

MRPA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2026

News • Resources • Opportunities • Member
Updates



MRPA 2.0 IS TAKING SHAPE

A New Website. New Field Intelligence. New Ways to Connect.

For the first time in years, MRPA is rebuilding its website as an active, contemporary professional resource - not simply a place to store old information. The new site is being organized around what members, agencies, vendors, students and partners actually need to find and use.

Beginning this fall, the website becomes a central part of MRPA 2.0: current information, Monday Field Intelligence Briefs, conference registration, calendars, professional development, member resources, vendor and sponsor information, surveys, district activity, agency successes and statewide professional news.



MRPA and FSM representative met August 25 with Legislators in Jackson Mississippi to present the MRPA first-draft of Play Safely Mississippi legislation.

THIS ISSUE LEADS WITH THREE MAJOR MRPA 2.0 DEVELOPMENTS

- 1) The relaunch of an active MRPA website and Monday Field Intelligence Brief • 2) Play Safe Mississippi • 3) The 2027 60th Anniversary Conference and upcoming registration

THE WEBSITE IS NOW PART OF THE SERVICE - NOT JUST THE SIGNPOST.

MRPA 2.0 DIGITAL HUB

The New MRPA Website Is Live - And Growing

After years without an active, regularly refreshed site, MRPA is rebuilding mrpa-ms.org as a working professional hub.

The most important change is not simply a new look. It is a new purpose. The website is being rebuilt around timely content, clearer navigation, useful professional resources, and direct pathways to the things members and partners need to do.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT?

Contemporary content. Cleaner navigation. Current conference information. A real calendar. Professional-development resources. Vendor and sponsor pathways. Member information. Weekly field intelligence. And, increasingly, news generated by MRPA districts and agencies themselves.

What You Will Find Under the Main Menu

HOME

Current MRPA priorities, 60th Anniversary conference information, member value, quick links, news, calendar items and featured resources.

CONFERENCE

The 2027 Annual Conference, conference and workshop information, registration, hotel details, education, vendors, sponsors, professional partners and updated program information.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Leadership and professional standards, credentialing pathways, CEUs, CAPRA and Park Metrics resources, technical learning, and the MRPA Field Intelligence Brief.

CURRENT & POTENTIAL MEMBERS

Membership information and benefits, member pathways, agency participation, professional resources and the statewide member survey - coming soon.

CALENDAR

A true events hub for conferences, workshops, meetings, professional development, registration details, deadlines, and future district activities.

VENDORS / SPONSORS / PARTNERS

Conference participation, indoor/veranda/outdoor opportunities, sponsorship options, partner information, and the active Vendor & Partner Survey.

[Explore the new MRPA website: mrpa-ms.org](http://mrpa-ms.org)

EVERY MONDAY

MRPA Weekly Field Intelligence Brief

What matters. Why it matters. What you can do next.

One of the biggest changes on the new website is the Monday rollout of the MRPA Weekly Field Intelligence Brief. This is not another generic newsletter. It is designed as a fast professional scan of the issues, deadlines, funding opportunities, standards, training, grants and field developments most likely to affect Mississippi agencies.

MONDAY FIELD INTELLIGENCE

Each Monday, MRPA will work to identify the developments worth your attention and translate them into action: funding deadlines, grant opportunities, professional standards, credentialing, CAPRA, Park Metrics, small-agency resources, youth sport, tourism and community sport, emerging trends, and professional-development opportunities.

Built for Busy Professionals

- Executive dashboard: what deserves immediate attention this week
- Funding and deadline alerts with practical member takeaways
- Professional standards, CAPRA, Park Metrics and credentialing updates
- Training, CEU and emerging-professional opportunities
- Small and limited-resource agency tools and resources
- Youth sport, safety, recreation, tourism and community-sport developments
- Ideas that can become conference sessions, workshops, policies or local action

THE MODEL

WHAT MATTERS → WHY IT MATTERS → WHAT YOU CAN DO

[Read the MRPA Weekly Field Intelligence Brief](#)

An Active Site Requires Active Members

MRPA cannot build a statewide professional news source from the state office alone. We need District News, agency successes, promotions and new hires, retirements, certifications, grants, facility openings, innovative programs, partnerships, awards, photos and practical ideas from every part of Mississippi.

