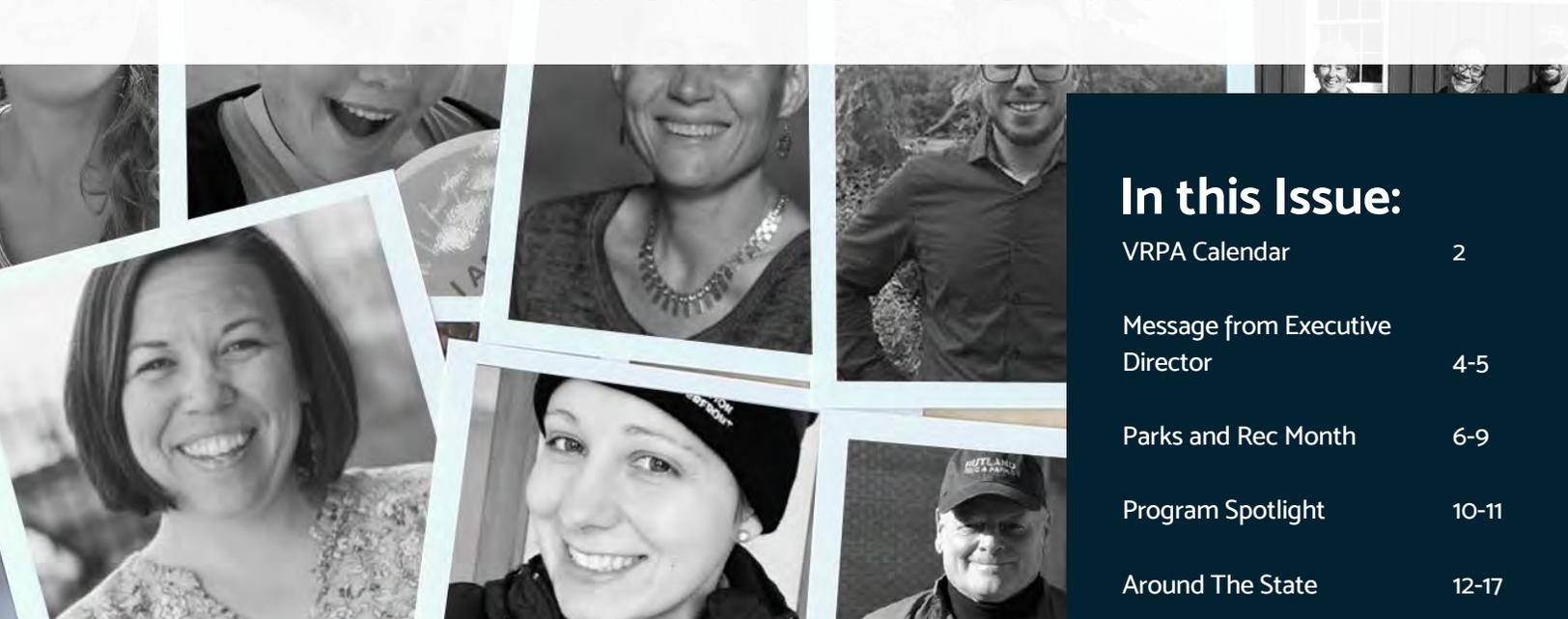




ADVOCATE

Vermont Recreation & Parks Association



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WE ARE PARKS AND RECREATION



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VRPA Newsletter

The VRPA Advocate is published three times a year by the Vermont Recreation and Parks Association. Contributions to the newsletter are welcome, including commentary on subjects of interest to Vermont's recreation professionals and volunteers.

Editor: Jessica Brodie

Next issue submission deadline:

August 21, 2020
Send to: Jessica@vrpa.org or by mail to:
VRPA, PO Box 33
Brownsville, VT, 05037



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2020

- Tuesdays 4:00PM** Weekly Director's Calls
- September 23–24** VT Conference on Recreation – Virtual!
- October 26–29** NRPA National Conference – Virtual!
- November 19** VT Performance Showcase
- December 3** VRPA Quarterly Meeting

If you have any suggestions for future trainings, workshops, or special events please let us know! Email Jessica@vrpa.org with your suggestions. We hope to see you all soon!

Mission

The mission of the Vermont Recreation and Parks Association is to provide training and resources to help Vermonters to "Create Community through People, Parks and Programs."



VRPA PRESIDENT'S
Perspective

Wait a minute...its July?!

It is hard to believe that we are halfway through 2020, yet with a quick thought, it feels as though so little has been accomplished. When the world "pauses" suddenly for a few months – but our planning keeps moving – we quickly find out we are about to blaze a new trail as we head into a fast-paced season.

Now, take a few extra moments to revisit the first half of the year. The list gets quite long when you realize all you have accomplished in the first six months of 2020 and what NEW challenges you have overcome.

We held our first VRPA Zoom Annual Meeting in May. After an abundance of emails to one another, a weekly virtual meeting was created to connect, share and learn. We blocked out time in our days to watch or listen to the Governor's press conferences. We got excited to see one another on virtual meetings... we also quickly learned that some days were better with the mic and camera off ourselves.

VRPA reminded the State that what we do and plan to do every day for our communities needed to stay a priority on the pandemic restart plans. Our email inboxes became overwhelmingly full of "new" work. Our meeting schedules filled up quickly. We needed our introvert friends to check in on us extroverts more often. Many of us learned to work from a home environment. Some of us also had to re-learn middle school math...please don't ask me to divide fractions and show you my work. We skillfully whipped up drive-through community events (that might just become new traditions). We learned how to support our staff – or did the best we could – as we ourselves learned how to do our jobs differently at the same time. We relied on many just as many relied on

us. I mean, who has experience living and working through a pandemic?!?

