



ADVOCATE

Vermont Recreation & Parks Association

VRPA PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Melissa Cate, CPRP,
VRPA President

Happy 2019! As is common, the dawn of a new year provides the opportunity for reflection on the past year as well as resolutions for the new one. The ancient Babylonians, some 4,000 years ago, were the first to hold recorded new year celebrations during a massive 12-day religious festival known as Akitu. They crowned a new king or reaffirmed their loyalty to the reigning king and also made promises to the gods to pay their debts and return any objects they had borrowed. These promises could be considered the forerunners of our New Year's resolutions. If the Babylonians kept to their word, their pagan gods would bestow favor on them for the coming year. If not, they would fall out of the gods' favor.

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Northern New England Conference Takeaways

28



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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: Betsy Terry

Next issue submission deadline:
May 1, 2019
Send to: info@vrpa.org or by mail to:
VRPA, 721 Main St.
Colchester, VT, 05446



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2019

March 14	VRPA March Quarterly Meeting Montpelier
March 26-27	Certified Pool Operator (CPO) Course South Burlington
May 16	VRPA Annual Meeting Waterbury
June 2	Summerama Summer Staff Training Barre
June 6	Maintenance Workshop Middlebury
July 20	State Track Meet St. Johnsbury Academy
September 24-26	NRPA Conference Baltimore
October 10-11	Vermont State Recreation Conference Lake Morey
November 21	Performance Showcase Lake Morey
December TBD	December Quarterly Meeting

For full descriptions of upcoming events & trainings visit, vrpa.org

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VRPA President's Perspective

Melissa Cate, CPRP, VRPA President



While I don't necessarily concern myself with falling out of the gods' favor, I do generally attempt to make resolutions (or at least best efforts!) to improve myself in the coming year. Often these resolutions relate to exercise, diet, sleep, spending habits or to being a better manager, mother, wife, or friend. It never really shocks me when my resolutions fail, typically by about Valentine's Day! So this year I thought that perhaps I will just try to KEEP doing some of the positive things I started – or continued – doing in 2018. These included getting back into gardening and puzzling, cooking more healthy meals with my husband, vacationing with my girlfriends and spending more time with my mother who turns 80(!) in March.

In my VRPA world, this "resolution" to keep on track means I will continue to learn more about VRPA's programs and to participate and volunteer as fully as possible, particularly in those programs I have not attended in the past – like the Certified Pool Operator's Course this March, or the Maintenance Workshop in June and the State Track Meet in July. VRPA has so many fantastic opportunities for members to volunteer in support of our state organization and I encourage everyone to seek out your role within VRPA – more

engagement only results in a stronger organization!

A new year inevitably brings change to our lives. This is true with VRPA as well, as we begin the process of searching for a new Executive Director, to take Betsy's place (can anyone really do that?) when she retires next summer. Although I have never been someone overly comfortable with change – and this one will hurt! – I am committed to working alongside Betsy and the Executive Board to make this process

as painless and seamless and successful as possible. I urge our members to reach out to me or any Board member with feedback or suggestions as we move through this period of succession. We have much work to do before summer so that next year at this time when we look back on 2019, we will be confident that we did all we could

to make VRPA the best it can be. I look forward to working with all of you in 2019 and to being the best we all can be. And I promise, if I borrowed any objects from you in 2018, I will try my best to return them in 2019! ■

Melissa Cate

Melissa Cate, CPRP
VRPA President (2018-2020)

“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.”
- Socrates

22nd Annual

New England Regional Turfgrass Conference & Show

March 5th-7th, 2019
R.I. Convention Center, Providence RI

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 Thurs., March 7 • 9am-2pm

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Tues. March 5 • 8am - 5pm *Pre-Conference Seminars*
 Wed., March 6 • 8am - 11am & 2pm - 4pm
Golf, Sports Turf & Grounds, Equipment Techs.
 Thurs., March 7 • 8-10am & 2pm - 4pm
Golf, Sports Turf & Grounds, Equipment Techs and Lawn Care/Landscapes

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Sports Turf Seminar

Thurs., March 7 • 9am-11am *Dr. Frank Rossi, Cornell University*

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- Maintenance Scheduling
- PDA Handheld Interface

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- Purchase Orders
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Message

from the Executive Director

Aaah, the New Year. So many expectations around this time of year. Hopefully it has started off well for you.

For the last several years now, I have started off my new year at the Northern New England Recreation (NNE) Conference. It had always felt like a hard time to get away but once I made the commitment to go, it now feels like a great time of year. Attending this conference is the best opportunity of the year to expand your networking circle outside Vermont. It is mostly Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont folks in attendance but our southern New England neighbors have started attending in recent years and it was nice to connect with folks from Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts too. We had the largest Vermont contingent in years. If you haven't been to this conference before, you should consider adding it to your professional development calendar.

Do you make new year resolutions? Do you have a behavior that you are trying to change...drink more water, eat a healthy snack instead of junk food, reinforce the good things that staff are doing more often, complete the challenging tasks before the simple ones? Try this...every morning place five pennies in your right pocket. Each time that you do the behavior you are trying to change, take one penny from your right pocket and put it into your left pocket. As you might guess, the goal at the end of each day is to have all five pennies in your left pocket. Repeat the next day, and the next.

One of the sessions that I attended at the NNE Conference was about giving and receiving feedback. For one reason or another, the lessons presented in that session seem to keep popping into my mind.

I have a challenge for you...the next time you have a staff person who is falling short of your expectations, sit down with a cup of tea and ask yourself a few questions. Do my staff even know what my expectations are? Have I asked my staff how they like to receive feedback? Do I hold

everyone consistently accountable? Do I connect regularly enough with my staff so that a meeting isn't always about things that need to be improved? As a supervisor, have I developed a team with a mindset for growth, both personal and professional? Have I created a culture where feedback is comfortably given and received? Do we talk as a team about difficult real-life situations and how we might each approach the solution? The answers you come up with might offer some insight into how you want to handle the situation at hand. Good luck. I'd love to hear if you try this and if it makes a difference for you.

