements.

These are just two of many examples of bills that are often well intended, but that fail to account for the differences among agencies, facilities, program participants, etc., or to recognize that these important issues can typically be best addressed at the local level.

Experience has shown that locally elected officials are better able to account for the vast differences among the size and scope of their operations rather than approaching the issue with a one-size-fits-all state mandate. By working with members of the General Assembly, IAPD is often able to address these issues without a state mandate and to preserve the flexibility of member agencies to continue to implement specific policies that are better able to address the safety of citizens while also protecting taxpayers and preserving much needed funds.

As you review the hundreds of bills that IAPD tracked this session, you will find many more examples of our efforts on these types of measures.

IAPD's legislative success would not be possible without the support and grassroots advocacy of our member agencies at the local level. As a result of our collective efforts, this was an outstanding year at the Capitol. Thank you for all your support. Please continue to watch for IAPD Legislative Updates on future grant announcements and updates as the governor takes action this summer on bills that were approved by the General Assembly this spring.

WHAT'S GO-ING ON?

By **JENNIFER GILBERT**, *CPRP, Director of Marketing & Community Relations, Gurnee Park District*

If you haven't heard yet there is something GO-ing on in Northern Illinois and it's spreading to agencies in Lake, DuPage, Cook, McHenry, and Jo Davies counties to name a few. And while humans typically try to contain things that are spreading, the GO movement is one that is receiving infectious support with GO programs popping up in communities across the state.





THE KICK OFF EVENT WAS A HUGE SUCCESS WITH SEVERAL HUNDRED COMMUNITY MEMBERS OF ALL AGES IN ATTENDANCE. STATE SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES, THE MAYOR, AND EVEN LOCAL SCHOOL MASCOTS CAME OUT TO GO GURNEE.

It all began in 2015, when former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek H. Murthy delivered a keynote speech at the National Recreation and Park Association's national conference promoting walking and walkable communities. He noted that despite the many benefits of physical activity, only one-half of all U.S. adults and one-quarter of high school students met the guidelines for aerobic physical activity (2008). Studies also showed that many chronic diseases could be delayed, prevented or managed through healthy behaviors including physical activity. Murthy proposed that the act of simply walking 30 minutes a day could positively combat the threat of these diseases and was simple, cost effective and generally accessible where people live, learn, work and play. Thus, Murthy gave a charge to all park and recreation agencies in attendance that day to bring *Step it Up!* back to their communities. Upon hearing this message, Gurnee Park District's Executive Director Susie Kuruvilla was both inspired to personally accept the challenge and encouraged to bring the message back to the residents of Gurnee. She shared her story with the district's marketing department where Jennifer Gilbert, director of marketing, and Katie Burgess, former graphic designer for the agency (now serving Hoffman Estates), brainstormed the concept, and thus, the GO Gurnee "G walker" brand was born!

GO Gurnee needed more than a brand to be successful, so the district's marketing staff went to work on an integrated plan to incorporate advocacy, education and free programming for a launch in spring of 2016. A community kick-off event was planned that May. As the date

approached, park district staff began to share the mission of the movement with key stakeholders including elected officials, local leaders, and community influencers. They were asked to accept the challenge to walk 30 minutes a day for the next 30 days and be a "Champion" for the movement by sharing with and inviting others to participate. There was unanimous support. Most of the Champions confessed that they personally needed to incorporate more activity into their day, so a challenge like this was welcomed and accepted. Around the same time, Gurnee's executive director and marketing director made a call to the Lake County Health Department. It seemed only logical to let the Health Department know what Gurnee was doing. This was the first time that the two agencies would meet to discuss their shared values and the potential for partnership beyond typical agency food and water safety needs. It was this meeting that would change the trajectory for GO!

The Kick-Off event was a huge success with several hundred community members of all ages in attendance. State senators and representatives, the mayor, and even local school mascots came out to GO Gurnee. Local businesses even donated prizes to add to the excitement of the day. All participants received a blue GO shirt to wear during the challenge and beyond. And, of course, the entire crowd walked together for 30 minutes throughout the park property!