We also reminded our managers, governing boards, and communities how adaptable we are as Parks and Recreation Professionals. We work well through change; we are creative in how we perform our work; and we showcase the close relationships we have in our communities supporting local companies to update our messages and policies quickly.

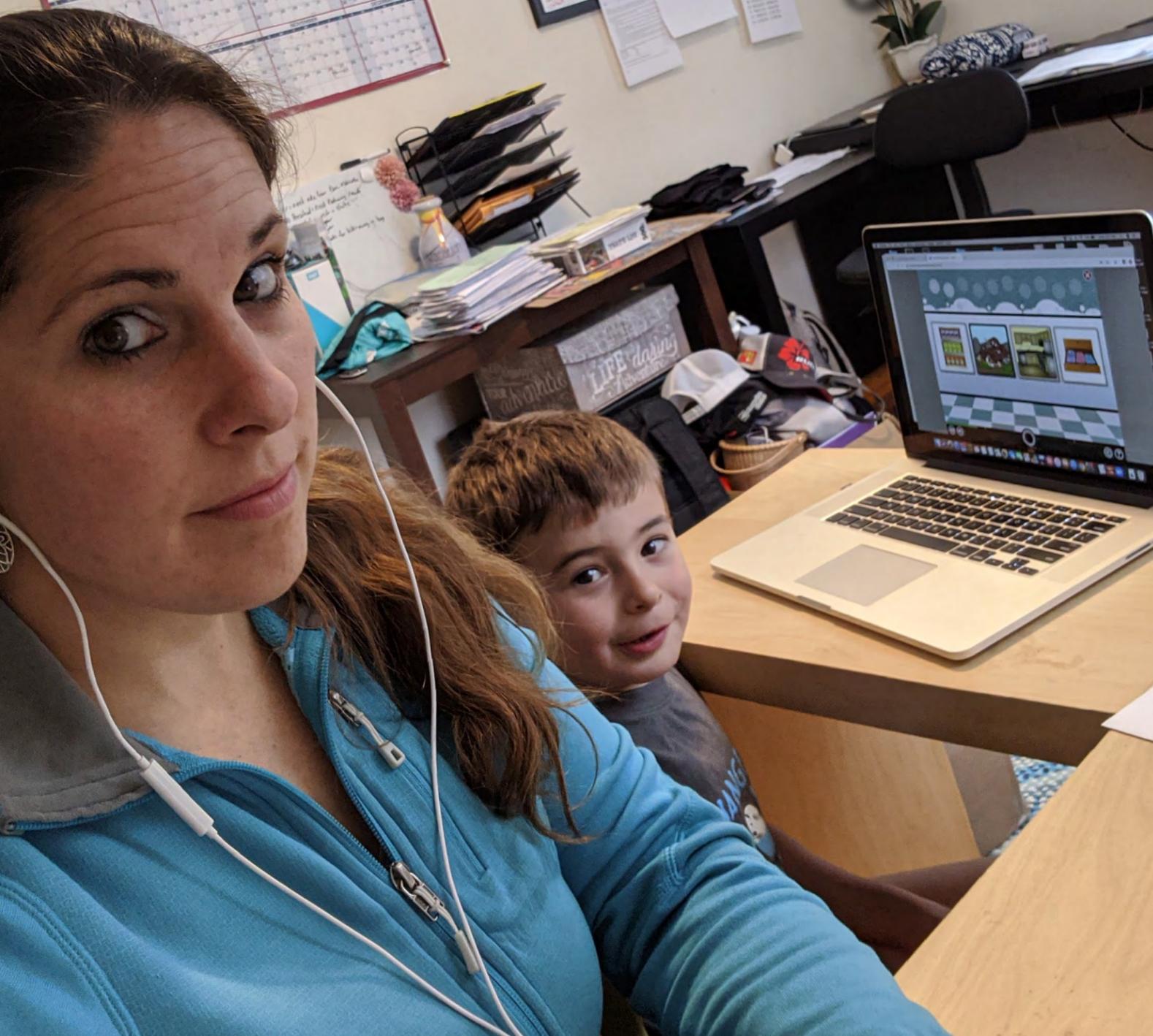
Through everything new, what word or term will Merriam-Webster choose this year to reflect a significant trend or aspect to the year? Here are a few they should consider: COVID, 'Rona, Coronavirus, pandemic, distant learning, Zoom, Teams, virtual programming, facial covering, social distancing, fogging, physical distancing, Breena – Jessica – Ken (Vermont's own first-name-only celebrities), heat map, restart plan, drive-in graduation, birthday car parades, quarantine, droplets...the list could and will go on and on as we work through the peaks and valleys of this virus.

VRPA is a resilient organization, and you are a stronger Parks and Recreation professional with each new challenge and opportunity that crosses your path. I'm excited to hear and see all of the new and creative ways you work through life moving forward. Remember to ask questions, share your successes... and your obstacles... and continue supporting the VRPA family.

Ally Vile
Ally Vile, CPRP
VRPA President

Message

from the Executive Director



“ Celebrating YOU this July ”

COVID-19. A phrase we have all become far too familiar with. Those five letters and two numbers have changed many of our lives in the matter of just a few months both personally and professionally, perhaps forever. What they have also done is shined the light on the ESSENTIAL work that all of YOU do day to day in the Parks & Recreation profession. Our Parks and Programs are essential and so are you!

YOU all have been the first to welcome kids back to a group setting since schools closed.

YOU all have provided necessary food deliveries for those in need.

YOU all have provided parks and public spaces for people to enjoy time outside among a pandemic.

YOU all have done more with less without skipping a beat.

YOU all have been creative to provide solutions to an array of challenges.

YOU all have come together to share ideas, share resources, and provide support to each other.