I so look forward to the year ahead for VRPA. We have lots of great meetings and training events coming up in the next few months and I hope that you and your staff will choose to participate in them. A very big thank you to all our members who have stepped up to lead and joined one of the committees planning these opportunities for you. I find it thrilling to experience the synergy that goes into creating these events...you all amaze me time after time.

As Melissa Cate mentioned in her President's Perspective, we will be working over the next several months to prepare for my retirement. When the job advertisement comes out, I hope you will pass it along to anyone you think might be a good fit. Melissa and I would be happy to talk with them and with you, if you are interested, to answer any questions you might have. My adult daughter is now a professional recruiter and she tells me that we will likely find someone through networking. We'd very much appreciate your help with this.

Best wishes for a good year in 2019, both personally and professionally. ■

Your friend in recreation,

Betsy

Betsy Terry, CPRP

VRPA Executive Director

Personal Profile



Adriane Martin

Program Coordinator, Essex Parks & Recreation

Adriane Martin is just beginning her fifth year as Program Coordinator at the Essex Parks and Recreation Department. She has been on the Vermont State Recreation Conference Committee for three years now and recently signed on as vice chair with plans to become the conference committee chair in 2020. She is also currently the Chair of the Colchester Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and has been in this position for two years and on the board for 5 years. Clearly, Adriane is a woman willing to step up to lead.

Adriane attended the University of Vermont where she majored in Human Development and

Family Studies. She says it wasn't until she reviewed her resume a few years back that she realized community recreation was a common theme in all her work. Summers throughout high school and college she was a lifeguard, swim lesson instructor and ultimately the Waterfront Director at a 9-acre man-made pond and shared that "she's a mermaid at heart." Throughout her time in college, she continued to teach swim lessons, lifeguard and added children's birthday party host to her resume through UVM's campus recreation. She believes that the benefits of being around water, spending time outside in the sun and working with kids and families were the

main influencers of her path at the time. She has continued in related roles because she likes being part of a community, working with people and using what she knows to help create positive experiences and lasting memories.

This Fall, Adriane will have worked in Essex for 10 years - all of her "professional" life. Prior to starting at Essex Parks and Recreation, she was Director of Programming for four years at Essex CHIPS, a nonprofit organization with a focus on substance abuse prevention and youth empowerment. Prior to that, she was an AmeriCorps member serving at Essex CHIPS

Personal Profile



“One of the best parts of being a VRPA member is the knowledge that an answer to a question or at least a lead is just an email away.”

in the Teen Center for two years after graduation from UVM. She became a member of VRPA as a way to meet new people and learn more about the recreation opportunities in the state. She shared, “I am so fortunate that my department and employer at the Town of Essex value participation in VRPA and professional development opportunities like this membership. I cannot imagine having started this position four years ago without meeting so many inspiring and committed colleagues around the state.”

She values the opportunity to be part of a larger community, to get to know new people who are doing similar things and being able to share resources. She also likes learning how another department may be similar or different from hers. “I always enjoy meeting and getting to know people whose jobs are very different from mine too.”

For her, she says “One of the best parts of being a VRPA member is the knowledge that an answer to a question or at least a lead is just an email away. Fellow VRPA members are always eager to help each other and it’s nice to commiserate with people who “get it!”

When asked about her greatest career accomplishments, “One of them has to be taking (and passing) the CPRP exam last March. On a smaller scale, every time the seasonal brochure is finally done and disseminated, I feel accomplished (and relieved!). When a patron arrives at our office excited to sign up for a class or program, it’s hard not to smile and feel proud.”

Adriane lives in Colchester with her husband, Jamie, and their almost two-year-old son, Keller. One of her favorite things to do is go on walks with Keller. “He loves being outside and I

love the opportunity to get exercise, walk around our neighborhood and be with him. One of the reasons we love living in Colchester so much is the access to recreation, specifically the bike path we can walk to from our home (a must in our recent home buying process). This past summer we took our first camping trip as a family at Button Bay State Park and had a blast. As parents, we recently discovered the awesome-ness of playgrounds. Keller loves them, spending hours playing, swinging and sliding... on the structures designed for kids ages 5-12, of course.”

When asked to share some words of wisdom, she offered “We are lucky to work in a field that provides a variety

of activities designed to improve one’s overall quality of life. From the obvious health benefits of exercise and spending time outdoors to providing opportunities for people to get involved in their communities, meet new people, try new things or take up a new lifelong hobby. These experiences provide connectedness, happiness, boost self-esteem and help us live our lives to the fullest! Share this with your community. Oh, and get involved! You won’t regret putting yourself out there, expanding your network and being part of something great!” ■

Personal Profile



Fire

By Judy Brown

What makes a fire burn is space between the logs, a breathing space. Too much of a good thing, too many logs packed in too tight can douse the flames almost as surely as a pail of water would.

So, building fires requires attention to the spaces in between, as much as to the wood. When we are able to build open spaces in the same way we have learned to pile on the logs,

then we can come to see how it is fuel, and absence of the fuel together, that make fire possible.

We only need to lay a log lightly from time to time. A fire grows simply because the space is there, with openings in which the flame that knows just how it wants to burn can find its way.

AROUND the STATE

Keeping Tennis Alive!

By Karen Didricksen
Vermont Service Representative, USTA

With all of the choices we have in presenting sports and activities to our children, sometimes one of the most historical and popular sport gets overlooked. New ideas in games & sports evolve to create more choices. It's hard to find enough time to partake in learning all these new sports. I tried 'foot-golf' this year and wonder if that will take off...kicking a soccer ball on a golf course was fun, but hard to imagine that the golfers will embrace the new use of their courses. But then, adapting is a way to ensure that we keep our favorite sports alive.

Tennis has also evolved with the times too! No, we're not playing with our feet (yet) but if you've been following the path of teaching tennis, you know that there is an easier and more successful way of introducing the game to those starting out in tennis. Children & adults learn this game best by playing games that develop athletic skills. The racquets and balls



are now progressive in size and weight. No more starting out with your uncle's old college racquet. No more standing in lines waiting to be fed a ball that you can't hit.

The United States Tennis Association (USTA) is continually working on promoting and developing game-

based curriculum, apps with videos and local help to share tennis with schools (grades K-12), after-school programs, Parks & Recreation and other Community Associations.

