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President's Message "Academy Happenings"



Tom Lovell,
2012-13
AAPRA President

Greetings Colleagues! Our second newsletter already? How time flies.

By now you should have received committee/task force list assignments. It is never too late to sign up—send me an email and I will try and accommodate your interest.

Back in September I asked for your insights in setting this year's targets for the Academy. I believe our ultimate success as an organization will hinge on our ability to be relevant to the needs of our members and the profession. Your survey responses and more importantly, your individual comments have been helpful in the development of this year's plan and support of ongoing efforts to improve our Academy. I hope you will take a few minutes to review the survey results. You will find them to be interesting at the very least.

One specific outcome has been the interest shown by Ray Ochromowicz to advance an effort through an interactive process to review our strategic planning needs. He and President Elect John McGovern will be setting up a session to be held at the NRPA Congress to review this important issue. The outcome of these exercises will be useful to President-Elect John McGovern and those that follow.

Periodically an issue will catch my attention and I will begin to muse about it with friends and colleagues. An Arnie Biondo's "musing" caught my attention and is included in this edition as is a toned down version of my latest called "What's in a Name?" These are always done to promote dialogue and exploration of an issue but certainly not to criticize or provoke. Enjoy my latest effort and shoot me an email or start your own musing on a subject of your choosing.

I believe in the Academy. . . .you should too.

AAPRA Survey What you had to say...

As you all know, an AAPRA member survey was recently conducted to ascertain your thoughts, opinions and perspectives relative to the Academy's mission, interests and efforts.

A number of fascinating and insightful comments were received. Below is just a snapshot of what you had to say about the Academy and in particular, current Academy initiatives.

- ▲ With the amount of knowledge rooted in the Academy, it would be interesting to capture the institutional knowledge of the membership in some form.
- ▲ We need to take stands on critical issues such as the plight of state parks.
- ▲ Would the Academy Foundation be considered an initiative? What is the real purpose of the foundation? Lobbying and advocacy might be things to consider. . .
- ▲ Being a very new member it is difficult to answer with any great certainty. In general terms, I find the mission and initiatives to be adequate.
- ▲ We need to continue to remain separate and apart from NRPA and still serve as a value to all parks and recreation professionals as needed.
- ▲ Perhaps we can initiate and promote a public forum in which we can generate ideas, debate, share innovations, pose heady questions, etc.
- ▲ We are not the NRPA board. Let's not waste time complaining about what NRPA should or should not be doing. We cannot be important to NRPA if we are not helping them solve their problems. What problem(s) is NRPA facing?
- ▲ Would it be better to focus on only 1-2 things each year or 2-3 years? What problems is our profession currently facing? What is the Academy doing to help address these problems? Would the Academy be more relevant if we focused our work on solving these problems?

The full survey report is on the Academy website (www.aapra.org) in the "Downloads" panel. Please make sure to read the results...they provide all of us with a good platform from which we can begin to improve and enhance the Academy!

iMesa Strategy by Marc Heirshberg

Like many cities nationwide, Mesa was at a crossroads. It was late 2010 and we needed to decide how we were going to deal with both our current financial challenges and our future. Were we going to be in survival mode or growth mode? In January 2011, Mayor Scott Smith introduced a tool to put us in growth mode. iMesa issued a call to action for residents to engage in a process – imagine, invest, improve – to Build a Better Mesa.

Part of the iMesa strategy is to use technology to engage residents like never before. iMesa uses an online crowdsourcing tool, web, social media and mobile apps to collect fresh ideas and stimulate discussions. Residents go to imesa.mesaaz.gov to submit, vote and comment on ideas that transform the community. This allows residents to take an active role in the future of the city and serves as a gauge of the priorities of Mesa residents. Face to face interaction is still an important part of citizen engagement and public meetings are held to gather additional feedback from members of the public who are not as active online.



Some ideas are simple and can be implemented right away while others take time, funding and planning to accomplish. One idea was to find a new home for HeatSync Labs who had grown out of their space in another community. The tech savvy users of the lab made the idea shoot to the top of the list with more than 100 votes and the City of Mesa took notice. The city found available properties and a few months later, HeatSync Labs opened in downtown Mesa.

Now, the most popular idea on iMesa is to save the historic Buckhorn Baths, a hotel and mineral bath spa used by spring training athletes and movie stars in the 50s and 60s. The hotel closed in 1999 and is number one on the Society for Commercial Archeology's top 10 list of endangered roadside places.