YOU all will help lead the path to recovery both mentally and physically.

These past few months have been challenging for many of us, but many of you have shined without even knowing it! I have been able to see how incredibly creative, dedicated, caring, and truly essential you all are. Thank you for being amazing professionals and for everything you have accomplished for your communities the past several months.

As we celebrate YOU this July for Parks & Recreation month please consider taking a moment to stop and take a breath from all you have been through the past few months. You have re-located offices, moved programs online, created entire new operational manuals, new program procedures, and have had limited contact with your staff and the community members you serve. These have been challenging times, but they can result in some good as well. Reflect back on your agency's mission and core values and take this time to

move forward in a fresh, new way. Change is hard, but often we can learn from the challenging times and move forward in a fresh, new way.

As I reflect personally on the past few months, I can say that it was certainly not easy to have three young kids at home and two working parents. There is so much we are thankful for though, and in times like these, those positive things are what we need to reflect on. I am thankful for a healthy family and active kids. I am thankful for access to amazing parks and trail networks. And thankful for the connection and our work in the Parks & Recreation field. I hope you and your family have been well and able to enjoy some added time together these past few months.

In the coming months, VRPA will be continuing to support you through Advocacy at the state level for new guidance, funding support, weekly emails & calls, and anything else that is needed. Though our calendar this year will look different than it has in the past, we will still be here to support you. That being said, it is important for you to continue to support us as well through your annual membership and involvement with our Virtual State Conference this year. We have also been financially hit by the pandemic as well after having to cancel several events that helped offset our operating budget expenses. We ask that you please continue to support us if you are able so we can keep supporting you.

I would like to thank all our members that have joined VRPA, and an extra big thank you to those that have volunteered so much of their time on our various committees to help plan all these wonderful events for everyone. It is amazing to see all the talented and hard working professionals come together to do great things. Keep up the amazing work everyone and I look forward to seeing you all soon! ■

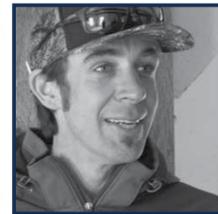
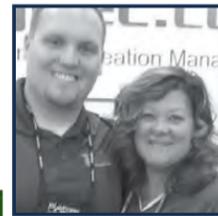
Sincerely,

Jessica Brodie

Jessica Brodie
Executive Director



WE ARE PARKS AND RECREATION



July is here, and that means it's Park and Recreation Month!

Every day, in communities across the country, the people of parks and recreation are providing essential services and making their communities better places to live, work and play. Because of their critical work, NRPA & VRPA want to shift the narrative of parks and recreation — and we can't think of a better time to start this movement than Park and Recreation Month.

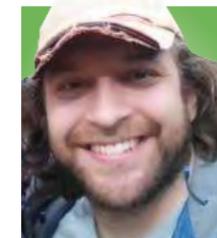
This July, we will begin to redefine the field of parks and recreation as an essential, vital necessity by sharing how park and recreation professionals are frontline staff, confronting our most pressing health, environmental and social challenges.

This year's theme is "We Are Parks and Recreation," and we want to highlight the diversity of park and

recreation professionals and showcase their selfless work. It's Park and Recreation Month, and there's no better way to celebrate than by lifting up the people who make it happen all year long. You can join us in celebrating throughout the month by sharing your park and recreation story using the hashtag #WeAreParksAndRec.

Celebrating YOU this July!

July is Park and Recreation Month, and in keeping with this year's theme of "We Are Parks and Recreation," we are highlighting park and recreation professionals from communities big and small across Vermont in various career paths!



Alex Mihavics
Bristol Recreation Department
Assistant Director

Tell us your story related to Parks & Recreation: Growing up I attended summer day camps in parks in my hometown of Elmhurst Illinois. The summer after I graduated High School I started working for my Park District as a Summer grounds maintenance worker. After 4 summers of cutting grass and trimming trees in the parks where I grew up, I was ready for a change of scenery and took an internship at an Outdoor Education Center in the Adirondacks. Upon the completion of my internship I returned to the Midwest to work at a Summer Camp and Outdoor Education Center in Southern Wisconsin. Several years later I accepted a position back at the Adirondacks at the Center where I was previously an intern. During this time my wife and I decided to finally drop anchor in Hinesburg Vermont. In 2018, After nearly three years of commuting across the lake I accepted a position at the Bristol Recreation Department. My story has been filled with incredible locations, organizations and friends (too many to list) and centers around one theme: sharing a love and appreciation for the outdoors.

Tell us something about you to share: I'm an Eagle Scout!



Kirsten Santor
Essex Junction Recreation & Parks
Program Director – Community Recreation

Tell us your story related to Parks & Recreation: As a kid I went to a rock climbing camp in Fairlee and that sparked my interest in rec as a career. I find it pretty ironic that every year I attend the state rec conference less than a mile from that camp....small world. I accidentally graduated high school in 3 years and went to Paul Smith's College for Recreation, Adventure Travel, and Ecotourism. I accidentally graduated college in 3 years too (there might be a pattern here). I had absolutely no plan and nowhere to live after college, but I was lucky to get a job in the fall after graduation as the Rec Coordinator at Paul Smith's. I did that for 6 years during which I re-built the Outing Program and led college students on trips to Scotland, Hawaii, and on a National Parks tour in the West. I knew I wanted to come back to Vermont so my husband and I quit our jobs and made the move. In the process I found the EJRP job posting and I got the job as the Program Director. I have since completed my masters in Recreation Administration as well as becoming a Certified Parks and Recreation Executive. I love that I worked in the rec field and how much of a positive impact I can make on the world because of it!