USTA offers free equipment and resources to registered "Community Providers". The new tennis brand name for teaching tennis to children is called NET GENERATION. It's designed for all junior players from 5-18 years old. The Net Generation program can also be easily adapted to teaching beginning adult players too! School providers can partner with Community providers to also receive free equipment and SHAPE based curriculum designed for Grades K-12.

There is no requirement for a tennis court or formal net either! Tennis can be taught in gymnasiums and even parking lots! To get started in learning how to get tennis in your community, click on this [LINK](#) to a detailed flyer and the requirements needed to start, enhance or upgrade your existing tennis program. Did I mention that there is NO Cost?! You can also go to netgeneration.com and learn more on that web site.

Please contact me if you'd like to learn more about Net Generation tennis. I am your Vermont Representative for USTA and live right in the middle of the state! Play on! ■

Karen Didricksen | didricksen@newengland.usta.com

Meet MATT WILLIAMS

The Catamount Trail Association's Executive Director



It's been almost a year since the Catamount Trail Association (CTA) welcomed Matt Williams as their new Executive Director last April, when Amy Kelsey stepped down after serving the CTA for over 9 years. Matt came to CTA from Warren Wilson College in Asheville, NC, where he had served as Director of Strategic Initiatives in Athletics and as their Head Cycling Coach. A native of Sharon, Vermont, Matt grew up on a small sheep farm skiing, sledding, mountain biking, and hiking out the back door.

Over the course of Williams' five-year tenure as Head Coach at Warren Wilson, the cycling program developed national caliber road and cyclocross teams, added cycling scholarships, and expanded its on-campus facilities. Under his leadership, the program saw competitive success in all disciplines. Additionally, during the 2017-2018 academic year, Williams had been serving as the Director of Strategic Initiatives, and had overseen all athletic programs at Warren Wilson.



While much of Matt's life and career has been spent in the worlds of mountain bike and nordic ski racing, he's always been passionate about finding new ways to connect places through his outdoor pursuits. He and his wife Nina both enjoy traveling by bike and ski as often as possible, and were enthusiastic about the opportunity to return to their roots and to new professional pursuits here in Vermont.

it was through promoting events, coaching, my blog, or simply working to consistently rally friends to join me on small excursions. I'm incredibly excited to have the opportunity to put all these pieces together at the CTA and to be a part of stewarding the amazing resource that is the Catamount Trail, while also working to expand opportunities for backcountry recreation throughout the state." -Matt Williams

"My favorite training days are always the ones

The CTA calendar of events is chock full this winter.

"My favorite training days are always the ones that veer off the map and involve a little bit of bushwhacking, route finding, or exploring on a new road or trail..."

that veer off the map and involve a little bit of bushwhacking, route finding, or exploring on a new road or trail, and I've always had a little stash of maps marked up in pencil with unnamed trails and ski lines. Over the years, I've looked for ways to share that passion for getting outside with others, whether

With the Nor'East Skimo Citizen Race Series, Splitfest, New England Women's XC Ski Day, a full schedule of instructional programs, one-day and overnight tours, races and apre-ski events, there is something for everyone. Check it out at catamounttrail.org. ■

Recreational Trails Program

The FAST Act (Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act) passed in December 2015, funded the Highway Trust Fund through 2020, so neither the Federal Highway Administration nor the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) are directly affected by any federal shutdown. The VT Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation, who administers the RTP, recently received grant requests for approximately three times the amount of available funding. Awards will be announced later this spring.



Community Response to **VOREC FUNDING OPPORTUNITY ROBUST**



One of the unique aspects of this grant program is asking communities to identify a diverse project team which must include at least the municipality and a non-profit.

With the issuance of Executive Order No. 11-17, Governor Scott established the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) during the summer of 2017. The effort is guided by the VOREC steering committee which is made up of Vermont businesses and non-profits including outdoor manufacturers, retailers, brand representatives, trail and user groups and conservation organizations, as well as state government.

The VOREC steering committee's purpose is to engage with businesses, government, the nonprofit sector and the public to identify specific outcomes that promote business opportunities, increase participation opportunities, and strengthen the quality and stewardship of

our recreational resources, and provide recommendations to the Governor based on that purpose. As part of that charge, the VOREC steering committee hosted seven public meetings as well as an online survey. Overwhelmingly, they heard that Vermont communities are primed and ready to embrace outdoor recreation as a cornerstone to their economies. Based on this response, the Governor and the Legislature believed that with some financial incentive they could create Outdoor Recreation Friendly Communities.

In spring of 2018, the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) staff began collaborating on a grant program structure based

on the likely scenario of receiving \$100,000 for a pilot program. The staff involved in developing the program have extensive grant administration experience and felt that the goals of the program should reflect the goals of the VOREC initiative: open, inclusive and transparent. Since the beginning, VOREC has embraced the motto "If you're outside, you're in." Including as many communities in this opportunity while still achieving the outcome of a pilot means striking a fine balance, and the program structure and subsequent grant materials are meant to reflect that balance.

In developing the program, the working group sought to design the process to ensure a wide variety of proposals were received which could demonstrate success in the four main pillars of VOREC:

- Grow the outdoor recreation related business opportunities
- Increase participation in outdoor recreation activities
- Strengthen the quality and extent of outdoor recreation resources
- Increase stewardship of outdoor recreation resources

The Governor announced the launch of the grant program on October 9th at the Craftsbury Outdoor Center during one of the Capital for a Day events.

From the time the Governor announced the opportunity, staff received overwhelming interest. On December 14th, twenty-nine proposals (of which twenty-eight are eligible) were received from communities in every county of the state, totaling \$1,690,120 in funding requests.

One of the unique aspects of this grant program is asking communities to identify a diverse project team which must include at least the municipality and a non-profit. Some communities have shown real initiative and even some progress just by putting together these teams, and regardless of funding, these relationships will be essential for their success.