After collecting project ideas and gathering input from the community for more than a year, the Mesa City Council agreed to forward a \$70 million bond package of projects to voters, which passed on November 6, 2012. The projects include a variety of new and renovated recreational assets such as youth and adult sports fields, open turf areas, playgrounds, trails, museum resources and an aquatics facility. Each project in the bond package had been through the iMesa process beginning as a community idea.

Throughout the process, iMesa has become a brand for Mesa's future. From an iMesa flashmob and public service announcements to booths at community events and business cards, the iMesa message to imagine, invest and improve has become our mantra and part of our culture.

JPra News

The *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration* (JPRA) is excited to have the opportunity to provide you with news, information, and updates as part of this quarterly newsletter.

What is JPRA? The American Academy of Park and Recreation Administration launched the *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration* (JPRA) in 1983 to further its goal of enhancing the practice of park administration by producing scholarly papers and conducting research. JPRA has long provided a forum for management and organizational analysis of the delivery of park, recreation, and leisure services. Since its inception, JPRA has been committed to the advancement of the park and recreation field by building the field's body of knowledge and enhancing the effectiveness and professionalism of park and recreation administrators.

More than research... Did you know that JPRA publishes more than research? JPRA also seeks submissions on **Programs That Work**. The Programs that Work section provides a forum for sharing information about innovative approaches to recreation and park issues and programs that have been developed around the country.

JPRA also contains a **Resource Review**. The resource review section of the journal provides timely assessments of textbooks and other educational and training resources. To learn more about how to contribute, submit submissions, or more, please visit <http://js.sagamorepub.com/jpra/about/submissions#onlineSubmissions>.

What you missed in the last issue of JPRA...



[Hispanic and White Visitors in U.S. National Parks: Meta-Analysis of Visitor Use Survey](#) - Lena Le

[Monitoring Visitation in Georgia State Parks Using the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities \(SOPARC\)](#) - Jason W. Whiting, Lincoln R. Lawson, Gary T. Green

[Temporary Parks? Sunday Streets, Serving the Need for Urban Outdoor Recreation](#) - Jackson D Wilson, Patrick Tierney, Mi-Sook Kim, Susan Zieff

[The Influence of Anthropogenic Sound in Historical Parks: Implications for Park Management](#) - Gretchen Nurse Rainbolt, Jacob A. Benfield, Paul A. Bell

[The Use Preservation Paradox: An Examination of Negotiated Rulemaking at Cape Hatteras National Seashore](#) - Lavell, Jr. Merrit, C. Scott Shafer

[Estimates of the Economic Benefits Accruing From an Expansion of Houston's Bayou Greenway Network](#) - John L. Crompton



Too True: All Legislative Advocacy Is Local by Arnie Biondo

Former Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill was known for saying, "All politics are local."

With apologies to the Speaker, I want to suggest that all (productive) legislative advocacies (politics) are **local** for us park and recreation professionals and proponents.

Many agencies across the Nation have experienced budget cuts, lay-offs, and closed facilities in recent years. Here's a question, "Who rode to the rescue? The Feds or your State?" Likely, the answer is neither. We all love the chance to get state and federal money to improve parks and conserve land. But, let's be honest. That money is unreliable, and it's only a small portion of what is needed to build and sustain a community, county or regional park system.

The question is, "where can we best spend our advocacy efforts and resources?" The answer is, locally. Think about what makes up more than 80% of municipal park and recreation budgets. It is local money. So if that is our lifeblood, then we should expect the best return on investment of our efforts to be in the local arena.

Consider, advocates are loyal customers. Loyal customers generate more business—support, participation, and, when needed, votes at the ballot box. Local, die-hard advocates will tell your legislators just how valuable their parks are. They'll beat the drum and lead the charge when it's time for a referendum. This was evidenced at Bartlett (IL) Park District and at Carol Stream Park District. Both agencies saw that local support and loyalty when they passed a \$20 Million and \$37 Million bond issues, respectively, in the midst of the great recession.

Okay, so what does it take to build a local advocacy program? Briefly, here is a primer:

Citizen-involved Decision-making. The "big brother" days are long gone. WE have to engage our citizenry, not just by getting data from needs assessments, but by bringing them in, systematically, to decision-making.

Marketing Orientation. Follows right along with #1. Don't expect that "if you build it, they will come". Make sure you design programs, parks and facilities based on what people say (over and over) that that's what they want.

Tight, Productive and Lean Stewardship. People are watching and evaluating what you are doing with their resources. There is less and less tolerance for waste, extravagance, and unnecessary expenditures. Get lean; be productive; and make sure everyone knows that is what is going on.