Reuben Allen
Vermont State Parks
Parks Regional Manager – Southwest Region

Tell us your story related to Parks & Recreation: I grew up in Idaho where I spent my formative years enjoying the myriad outdoor recreation opportunities the mountains, lakes, and streams offered. My now wife (a Michigander) and I first came to Vermont in 2013 to work as seasonal park managers at Lake St. Catherine State Park. When we left Vermont that November, we stopped to take a picture of the Welcome to Vermont sign when we left Vermont and entered New York State, thinking we would likely not be back. Two years later, however, we were back to work again with Vermont State Parks – this time as Park Managers of Quechee State Park – and we haven't left since. I am now the Regional Manager for the Vermont State Parks southwestern region which stretches from Woodford State Park near Bennington to Mt. Philo State Park in Charlotte. I am proud to now represent the Vermont State Parks as a member of the VRPA executive committee, and I am excited to get started with the valuable work we do.

Tell us something about you to share:

I grew up in rural Idaho. After graduating from Idaho State University with a degree in Journalism, and a short stint as a newspaper reporter, I spent the next three years serving with different national service organizations throughout the eastern US. During this time I met my wife, who found our first jobs bringing us to the Green Mountains with the Vermont State Parks. Now we have three little park rangers who love to take us exploring the great outdoors of Vermont and beyond.



Sarah Carter
Burlington Parks Recreation and Waterfront
Recreation Programmer – Activities Programmer @ The Champlain Senior Center

Tell us your story related to Parks & Recreation: The Champlain Senior Center had to close due to the corona virus outbreak on Friday March 13. On Monday the 16th we started delivering meals on Wheels to our participants. Meals cover 7 days of nutrition for the folks. At this time we have delivered 1500 Meals in and around Burlington. My co-worker Mulu Tewelde checks in daily with each senior to talk and let them talk and tell what's on their mind. We also put in their meal bags a weekly packet of crossword puzzles, word searches, adult coloring and funny stories. Also we miss you notes from the staff here at the CORE. For those who have the technology we send virtual tours to National Parks and Museums. We are also going to start telephone Bingo. They have a call in number and we call bingo over the phone and they play at home. We are also fortunate to get daily baked goods donated from Great Harvest Bakery in Burlington. They love the cinnamon rolls, cookies, scones and bread treats in their meal bag. Green Mountain Coffee has also donated coffee for food bags. Age Well was so generous to make a large donation for Sunshine Bags we will be putting together each week for the folks. We all get excited when we get a care package with snacks and treats to brighten our day. We will be together soon in person but we are still together in mind and spirit. Stay well.

Tell us something about you to share: On my recreation time I love to fly fish and spend time at my cabin in the Adirondacks with my dog Pappy and sister Susan. ■



For more information:



800.861.1209 or 508.393.1963
Email: nerg@nerecgroup.com



PETERS

family



KIM PETERS

What influenced your decision to choose the career you did?

Actually in College at Ohio State University I was studying to be a High School Teacher, but after I graduated I decided to work in a professional setting at Procter and Gamble. About 7 years later I had decided to stay home with my two boys, but that did not last long. I began to coach Competitive Swimming at the local YMCA, and before I knew it I was asked to be the director. What I love about working with families and programming is the many opportunities that continue to change. I love going to work every day with new challenges and every day it different then the day before.

Career positions held.

- Logistics and Customer Service at Procter and Gamble
- Christian Educator at Trinity Lutheran Church
- Head Swim Coach at YMCA
- Killington Recreation Director
- Superintendent Rutland Recreation and Parks

What do you consider your greatest career accomplishments?

When I was a Head Swim Coach in Southwest Ohio, I juggled working odd hours and a family of 5. I was a female Head Swim Coach (the only female, among 35 other head Coaches) and I was recognized as Coach of the Year in 2014.

More recently, the challenges of being in a pandemic with COVID and creating safe opportunities for the community, and making hard decisions daily.

What have been your biggest professional challenges?

Professional challenges for me would be managing a family of 6 (including me) and a career. I made a decision about 7 years into my professional career to stay home and work part-time.

Professional advice from lessons you have learned...

I believe I have “landed” where I am now because in the last 20 years I listened! I listened and observed HARD! I learned from everyone, good and bad. I learned that not everyone can be managed the same, I probably learned this because my own children are different, and I needed to adjust to each of my children and their individual needs. I now manage 12 Full time employees and over 100 Seasonal employees, an open approach is crucial and listening to each of them is important.

What are some of the benefits you value most as a member of VRPA?

Sharing ideas and real life experiences with each other. If I have question or thought, the first place I go is to the VRPA. The resources available at the VRPA is so important and valuable.

Personal Recreation Interests.

Wow...hard question. My own personal Recreation Interest involve any type of sports for Youth and Adults that create a safe environment

Family.

Our family moved to Vermont in 2017, which was only supposed to be a 2 year commitment for my husband, Matt

Peters who works at General Electric in Rutland. However, as a family we decided to continue in Rutland.

I have four children: Bailey Peters attends Southern Connecticut and will be a Senior this year. He has also been a 3 year College Athlete as a swimmer and hopes to finish his Senior year swimming. Dakota Peters will be a Sophomore at Miami University in Ohio, Dakota was 2 year Vermont State Wrestler Champion for Rutland High School.

Justine Peters will be a Senior at Rutland High School, but also will be attending early college at Castleton University.

Mattie Lou Peters will be a Sophomore at Rutland High School and is three sport athlete.

Anything else?

I have been so fortunate to work in such a positive, fun, and challenging environment. All my past careers/jobs have led me to this amazing journey. ■

“The resources available at the VRPA is so important and valuable.”