During January, State staff performed a first round of scoring to manage the number of proposals for review by the Selection Committee. The Selection Committee will then begin reviewing proposals in February for a funding recommendation meeting. Successful applicants will be notified in March. ■



27th Annual James P. Taylor Outdoor Adventure Series

For more than a hundred years, the Long Trail has inspired Vermonters to seek adventure in the Green Mountains and beyond. The James P. Taylor Outdoor Adventure Series, named after the man who first envisioned the Long Trail, brings such adventures to you through stories, photographs, and videos. Join the GMC for inspiring presentations that will transport you to mountains and waterways near and far —a great way to spend an evening! Presentations happen at the GMC Visitor Center in Waterbury Center most Thursday nights through March. A few other presentations are interspersed around the state so check out the whole schedule at greenmountainclub.org/taylorseries.

23rd Annual Winter Trails Day

Saturday, March 2, 2019 • Londonderry

Try out winter hiking with experienced Green Mountain Club (GMC) leaders and join the great GMC community for a fun-filled day at Flood Brook School in Londonderry. There will be guided group hikes around the southern Green Mountains, winter skills workshops, snowshoe demos, kids' activities, and a campfire all day. Then stay for the après party and raffle! More info at greenmountainclub.org/winter.

Green Mountain Club Winter Workshops

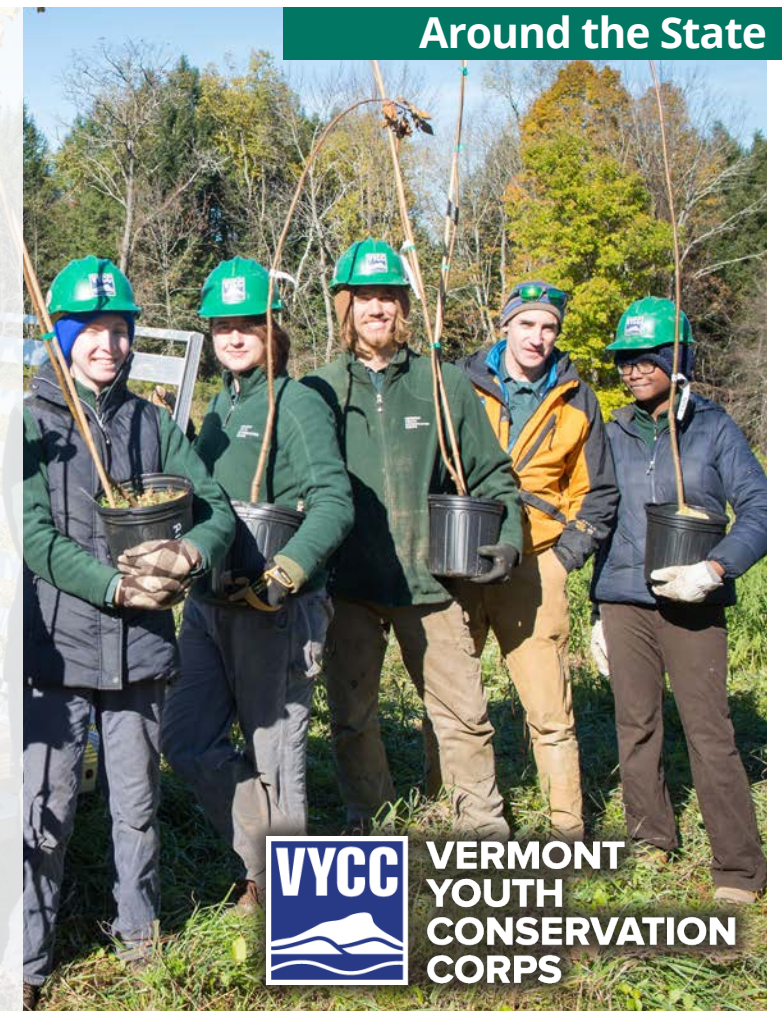
Did you know the GMC offers a variety of workshops to help you or your group travel safely and confidently in Vermont's backcountry and have fun while doing it? Join one of their upcoming workshops this season:

- Intro to Cold Weather Trekking: February 6
- Adirondack Pack Basket Workshop: February 16-17
- Full Moon Snowshoe Walks: February 20, March 20
- Ice Climbing with Petra Cliffs: February 23
- Map and Compass: March 9

Details and registration at:
greenmountainclub.org/workshops

Know a Young Person Who Wants to Change Lives?

The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) believes young people change the world. They are looking for new 2019 Corps Members, ages 15-26, who are excited to make a difference, spend time outside and work on a small team. Corps Members complete conservation and farm projects, while growing and enhancing job and leadership skills. Over 250 young people will get paid this summer and fall to be Crew Members or Crew leaders as part of our award-winning Conservation and Farm programs. There are a variety of short or long-term experiences on our crews including: AmeriCorps service positions, camping crews, day crews, internships, and on-going education.



Vermont Youth Conservation Corps Planted Trees at State's Newest Wildlife Management Area

With support from the Habitat Stamp, the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps worked directly with state wildlife biologists to improve habitat on the state's newest wildlife management area, Windsor Grasslands WMA.

More than five years in the making, the Windsor Grasslands WMA restoration project was first envisioned to restore wetlands affected by past agricultural uses. Under the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's new ownership, the

health of the property's wetlands, streams and forests, are being restored. These efforts will benefit the entire watershed downstream.

"The young people working for the VYCC spent a full week battling invasive plants and working to establish a mix of native, wildlife-friendly trees and shrubs in their place," said Chris Bernier, the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department biologist who manages this WMA.

"Habitat stamp donors should take pride in knowing these funds are helping to restore fish and wildlife habitat, protect water quality, and engage youths in conservation.

This collaboration demonstrates how, when the will and funding come together, we can improve our environment," said Bernier. Members of the community also lent a hand planting trees and improving habitat during a volunteer day in late October. Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter joined the crew to lend a hand and to thank them for their efforts on this important project. ■

This article is reprinted with permission from the "2018 Vermont Habitat Stamp Annual Report" prepared by the VT Department of Fish & Wildlife.