High Quality. People want to be associated with quality, with "winning" teams, and with in-demand products. Deliver a quality a notch above your community's standard, and then keep looking to raise the bar. (See #'s 1 & 2)

Outrageously Good Service. This runs the whole gamut. If you're not sure about this, go pick up and read the "old" textbook, "Service America!" [Albrect and Zemke]. You may not be able to wow 'em with the park or the pool, but you can knock their socks off with great customer service.

Participation of Local Influencers. No, we're not talking about mayors and councilmen. The influencers are the people who others in the community listen to. As often as not, they are unofficial. They are recognized and followed by their involvement and action. Make them your friends.

Partnerships. The days of going it alone are gone. Improve quality, lower costs, meet market demand, do more by spending less, and connect with influencers by building mutually beneficial partnerships.

Does all this mean we shouldn't bother with Federal and State legislators? No! Having good relationships with your legislators is about more than just getting pork. But, put much more effort into **building the local advocates**.

Harness the power of un-matched local support for parks and recreation and then demonstrate and illustrate that to all of your legislators. The more they understand that their constituents are totally committed to their local park system, the more the legislators are going to support your request for aid and assistance.

2013 AAPRA Newsletter Editorial Calendar

SUMMER NEWSLETTER - JUNE

Deadline for Articles: 6/14/13

Distribution: 6/19/13

FALL NEWSLETTER - SEPTEMBER

Deadline for Articles: 9/20/13

Distribution: 9/25/13

WINTER NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER

Deadline for Articles: 12/13/13

Distribution: 12/18/13

**"Happiness is having a large, loving, caring,
close-knit family in another city."**

-George Burns



American Academy for Park
and Recreation Administration

From the AAPRA Office

- ⇒ Both bylaws changes passed unanimously with 128 ballots being returned. The changes will be incorporated into this year's directory.
- ⇒ Many of the biographies on the website (aapra.org) are seriously out of date. Please review your information and send changes to Andee. We also need help with updating the bios of former members. If you have knowledge of anyone who is a past member, updates would be greatly appreciated!
- ⇒ Please make sure your records list the Academy mailing address as PO Box 888, Mahomet, IL 61853. It is no longer PO Box 1040.
- ⇒ The deadline for dues payments without the \$25 late assessment has passed. If you haven't paid yet, please do so right away.
- ⇒ The office phone number 217-590-0231 is for the general public. Members can call Andee at 217-840-2009.

The AIPE/Academy Foundation Board of Trustees is accepting nominations for the 2013 John C. Potts Leadership Development Scholarship (affectionately known as the "Pottsie"). This leadership development scholarship is restricted to the tuition (\$925) for first-year students at the NRPA Directors School conducted at Oglebay Resort-Park, Wheeling, WV.



To apply for the "Pottsie" scholarship, applicants must submit the following to the Academy Foundation Office no later than May 1, 2013:

- ◆ Resume (not to exceed three pages);
- ◆ Copy of agency's organizational chart;
- ◆ Essay by applicant (500 words or less) on career aspirations/leadership development goals;
- ◆ Letter of support from the Academy member nominating the applicant;
- ◆ Proof of registration to the NRPA Directors School;
- ◆ Proof of membership in NRPA and/or respective state association. [Please note, if not a member of NRPA, an additional fee of \$135 (the responsibility of the recipient) will be required.]

Completed applications may be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to:
AIPE/American Academy Foundation
PO Box 888
Mahomet, IL 61853
(217) 590-0231 – phone
(217) 590-0231 – fax
info@aapra.org

Important Deadlines

- Pugsley Award Nominations – April 15, 2013
- Legends Nominations—April 19, 2013
- Pottsie Scholarship Applications – May 1, 2013
- New Member Nominations – June 17, 2013

Committee Updates

Health & Wellness...

The Health and Wellness Committee has been meeting regularly to develop a series of standards that can be used by parks and recreation agencies to identify, educate and advocate for systems and resources to help create a healthy community.

Parks and recreation plays an essential role in providing safe, accessible and affordable places for physical activity such as walking and biking. The closer people are to parks and trails, the greater the chance that they will be physically active. Parks and recreation also has a key role in providing healthy, smoke-free environments and smart food choices such as places for community gardens.

Highlights of this program include:

- Identification of the key components for healthy communities as they relate to parks and recreation
- Definition of subjects and terms for clarity
- Research data to support the subject

As this tool is developed, a partnership with NRPA will be created so that it can be made available to all agencies. The tool can be used to assess an agency's status and to help to create healthy communities. The project should provide great support to the recently adopted NRPA Strategic Plan.

