



# Vermont Recreation & Parks Association

## 2019-20 ANNUAL REPORT

### INTRODUCTION



With change, comes new opportunities. This past year has been that of change for the VRPA in many ways. This past July we said farewell to long time Executive Director, Betsy Terry, and wished her well in her retirement. Betsy brought so many wonderful things to the VRPA during her time serving you and she will be greatly missed, but not forgotten. Betsy is staying involved on the Conference Committee and with the Senior Games, so be on the look out because you will still see her around! Another big change for the VRPA this year was welcoming our new Executive Director, Jessica Brodie, to the Association. Jessica comes with 10+ years of municipal parks and recreation experience after serving in three different communities in Massachusetts. She now lives in West Windsor, Vermont with her husband and three young kids.

### WORKSHOPS & TRAININGS

The VRPA offers a variety of workshops and training programs through the year. Some of our larger events are highlighted below, but we also provide necessary training opportunities for a variety of certification programs. In 2019, we once again hosted a Certified Pool Operator (CPO) Training Course held at the Windjammer hotel in March. We had 28 participants for the course, which is lead by Nationwide Aquatics Consulting. This course is planned to be an annual offering in future years.

#### Vermont Maintenance Workshop

Just as predicted, the sun began shining five minutes before the start of the recent Vermont Maintenance Workshop at the Middlebury Recreation Center. There to actively participate in the day were 76 workshop participants, 15 vendors/commercial partners, and 19 speakers and roundtable facilitators.

A VERY BIG SHOUT OUT to Scott Bourne, Dustin Hunt, and Middlebury Parks & Recreation for so fully welcoming us to the Middlebury Recreation Center. It was a perfect way to show off this facility to more of Vermont's parks and recreation professionals, after being recognized as a VRPA Facility of Merit in 2016.

This year's vendors went above and beyond to bring equipment to the event so that participants could get onto machines, drive them, and see them in action. We realize that this takes extra effort on their parts and on behalf of the participants who have been asking for this for years, a special thank you to all our commercial partners who made the decision to be vendors, THANK YOU!

This year's Maintenance Workshop Committee - Derek Mitchell (Colchester), Harlan Smith (Essex Junction), Scott Hausler - Chair (Hartford), Evan Steele (Pioneer Athletics), Conrad Zeller & Tyler Dahlin (Rutland), Denis Lincoln and Frank Spaulding (VT State Parks), and Todd Goodwin (Williston) - did a great job choosing the session topics and finding exceptional speakers to deliver the information.



Thank you to everyone involved and to everyone who attended and/or sent your staff! There is never a perfect time of year for park staff to take a day away from their parks and we'd like to acknowledge the folks who made the commitment to take the day to connect with folks doing similar work and learn new skills and knowledge on a variety of topics.

## Summerama Camp Staff Training

160 people that worked in a Vermont camp setting last summer participated in Summerama on Sunday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>. What a great day it was! A VERY BIG THANK YOU to Stephanie Quaranta and the City of Barre for sharing the Barre Auditorium with us...what a great location for Summerama!



A big shout out again this week to the Summerama Committee and Committee Chair Extraordinaire, Jess Booth from Newport, and to all our speakers including VRPA members Jazmin Averbuck (Girl Scouts of the Green & White Mtns.), Lee Barrett (Colchester), Emily Boek (Stowe), Karen Didricksen (USTA-VT), Jess Booth (Newport), Joe Fox (St. Johnsbury), and Todd Goodwin (Williston) – their willingness to take time from their own weekend to make this professional commitment is another good example of how our VRPA members make it possible to accomplish all that we do. Thank you to everyone who attended and brought their staff to this year's Summerama!

## STATE TRACK MEET

On August 3<sup>rd</sup>, just under 300 youth Track & Field athletes from around Vermont gathered at St. Johnsbury Academy for the VRPA State Track & Field Meet. Originally scheduled for July 20<sup>th</sup>, the meet was postponed for the first time in its history due to excessive heat on its original date. The day kicked off at 9:00 am with the girls & boys Shot Put. Events that followed included the High Jump, Softball Throw, Long Jump, Discuss Throw, 1600 Meter Run, 80 Meter Hurdles, 50 Meter Dash, 100 Meter Dash, 400 Meter Dash, along with 50 & 100 Meter Relay races. All events were timed by 802 Timing out of Essex Junction, VT. Ribbons were handed out to the top six runners in each Boy & Girl age category. Along with ribbons, "Large" and "Small" team category winners were also announced. Taking the top spot in the large team category again this year was St. Johnsbury, who had 65 registered participants. Following St. Johnsbury in the large team category was Champlain Valley with 21 participants. Taking the win in the small team category was a new team winner this year, "Kurn Hattin" with 9 participants. Following Kurn Hattin was Newport Parks & Recreation with 13 participants. T-shirts were provided to all participants and volunteers thanks to our generous sponsor, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont. We extend our greatest thank you to our sponsors, volunteers, staff, and host facility for all your help making this event possible!



## ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 76<sup>th</sup> Annual Vermont Conference on Recreation was held on October 10-11<sup>th</sup> at the Lake Morey Resort. Though the conference fell short of the intended goal of 150 registered participants, attendance set a 20-year record with 142 attendees over the two-day conference. The conference has seen a growing attendance over the last three years, largely since expanding from the one-day conference format to a two-day, more comprehensive offering.



This year's conference attracted talented speakers from all over the country, including the states of Colorado, Indiana and Massachusetts, among other states, and attendees from all over Vermont, including many small communities and rural towns. Perhaps the highlight of the conference was keynote speaker Neelay Bhatt of PROS Consulting. Bhatt, most known for his work with NRPA and his success as a TEDx speaker gave an interactive and inspirational keynote address ending in a conference "selfie," a conference first!

In addition to great educational sessions, entertainment highlights included several rousing karaoke performances, a selfie-station and an impressive fireworks display by Northstar Fireworks.

This year’s conference featured a new, stronger emphasis at encouraging student involvement at the conference, with a mixture of six students from Castleton University and the University of Vermont participating. These students handled the lion’s share of moderating for each educational session. Candice Holbrook of Burlington, Parks, Recreation and Waterfront managed student orientation at the conference, aided by Adriane Martin from Essex from Essex Parks and Recreation.

Though the exhibit hall was not completely sold out, feedback on its overall success was abundant in our post-conference survey. The exhibit hall featured over 30 exhibitors and attendee and exhibitor interaction during the exclusive vendor hall time was impressive this year. New relationships were formed, while existing relationships were strengthened, the hallmark of any great conference exhibit hall.



The Theresa S. Brungardt awards luncheon featured an address by Forests, Parks and Recreation Commissioner, Michael Snyder and was capped off with the annual awards presentations. This year, the “friend” award honored Jean Haigh from the Green Mountain Club for her lifetime of work dedicated to the outdoor recreation and trails in Vermont. The “organization” award went to Cochran’s Ski Area for their many contributions to the recreational field in Vermont, including teaching thousands of local children to ski and ski race over their several decades of operation. Finally, the “professional” award went to Geoff Beyer from Montpelier Parks and Recreation for his character, his dedication to the field of recreation and dedication to the community of Montpelier after a long, successful career.

Finally, Vermont’s Finest Silent Auction once again raised over \$5,000 in proceeds from over \$11,500 in auction donations. The fine work of conference committee member and auction organizer Emily Boek, Aquatics Manager of Smugglers’ Notch Resort was a smashing success.

To round out 2019, VRPA held another successful Performance Showcase event at Lake Morey Resort in November. There were 45 audience members attended to preview over 20 Artist performances. Approximately 20 kids from the Valley Cooperative Preschool joined the audience to provide a child’s perspective and enjoy the show. We thank the great performers for once again showcasing their talents to our members!

The latter half of FY19-20 has been an interesting one due to COVID-19. All of our traditional plans and workshops had to be altered to adjust to social distancing and stay-home orders. Our March Quarterly meeting was the last time that we met in person during the 19-20 fiscal year, and attendance was lower because of the beginning effects felt by COVID-19. Our Spring CPSI & CPO Workshops were transitioned to virtual workshops, seeing a decline in overall numbers, but still a worthy offering for those that needed to renew their certifications.

As we enter a new year currently filled with many unknowns we will continue to serve our members by providing valuable trainings and resources, however that may look in the age of the Novel Coronavirus.

VRPA EDUCATION PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS					
	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
Annual Meeting	15	45	39	44	45
Certified Pool Operator Course	22	27	31	26	17
CPSI Playground Inspector Course	42	-	-	46	-
Quarterly Meeting – December	34	34	28	33	35
Quarterly Meeting – March	31	31	29	28	31
State Conference - Delegates	125	125	104	115	104
State Conference - Vendors	34	34	42	43	40
Summerama	160	217	91	117	144
VT/NH Maintenance Workshop	79	/	-	-	-
CPRPs & CPREs	40/1	40/1			

**MEMBERSHIP** - Membership in the

association continues to grow, with new members joining throughout the year. The numbers for this year are deceiving – the total number of members is lower because we made the decision to include only the board/committee chair in an agency membership, rather than all the committee members. In reality, the total number of organizations represented in the membership has increased. Nearly every Vermont community with part-time or full-time paid recreation staff is a VRPA member.