**To learn more visit, vycc.org/join.
Questions? Email Nora Woolf, VYCC's Recruitment and Member Services Manager!**

Camp STAR



By Denise Malm, After-School Site Coordinator
Essex Junction Recreation & Parks

Camp STAR is an unforgettable summer day-camp experience based in Essex Junction. Run through Essex Junction Recreation & Parks, the camp is open to all children entering grades 6-9 and calls Albert D. Lawton Middle School "home." The camp strives to create a program which addresses both the wants and the needs of campers, which, at the pre-teen age, can cause challenges. Middle schoolers need structure and stability, but crave risk-taking opportunities - they want to try new things, but are often unaware of this want, preferring to stick to what they know (and, most importantly, to what their friends know). Camp STAR mitigates this by exposing campers to a wide range

of choices. At any given time of day, they have some say in where they'd like to be and what they'd like to be doing, allowing them to take full ownership of their camp experience.

Every morning, the amazing swim instructors at Maple Street Pool provide swim lessons for all EJRP campers, 1st grade and up. For our oldest campers, however, they don't merely have them practice strokes and take laps. At Camp STAR, campers have the privilege of upgrading swim time to include things such as diving instruction and lifeguarding skills (and of course, the much-anticipated weekly game of water polo). Campers who are less

enthusiastic about getting in the water so early are able to take part in club time back at the school. Each day of the week, a different club is offered. Last summer, options ranged from sports skill clinics, to dance instruction, to yoga!

Later in the morning, there are a similar set of options offered. Campers may choose between a daily active group game, an arts and crafts project, or a specialized activity. At Camp STAR, this often looks like a "Magic: The Gathering" tournament!

After eating a nutritious lunch with cost-free options provided by Child Nutrition Services, campers head over to Maple Street Pool, where



they can swim, socialize with friends, or take advantage of the park - the gaga ball pit is always a hit!

Upon returning to the school, campers have a snack and then come together for a team-building activity. Camp-wide dodgeball, competitive charades, or fort-building in the woods - you name it, Camp STAR will do it!

The fun doesn't stop there, either; Field Trip Fridays take everyone beyond camp walls every week,

allowing them to explore new beaches, hiking trails, or even hit up some laser tag. This time may also be allocated to local community service. Have you seen the spray-painted signs near drains in local neighborhoods, warning of runoff dangers? Thank you, Camp STAR!

Camp is a wild place, full of community, laughter, challenges, and memories, and Camp STAR continues to grow; a couple years ago, less than twenty students

attended the camp each week. Now, the cap is bursting at fifty campers with an eager waitlist! In the future, EJRP is hoping to see that number continue to grow. Middle schoolers are a particularly poignant crew, and Camp STAR is an amazing place for them to set their dreams loose. ■

Facility Feature

Building a Playground for Everyone - from Dream to Reality

By Jon Adams-Kollitz, Parks Project Coordinator
Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront



Facility Feature

There is not one universally accessible playground in a contiguous geographic area including Vermont, New Hampshire, upstate New York and Maine. We have started to change that story.

In 2011, a nascent advocacy organization (then Play and Engage in Accessible Spaces for Everyone, now Oakledge for All) and its devoted founder, Julia Wayne, paid a visit to the offices of Burlington Parks Recreation & Waterfront (then Burlington Parks & Recreation). Julia, an Early Childhood Special Educator, described her vision for a truly universally accessible play space somewhere in the city's park system. Julia's graduate research had focused on the importance of accessible play and she identified that children with disabilities and their families had no access to a playground in all of Vermont, or surrounding regions. While the project details were not clear yet, the need and the dedication to successful completion was. BPRW staff was impressed with Julia, and the fact that eight years later the first phase of her dream project has just been completed, along with a growing list of regional partners, is testament to her passion and conviction to universal access to play.

Fast forward four years, BPRW's recently completed master plan, new City and department leadership and a growing ability to finance projects through the City's Penny for Parks program, all aligned to lay the groundwork for a truly visionary and collaborative project in a setting that would showcase the play space to a wide audience.

Based on the Master Plan, Oakledge Park was determined to be the best site for the proposed playground. Oakledge Park is a large regional park, immensely popular for both locals and visitors alike, brimming with natural beauty and home to a number of active and passive recreation facilities, including the world's first universally accessible treehouse, accessible bocce courts and a newly renovated accessibility driven restroom facility. The City hired the bold landscape architecture team at GroundView Design, who had recently won an award from the Boston Area Landscape Architects Association and been credited with leading a "quiet revolution in play design." The team scheduled a series of public design charrettes and project presentations that concluded in September, 2017. By that time, it was very apparent to the department and their advocacy partner that residents of Burlington were more than ready to see a truly accessible play space in the city. The push was on, and BPRW and PEASE worked hard to respond to the growing demand for this accessible play space.

It was at the last meeting that Annie Bourdon, mother of young twins, one with cerebral palsy, made her passionate case for the need for more accessible play spaces in the city. A resident of the South End neighborhood that contains Oakledge and the founder and Director of a

respected Burlington non-profit, Bourdon made an emotional case for immediate action. She joined forces with Oakledge for All to help them obtain official State of Vermont non-profit status, hire an expert branding and marketing agency and bring her extensive fundraising experience to the group. BPRW staff invited Annie and her children to meet at the current Oakledge playground. When another boy of similar age approached Annie's son, inviting him to play on the equipment, she had to explain to him that he was not able to utilize the equipment, either from his wheelchair, or without. The other boy struggled to understand how this could be, but the limitations imposed by the aging equipment and lack of accessible connections, was very clear to the BPRW team.

Along comes the NRPA/Disney Play Space grant. The team discusses an application strategy, and initially conceived a temporary installation, or pop-up universally accessible playground that can demonstrate the look and feel of the final design, but have the ability to be taken on the road for further demonstration and education. The team began to realize that a successful \$30,000 Disney Place grant, bolstered by Penny for Parks money, could build the first portion of the complete design, and the investment would be permanent and provide a literal opportunity to demonstrate to all what a universal playground is all about.

When another boy...approached Annie's son, inviting him to play on the equipment, she had to explain to him that he was not able to utilize the equipment, either from his wheelchair, or without. ...the limitations imposed by the aging equipment and lack of accessible connections, was very clear to the BPRW team.



The successful completion of phase 1 now provides an incredible setting for fundraising and awareness events, such as a recent press conference featuring Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger, BPRW Director Cindi Wight, members of the Parks Commission and Foundation, Oakledge for All members, and children affected by mobility issues. Also speaking through the cold and rainy atmosphere was Annie Bourdon, who provided moving words and a continued push for more universal accessibility. With her twins nearby, she told the unfortunate story of not having a facility where her son could play. After the speaking was finished and the playing began, Annie's twins glowed

with happiness in side-by-side swings, specifically requested by Annie, bringing together children of differing abilities in the same space, rather than relegating accessible features to separate spaces.

