



# VRPA Advocate

Issue 87

Vermont Recreation & Parks Association

Winter 2017

## VRPA President's Perspective

Scott Hausler, CPRP,  
VRPA President

VRPA Members,

"A year from now you will wish you had started today". (Karen Lamb). I share this quote for the simple fact that I have experienced it firsthand as I personally and professionally begin a new year. It's the active lifestyle I seemed to never get started. Practicing what we preach...right? It is the healthy lifestyle of eating the right foods, and cutting out of the diet the many foods and drink you enjoy. It's the work-related tasks or programs you just couldn't find the time to accomplish. Perhaps you started today and it will be a positive reflection for you over the next year. But for many of us, I am sure, we often wish we had gotten started today.

In 2017, VRPA has a lot to offer you individually and department wide. As you plan out your year, we hope you take advantage of the many professional development programs and offerings for you and your staff. Here is a quick snapshot of several great program offerings through VRPA:

Registration is now open for the Certified Pool/Spa Operator and Certified Playground Safety Inspector courses that VRPA is hosting this spring. Both courses will be held at the Windjammer Best Western in South Burlington and special overnight rates are available for course participants. You can check out all the details about these two courses on the VRPA website. The CPO Course will be held March 21st & 22nd and the CPSI course will be held April 4th - 6th. Members of VRPA receive a discounted rate and register early and save even more money.

May 31st is the Maintenance Workshop.

(Continued on page 8)



## Two VRPA Members Receive Recognition from National Organizations

Barre City's Stephanie Quaranta was presented with the National Change Maker Award at the 2016 National League of Cities and Towns convention in Pittsburgh, PA last November. Barre Mayor Thom Lauzon and his wife, Karen, were also honored for their active roles in leading their community to achieve all 5 medals in the Let's Move Cities, Towns & Counties campaign for improving access to healthy, affordable foods, as well as encouraging families to exercise more and eat better.

Stephanie said, "The award was indeed an honor and a tribute to all the collaborative efforts that currently exist in Barre City as well as a strong commitment to continue the journey. We were proud to stand alongside communities with much larger budgets and resources. We showed that by working with others in the community and making small changes, you can make a difference and be successful on the road to creating a healthier community."



(L) Clifford M. Johnson, Executive Director, National League of Cities, (C) Stephanie, and (R) Jerry Abramson, Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, The White House

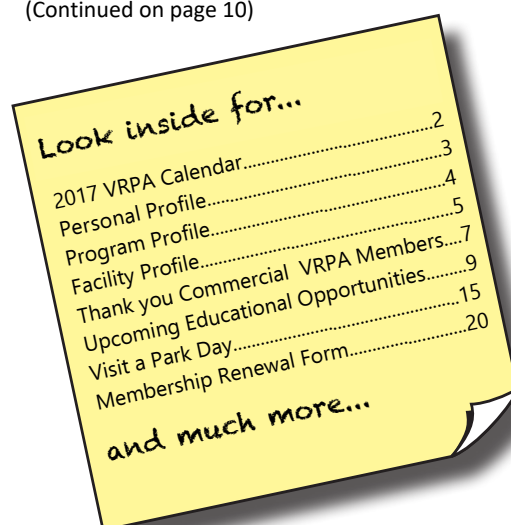
(Continued on page 7)

Thomas L. Hark of the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps was selected by The Corps Network, the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps, as a winner of the 2017 Corps Legacy Achievement Award.



The Corps Network presents this prestigious award on an annual basis to at least one individual from their membership of over 130 Service and Conservation Corps across the country.

(Continued on page 10)





### VRPA Executive Committee Officers

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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 Circulation – 450

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Send information to [info@vrpa.org](mailto:info@vrpa.org) or by snail mail to:

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## Message from the Executive Director

Over the last few months, I have been reminded of the power and strength of collaboration on a number of different fronts. In early December, the 2017 Conference Committee held its first meeting; it never ceases to amaze me how meeting after meeting, we toss around ideas and come out with such great solutions. It is refreshing to be part of a group where people feel comfortable sharing their ideas, decisions get made, and there never seems to be any importance placed on who gets credit. In mid-December, we met at Dartmouth College to plan the 2017 VT/NH Maintenance Workshop. The table was full of members from VRPA, the New Hampshire Recreation & Park Association, and the New England Sports Turf Managers Association. Two hours after we began, we had a plan for the day and people from all three groups had agreed to follow up on all the details and to secure a variety of speakers so that we could offer even more session options than we have in the past. And since that meeting, everyone has been following up as promised. Lastly, I recently returned from the Northern New England Recreation Conference (NNE) in Attitash, NH. The NNE



Conference Committee is made up of representatives from Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire and from the outside looking in, it appears that this group functions like a well-oiled machine. This year's conference was exceptional and the best opportunity of the year to learn and play with fellow

recreation professionals from around New England. It is a great way to start off the year! Vermont is the host state next year and I hope you will plan now to be there in 2018 and that we will have more Vermonters than we have ever had before.