SEND US WHAT IS HAPPENING

If your agency did something worth sharing, tell us. If a colleague earned a promotion or credential, tell us. If your district is meeting, training or planning an event, tell us. The website should reflect the profession across Mississippi - not just MRPA headquarters.

USE THE SITE

Where to Go Right Now

The new website is being organized so members and partners can act - not just read.

Vendors, Sponsors & Professional Partners

The Vendor, Sponsor & Professional Partner page is already active. Vendors and prospective partners can review the 2027 participation model, indoor/veranda/outdoor options, sponsorship pathways and take the Vendor & Partner Survey now.

[Vendor / Sponsor / Professional Partner page and survey](#)

Members & Professionals - Coming Soon

The Current & Potential Members area is being positioned as the entry point for membership information, benefits, professional resources and the MRPA statewide member survey. The member survey link will be added as soon as it opens so members and non-members can help shape MRPA 2.0, future Strategic Initiatives, education, small-agency support and professional services.

The Calendar Is Becoming the Association's Working Schedule

The Community Calendar is now more than a date list. It is intended to become the single place to find upcoming MRPA conferences, workshops, meetings, professional-development opportunities, registration information, deadlines and eventually District activities. As more events are added, members should be able to answer one question quickly: "What is coming up in MRPA?"

[View the MRPA Event Calendar](#)

2027 Conference Registration Opens October 1

The new Conference page is already active with dates, Centennial Plaza lodging information, professional-development direction, vendor and sponsor information, awards, and the developing conference schedule. Member, non-member and student conference registration is scheduled to open October 1, 2026.

WATCH THE WEBSITE

Conference information will continue to change quickly this fall. The website - not an old PDF or forwarded email - should become the first place

you check for the current registration link, rates, program information, hotel instructions, vendor opportunities and deadlines.

[2027 Annual Conference page](#)

MRPA NEWS

Help Shape MRPA 2.0

The statewide survey is designed to hear from the entire Parks and Recreation profession - not just agency directors or current members.

We Want to Hear From the Entire Profession

MRPA is asking professionals across Mississippi to help define the Association's next chapter. The survey will be open to current members and non-members and is designed to hear from employees working at different levels and in different areas of parks, recreation, athletics, aquatics, facilities, maintenance, operations, programming, customer service, administration and technical services.

- Full-time, part-time and seasonal employees are encouraged to participate.
- Multiple responses from the same agency are encouraged.
- The survey is designed to help prepare for MRPA strategic planning and future initiatives.
- The member survey link will be posted in the Current & Potential Members area when it opens.

THE QUESTIONS BEHIND THE SURVEY

What are we doing well? What can we do better?
What should we add? What should we stop doing?
What should MRPA become over the next five years?

What the Survey Covers

- MRPA membership and future direction
- Mission, vision, strategic goals and future Strategic Initiatives
- Education, training, credentialing and professional development
- Play Safe Mississippi and youth/community sport support
- Small-agency and limited-resource needs
- Technical, frontline and workforce-development needs
- Conference, workshop and member-service priorities

PRIVACY

Survey responses will be used by MRPA for association planning and program development. Personal information voluntarily provided for follow-up will be used only for the stated MRPA purpose and will not be shared with outside organizations, vendors, sponsors or other third parties.

STATEWIDE INITIATIVE

Play Safe Mississippi

A broader MRPA framework for education, implementation support, partnerships and continuous improvement.

Play Safe Mississippi is being developed as an MRPA-led statewide initiative to help communities strengthen safer recreation and sport practices through practical resources, education, partnerships and implementation support.

THE BIG IDEA

Create a trusted MRPA clearinghouse where agencies can find practical, a la carte options for background screening, education and training, documentation tools, policies, renewal reminders, best-practice resources and implementation assistance - without forcing every agency into one vendor or one system.

What Could Live Under the Play Safe Mississippi Umbrella?

- Coach, volunteer and staff education and training resources
- Background-screening options and guidance
- Documentation and record-tracking tools
- Sample policies, checklists and annual renewal reminders
- Emergency preparedness, facility and equipment safety resources
- Accessibility, inclusion and risk-management resources
- Small-agency implementation options and technical assistance
- Links to NRPA, national coalition and other vetted professional resources

A Non-Exclusive Partnership Model

MRPA is working toward a model that allows strategic implementation partners to participate while preserving MRPA's ability to maintain a broader clearinghouse and work with other providers. The goal is member value, flexibility and practical implementation - especially for smaller agencies.