The second pillar of the plan relates directly to health and wellness. The first object of this pillar is to develop a set of physical activity standards that can be adopted by 1,000 agencies nationwide. We look forward to developing this project.

Legends...

The Legends program consists of videotaped interviews of distinguished administrators and educators who have made outstanding contributions to the field of Parks and Recreation. Thirty to 40 minutes interview record the individual's personal background, professional insights, advice and philosophical beliefs.

If you have someone you would like to nominate for "Legend" status, please contact a committee member (nominations must be made by committee member), and e-mail Chris Dropinski their name, title, and agency/university. Deadline for nominations is April 19.

Chris can be contacted at chrisd@greenplayllc.com. The individual does not have to be a member of the Academy, but does need to have a logical connection to the field of park and recreation administration.



What's In A Name? by Tom Lovell

A couple of years ago I began to notice the insertion of "conservation" in reference to Parks and Recreation (i.e., "Parks, Recreation and Conservation"). It was conspicuous enough that I asked several colleagues if this was a coming change. Their replies varied but most sensed there was an interest by some to "piggy back" popular causes to enhance our image. They also noted, with a few exceptions, that they did not like it for various reasons.

The Problem. At the time I was in the middle of other "revelations" about the severe lack of recognition by our elected officials and the citizens we serve as to what we do and the essential role we play in providing solutions for many in our community and national challenges such as community health, conservation, economic activity and community development (to name a few). I continue to see the addition of conservation and other monikers coming. As a 40 year veteran who delivers parks and recreation services, it struck me as counter-intuitive to take another "flavor of the month" and insert it into our "brand" possibly further confusing decision makers and the public. What I am talking about is a marketing issue, not a value judgment.

Conservation is Important but this is about branding and the national mindspace. Now don't get me wrong. I have been practicing conservation and preservation since I got my first LWCF grant in the 70's. This discussion is not about the importance of conservation. We know it is important, a part of who we are and one of the important roles our parks can play. But over the years I have seen several attempts to change or modify our brand at the national level. I have also witnessed firsthand the confusing disconnect that occurs over the use of "leisure services" to describe who we are. Are we really OK with being "leisure service" professionals? Brand is about perception and that first perception will be our reality. In the marketing world it is called "mindspace". Products and organizations all have a limited opportunity to acquire and sustain positive "mindspace" so it is important to keep the message constant and succinct.

Do we need change or add-ons? Companies and/or organizations change their image, brand or name when they need to start over. These types of changes are very expensive if you expect to make a significant change in your level of presence in the national mindspace. There is an evolution that occurs as a product or service develops in the marketplace (like Nike was Blue Ribbon Sports and Pepsi was Brads Drink) but once established rarely do you see major changes unless there is a problem. That is why Volvo is still Volvo, the NEA is still the NEA, the NRA is still the NRA and Southwest Airlines is still Southwest Airlines. The secret of the brand is that it has an established presence. The cost to maintain and/or change these national perceptions is millions of dollars per year. This level of investment is really not an option for us. However, we

have an advantage. Our brand is built and maintained primarily at the grass roots level, community by community. In and of itself a very powerful opportunity if used. Think of the 1,000's of PARKS AND RECREATION departments and organizations all over the United States selling and educating their constituents on the value and benefits of PARKS AND RECREATION in every brochure they mail, every ad they take out and every other promotional piece they distribute. There is impact on a national level if our message is consistent.

At some point in the past we set our brand as PARKS AND RECREATION. Now here is the problem. People are familiar and comfortable with the name "PARKS AND RECREATION" but not that familiar with the multiplicity of things that we do or the measurable benefits we have on national issues (conservation, community wellness, economic development, etc.). This will and is changing as we build our database of these benefits through Proragis and initiate local repositioning programs to educate the public, practitioners and elected officials.

So What About Conservation? Within each brand there are power brands and we have several including conservation, but most would agree that community wellness, economic activity, inclusion, community development, sports management, aquatics, etc. are also important.

Now Back to Leisure Services. I am sure many of you will be able to identify with the strange conversations I have had when I tried to explain my job in Leisure Services terms years ago when it became the "flavor of the month". I understand the value to our universities to be as inclusive but we need to keep our brand simple and leisure services does not do that. Our universities need to be engaged in this conversation.

The Solution. Keep it simple and succinct. Educating our citizens and elected officials will help them understand the essentiality and multiplicity of benefits that a good "PARKS AND RECREATION" system can provide. This is what repositioning is all about. We have a real and present danger of continuing to lose resources. Our President, leaders of both parties, and our local officials are again ready to eliminate stimulus projects and funding that address important community wellness and economic activity projects because they are "leisure projects" in their "mindspace".