I have a feeling that much of what I believe in is about to be challenged over the next few years. On the bright side, there is nothing like a good hearty debate to confirm for myself where I stand on things. For me, the whole is always greater than the sum of the parts and I look forward to continuing my work with all of you to make Vermont parks and recreation, and life in general, even better than ever.

I look forward to the journey together.

Betsy Terry, CPRP  
VRPA Executive Director

## VRPA Calendar of Events

2017	
March 16	VRPA Quarterly Meeting, Montpelier
March 21-22	Certified Pool/Spa Operators Course, South Burlington
April 4-6	Certified Playground Safety Inspector Course, South Burlington
April 13	VRPA Executive Committee Meeting, Barre
May 9	VRPA Annual Meeting, Quechee
May 31	VT/NH/NESTMA Maintenance Workshop, Location TBA
June 3	Summerama, White River Junction
July 29	VRPA-St. Johnsbury Academy State Track Meet
September 7	VRPA Executive Committee Meeting
September 26-28	NRPA Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA
October 11-12	74th Annual Vermont Conference on Recreation, Lake Morey
November 2	VRPA Executive Committee Meeting
November 16	Performance Showcase, Lake Morey

**VRPA Mission:**  
***Provide training and resources to help Vermonters to "Create Community through People, Parks and Programs."***



## 3 Vermont Communities Have New Recreation Directors

By Betsy Terry, CPRP

It is always a treat to see Vermont communities add their first recreation staff to their municipal teams. Recently, the communities of Westford (population 2,029) and Enosburgh (population 2,781) hired their first part-time year-round paid recreation staff and the Town of Waterbury (population 5,064) hired their first full-time recreation director. This seems like a great place to introduce all three to the Vermont recreation team.



In Enosburgh, Mary Tryhorne is the new Recreation Director. Mary graduated from Johnson State College. She had no experience in the field when she applied for

the position but saw it as an opportunity to be challenged and to use her passion and creativity to benefit the community. She told me, "My experience growing up in the St. Johnsbury Recreation Dept. shaped who I am today and I wanted to give that experience to future generations."

So far, starting the first community garden in Enosburgh feels like her biggest accomplishment. Challenges include working from home without the support of others in the field by her side and currently another challenge has been starting an outdoor ice rink. By now she has hopefully figured that one out but if you maintain an outdoor ice rink and would like to share your best tricks with her, you can reach Mary at [recdirector@enosburghvt.org](mailto:recdirector@enosburghvt.org).

About being a VRPA member, Mary especially appreciates the weekly rec check-in and learning about grant opportunities. Personally, she is most interested in outdoor activities such as hiking, river and lake sports, and ice skating. She enjoys teaching yoga and created a Yoga in the Park summer series. Enosburgh Recreation is "on the rise" and you can learn more by clicking [HERE](#).

Bekah Gwozdz is Westford's new

Recreation Coordinator. Bekah graduated from Burlington College. She sought out this position because she loves providing opportunities for the community to enjoy leisure activities and truly believes that these activities build a better, stronger community.



In her new position in Westford, Bekah has successfully increased program options. She said that one of her challenges is figuring out how to most effectively communicate with the community.

Bekah appreciates the resources provided by the Vermont Recreation & Parks Association and enjoys feeling like part of the Vermont recreation community. In her own leisure time, she enjoys hiking, swimming, and pickleball.

In the Town of Waterbury, Deb Fowler went from being the Summer Recreation Coordinator to Interim Recreation Director to the first full-time year-round Recreation Director. She told me, "When I first moved to the area, I got involved with the Summer Day Camp and Pool to keep my foot in the recreation door. When spring came around, the Recreation Director suddenly quit and I was approached by the Town to help get the summer programs going. Once I got involved I enjoyed the challenge so much that I put my hat in to be interviewed for the permanent job and as they say, the rest speaks for itself."

Deb went to school north of the border at Conestoga College in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada. She started her career in a treatment center for troubled teens where she was an Evening Recreation Director. Before moving to Vermont, she also worked for the YMCA in Oldham County, Kentucky where she provided support in all areas of the facility.

In Waterbury, she is most proud of being able to pull together everything needed to run a very successful Day Camp and outdoor pool while starting the whole process from scratch at the end of March. Not only did they have a full

camp of 80 plus kids, the pool saw a 30% increase in all aspects of income.

In her own leisure time, Deb enjoys a wide range of recreation interests including dancing, skiing, kayaking, volleyball, hiking, riding motorcycles and reading. She is on the volunteer Ski Patrol at Sugarbush Ski Area and teaches both water and land aerobics. "When I moved to Vermont, I received a book called 106 Covered Bridges of Vermont and I have made it a goal to see all of them."

Deb notes that "Being a new Recreation Department and being primarily a department of one (I have seasonal staff in the summer), VRPA has been invaluable to me. The association and its members are a source of support, education and information. When first hired, the Town asked me to review all fees and charges. This would have been an impossible task without the support of VRPA. Additionally, the incredible continuing education that is provided is invaluable."