AROUND

THE

STATE

Vermont's 2020 Hiking Season & COVID-19

Hiking is the ideal outdoor recreational activity for these times since you can get outside for exercise and fresh air while still adhering to social distancing and hygiene guidelines, but let's be smart about it, and above all, let's be sensitive to trail conditions and courteous to other hikers itching to get out just as much as we are.

Trail Conditions and Backcountry Facility Closures

Trails on state and federal lands are open, but caution is still needed. GMC volunteers were delayed in starting their spring trail maintenance due to COVID-19 restrictions and late-season snowpack. We will also be operating with very limited field staff this season and will need your help in stewarding the trails.

Here are a few tips for hikers:

- Plan ahead and prepare. Now is the time to practice extra caution and know the risks of any activity.
- Always let someone know where you will be hiking and when you expect to return.
- Carry a map and know which trailhead you need to return to.
- Bring a warm extra layer as mountaintops are chilly year-round and Vermont's weather can quickly change.
- Bring rain gear; even an emergency poncho or garbage bag will help in a pinch.
- Stay hydrated and bring food for long hikes.
- Report blowdowns or other issues on the trail to GMC or the appropriate land manager.

At the time of this writing, guidelines for using backcountry facilities such as shelters and privies was still being developed. Please check GMC's website for the most up-to-date information: www.greenmountainclub.org/covid-19-response/. Dispersed and primitive camping is another option for overnight trips at some locations on the Long Trail and Appalachian Trail in Vermont.

Primitive camping along the trail can be difficult. Not only can it be hard to find a flat, clear spot for a tent in the rugged terrain of the Green Mountains, but it's complicated because the rules vary depending on who the land manager is:

- **Private Land:** Camping is limited to designated areas only on private land. Use of this land is permitted through the generosity of the landowners, so please do not abuse the privilege.
- **State Forests:** In certain state forests, primitive camping is allowed but your campsite must be 100' from any water source, 200' from any trail or property line, 1000' from any traveled road, and below 2500' in elevation. See FPR's website for more information and locations.
- **Federal Land:** Camping between shelters is permitted along much of the Long Trail in the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). GMNF recommends campsites be at least 200' from any water source or trail, and not to camp in the alpine zones.

New COVID-19 Trail Etiquette

As with all outdoor recreation activities, hikers should go out only if you're healthy, have not been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, and/or have not recently traveled from a location with a CDC-issued travel advisory. Wash or sanitize your

hands frequently, don't touch your face, and embrace a "Park, Play and Move On" mentality.

If you are heading out on the trail, please follow the updated COVID-19 trail etiquette below:

Know where and when to go: It's best if we don't all go to the most popular trailheads at the most popular times of day. Early morning or evening tends to be less crowded. Dispersal is key! You can plan your trip on www.trailfinder.info. If you arrive at a parking lot and it is full, find another trail.

Maintain a physical distance of at least six feet from others: This includes dogs: please leash your dog. They are members of your household and need to keep their social distance as well (most standard leashes are six feet in length).

Wear a cloth mask or face covering: Any time you know others may be present, you should have your mask on, even while hiking. Keeping it at the ready is okay if you can quickly and safely pull it up over your nose and mouth, doing this well before you come within six feet of others.

Slow down, step back, and let people know when you're approaching: Awareness and consideration are key. Everyone should yield to everyone right now and making some noise as you approach is recommended. A friendly "Hello!" followed by a pause to figure out your next move is the best tactic. If you find yourself coming up behind a slower walker and there's not six feet to pass safely, slow down instead. If somebody is getting too close to you, step back to allow enough space.

Step off the trail when needed: If the trail isn't wide enough to allow for six feet in passing, step off the trail at a 90-degree angle, being careful not to tread on



plants if at all possible. Once you're six feet off, wait for the approaching group to clear the area before retracing your footsteps. Please do not cut a new trail parallel to the existing track.

Keep single file (even on wide trails): Keep your group single file (this may mean you have to hike more slowly than you want to): do not spread out all over the trail. When you let someone pass, step off to the side and stay put — don't walk alongside the path. The same goes for when you encounter mud in the trail — stay on the trail and go right through it!

Don't stand across the trail to chat: It is great to see friends and acquaintances (who's that behind the awesome plaid cloth mask?) but stopping on either side of the trail to chat just creates a breath "gauntlet" that others must either pass through or go off-trail to avoid.

Embrace an arrive, play, and leave mentality: Do not gather in groups before or after activities.

Hiking with children: If you are hiking with children, set expectations before getting out of the car. Remind

them not to run up to people or dogs, and to cough and sneeze into their elbows while turned away from people. Children older than 2 years in age can and should be encouraged to use cloth masks or face coverings. Remind your kids often of the new rules; they will need lots of kind and consistent reminders of what this new behavior needs to look like — be sure that you are modeling it. ■

For more hiking information and recommendations contact:

GMC's visitor center staff
802-244-7037 | gmc@greenmountainclub.org.

GMC offers waterproof paper maps and guidebooks for sale in the GMC online store, and digital maps of popular trails in Vermont through the Avenza Maps app, available in the App Store and Google Play. You can also chat with other hikers and see others' trip reports in [GMC's Facebook Group](#).



**TENNIS.
GET OUT
AND PLAY.**



USTA Launches Get Out & Play Campaign!

"The site includes several helpful resources for anyone interested in starting or already playing tennis"

With the ability to socially distance and socially connect at the same time while having fun and getting great exercise the United States Tennis Association has launched its [Get out and Play! campaign](#) (30-second video). Check out the campaign's [webpage here](#). The site includes several helpful resources for anyone interested in starting or already playing tennis, including how to play safely, the health benefits of

tennis as a lifetime sport, how to choose the right sized racket, how to play and keep score, and also tennis at-home activities.