STAFF FROM NEIGHBORING ANTIOCH AND WAUKEGAN PARK DISTRICTS INQUIRED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE USE OF THE GO CONCEPT FOR SIMILAR PROGRAMS DUE TO GO'S MOMENTUM AND RUNAWAY SUCCESS

That summer, a variety of walks were scheduled. Some hosted by local churches, others led by the mayor of the village and a host of other staff and volunteers. As fall arrived, the district hosted Super Saturday, a superhero themed physically active event that included a family 1-mile mini race. The participation and feedback was inspiring! Families with small children, older adults needing to re-engage with fitness all participated and expressed their delight for a fun kick-off to new fitness habits.

As the outdoor walking season was ending, leaders at the Gurnee Park District were concerned with how to maintain momentum into the winter months. They agreed to allow free access to the community center's indoor track to any GO champ wearing their t-shirt. The track is used by several GO walkers each day.

2017 ushered in a great deal of programming innovation. The kick-off event was themed around dogs and welcomed pet-owners and their well-behaved furry friends to take part in GO. Free logoed bandanas were given to the four-legged champs and attracted a new segment of the community. As with the other kick-offs, attendees participated in a group walk. That summer, with Pokémon GO being all the rage, two Pokémon pop-up events were hosted in Viking Park. The event started at the band shell and encouraged fans to stay active (and alert) while

walking the park, allowing the local community to find their Pokémon. The event attracted a tech demographic not usually reached by more traditional recreational programming. That same summer, the Adult Walking Club really took off with ten to 25 individuals participating in a weekly volunteer-led walk at a new location each Saturday morning.

It was also during that year that probably one of the biggest and most pivotal moments of the GO movement began. Staff from neighboring Antioch and Waukegan Park Districts inquired about the possible use of the GO concept for similar programs due to GO's momentum and runaway success. Additionally, the Lake County Health Department kicked off Live Well Lake County, an assemblage of community stakeholders mobilized to take action on community health issues around the same time. Timing could not be better as the GO Gurnee program had the potential to offer a scalable solution to one of the county's objectives, *empower Lake County Residents to improve their overall health through the simple act of walking*. Gurnee Park District officials agreed to share the GO program with the health department and fellow park agencies in return for shared health data from the Health Department and the Health Department's commitment to recruit and develop other communities to have their own, unique GO programs. GO Lake County was established and since that time, agencies such as Deerfield, Fox Lake,



Grayslake, Highland Park, Lake Bluff, Lake Forest, Lindenhurst, Mundelein, North Chicago, Round Lake Area, Vernon Hills, Wadsworth, Wauconda, Wildwood, Winthrop Harbor, and Zion have adopted their own programs. The Lake County Health Department even created a webpage to help promote all of the GO activities scheduled by these agencies.

During the summer of 2018, Gurnee hosted the GO the Distance Youth Walking Challenge. The challenge received endorsements by all local schools and boasted over 600 youth registrants committed to walking all summer long. 2018 closed with a remarkable multi-agency fall walk hosted at Lake County Forest Preserve's Independence Grove. The LCFPD had been incorporated into the cadre due to their shared interest in getting residents out to their hundreds of miles of trails. More than 15 agencies were in attendance and residents from those areas attended totaling more than 200 people. This marked the first park and recreation multi-agency event of its kind ever to be attempted in Lake County.

By early 2019, the concept of GO was spreading beyond Lake County to park and recreation agencies in other parts of the state. Gurnee Park District also continued to deliver innovative GO programming with many smaller events and activities like Chalk the Walk to decorate walkways with

happy inspiring messages, Audubon Society led bird-watch walks, story walks with the local library, water walks (in pool lap lanes), and walking partnerships with the local high school to walk the school halls on the weekend during cold weather. This summer, Gurnee will host the Sedentary Smack Down Challenge. Participants will have 100 days to complete 100 miles.

It is certainly the hope that this powerful movement can keep GO-ing! Gurnee Park District invites each community to make GO their own while upholding the foundational requirements:

1. Must emphasize 30 minutes of daily activity, primarily walking
2. Promotes community health with an emphasis on outdoor movement
3. Free or low cost
4. Proximal to home, work or school
5. Educational, engaging and collaborative
6. Measurable
7. Scalable

If your agency is interested in launching a GO movement contact, Jennifer Gilbert at jgilbert@gurneeparkdistrict.com for an agency start-up kit.



THE OAK LAWN COMMUNITY GARDEN;

A “Growing” PARTNERSHIP

By Dolly Foster, *Oak Lawn Park District Horticulturist and*
Denise Iwinski, *Oak Lawn Park District PR/Marketing Supervisor*

The Oak Lawn Community Garden is a beautiful, half acre enclosed garden that is more than just your average garden. This project truly took a community to build as a partnership was formed between the Oak Lawn Park District, Oak Lawn – Hometown School District 123, and the Village of Oak Lawn.