## Program Profile . . . . .

# VYCC Food and Farm Program to Go Statewide

By Naomi Galimidi, Development Director, VYCC

Last year, 475 families in Chittenden, Rutland, and Washington counties received weekly deliveries of organic vegetables grown by youth enrolled in the Vermont Youth Conservation Corp (VYCC) Food and Farm Program. This year, with a \$95,000 grant from the Walmart Foundation, Orleans County will join this innovative project that addresses hunger and provides valuable youth development programming.



In 2012, VYCC launched the Health Care Share, which employs local youth to grow food for families unable to afford or access fresh vegetables. Families are referred through their primary care provider and pick up the share at their doctor's office each week, much like a CSA.

VYCC Corps Members, ages 15-24, grow and harvest food as a means to develop employment skills and embrace the organization's mission of personal responsibility. While the majority of food is grown on the Farm at VYCC in Richmond, Corps Members also grow and glean crops on partnering farms. Last year, a crew of Winooski High School students built a school garden as part of their VYCC experience.

Cianna, a high school student from the Burlington area, was one of 100 Corps Members working in the program last year. She says she has learned to use humor to keep a positive attitude throughout difficult tasks. She is motivated to work hard knowing how appreciated each item of food is by the people that receive it. This inspires her to take great care in all she does in the fields.

Food and Farm Program Director Paul Feenan asserts that "While other projects and organizations contribute similar work, none are as far-reaching or create a more intricate web of partners. At the junction of youth development and food access, the Health Care Share is an answer to what 'prevention' can mean for Vermont."

The Food and Farm Program already operates in Chittenden, Washington, Rutland, and Bennington counties. ([Click here to see a map on the VYCC website.](#)) Upper Kingdom Food Access Community Initiative is organizing to launch the Health Care Share in Newport, following a [2015 Community Health Needs Assessment](#) conducted by North Country Hospital which confirms that community members in this region experience health levels far



below the state average.

VYCC will employ a crew of Newport-area youth this summer to grow and distribute food. Inquiries regarding the Food and Farm Program and Health Care Share can be directed to Paul Feenan at [Paul.Feenan@vycc.org](mailto:Paul.Feenan@vycc.org).





# The Catamount Trail – Vermont’s Gateway to Backcountry

The Catamount Trail (CT) is 300-miles of backcountry skiing through the heart of Vermont stretching from Massachusetts all the way to Canada. It was first skied in 1984. The Trail begins in the town of Readsboro, VT, along the Massachusetts border, and stretches north to North Troy where it hits the Quebec border. The Trail is divided into 31 sections, most of which are skiable in a day, depending on conditions. Sections range in length from 6 or 7 miles to over 12 miles. Each of these sections is maintained with the help of one or more volunteer “Trail Chiefs.” The Trail Chiefs are the folks that know the trail sections best, and they are the people that make sure it is clear and ready for skiing each winter. The trail would not exist without the help and dedication of these and many other volunteers.

The Trail is characterized by great diversity – both in terms of the difficulty of the route and the remoteness and scenery of the various sections. There is something for everyone out there, regardless of your ability level and the time available. However, please be aware that while you may be adequately skilled and equipped for one section, you may not necessarily be so for other sections. Consider the



weather and snow conditions, and each member of your party’s physical fitness, equipment, familiarity with the route and backcountry skiing experience and skills. By reading the route description for each section and studying the trail profile (available at no cost on the Catamount Trail Association website), you should be able to choose a section suitable for the ability level of your party.

The same year the Trail opened, the Catamount Trail Association (CTA) was born, and during the last 30+ years they’ve

been working hard to protect the Trail, and maintain access to Vermont’s backcountry terrain while building partnerships that support their mission and vision.

Work related to maintaining and protecting the trail corridor is a priority for the CTA, but it is far from all they do. Their instructional offerings provide individuals of all ages and backgrounds, the opportunity to spend time outside being active during the winter. Collaborations with land managers and local community groups provide dispersed backcountry skiing and riding opportunities throughout the state. And, their special events bring individuals together helping create new connections and strengthening the Vermont community.

Being active and enjoying the winter environment is a large part of the Vermont experience. The CTA offers a wide variety of tours, special events and instructional clinics in an effort to remove the obstacles that keep people inside and sedentary during winter. Whether you’re looking to develop and improve your technique, meet like-minded adventurers, or push your limits... You can be sure the CTA has something for you.

To learn more about the CTA, or to join one of their many winter tours or events, visit [www.catamounttrail.org](http://www.catamounttrail.org). If you’d like assistance to determine where you might start your Catamount Trail adventures, feel free to call the CTA staff at 802-864-5794. They love to talk about the trail!



## A very big thank you to all our commercial VRPA members!

CLICK ON the "Commercial Members" tab on the VRPA website for a direct link to each of their websites. Please remember to support our commercial members with your business and be sure to include them on your bid lists when you are purchasing services, supplies and equipment. Here at VRPA we couldn't do half of what we do without their ongoing support.

Thank you very much. We really appreciate you choosing to be a VRPA commercial member!