The USTA has also supplied this helpful Playing Tennis Safely - [Player Tip and Recommendations During Covid-19](#) infographic which you can post on your tennis courts and/or share in your community. ■





VT SENIOR GAMES

to Host Golf, Tennis in Pickleball
State Championships in 2020

After weeks of staying tuned into Governor Scott's COVID guidance for recreating outdoors and returning to play, the Vermont Senior Games Committee recently made a decision about the 2020 Games season. The Vermont Senior Games will host three sports this year; all other events have been cancelled until 2021 due to COVID-19 limitations.

The three sports being hosted will be Golf at Neshobe Golf Club in Brandon on August 10th, Tennis at Burlington Country Club on August 22 & 23rd, and Pickleball on September 11-13 at a location yet to be confirmed. Athletes aged 50 and older by December 31, 2020 are eligible to participate. More information, registration details, and special COVID guidelines for this year's Vermont Senior Games events are all available at vermontseniorgames.org.

For all senior athletes who were hoping to qualify this summer for the National Senior Games next September, the National Senior Games has issued new qualifying standards for the 2021 Nationals in Florida. Full details are available on the National Senior Games [website](#).

To summarize, the NSGA has established these one-time COVID-related qualification guidelines for the 2021 National Senior Games:

- If a state is UNABLE to conduct a sporting event, athletes from that state who qualified for the 2017

Nationals in Birmingham OR the 2019 Nationals in Albuquerque automatically qualify. This doesn't mean they had to attend Nationals, just qualify.

- If a state is ABLE to conduct an event, regular 2021 NSGA rules apply AND those who qualified for the 2019 Nationals qualify as well.
- In addition, the NSGA will also offer a new Open Registration Period for athletes who can't qualify in 2020 and did not qualify in 2019 or 2017, and for athletes who turned 50 in 2019 or 2020. Athletes can just apply and perhaps be allowed to participate on a "first come, first served" basis, depending on the numbers in the specific sport.
- There is one additional change – Power Walk will remain an open sport, no qualification needed. The same is true for Corn Hole.

To Vermont's parks and recreation professionals, we would really appreciate it if you would share this information with your older athletes! We look forward to being back in full swing with 14+ state championship events in 2021 and for this year, we look forward to hosting these three events in full compliance with state COVID guidance. ■

Questions? Contact:

George Moltz | Vermont Senior Games Coordinator
gwmoltz@gmail.com | 802-779-5119



Facilities Use Guidance for Visitors

For more info, [click here](#)



Travel Restrictions

Quarantine requirements are in place except under certain conditions. Latest info: accd.vermont.gov/travel



Social Distancing

Staying 6' apart from others not in your group is required.



**STRONGLY
ENCOURAGED**
AROUND OTHERS

Wear a Mask

Wear a cloth mask to cover your nose and mouth when around others.



Group Size Limit

Group sizes are limited to 25 people or fewer.

**ENJOY VERMONT
STATE PARKS.**

Montpelier Union Elementary

School Playground

by Tom Hand, ASLA, PLA, Drew Pollack-Bruce, CPRP, and Kirstin Lamonde

An opportunity for re-invention.

As the existing Union Elementary School Playground in Montpelier reached maturity, it was important that both school and community members worked together to envision its future. The playground served not just the elementary school, but had become an important community and neighborhood resource, remaining busy after-school and on weekends. The school community envisioned a nature-based design solution to better integrate PLAY + LEARNING, while also addressing accessibility, erosion, and stormwater issues. SE Group led the consultant team as Landscape Architect, with Engineering Ventures as civil engineer, and the Johnson Company/VHB was the environmental consultant. The team created a design that increases PLAY options, educational opportunities, stabilizes the site, and transforms it into a valuable resource for the local community.

Addressing the challenges.

Existing playgrounds at the school were installed when a new cafeteria wing was constructed in the mid 1990's. Many of the existing site features—including walls, pavements, and stairs—had reached their lifespan and were beginning to fail. The school frequently dealt with flooding of the paved areas outside doorways due to a failed stormwater system. Outdated play equipment and little shade offered limited accessibility and activities for students- who could frequently be found playing in the woods behind the school.

In addition to these challenges, soil tests performed early in the project identified isolated areas of contaminated soils—remnants of both the local site history as well as the industrial past of Vermont's Capital City. The project team worked with a local environmental consultant and the Vermont DEC to develop the corrective action plan for soil remediation.

Crafting solutions.

The concept for the playground design integrates structured and unstructured play opportunities into the site, adjusts grades to incorporate PLAY and access into the hillsides, and addresses stormwater collection and treatment throughout the site. Site circulation pathways define landscaped “spaces”



where more intensive play areas and equipment such as a large climbing structure could be thoughtfully positioned. Grades along the side of the existing school were pulled back carving an accessible pathway into the slope to the upper playground. PLAY amenities including an embankment slide, stone amphitheater, and an elevated outdoor classroom called the “NEST” are incorporated into hillside, increasing the benefit and use of the large hillside.

Guided by the community's vision, the newly constructed playground uses natural materials as a primary aspect of the site design. Locally sourced black locust logs are used extensively for curbing, stair treads, and climbing elements. Native trees, shrubs, and perennials help define play areas, provide shade, treat stormwater and provide LEARNING opportunities for students. Quarried limestone blocks are used as sitting walls throughout the site and amphitheater.

Stormwater is filtered through river rock swales, sediment basins, and a bioretention swale and is ultimately treated in two gravel wetlands installed at the perimeter of the school. These constructed wetlands are set within gabion walls and planted with native shrubs including red dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), perennials (*Aster novae-angliae*), and sedges (*Carex vulpinoidea*). The gravel wetlands provide habitat and excellent opportunities for science and nature-based LEARNING.

A revitalized community asset.