Completing Phase 1 on an aggressive time schedule, to meet the requirements of the Disney/NRPA grant, proved to be an important milestone in the history of the project. The partnership and commitment between BPRW and OfA proved very solid and ready to realize the longstanding dream. It provided a small demonstration play area to the public and has been instrumental in building momentum for the project. Systems for decision

making were honed, and much was learned about site conditions, equipment and, as was so evident on that blistery day in October, the commitment of the community and City leaders to seeing this project jump from the drawing boards to its beautiful home near the shore of Lake Champlain in Burlington's Oakledge Park. The partners will showcase their work and the vision for the remainder of the project during a rescheduled kickoff event, Come Play with Us, on May 18, 2019. Check oakledgeforall.org or enjoyburlingtonvt.gov for more information. ■



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In celebration of the 75th conference - the legacy projects

As part of the plan to *Honor the Past & Inspire the Future* at the 75th Annual Vermont Conference on Recreation, the 2018 Conference Committee planned four special legacy projects.

(1) Written History of the Conference Flyer



After collecting and reviewing all but two of the past seventy-five conference brochures, South Burlington Recreation Historian, Muriel More, with the help of Diana Wood from Burlington Parks, Recreation & Waterfront, created a detailed summary of the history of the Vermont state recreation conference. Organized by decade and set in the context of national park & recreation landmark events, the history includes mention of major conference topics, notes lots of “firsts” in Vermont parks and recreation history, and highlights some of the conference themes and keynote speakers. It is unlikely that a record like this has ever been compiled before. Special thanks to Muriel and Diana, and to Villanti Printers for generously donating the printing. Hard copies are available from the Vermont Recreation & Parks Association and a link to an electronic copy is available on the homepage of the VRPA website.

(2) Park Build at the Fairlee Town Beach

It started out as VRPA President Melissa Cate’s idea to do a volunteer project somewhere on Lake Morey. The Fairlee Recreation Committee was happy to participate and outlined some of their needs at the Fairlee Town Beach. Conference Committee member, Josh Ryan, owner of Timber & Stone, jumped on board to oversee the park build construction and the ball was set in motion. Donations were solicited from our commercial members and a GoFundMe campaign raised \$2875. Skies were blue for construction day and the following improvements were completed: accessible pathways were installed from the parking lot to the playground and bathhouse (thank you Timber & Stone), the playground safety surface material was replaced (thank you Durgin & Crowell), two spring toys were installed (thank you O’Brien & Sons and Kompan), an accessible picnic table and group BBQ grill were added to the site along with a new beach wheelchair that was donated by SMILE Mass. Community members and conference attendees gathered for the ribbon cutting ceremony at the end of the first day of the conference and a celebration followed in the Exhibit Hall. What a remarkable project.



(3) Forty-One Brungardt Award Recipients Attend the Awards Luncheon

The Brungardt Award presentations have been an important part of the Vermont state recreation conference since they were introduced in 1975 and the conference committee decided to invite all the past award recipients to the Awards Luncheon. It took a while to collect all 125 emails but, in the end, we gathered all but one. Forty-one past award recipients from all over New England and as far away as Florida, came to Lake Morey to attend this year's Awards Luncheon. It was a very special gathering.

(4) A Documentary - Theresa Schmidt Brungardt Through the Lens of Photography

What began as an interactive session with members of Mrs. Brungardt's family who would be with us at the conference and the recipients of this year's Brungardt Awards, morphed into much "more". Muriel More's recreation historian skills were fully exercised and her work, along with cooperation from Mrs. Brungardt's family members who scoured their photo collections, resulted in an extraordinary PowerPoint photo-documentary of the life of Theresa Brungardt, Vermont's first state recreation director. The Powerpoint was showcased in a conference session following the awards luncheon and is available via a link on the VRPA website. Special thanks to Candice Holbrook from Burlington Parks & Recreation & Waterfront for pulling the materials together into an impressive document. This is another lasting legacy of our 75th conference celebration. ■



In a surprise announcement, Mrs. Brungardt's nephew, Dave Schmidt, and his wife, Joann, presented VRPA with Mrs. Brungardt's Honorary Doctorate of Human Letters from Windham College and the gavel she was presented and used when she was President of the American Recreation Society (1952-1953).



Conference



Photo caption (L to R): 2018 Brungardt Award recipients with six of Mrs. Brungardt's relatives, Lenore Budd, Kate Wanner, and Matt Frost from the Trust for Public Land, Sheryl Porrier, and Derek Mitchell.

2018 Theresa S. Brungardt Award Winners

Each year at the annual state recreation conference, the coveted Theresa S. Brungardt Awards are presented to a professional, friend and organization who has made significant contributions to parks and recreation in Vermont. The 2018 Brungardt Awards were presented to Sheryl Porrier of Poultney (Friend), the Vermont Office of the Trust for Public Land (Organization), and Colchester's Assistant Parks & Recreation Director Derek Mitchell (Professional).

Thank you very much to our conference exhibitors and sponsors (in bold). Please be sure to include them on your bid lists when you are purchasing services, supplies and equipment. We couldn't do half of what we do without their ongoing support.