AT THE CAPITOL

MRPA members met with legislators in Jackson on August 25, 2026, to discuss Play Safe Mississippi and the proposed MS Play Safely Bill.



Pictured left to right: Ryan Porter, Seth Gaines, Jared Barkley and Courtney Nunn.

SAFE PEOPLE • SAFE PLACES • SAFE PLAY

Play Safe Mississippi is intended to support better local practice while keeping MRPA in an education, coordination and professional-support role.

60TH ANNIVERSARY

2027 MRPA Annual Conference

February 22-24, 2027 • Centennial Plaza • Gulfport, Mississippi

Planning is accelerating for MRPA's 60th Anniversary Annual Conference at Centennial Plaza in Gulfport. The conference website now provides the working home for registration, hotel information, professional development, vendors and sponsors, awards and the developing schedule.

REGISTRATION OPENS OCTOBER 1

Member, non-member and student registration is scheduled to open October 1, 2026. Watch the Conference page for the live registration link, rates, hotel instructions and program updates.

A Better Vendor & Professional Partner Experience

- Approximately 20-25 indoor vendors, rather than repeating an overcrowded exhibit hall
- Covered veranda and outdoor demonstration opportunities where appropriate
- Structured attendee-vendor engagement and sponsor visibility
- Separate booth and sponsorship value
- Year-round professional partner visibility and stronger post-event value

Conference Experience

- Professional education and CEU opportunities
- Opening social and networking opportunities
- Keynote and featured education
- Awards and professional recognition
- Student and young-professional engagement
- Indoor, veranda and outdoor partner experiences at Centennial Plaza

[Follow conference updates at mrpa-ms.org](https://mrpa-ms.org)

RECOGNITION & DEVELOPMENT

Professionalism in Action

Recognizing achievement while creating clearer pathways for learning, credentials and leadership.

2026-2027 MRPA Awards for Excellence

Now is the time to begin thinking about the professionals, agencies, programs and accomplishments that deserve statewide recognition. Strong nominations take time - start gathering the story, outcomes, photos and supporting information now.

NOVEMBER 15, 2026

**Deb Helms, CTRS: Commitment to
Professionalism Award**

DECEMBER 18, 2026

**General MRPA Awards for Excellence
nominations**

Professional Development Is Now Easier to Find

The Professional Development area of the new website is being organized around year-round learning: Annual Conference, Leadership Conference, District Workshops, leadership and professional standards, credentialing, CEUs and practical resources for agencies of every size.

- CPRP, CPRE, CTRS, AFO, CPSI and other relevant professional credentials
- CAPRA standards and agency self-assessment resources
- Park Metrics and performance-measurement resources
- Leadership, supervision, ethics and workforce development
- Technical and frontline training
- Small-agency and limited-resource professional support

THE GOAL

MRPA professional development should serve the entire profession - directors, administrators, supervisors, programmers, athletics, aquatics, therapeutic recreation, maintenance, operations, technical employees, students and emerging professionals.

MEMBER CONNECTION

Help Make the Website Mississippi's Professional Story

The site will only be as current and useful as the information we share with one another.

What We Need From Around Mississippi

- DISTRICT NEWS - meetings, workshops, collaborations, training dates and local professional-development opportunities.
- AGENCY SUCCESSES - facilities, renovations, grants, partnerships, innovative programs, community events, measurable successes and practical solutions.
- PEOPLE NEWS - promotions, new hires, retirements, certifications, awards, leadership appointments and career milestones.

ONE PARAGRAPH + ONE PHOTO IS ENOUGH

Do not wait until you have a polished article. Send the basic information and a photo. MRPA can help shape it for the website, newsletter or social media. An active association site depends on a steady flow of real news from real agencies.

Save the Dates

DATE	EVENT
September 29-October 1	NRPA Annual Conference • Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
October 1	2027 MRPA Annual Conference registration scheduled to open
October 23	Current NRPA youth-sports grant application deadline
November 2026	MRPA Leadership Workshop / Strategic Planning
November 15	Deb Helms Professionalism Award deadline
December 18	MRPA Awards for Excellence general nomination deadline
February 22-24, 2027	MRPA 60th Anniversary Annual Conference • Gulfport