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## National Recognition (continued)

The Let's Move campaign was launched in February of 2010 by then First Lady Michelle Obama. It was a comprehensive initiative with hopes of solving the childhood obesity rates so that the children of tomorrow would have an opportunity to grow up in a healthier environment.



The Let's Move Cities, Towns and Counties (LMCTC) reached out to Mayors across the country to adopt long-term, sustainable and holistic approaches to addressing childhood obesity. The Mayor of the City of Barre was made aware of the program and the fact that no other community in Vermont had joined in. Barre City enrolled and with that enrollment, it now secured that all 50 states were involved.

An important part of the LMCTC initiative and an area of success for the City of Barre was the number of neighborhood playgrounds throughout the City, providing easy access, especially to those families where transportation can be a barrier. The City recognized the value of these playgrounds and they were all updated and renovated with funds that were willed to the City of Barre from a longtime resident and business person. The summer meal program was expanded to include the library as a downtown site and the pool/playground area was excellent for reaching those who needed it most. Along with the lunch, a healthy snack was available later in the afternoon.

The movement is all about taking a close look deep into the community to see what services are offered and who is doing what. A closer tie to the school revealed that they were sending children in need home with backpacks on the weekend that contained food. An arrangement was also made where every 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month families could come to the school and take home fruits and vegetables free of charge. Healthy eating is not always affordable and when money is tight, these items are not purchased. This opportunity helped to ease some of those constraints and made for better food choices for children and families. The school set up a "tasting area" once a month where youngsters could experience eating different fruit that they might not have otherwise tried. Several other agencies within the City contributed as well, including the local clergy who all meet on a regular basis.

On the programmatic side, fundraisers at the schools added fitness components to them. One of the fundraisers involved youngsters raising money for new basketball hoops. Sponsors donated 25 cents and students could shoot one basket; a \$1.00 donation allowed for four shots. They were raising funds for recreational opportunities and being active at the same time. The walk/run around school was another very successful fundraiser that had students moving and learning about a new possible trail around the school. As an alternative to the downtown trick or treating where candy would be handed out, active carnival type games were set up and participants received healthy snacks and a large activity book. A fun skating event with police officers yielded consideration of an active event along with a free, healthy snack. Another collaborative effort resulted

in a drop-in program at the swimming pool where once a week youngsters learned to make healthy snacks! LMCTC is all about rethinking how to introduce fitness and health in fun ways! It is about collaboration with other groups in the community and utilizing all the resources that are right in your own community.

Over the period of two years the City of Barre worked very hard to network and piece together what everyone was doing as it pertained to nutrition and healthy options. It was clear that there was a weakness, especially with preschool age children and modifications were created to expand programs for that age group. Stephanie recalled, "The best part was to learn where the City was really strong and see where improvement was needed. Barre City has so much to offer and the LMCTC program helped to strengthen our goals and desires for the City."



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- PDA Handheld Interface

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## President's Perspective (cont'd)

This is a collaborative event with NHRPA and NESTMA. The workshop schedule will provide participants the opportunity to choose from concurrent sessions all morning with a hands-on and lecture format. Equipment demos are also being planned throughout schedule times, providing your staff the opportunity to touch and grab on to top of the line equipment in our industry. The workshop will be held in the Lebanon/Hartford area providing easy access to members in Vermont and New Hampshire. Look for the final details appearing in the mail or your email in-box soon.

Take advantage of the professional training opportunities through VRPA. Whether it's the CPO, CPSI, Maintenance Workshop, Summerama, Conference on Recreation or the VRPA Quarterly Meetings, VRPA has something to offer everyone in your Department. I challenge us all to get started today professionally and personally, so in a year from now, you won't be saying, "I wish I had started today".

Respectfully,



Scott Hausler, CPRP



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## Mark your calendar...

The March Quarterly Meeting will be held in Montpelier on Thursday, March 16th. Get ready for an education program on becoming a better advocate and an afternoon at the Statehouse.

The VRPA Annual Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 9th at the Quechee Club. Afternoon activities will include golf, fling golf (check it out at [www.flinggolf.com](http://www.flinggolf.com)), and a walk into Quechee Gorge.



# Upcoming Educational Opportunities

VRPA is hosting the Certified Pool/Spa Operator (CPO) Course on Tuesday & Wednesday, March 21 & 22nd at the Windjammer Best Western in South Burlington. The CPO certification program includes pool and spa chemistry, testing, treatment, filtration, maintenance, automatic feeding equipment, and government requirements. Participation in this training will give your staff a better

understanding of the operator's role in pool care, management and risk reduction. The course registration fee includes lunch both days, course materials mailed prior to the course, and an open-book exam on Day 2. CPO certification is valid for 5 years and VRPA hosts this course once every 5 years. The CPO certification course is eligible for IACET continuing education units. The CPO registration brochure

is available on the VRPA website. Class size is limited. The early registration deadline is March 2nd.