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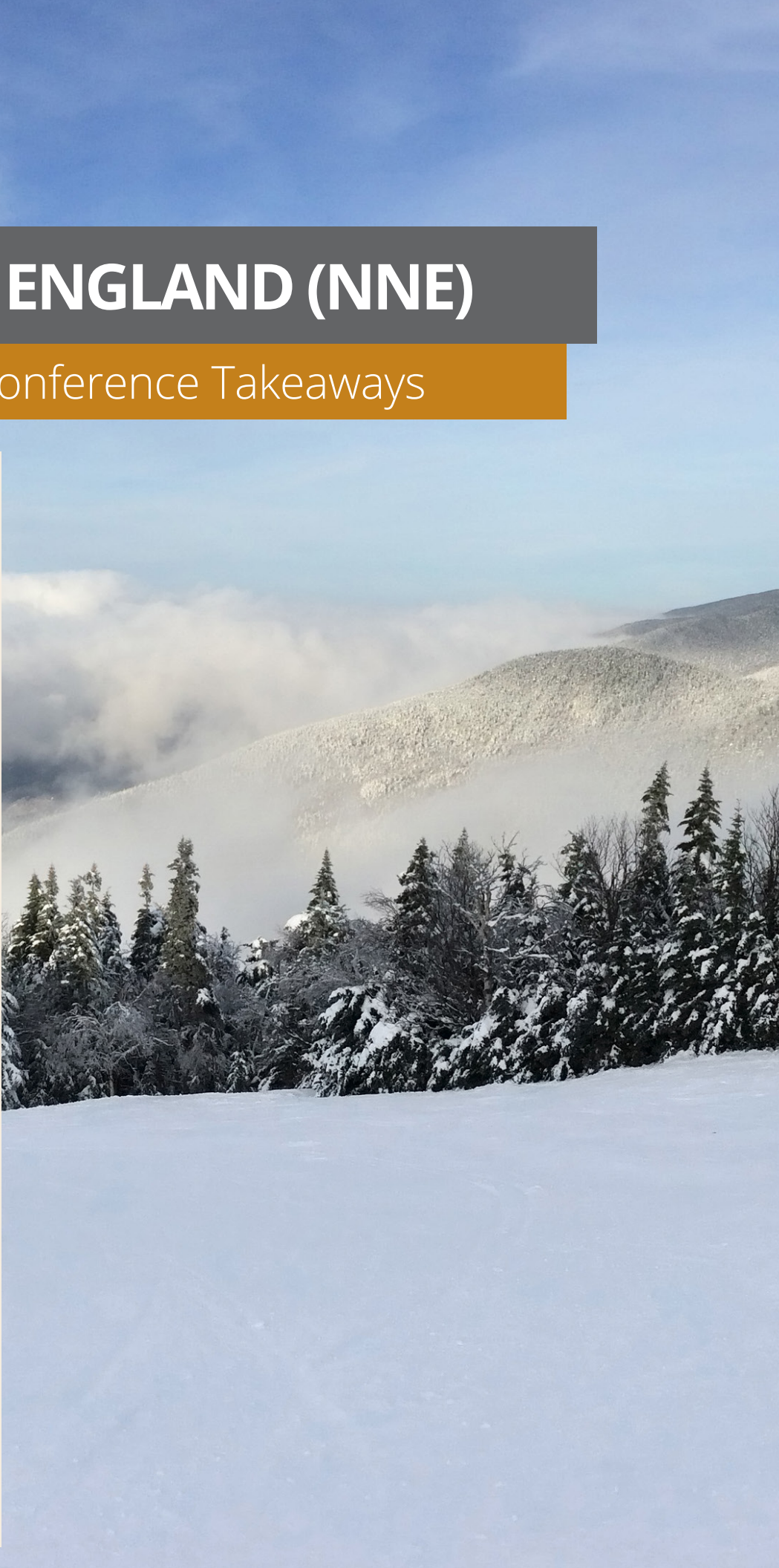
NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND (NNE)

Recreation & Parks Conference Takeaways



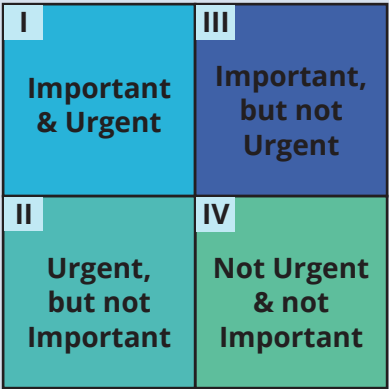
More than 20 Vermont professionals attended the recent NNE conference in North Conway, NH. This is more than we have had in a long time. The Vermont attendees were asked to share their top conference takeaway with you in this newsletter article. Thank you for responding Rob Peterson (VT State Parks), Kim Peters (Rutland), Sharon Lewis (Castleton), Cindi Wight (Burlington), Gail Devine (Woodstock), Ethan Phelps (VT State Parks), Alicia Finley (Winooski), Eric White (Montpelier), Emily Boek (Stowe), April Cioffi (Rutland), Denise Malm (Essex Junction), Katie Feeney (Castleton), and Jill Kearney (Norwich).

Here goes, in no particular order...



The Northern New England Recreation and Parks Conference happens at a time of year that's very busy with inside work – planning, hiring, and lots of other things that takes a lot of time sitting at a desk. Bill Yeo, the endnote speaker, gave us all an important reminder that we need to sometimes hit the pause button to get out and enjoy the parks and public lands that we invest our time into. We don't all manage places like Denali, or want to climb Everest, but we all work and live in a very special part of the world and need to do all we can to enjoy it at our own pace.

Many times, we receive a phone call or email and it takes over our day or week! Need some help deciding where interruptions like these fit into the priorities of your to-do list? Using Stephen Covey's quadrants shown in the graphic to the left, you can classify each task as important and/or urgent and decide if you should do it now, decide when to do it at a later time, delegate it, or keep it off your to-do list altogether. "I plan to implement this exercise in our staff meetings using sticky dots to place our work tasks in the different quadrants."



Polly Tobin Goddard from Sandbar Coaching & Consulting did a session on feedback and the importance of creating a culture where feedback can easily be given and received. She offered what I thought was a great idea.

She called them "employee 3x3s".

When she has a new staff person, she gives them (in advance) 3 questions to answer in their first meeting:

1. What 3 things should I know about you in order to manage you effectively?
2. What 3 approaches work best with you when you need feedback or redirection?
3. What 3 things shut you down to a growth process?

She also shares her own 3x3s with the employee.

1. Three things you should know about me as a member of my team are...
2. When you have problems or feedback for me, I would prefer if you...
3. My expectations for you as a member of my team are...

This session provided some other key takeaways for Creating that Culture for Feedback.