VRPA MEMBERSHIP				
2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
309 members	302 members	344 members	372 members	394 members

**EDUCATION** - Participation in our education program offerings met or exceeded expectations this year. The number of conference attendees was the highest in years. Over the past several years, VRPA has made a concerted effort to encourage members to become certified park and recreation professionals, or CPRPs. The number of Vermont CPRPs has doubled in the last 5 years. We haven't tracked this number before but it has been added here so that we will, into the future. We hope to have more CPREs (Executives) by next year.

**PROGRAMS** - For the twelfth consecutive year, St. Johnsbury Academy hosted & sponsored our State Youth Track Meet, thank you St. Johnsbury Academy and Joe Fox! And for the third year, Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Vermont chose to sponsor this event which provided t-shirts for the athletes and officials. The St. Johnsbury Academy staff comes out in force to support this event; it is remarkable and so appreciated. We had another successful Performance Showcase in 2019 and discussed potential possibilities to grow the event in the years to come. While we had experienced a significant decline in discount ticket sales over the previous three years, we were pleased to see ticket sales remain consistent with the previous year last summer. Our discount tickets are sold through almost 40 different ticket partner communities, thank you.

VRPA PROGRAM PARTICIPATION					
	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2015-16
State Track Meet	300	312	290	433	466
Showcase Audience	45	52	37	54	44
Summer Tickets Sold	3,488	3,569	3,714	4,826	6,463

**PUBLICATIONS** - VRPA continues to offer all our publications and event notices in electronic format, including three newsletters each year, conference and meeting/event brochures, and weekly recreation check-ins. The weekly recreation check-in continues to be one of our most highly rated member benefits, which we enhanced this year by using Constant Contact!

**FINANCES** - For many years, revenue from the VRPA discount ticket program was enough to solely support the association budget. In 2001, we sold more than 15,000 tickets and ten years later, our sales were down to 10,782 tickets. In recent years, we have sold fewer than 5,000 tickets each summer, still a significant revenue source but significantly less than what we used to enjoy. As ticket sales started to decline, the Executive Committee strategically began planning for a more diverse revenue stream. You can see in the revenue charts below that the portion of the total revenue from tickets has continued to decline and the revenue generated by the conference, membership, and education and programs has steadily increased. This has been accomplished by increasing registration and membership fees, along with growth in training offerings and increased participation in membership, trainings, and programs. We ended the year with a balanced budget.

<p><b>We ended FY2019-20 year with:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ \$271,956.25 in total revenue</li> <li>➤ \$271,956.25 in total expenses</li> <li>➤ <b>\$0 net balance</b></li> <li>➤ \$5,576 in Silent Auction income</li> <li>➤ <b>\$83,447.76 in total assets</b></li> </ul>
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In 2015, the Executive Committee approved up to \$10,000 from the reserve fund to increase the Executive Director compensation to more accurately reflect the amount of work being performed as the association has grown. That first year, we used \$3,088 to balance the budget. Every year since, we have included part of this reserve fund appropriation to balance the proposed budgets but each year, revenues have exceeded expectations and we have not needed to draw from the reserve fund. The Executive Committee did approve a transfer up to \$3,500 in FY2019-20 to balance the year end budget because of the effects COVID-19 has had on the Association.

VRPA REVENUE HISTORY - % of Total				
	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Tickets	56.2%	56.2%	58.0%	60.3%
Conference	19.0%	19.0%	17.1%	14.5%
Membership	6.8%	6.8%	5.9%	4.8%
Programs	6.1%	6.1%	6.6%	5.0%
Education	12%*	9.4%	12.2%*	15.2%
Other	2.5%	2.5%	0.2%	0.1%
* CPSI course offered				

At the close of FY2019-20, membership is strong and participation in programs and trainings is high. Thank you to all our members for choosing to be part of VRPA...collectively we continue to do great things. Time after time, we go into committee meetings without pre-conceived outcomes, we dialogue rigorously, and the results are amazing. This is your organization and you will get far more value from your affiliation if you choose to engage. We have opportunities for everyone.

Thank you VRPA President, Melissa Cate, and the entire Executive Committee for guiding us through this past year. To everyone who has served on a committee this past year, thank you! Our association has grown to be so well-regarded because of all your efforts.

I have learned so much and met so many amazing professionals serving as your Executive Director this year. Thank you to Betsy Terry for leading the Association through so much during all her years with you, and for handing over the reins to a strong organization. I am inspired by our members and astonished at all we have accomplished. It is a thrill to see so many new faces at our meetings. Though this coming year may be different than we have all ever seen before, we can and will get through this together. Keep up the good work, and I hope to SEE you all again soon!

### 2019-20 VRPA Executive Board

President-Melissa Cate   President Elect-Ally Vile   Treasurer-Jenn Turmel   Secretary-April Cioffi   Past-Pres.-Scott Hausler  
Members-at-Large:   Matt Frazee   Brett Leonard   Rob Peterson   Drew Pollak-Bruce  
Executive Director: Betsy Terry / Jessica Brodie