The playground's design uses each element as an opportunity to provide unstructured play and education, supplemented with commercial play equipment to provide adventure and motion. The Montpelier Union Elementary School Playground Project realizes the community's vision, incorporating PLAY into the daily life and rhythm of the students and the community at large. Creative site design. Natural materials. Sustainable approaches. Every opportunity on the site is now a chance to PLAY + LEARN. ■

Facility Feature



Landscape Architect: SE Group
Civil Engineer: Engineering Ventures
Environmental Consultant: The Johnson Company/VHB
Vestibule Architect: Black River Design
NEST Architect: Norwich University Design + Build Collaborative
General Contractor: Engineers Construction Inc.
Landscape Contractor: DiStefano Landscaping

77th Annual Vermont Conference on Recreation

CREATING OUR

vision



**WE'RE GOING
VIRTUAL**

September 23 & 24, 2020

Exhibitor Registration

Attendee Registration

By: Adriane Martin, Conference Committee Chair

"As you are aware, many states and national conferences for 2020 have been shifting to Virtual options due to an array of circumstances preventing many from being able to gather in person this year. Though Vermont has been impacted less by the virus, we have felt many economic impacts from the pandemic. Many departments have seen drastic budget cuts & reduction of staff, all while performing other essential functions such as childcare, food delivery, and keeping parks open. Due to these challenges and budget reductions, our Conference and Executive Committees have made the decision to also shift our 2020 Conference to a Virtual platform this year." [Read the rest of the letter here.](#)

"We are all truly in this together, and we hope that you will see the value in joining us again this year, even though the format and in-person connection will be different."



KEYNOTE: Michael Kirschman

City of Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation Director

From tracking wolves along the Canadian border to living and working in the South Pacific Samoan Islands, Michael has had an amazing educational and professional journey – and it is far from over. In between visiting new parks (and experiencing new P&R conferences!), kayaking, hiking, bird watching, enjoying the beach with his wife and daughters, or playing scrabble or racketball (yes, people still play this), he is also a passionate P&R professional.

Personal highlights of his career include: restoring tall grass prairies in Illinois, partnering with a non-profit senior center to build a Window on Wildlife bird watching amenity at a their facility, introducing off road Segway tours at a large nature preserve, raising private funds and installing the first nature based playground in Charlotte NC, working on multiple P&R master plans, bond and levy issues, keynoting at the New Zealand national P&R conference, and most recently being inducted into the American Academy for P&R Administration.

Currently Michael is the City of Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation Director. The department manages 290+ parks, 7,000+ acres, seven large recreation centers, 185 playgrounds, 200+ athletic fields, 14 boat launches,

a marina, and the Princess Anne Athletic Complex - a tournament level 16 field complex. The Department is the City's largest childcare provider through it's Before and After School program at all 56 elementary schools and also provides maintenance for 512 city buildings, all 91 public schools and athletic fields, and 340 miles of roadway median. The department employs 1,500 staff with a \$67M operating budget (FY20). It was the first Virginia CAPRA accredited agency in 1999 and is one of only 13 in the nation to have maintained accreditation for the past 20 years.

Prior to Virginia Beach, Michael worked for 12 years at the Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation Department, serving a population of 1 million including the City of Charlotte and six towns, first as Division Director for Nature Preserves and the last 6 years as Deputy Director.

He also worked for park districts in Illinois and Ohio, consulted for the National Park Service, worked for the American Samoa EPA, and started his career over 25 years ago as a Soil & Water Conservation District educator. Michael received his bachelor's degree from Westminster College PA and master's degree from Antioch University WA. He speaks extensively throughout the country on P&R topics, and has instructed at Green School, Supervisors Management School, and currently at Director's School. A native of Pittsburgh PA, he is - of course - a staunch Steeler fan and even to this day you may hear him utter "yinz guys" every once in a while. ■



VRPA 2020 Annual Meeting

Summary & New Executive Committee Welcome

We welcomed new members to our Executive Committee this year, as we elect the new positions every other year. It is my pleasure to introduce your VRPA Executive Committee for 2020-22:

- Ally Vile, President
- Rob Peterson, President-Elect
- April Cioffi, Secretary
- Melissa Cate, Treasurer
- Scott Hausler, Past-President
- Drew Pollak-Bruce
- Brett Leonard
- Reuben Allen
- Joanne Putzier

We welcome our new board members, and thank every member of VRPA for their involvement and contributions to our association.



Reuben Allen

Joanne Putzier

ANNUAL REPORT

It was an annual meeting like never before – we went Virtual!

Although we could not all be together in person, many VRPA members came together on Wednesday, June 13th from the comfort of their own homes for our Annual meeting. The meeting started with a great education session, “The State of Youth Sports: What’s going right (and wrong) in 2020” lead by UNH’s Bob Barcelona, Ph.D, Department Chair & Associate Professor. The session was held via Zoom, which many found familiar and easy to use.

We had originally envisioned an Annual meeting this year at the Sailing Center in Burlington, but in the age of COVID-19, everything we originally planned was turned upside down. We delayed are traditional Annual Awards to the fall until we have a better idea of what COVID-19 means for potential gatherings in the future. Once we are able to gather again, we will celebrate and honor all of those that deserve recognition from this past year!

Thank you very much to everyone who “tuned in” to the Annual Meeting and to everyone who contributed to the success of all VRPA events and meetings this past year. For those of you who were not there, the Annual Report is included in this issue of the newsletter.

I look forward to continuing to learn and grow together through these challenging, innovative, and unique times.