The outgrowth potential is significant and includes school curriculum enhancement, senior citizen engagement, and veteran outreach programming.

This community-wide initiative provides a gardening outlet for numerous residents while also providing much needed fresh produce to local food pantries that support needy families in the community. The outgrowth potential is significant and includes school curriculum enhancement, senior citizen engagement, and veteran outreach programming.

The garden began as a leisurely conversation in September 2015 between three passionate greenspace individuals: Oak Lawn Park District Horticulturist Dolly Foster, Oak Lawn-Hometown School District 123 Community Liaison Officer Larry Fetchko, and Village Forester Matt Basile. The school district wanted to build a pantry garden that would serve as a place to raise produce for local food pantries and to serve as an educational garden for students. Foster said she knew there was a community need for rental allotments for patrons who did not have access to green space. Both of these concepts followed the Oak Lawn Park District's mission of promoting a strong sense of community by providing leisure opportunities and the preservation of natural resources that enhances the quality of life and wellness for everyone. Therefore, in order for patrons and the community to receive the maximum benefits possible, a push for both opportunities was written into the plan.

Next was finding a space and location. Two sites were suggested; a site on park district property and a site on school district property. The school district property was preferred because there was an expanded parking lot.

The next step was negotiations and presentations to all three organization's boards for project approval.

Oak Lawn Park District Superintendent of Parks Joel Craig and Dolly Foster presented to the park district board. The board decided this project would move forward pending approval from the school district and cooperation from the village.

The park district would fund the construction and the ongoing project out of the Capital Projects Fund. The Village of Oak Lawn was formally asked and agreed to help with piping water to the site.

A comprehensive plan was drawn up for the school district site, and the garden was divided into different zones. The garden's top half was designed to have 52 allotment rentals. The garden's bottom half would eventually have 39 beds to grow vegetables for the pantries. There would be two sitting areas, a shed, and a 13' diameter hexagon herb garden. A pergola/ gathering area with picnic benches would act as wash/pack station. Construction of the pergola was completed thanks to a 2017 Green Regions Grant.



The second season which was a full growing season, yielded 1200 pounds of produce and the largest harvest was over 200 pounds. The district was stunned at the quality of the produce and proud that no pesticides were used on the plants.

Once details were compiled, a final presentation was given to the school board in March 2016 that would decide the fate of this project. As Dolly Foster gave her presentation, she couldn't help think about how much she wanted this project and while she knew how beneficial it would be to the community, she could not have predicted the success and impact that this project was going to have. The school board approved the project and a legal agreement was drafted and signed by all three parties.

On June 4, 2016, the Oak Lawn Community Garden held an all-volunteer build day and completed all targeted build goals. Approximately 30 volunteers constructed and compost/top soil filled: 17 Allotment Garden Beds (5' x 10' raised), 10 Pantry Garden Beds and 6 ADA accessible beds.

The Richards High School football team graciously provided most of the work effort and muscle to transport more than 25 cubic yards of compost/top soil to the beds. Boy Scouts, University of Illinois extension, Oak Lawn Green Team, neighbors and allotment gardeners joined park district and D123 representatives in constructing and back filling the beds.

That build day was successful in getting all the allotments built for the renters but the pantry beds had to wait a little longer. Staff at the park district finished 22 beds by mid-June.

In the first season, 300 pounds of heirloom tomatoes, fresh cucumbers, peppers, squash, kale and chard was harvested for local food pantries. The second season which was a full growing season, yielded 1200 pounds of produce and the largest harvest was over 200 pounds. The district was stunned at the quality of the produce and proud that no pesticides were used on the plants. In 2018, with the addition of one new bed and changing around some of the plant varieties, over one ton in produce was collected.

Other partnerships have formed over time. A local church that needed space to grow produce reached out. In exchange for providing planting space so the church can deliver the produce to their pantry, the church's committee chair mows the park districts lawn.

The pantries became a huge partner. Larry Fetchko took on the task of forging relationships with food pantries. The goal was to keep produce as close to the garden as possible, however, not having a lot of pantries with refrigeration meant going out of Oak Lawn and giving produce to larger distribution centers.