VRPA is also hosting the Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) Course on Tuesday & Wednesday, April 4 & 5th, with the written exam to follow on Thursday, April 6th. The CPSI course is the most comprehensive training program on playground identification and risk management

methods offered anywhere. Program highlights include hazard identification, safe surfacing materials, playground equipment accessibility, safety management, audit objectives & procedures, and maintenance procedures & standards. The program includes a site visit to a nearby playground for hands-on learning. The course registration fee includes lunch both days, course materials mailed to participants prior to the course,

and two full days of training. Course participants are eligible to take the written exam on the third day for an additional fee. The CPSI certification is valid for 3 years and VRPA hosts the CPSI course once every 3 years. The CPO certification course is eligible for IACET continuing education units. The CPSI registration materials are available on the VRPA website. The early registration deadline is February 15th.

The 2017 VT/NH Maintenance Workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, May 31st. This workshop is jointly coordinated by the Vermont and New Hampshire Recreation & Parks Associations and the New England Sports Turf Managers Association

(NESTMA). This year's workshop program will include concurrent education sessions and a series of demos throughout the morning, providing a wide variety of education topics and more hands-on opportunity for maintenance staff at all levels of



experience. As always, the afternoon will be filled with the ever-popular roundtable discussions. Plan now to send all your seasonal and full-time maintenance staff and better yet, come with them! The location is yet to be confirmed but will be in the White River Junction/Hanover, NH area. Registration materials will be posted on the VRPA website as soon as they are available.



## National Recognition (continued)

Legacy Achievement Awardees must have at least 20 years of experience with Corps.

"Thomas is a leader in transformation at both the individual and the organizational level," said Breck Knauff, Executive Director of Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. "At his core, he is a builder of people, programs and organizations."

Mr. Hark has over 30 years of experience with Corps. He got his start in 1979 as a Crew Leader with the U.S. Forest Service Youth Conservation Corps in Young Harris, GA. It was an experience that changed his life.

A few years later, he was a summer camp director with Minnesota Conservation Corps. During this time, Mr. Hark was instrumental in bringing together two summer camps: one based at St. Croix State Park and one for deaf and hard-of-hearing members at Tettegouche State Park. Today, Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa's Summer Youth Corps continues to be an integrated program; about 15 percent of participants are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

In 1985, with a one-dollar appropriation from the Vermont State Legislature, the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) was founded as a program of the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. Mr. Hark was hired to be the fledgling organization's Program Chief. He led with the firm belief that all people, regardless of background or experience, have the ability to make a difference in the world around them. Mr. Hark envisioned an organization where, through meaningful projects in the great outdoors, young people could learn the value of hard work, build self-reliance, develop job skills, improve critical thinking and forge lasting friendships.

Under Mr. Hark's leadership, VYCC developed into a public-private partnership which has served more than 6,000 young people. After 30 years, VYCC has become a state-of-the-art, work-based learning organization operating year round across Vermont and beyond.

"All our member Corps and Corpsmembers make significant contributions to communities across

the country," said Mary Ellen Sprenkel, CEO of The Corps Network. "With the Legacy Achievement Award, we have the opportunity to celebrate extraordinary individuals and programs from our network and shed light on the vast capabilities of Corps; our awardees are symbols of the impact of national service. The Corps Network is humbled to represent such inspiring people as Thomas Hark."

After 30 years at VYCC, serving in various capacities – including as Program Chief, Executive Director and President and CEO – Mr. Hark stepped down from the organization in 2015. VYCC recognized his contributions by naming the Thomas L. Hark Leadership Campus in his honor. Mr. Hark's legacy continues in the programming and spirit at VYCC and the many young people and national service programs he influenced throughout this career.

Mr. Hark will be honored at a ceremony on February 15 in Washington, DC as part of The Corps Network's 2017 national conference.



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# “A Letter to My Internship Supervisor”

By Isaac Spivey, Program Coordinator, Colchester Parks & Recreation

*Dear Internship Supervisor,*

*During my time in college, I took my undergrad and graduate years looking for that next opportunity that would set me up for success and set me apart. Being the oldest of seven kids, I always had to go through things first, but I challenged myself to do it in a way where my siblings could look at my journey and use it as a road map for their own. My father always challenged me to get involved during my college years, as it would be one of the most important times in my life to really figure out what I wanted to do, what I was passionate about, all while having resources readily available to me at my institution. I took that advice and took part in 6 internship experiences during my college years, each one teaching me a different skillset and providing me with experience that was invaluable.*

*When I was looking for an internship to take part in, I looked for three main things. First off, I was looking for an internship that would provide me with skillsets in a particular field or focus area that would help me down the road. Secondly, I was looking for networking opportunities, not only with the site I was working with, but also professionally as well. Lastly, I was looking for the right fit for me. A fit where I felt a part of the site I was working at and finding a site that would help me identify if what I was interning in would be a passion of mine professionally. I was looking for a well-rounded experience that would help me answer that question, as well as setting me up for my career aspirations down the road.*