Jessica Brodie
Executive Director

ST. JOHNSBURY ACADEMY STATE TRACK MEET

2020 VRPA



Normally this time of year we are putting the final touches on the Annual State Track Meet held at St. Johnsbury Academy where hundreds of youth runners have gathered each summer to showcase all their hard work and abilities on the track. Unfortunately, we had to cancel this year's meet because of COVID-19. We hope to see everyone back in person next year, and hope that everyone will continue to run and practice their skills at home.

We would like to thank Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont and St. Johnsbury Academy for continuing to support the State Track Meet each year as well. Thank you!

In the absence of this year's State meet, we did want to help provide another option for youth. We encourage every track & field youth athlete to check out the [USATF Youth Virtual Summer Challenge!](#)

USATF is excited to announce the first USATF Youth Virtual Summer

Challenge in conjunction with our partners at AthleticNET. The Challenge is open to both USATF Youth Members and non-members, and will run July 10 - July 31. Each registrant will receive a unique USATF Youth Virtual Summer Challenge competitor medal. In addition, USATF-Youth Members will receive a virtual race bib to wear while competing! ■

[Click to read: Rules & FAQs](#)



REGISTER NOW!

**Results submission window
July 10 - 31**



SUMMERMA 2020

a trail map to our future

Because of the changes that COVID-19 brought for our 2020 season we were not able to offer an in-person staff training this year. We did, however, still want to be there for the communities and staff that are still working to provide, mentor, and teach at multiple capacities around the State of Vermont. For 2020, we put together a live virtual panel discussion CEU call as well as the following online resource guide to help our membership provide safe and enriching experiences for campers in our communities.

Online Resource Guide!

The virtual call was held on Tuesday, June 9th and we had over 40 people in attendance! The speakers on the call included: Kim Peters, Superintendent Recreation and Parks, City of Rutland & Dr. Breena Holmes, Director of Child and Maternal Health at the VT Department of Health who both spoke about summer 2020 camp guidelines and implementation. We also had our own committee chair, Jazmin Averbuck, Resident Camp Director/Outdoor Program Coordinator, talk about How to Engage Programming not in person & Overnight Camps. To top off our call, Scott Moore delivered a special "playnote" presentation on Camp Culture & Counselors, Motivation, & Direction for moving forward.

Included in the guide are details about certification changes, links to training videos

and other inspirational talks and presentations, sample documents, and so much more. We hope you find this information useful and relevant. Please share with your year-round and seasonal staff members as this is designed to be valuable to everyone!

We hope to keep this as a working document in the year to come so we can also provide necessary updates and resources for the years to come. Thank you for all of your work through this difficult time. We hope this guide finds you safe and healthy as you provide programs and resources to Vermont families and communities.

Jazmin Averbuck, Summerama Committee Chair

Jessica Brodie, VRPA Executive Director

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FOREST PRODUCTS



The annual **VRPA Membership Directory** is available to all current members in electronic and hard-copy format.



Access to VRPA library.



Opportunities to meet other people who work and volunteer in parks and recreation.



Access to certification, awards, grant information, technical assistance, and many other resources.

For more information, visit vrpa.org

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE VERMONT RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION

The members of the Vermont Recreation and Parks Association **meet four times a year:** in March and December for Quarterly Meetings which include a 0.1CEU Education Program, for the Annual Meeting each May, and in the Fall for the state recreation conference known as the Annual Vermont Conference on Recreation. All current members receive notice of these meetings either via mail or email. These are all great opportunities to network with parks and recreation colleagues from throughout the state.

The **VRPA newsletter, *The Advocate***, is published three times each year in the Winter, Spring, & Fall. All current members receive an electronic copy and is posted on the VRPA website.

Nearly every Friday, the **weekly Recreation Check-In** is sent to all current members via email. This provides up-to-date information about VRPA news, current issues in parks and recreation, funding and grant opportunities, employment opportunities, and an opportunity to ask questions of other VRPA members and get help with your issues and challenges. Many members consider this to be the most significant benefit of being a VRPA member. ■

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ORGANIZATION _____

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OFFICE PHONE _____ CELL PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

CLASSIFICATION (See next page for classification descriptions)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agency (check one)	No. of Persons	Membership Fee
<input type="radio"/> 1-4 staff	_____	\$285
<input type="radio"/> 5-10 staff	_____	\$395
<input type="radio"/> 11+ staff	_____	\$510
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Professional	___1___	\$80
<input type="checkbox"/> Board/Commission*	_____	\$115
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial**	___1___	\$190
<input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Friend <input type="checkbox"/> Retiree (check one)	___1___	\$25
<input type="checkbox"/> Honorary Life	___1___	Complimentary

* (Includes ALL board/commission members)
** (inc. link from VRPA website)

Check enclosed Payment being mailed Total amount due \$ _____

New memberships received in the months of Nov, Dec and Jan are half price. New memberships received in the last three months of our fiscal year (Feb, March and April) are full price and include the following year membership also.

MEMBERSHIP INVOLVEMENT

Would you like to become more involved with VRPA? Listed below are the various VRPA committees. Please check if you are interested and someone will contact you. Thank you for your interest!

- Membership
- Newsletter
- Performance Showcase
- Summerama
- Executive Committee
- Track & Field
- Awards
- Maintenance Workshop
- State Conference
- Northern NE Conference
- Other ways you'd like to help: _____

Is there a VRPA member who influenced your decision to join? _____

Are you a member of NRPA? No Yes, who? _____

**IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY RENEWED YOUR 2019-2020 VRPA MEMBERSHIP, IT IS TIME.
IF YOU HAVE ALREADY RENEWED, THANK YOU!**

Online: vrpa.org | Mail: send printed application to VRPA, P.O. Box 33, Brownsville, VT 05037
Questions? Call the VRPA office at 802-878-2077



ADVOCATE

Vermont Recreation & Parks Association

ISSUE 97 | SUMMER 2020