Larry Fetchko drafted a list of local pantries and supply for school social workers. The list included days and hours of operation, addresses, what IDs were needed to get in, and additional information families in need would benefit from. This developed into the Family + Community Resource Network (FCRN). The network includes emergency assistance, healthcare, child care, senior care, clothing acquisition from charities, utility assistance, financial training and more.

The Garden has been an integral part of FCRN. First, it is a critical component of the expanded food network providing over a ton of fresh produce to eleven local food pantries, homeless shelters, senior and women's programs and the local VFW.

Second, the expanded food network - anchored by the Garden - has become the model (considering breadth and information) for other service areas comprising the FCRN.

Finally, contacts made through distribution of community garden produce has provided a powerhouse of leads and community organization contacts for other service areas and has greatly expanded the breadth of FCRN services.

This project wouldn't be successful without wonderful volunteers. The bulk of the work in the garden is done by volunteers which includes watering, planting, fertilizing plants, and keeping the grounds looking good.

The district is proud of the hard work that goes into the garden and the benefits it serves to the community. The district applied for and won the Governor's Hometown Award for Outstanding Volunteerism in the district's population category, being recognized for the strong partnership with the Village of Oak Lawn and SD123 and how the community program has facilitated the development of other social programs to benefit the families in the Oak Lawn area.



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PALATINE

StoryWalk:

A PARTNERSHIP TO PROMOTE LITERACY IN OUR PARKS

By **Joan Scovic**, *Communications & Marketing Manager, Palatine Park District*

In October 2017, staff members from Palatine Public Library District approached Palatine Park District regarding a unique new partnership idea for the summer of 2018. The proposal was to create a StoryWalk® installation along the Palatine Trail combining the values of early literacy and open spaces, making it a perfect pairing for the two districts. The proposal was a natural extension of the Story Time in the Park program that Preschool & Tots Coordinator Karen Rude has been coordinating with the library since 2014.

The paved paths wind through neighborhoods and open land areas connecting parks and facilities along the trail system.



A StoryWalk is a series of fixtures that display the pages of a children's storybook in panels that sit atop posts. The pages of the story can be changed out to keep the installation fresh. With the library's 2018 annual summer reading program theme set as "Reading Takes You Everywhere," placing a story in an outdoor area was a perfect fit. The StoryWalk Project was originally created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and developed in collaboration with the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. StoryWalk is a registered service mark owned by Ms. Ferguson.

When approached with the partnership proposal, Mike Clark, Palatine Park District's executive director, realized that this project would create an amenity that would attract additional families to the park, making approval of an agreement an easy decision. According to Clark, expanding the long-term relationship with Palatine Library to include this new and innovative outdoor reading activity was the perfect merger of the missions of the two organizations, expanding outdoor offerings to create additional recreational opportunities for the community.

Once the idea was approved by the leadership teams of both organizations, location became the next hurdle. Palatine Park District maintains approximately ten miles of off-road paved trails throughout the district. The paved paths wind through neighborhoods and open land areas connecting parks and facilities along the trail system. The library is located adjacent to an area of the trail and the first proposal was to place the StoryWalk in a lovely shaded location where the path winds through heavy trees and foliage behind the library. While this would have been a very convenient location from the library's perspective, the parks department had some concerns including having enough land next to the trail to install the posts without affecting trail users and the possibility of vandalism along such a secluded area of the trail. Several additional parks and sections of trail were then considered, and the Tom T. Hamilton Reservoir was eventually selected as the installation location.



Members of the library staff read stories, sang songs, and helped children get the wiggles out for thirty minutes in the park.

The majority of the 94 acres at Hamilton Reservoir is leased by the park district from the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District and is home to five baseball/softball fields, a natural turf area that can fit up to nine soccer fields, a concession building with public restrooms, a playground renovated in 2014 with a poured in place accessible surface, over 275 parking spaces, and a .9 mile paved path around the entire park. With athletic events taking place almost every day from April through October, traffic at the park is heavy which would allow for expanded access to the StoryWalk.

Once the park location was selected, story board post placement was determined by the parks department. The story loops along an area of the circular path at the park, starting and ending at the playground. As caretaker of the land, park district crew members dug holes, poured concrete, and installed the posts; under the agreement for the project, the park district is responsible for all post maintenance. The panels were then affixed to the poles with the library responsible for maintenance of the cases that hold the story panels as well as the installation of new stories.