*Looking back on my experiences and conversations with my internship supervisors, I can share that the two hesitations from my internship sites in offering an internship were the ability to offer a challenging and prepared experience and the compensation aspect of an internship. First, the internship sites felt some doubt about what experience they could offer a college student, as they had never taken the chance to offer an opportunity through their department before, and this hesitancy held them back for years. Secondly, internship sites felt if they didn't offer some form of compensation for their interns, the interns would not want to take part. For me and many other interns I've talked to, these two factors were not deal breakers, as the opportunity and experience I got was more important than the compensation. The most successful internships I took part in were the ones that took the time to prepare for me, offered a joint experience for the me and the internship site team, and lastly challenged me in a way where I left a better professional, student and person.*

*When one internship supervisor interviewed me for the first time, I was told what I might get out of the internship, and then I was asked “What do you want out of this experience?” That question changed the game for me, as the joint participation in creating my internship experience was not only something I had never been asked before, but it made me feel like we were in this experience together and I was valued by the team. This question gave me confidence going into my internships, and as much as I got out of an internship experience, I believe I was able to give value back to the sites I worked for. Internships should be a two-way street, as an intern can bring a fresh perspective, new ideas and current educational focus to the table. When finding the right fit for both parties, this partnership can be something that elevates an organization to the next level and sets up future interns for success.*

*During my many internship experiences, I was offered different opportunities to grow, many of which pushed me out of my comfort zone. Some internships taught me patience, how to handle upset customers and how to analyze a program and make changes to improve an organization. Some internships put me right in the action, as I officiated school sporting events, supervised national championship sporting events, and gave tours to Division I athletes like Kevin Durant, the Chinese Collegiate basketball team and coaches like Roy Williams, Doc Rivers and Coach Krzyzewski. I got to attend a national conference in North Carolina for student activities where I met Andy Grammar, Raven Symone, and Jalen Rose. I was able to set up a halftime event with our students and the Guinness Book of World Records for the longest game of Knockout. I even got to present as a speaker at a Northeast Regional Conference in Residence Life sharing my passion of motivational speaking. I look back and just shake my head in amazement at all the opportunities I got to take part in and learn from during my internship experiences, all because someone was willing to give me a chance to grow and be challenged.*

*I sit here today as a parks and recreation professional. Before this, I worked professionally in residential life at a university, followed by being a director at a YMCA. These professional opportunities didn't just happen because I graduated with a degree, but because I was willing to challenge myself, try something different and because of the skills and experience I received from my internships. Yes, internship opportunities matter. Most higher education degrees have them as mandatory pieces in their curriculum because a classroom can teach you theory and methods, but internships give students hands-on experience in the field. Because I had internship sites that prepared ahead of time, took the chance to give a college student an opportunity and shared in the experience with me by adjusting the role to fit my needs, I left each part of my journey more prepared and better than when I first arrived. These opportunities set the foundation for who I would become as a professional, set me up for success in my future work, and challenged me in a way that a classroom could not.*

*As professional organizations and departments in our community, I believe it is so important to give back and provide these types of opportunities to graduating students. There is nothing more valuable than offering an opportunity to a young college student that will set them up for success down the road. I have set up internship opportunities at all of my past places of employment because I was that kid a few years back. Because someone was willing to give me a chance to experience something I had a passion for, I am where I am today. So, to my internship site and supervisors of the past, I want to say THANK YOU. Thank you for taking a chance on me, for preparing a challenging experience, and providing me with the opportunity to grow. My success is a direct result of each of you, giving me experiences and opportunities that I will always cherish. No matter where my journey takes me, or where I end up professionally, I look at me and know that I am who I am because of each of you.”*

*Sincerely,  
An Appreciative Intern*



# Sport Dropout, or Sport Commitment? The Choice is Ours!

By Bob Barcelona, Ph.D.

**R**ecent research data on youth sport participation in the United States suggests that fewer young people are participating in sports today than they were in 2008. Most studies estimate that at least 30 percent of youth drop out of sports each year. Girls are particularly vulnerable to dropping out of sports with disproportionate attrition rates occurring around age 13.

While there are fewer kids playing sports overall, those who remain active are participating more frequently and at higher levels. This may not lead to dropout right away. However, youth who specialize in sports too early and who play more games increase their exposure to physical injury and psychological burnout. Injuries and burnout are two key ingredients for dropping out.

For those of us who believe that youth sports are largely positive in the developmental process of young people, the reality of sport dropout is

discouraging. Fewer kids playing sports mean fewer kids reaping the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social benefits that healthy sport participation can provide.

Dropout has been attributed to a number of factors including lack of enjoyment, lack of perceived competence, increased stress and pressure, physical injuries, negative team dynamics, having a negative relationship with a coach, and lack of time due to other activities. The good news is that youth sport leaders can positively influence almost all of the reasons given for dropping out of sport. I want to focus on the following three strategies in particular:

1. **Encourage Sampling, Discourage Specialization.** On this point, the research is becoming more clear – multi-sport athletes are less likely to obtain overuse injuries, are more likely to develop well-rounded physical skills, and are less likely to burnout and (eventually) dropout. Multisport athletes are also

more likely to experience enjoyment in sport. Ensure that young children are given the opportunity to sample a variety of different sports, and discourage youth from specializing in just one sport.