Developing a growth mindset

- Build relationships – know your employees
- Identify clear and consistent expectations for your whole team
- Hold everyone consistently accountable
- Develop training that is consistent, thorough, and appropriately paced
- Create a culture of support and supervision that provides one-on-one time on a regular schedule (not less than once per month) for employees to connect with their supervisor toward building a solid relationship and open communication
- Pay attention to preparation and documentation of areas for development and for strength and share your insights with employees regularly
- Understand "will" vs "skill" to help get an employee up to speed

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- *Finding the Space to Lead* by Janice Marturano
- *Be the Boss Everyone Wants to Work for: A Guide for New Leaders* by William A. Gentry
- *Insight* by Tasha Eurich

Become a Caring Deliverer

- Commit to delivering feedback in a way that feeds your teams growth and development
- Address patterns and themes – don't be a nit picker
- Deliver feedback that is:
 - Private and deliverable
 - Frequent and timely
 - Kind but direct
 - Specific and actionable

Develop Gracious Receivers

- Commit to the process of:
 - Receiving the feedback with grace
 - Reflecting on the feedback
 - Responding to the feedback
 - Ask enough clarifying questions to fully understand the feedback

With changes in society, many of the younger generation are now finding their entertainment in technology. One way to compete with this draw towards technology and attract younger people to your parks is to make your parks interactive with apps such as Munzee (the next generation of global scavenger hunt games) and Ingress (interact with real-world landmarks), which will make your park more interactive. If wifi is an issue, there are companies such as Oh, Ranger! wifi that can help bring in a wifi access point to run the interactive apps better, and to help track analytics.

My biggest take away for the NNE conference is how important it is to connect with those in our "rec world" and to keep in touch. Not only is it great to be around people who know our struggles and where we are coming from, but these are connections that can help you when in a pinch. I also get to personally build a relationship with the vendors we use or might use and this goes a long way! I also took away

different ideas to incorporate into my programming which starts at the foundation- ME! I came away feeling better prepared to re-evaluate my vision and goals as a leader and to hopefully better support my employees who assist me in running programs. Looking forward to this improving our customer service quality.

One of the items I took away is the concept of a digital scavenger hunt. The kids in our community receive Come Alive Outside Passports twice a year to promote getting outside and living healthier lives. The debate has been how to incorporate technology into the passports without losing sight of the overall objectives of getting them outside and unplugged. Utilizing a QR code scavenger hunt like Munzee may be a way to compromise. It will be worth a try, and I'm thinking it might be something to try with adults too.

My favorite tip is to challenge staff and kids to come up with variations on traditional sports games to create entirely new activities that they can then take ownership of. For example, playing soccer with more than one ball, multiple goals, or a different way of moving than running.

The endnote message by Bill Yeo was particularly impactful for me, especially the "it's not too late to do certain things" message. I've been wanting to join the Masters Swimming Club in Williston for a long time. I've always been hesitant, thinking I'm too old, not fast enough and I don't do flip turns! But I've returned and I'm thinking I should give it a try. Swimming makes me better at my job, more focused, relaxed and ready to tackle challenges. Taking it to the next level might be just what I need. On a practical note, the Primex playground class offered helpful reminders. In fact, I'm going to look into getting rubber mats for under our swings at Sand Bar! ■

Hiring Summer Staff



A Full-Day Hands-On Group Interview Process

In one of the sessions at the recent Northern New England Recreation & Parks Conference, one of the attendees talked about a group hiring process they use to hire their seasonal summer staff where prospective camp counselors spend the day leading large and small game activities, songs and skits and demonstrating their leadership skills. Wow, what a great idea! Turns out that she was Laura Downs, All Day Super Fun Program Coordinator, at the Sandwich, MA Parks & Recreation Department. When asked if she would be willing to share some of the specific details of their group interview process, she was happy to share.

When they receive an application, they send the person a pre-interview packet and ask them to complete and return it before the date of the interview. Laura shared that "This really helps us get an idea of who is willing to put in the work and go the extra mile before the interview!"

Some of the things they ask include: What age groups are you most interested in working with? Are there any dates you would be unavailable to work? Are you CPR/First Aid certified? Are you able to attend all 5 days of the mandatory training week and they give the dates of the training.? What are you most looking forward to at this summer program?

They ask them to rate their skill level on a scale of 1-to-5 for all kinds of specific activities and prepare a lesson plan for a three-hour Disney themed camp day and describe a large group activity or games, small group activity or game, craft, snack, and list of supplies needed. At the bottom of the list of questions, they remind each applicant that they will be required to lead a large group game, small group game and a skit/joke or song, and to come to the group interview prepared.

When they arrive at the interview, they check in and get a name tag with a number on it. The registration staff takes their photo with the number on them so they can match faces to badge numbers post interview! In addition to the active hands-on play part of the day, each applicant also does a one-on-one interview with a small panel.

Wow, what a great process. If you'd like copies of their document files as a resource, go to the VPRA website and click on the "Resources" tab; you will find a button to click on in the Newsletter section. ■

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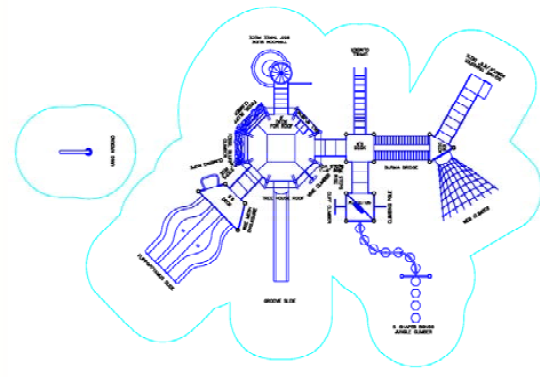
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- Shape our profession today and tomorrow.

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- **Recreation Check-In**
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- **The Advocate - VRPA newsletter**
Three issues a year, via email.
- **VRPA Membership Directory**
Annual directory of member contact information, electronic format.
- **Discounted Fees**
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- **Professional Assistance**
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- **VRPA website**
Access the VRPA website at vrpa.org.

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May 1, 2019 - April 30, 2020

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** (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!

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Performance Showcase |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Awards | <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance Workshop | <input type="checkbox"/> State Conference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Northern NE Conference <input type="checkbox"/> 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? _____

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Questions? Call the VRPA office at 802-878-2077



Vermont Recreation & Parks Association

ISSUE 93 | WINTER 2019