Let's get to work on REPOSITIONING by keeping our brand familiar and simple. We are the short term and long term prevention and intervention solutions our communities and nation need to solve the many problems we are faced with. Let's do it one citizen, one elected official and one community at a time with the objective of solidifying and expanding our national mindspace.



Taking the Pulse of California's Park and Recreation Agencies—2012 Budget Survey (excerpts)



In 2010 CPRS conducted the first “Taking the Pulse of Park and Recreation Agencies” survey. We wanted to know how California’s park and recreation agencies were functioning during one of the most grueling financial and operational stress tests in history. We want to understand what new [and continuing] strategies were being deployed to meet these fiscal challenges and if there was a combination of strategies that could make a difference in sustaining agency budgets.

The 2010 survey revealed:

- ◆ Capital budgets have taken the greatest “hit” in this economic climate. Loss of developer fees and/or concern over how to fund park and/or facility maintenance and operations after they are built was stated.
- ◆ Agencies rely on recession-sensitive revenue streams such as recreation/program fees, facility rentals, and camping fees and do not appear to be undertaking systematic review of their programs, core services, fees and charges.
- ◆ Agencies have reduced both full and part time personnel; recreation programming opportunities; and modified maintenance standards yet very few agencies indicate closure of parks or facilities.
- ◆ Agencies are searching for new dollars (grants was most frequently mentioned).
- ◆ Agencies have not communicated externally to their residents about the impact of the budget cuts on their programs and services; in fact many agencies continue to provide the same level of service with fewer resources (money and staff).

Two years have passed and in 2012 what, if any, changes have agencies undertaken to weather the continuing economic climate? The 2012 survey results reveal agencies continue to deal with reduced budgets, fewer staff, and no lessening of expectations by the public or policy makers. Is this taking a toll on remaining staff? What changes are agencies implementing to deal with fewer resources?

Overall park and recreation agencies report a downward trend relative to general fund support. The aggregate responses indicate a decrease of general fund support to 50-53% compared to the 57% average of general fund support in 2010. Additionally the average non-general fund support in 2012 decreased from 45% in 2010 to 37% in 2012.

In 2012, a higher percentage of agencies reported their budgets have stayed the same (39%) than reported in 2010 (15%). While not a large increase, it may reflect slightly improving financial conditions. The number of agencies reporting a decreased budget dropped significantly to 41% (a 34% decrease from 2010).

Agencies continue to rely on recession-sensitive revenue streams: fees and charges. In both 2010 and 2012 there is a

large gap between fees and charges and the other revenues sources:

Program Fees / Charges	46%
Rental, Camping Fees	11%
Assessments	11%
Other	6%
Grants	6%
Sponsorships	2%
Community Organizations	2%

A new question was asked in 2012 about taxing authority. Seventy-one (71%) percent of respondents indicated no autonomous authority; 19% indicated yes; and 10% indicated unsure. Of the 10% who indicated “unsure” it is likely they do not have an autonomous taxing authority which indicates that 80%+ of agencies do not possess this funding tool.

Questions were asked about cost recovery efforts. We defined cost recovery as the extent to which the full cost of the programs and services are paid through user fees, sponsorships, partnerships, grants, etc. The greatest percentages of agencies seek a cost recovery target of 41-50% or 51-60%. Few agencies seek cost recovery of 60% or higher. When asked who mandated the cost recovery, surprisingly 80% of agencies said there was no mandate for cost recovery.

What are agencies doing differently? Not much it appears – it is really more of the same. 2010 responses compare to 2012 responses as follows:

- ◆ Renegotiating employee salary and benefit contracts (up from 38% to 68%)
- ◆ Reorganizing departments/divisions/sections (up from 55% to 78%)
- ◆ Expanding supervisory span of control (up from 25% to 65%)
- ◆ Reorganizing business processes or practices (up from 38% to 57%)
- ◆ Deferring salary increases slightly increased to 65% (up from 57%)
- ◆ Offering incentives to retire (up from 23% to 46%)
- ◆ Vacating program areas (up from 18% to 30%)

Is there a light at the end of the tunnel? It’s pretty dim. In 2012, a higher percentage of agencies (53%) report their budget will stay the same for FY 13/14. Sixteen percent (16%) indicate a budget increase; 21% see a 5% reduction or less; 10% indicate a 6-10% reduction; and no respondents indicated a budget decrease over 10%.

Interestingly, initiating voter approved special taxation initiatives increased from 1% to 16%.