The first story installed by the library was the New York Times bestseller “How Rocket Learned to Read” by Tad Hills. In the story, Rocket the dog meets a little yellow bird in a park. The bird is a teacher who helps Rocket learn to read and they become friends who gather each spring to enjoy stories together. In addition to the story pages, each post includes a question or activity such as “Sing the alphabet on your way to the next post,” and “How do you think Rocket feels?” These additions to each story page invite families to have discussions about the story, identify different items in the illustrations, and have fun while reading together in the park.

Once the story was installed, a grand opening of the StoryWalk was planned for the first 2018 Story Time in the Park event on June 6. Members of the library staff read stories, sang songs, and helped children get the wiggles out for thirty minutes in the park. The stories were followed by a ribbon cutting led by Director Mike Clark, Jeannie Dilger, executive director of Palatine Public Library District, and Palatine Park District’s Sammy the Squirrel mascot. After the official ceremony opening the StoryWalk, the 250 people in attendance were led along the path to discover

for themselves just how Rocket learned to read. Each story page had a guest reader including park district staff, library staff, foundation members, park board members, and volunteers. The event also included goody bags for the children and free raffles including copies of "How Rocket Learned to Read" and passes to various park district events and programs.

To keep the project fresh, the library plans to install a new story at least once each year. In June 2019, pages from the story "Mother Bruce" by Ryan T. Higgins will be placed in the panels. To better meet the needs of the community, three story times will be offered during the day, and three new story times have been added during the early evening. The new StoryWalk story installation will be celebrated at the first of these six outdoor story time collaborations on June 12.

StoryWalk installations can be created in several ways. Some locations have chosen the less expensive option of placing the story boards on yard signs stuck in the ground with metal H-frames. However, Palatine Library wanted to make this a more permanent option in the parks with metal posts placed in concrete. This, of course, led to greater expenses. The final project cost was \$8,500. The library brought in Palatine Public Library District

Foundation and Friends of the Palatine Library to serve as additional gold level sponsors along with the park district. Additional silver-level support was received through donations from a variety of local businesses and individuals. Sponsors were recognized on the individual story boards and through media releases.

The StoryWalk project was one of several enhancements at Hamilton Reservoir that will help make this area a true community park that serves as a destination location for residents. Additional expansion projects at this location that are aligned with the district's five-year master plan include the addition of six outdoor lighted pickleball courts, outdoor fitness stations, and a connecting path from the park's paved loop to the main Palatine Trail system.

The StoryWalk partnership with Palatine Public Library District provided the opportunity for a creative collaboration that invites people to play in the parks while supporting literacy and family fun. From creative story choices featuring animals that fit a parks and recreation theme to a location that has high visitation by the public, the project was a positive addition to the Palatine community.



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PEOPLE & PLACES



Fox Valley Special Recreation Association announces new Executive Director

Fox Valley Special Recreation Association (FVSRA) Board of Directors is excited to announce **Alex Engelhardt** as executive director. Engelhardt follows Carolyn Nagle, who is retiring

after 27 years as executive director of FVSRA.

Engelhardt started her career at FVSRA as a therapeutic recreation intern in 2006. She has worked under the leadership of Nagle for 13 years in various capacities such as therapeutic recreation specialist, support staff manager, and has been the superintendent of recreation for the past five years. She has presented at local, state, regional and national conferences on fitness inclusion, created an award-winning personal training and fitness program, and was recognized as one of the Kane County Best Under 40 in 2016. Engelhardt is a certified therapeutic recreation specialist, a graduate from the University of Northern Iowa, and received her Masters of Business Administration in Human Resources from Aurora University.



Sycamore Park District Executive Director Announces Retirement

The Sycamore Park District Board of Commissioners has accepted the resignation and retirement of Executive Director **Dan Gibble** effective August 31, 2020. Over the next several months, the board will formulate a timeline for filling the position.

Dan entered the role of executive director in January of 2012. Over the last seven years, the board credits him with changing the culture of the Sycamore Park District, managing the district and tax dollars in a responsible and responsive manner, and expanding the wellness opportunities offered in Sycamore. His leadership of the staff and guidance to the board has brought the district an impressive list of accomplishments in a very short amount of time, including: balanced the budget and allowed required reserve funds to grow for the first time in years, operated the golf course and aquatics in the black for the first time in several years, developed and implemented a Strategic Plan, and much more.



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