2. **Create Mastery Motivational Climates.** Mastery motivational climates are sport environments where the focus is placed on self and/or team improvement, learning from others, engagement, autonomy, and effort. Mastery climates give young athletes choice in their sport experience – this could include allowing young athletes to give their preferences for playing positions, setting their own goals for skill improvement, working individually or in small groups on specific skills, or allowing the team to decide what game will be played at the end of practice. Minimizing negative sport experiences and poor sportsmanship by reinforcing pro-social behavior can also help. Strategies can include promoting team-building and social bonding, rewarding good

(Continued on page 15)



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## Sport Dropout (continued)

sportsmanship, and closely supervising practices and games.

3. **Maximize the Fun.** “Because it wasn’t fun” is one of the most frequent reasons given by young athletes for dropping out of sports. Sport leaders should consider implementing strategies that maximize the fun in sport, starting with creating mastery motivational climates in practices and games. Other strategies include maximizing participation opportunities – it is more fun to play than sit on the bench. Ensuring equal playing time, playing different positions, limiting roster sizes, and creating more small-sided games are good examples. Structuring practices so there is less standing around and more physical activity, and teaching sport fundamentals in the context of games (rather than skills and drills) are also good strategies for maximizing fun.

It is important to note that all of these strategies are dependent on the age and developmental level of the athletes that you are working with. One size does not always fit all when it comes to youth sport development. Whether a young athlete drops out of sports altogether or commits to participate long-term is largely a function of the environment that is created by recreation directors, league administrators, coaches, and parents. The choice is ours – either we work to improve the youth sport experience, or we’ll continue to see sport participation rates decline.

Given all of the potential benefits of youth sport participation, the choice should be an easy one for us to make.

*Bob Barcelona, Ph.D., is the Department Chair and associate professor in the Department of Recreation Management and Policy at UNH. He can be reached at bob.barcelona@unh.edu.*

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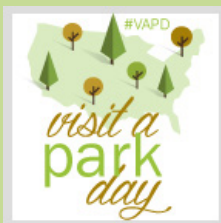
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## Visit a Park Day on October 6th

The Young Professional Network (YPN), with the support of the National Parks and Recreation Association, will be sponsoring the 6th annual Visit a Park Day on October 6th 2017! Parks and recreation impacts communities through conservation, health and wellness, and social equity by preserving natural resources, connecting people to nature, improving overall health and wellness, and ensuring universal access to public parks and recreation programs. Each community is unique, so to develop a “one size fits all” program for each community would be a difficult task.

Over the past 5 years of this initiative the YPN has collected information regarding events, programs, and dedications that have helped push this initiative forward and more importantly helped reunite individuals to the power of parks. Prior to the event, the YPN will distribute program ideas, lesson plans, and activity guides for you to use in your own agency! Help keep the communication and appreciation for public parks flowing and generating support and excitement for the great things happening in all communities throughout the United States. Stay tuned for more information this spring, and plan on joining the nation on October 6th in visiting a local park! For more information, contact Brian Bevacqua, Program Director at the Quechee Club, at [brian.bevacqua@quecheeclub.com](mailto:brian.bevacqua@quecheeclub.com).



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# Gaga ball becoming the great playground equalizer

The old-but-new-to-some game of gaga, what some call a kinder and gentler form of dodgeball, is being chosen over traditional games on a number of playgrounds these days. And parents, educators, camp counselors and other grown-ups, and kids too, say the spread of gaga fever is a good thing. They call the game of gaga "the great playground equalizer." It doesn't require a strong throwing arm, fast legs or superb hand-eye coordination. Almost anybody can play.

The name "gaga" to some may initially conjure images of a female singer. But the gaga at playgrounds and camps is actually a decades-old game. Many believe it originated in Israel. Gaga means "touch, touch" in Hebrew. It was being played at some Jewish summer camps in the U.S. by the early 1970s, but the game's popularity is much greater nowadays and growing.

Gaga is played inside a hexagon or octagon pit about 15 to 25 feet wide with walls generally 24 to 30 inches high and built on any surface: blacktop, grass, sand, wood chips or carpet. The number of players at the start of the game varies.

Players start with one hand touching

a wall. A lightweight ball, like those used for kickball, is dropped in the center. Then someone slaps the ball underhand, attempting to hit the other players on or below the knee to eliminate them from the pit.

The last player in the pit wins, but the game is more complicated than that. Players cannot hold or throw the ball. If someone hits the ball out of the pit without it touching a person, they're out. If someone outside the pit catches that ball, he or she is back in. So being outside the pit doesn't completely exclude you from the game.

The rules, the soft ball that's used and the confined space help keep the action safe and less subjected to athletic prowess than other traditional games. All of the kids who aren't in the pit stand around and then go flying over the railing to get back in the next game when one ends. Although there are basic rules, schools and camps may vary them according to the setting or age of the participants.

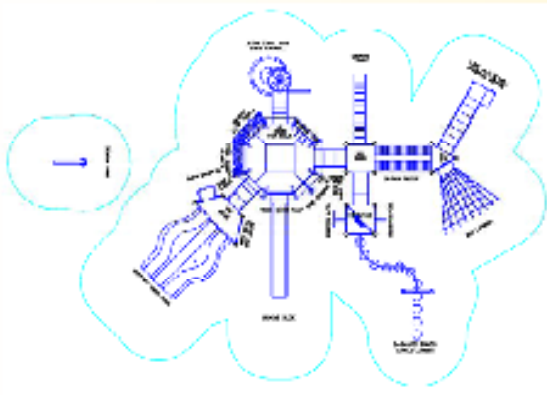
To learn more, go to the website of one of our newest VRPA commercial members at [www.gagacourt.com](http://www.gagacourt.com).

## Become a VRPA Ticket Partner

If you are not already a VRPA ticket partner, we'd love to have you become one. VRPA now has winter and summer discount ticket programs. VRPA makes it easy for you to provide a variety of ski, amusement park and adventure center tickets to your residents at deeply discounted prices. Tickets are available on a consignment basis...no upfront expense, you only pay for what you sell and return all unsold tickets. Online tickets are also available for you to advertise to your constituents.

This winter, VRPA has discount tickets for Smugglers Notch, Bromley and Pico Mountains. Summer tickets are available for Bromley Mountain Adventure Park, Killington Adventure Center, the Great Escape, and Six Flags New England. Details are available on the VRPA website at [www.vrpa.org](http://www.vrpa.org) or by calling the VRPA office at 802-878-2077. There is still time to become a winter ticket partner. Summer ticket orders will be available in early March.

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# Vermont Senior Games Association Hires It's First Managing Director

**A**ndrea Stander has joined the Vermont Senior Games Association (VSGA) as the group's first part-time Managing Director. Andrea lives in Montpelier and has 20+ years' experience working with non-profits including most recently 4 years as the Executive Director of Rural Vermont and before that, 6 years as Communications Director with the Vermont Arts Council. Andrea will be helping with aspects of planning, marketing and hosting the Vermont Senior Games events and activities.

In 2017, the VSGA will be hosting state championships in 14 different sports for adults age 50 & older. This year's sports will be basketball, bowling, cycling, golf, horseshoes, pickleball, racquetball, 5K and 10K road races, swimming, table tennis, tennis, track & field, and triathlon. Vermont is an "open" state and the Vermont Senior Games are open to Vermonters and non-Vermonters.

The 2017 VSGA season opens on April 1st with the Swimming Championships being held in conjunction with the 4th Annual Edge April Fools Masters Swim Meet in Williston. Swimmers can register in up to five individual events as well as freestyle and medley relays. Other events at the start of the season include the Bowling Championships at Spare Time in Colchester on April 13th and Racquetball at the Essex Edge on May 20th. Event details and registration information for all VSGA events is available at [www.vermontseniorgames.org](http://www.vermontseniorgames.org).

In even-numbered years the Vermont Senior Games are qualifying events for the National Senior Games. Vermont senior athletes who qualified in last year's events are currently in the process of registering for the 2017 National Senior Games being held in Birmingham, Alabama on June 2-15.

The VSGA welcomes help from all Vermont parks and recreation agencies



to advertise the 2017 Vermont Senior Games. If you are willing to post VSGA event posters and/or include details of the Vermont Senior Games in your department brochures or on your website and Facebook page, please contact VSGA President, Marti Powers, at [vermontmarti@gmail.com](mailto:vermontmarti@gmail.com).

Ever thought about becoming a member of a state-wide board? The VSGA is currently accepting applications to become a member of their Board of Directors. If interested, contact Betsy Terry at [betsy@vrpa.org](mailto:betsy@vrpa.org) or Janet Nunziata at [jnunziat@uvm.edu](mailto:jnunziat@uvm.edu).







If you are new to the NEPA or were a member years ago but have let your membership lapse, we invite you to join us and become part of a vital and growing network of providers, vendors and students who share the common belief that "Parks make life better!"

## Get to know NEPA!

Formed in 1898, the New England Park Association is the oldest organization of its kind in the US.

Over 100 years later the New England Park Association continues to provide an important network of ideas, information, professional development and support for over 400 members throughout the region.

Our Spring meeting and annual Fall conference provide our members an opportunity to interact with colleagues from neighboring communities to exchange ideas and gain valuable insight into developing the most cost effective and impactful ways to deliver services to the residents and clients we serve.

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- ❖ Shape our profession today and tomorrow.

- ❖ As a VRPA member, you will receive:

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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* – Conferences, workshops and event registration fees, and advertising rates.

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*VRPA website* – Access the VRPA website at [www.vrpa.org](http://www.vrpa.org).

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\* Please list all names, titles & contact information (email and phone) for agency and board memberships. Thanks!

**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.*

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?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No  
**If yes, who?** \_\_\_\_\_

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