Greetings from the NRPA Young Professional Network,

First and foremost, I want to say how proud I and the Young Professional Network are of this publication. The latest edition, released in April, again impressed everyone and the feedback received was extremely positive. Please join me in giving kudos to the amazing team that puts “The Young Professional” together. Sadly, but with great satisfaction, this will be the last time that I address everyone as YPN Chair as I will be passing the torch on to Christian Moore soon. I want to thank you all for your time and support during my time as leader of the YPN. With the help of a great team, we were able to accomplish a lot and credit is due to all of those who contributed. Thank you!

That said, before you dive into this edition, please let me tell you a little of what the YPN is up to going into Congress!

Recently, NRPA staff leadership called on YPN leadership to discuss some new initiatives on the horizon for NRPA. One of those initiatives was the NRPA’s Three Pillars: Health and Wellness, Conservation and Social Equity. We had an in-depth discussion of the importance of these pillars within Recreation and Parks and are excited to assist in promoting these concepts. Many of us do what we can to promote these pillars already, but now is the time that we tell their story. To learn more about the Three Pillars and to hear NRPA President and CEO, Barbara Tulipane, speak about the NRPA Three Pillars, visit NRPA’s website, there is much more information available.

The Administrators and Young Professionals Network’s Mentorship Program commenced in May and over 20 parings were made. We are excited to offer this program to our network and are confident that it will create career-long relationships where participants continually learn from and call upon their mentor/mentee. For those who missed out on this opportunity, please let us know and we can work to find you a mentor. Also, be on the lookout for the next time we announce the program early next year.

On a final note, NRPA Congress is here! As I am sure you have heard through many outlets, Congress is a great place for young professionals. It is truly the premier educational and networking event in the industry and you do not want to miss it. As we travel to Houston this year, I want to highlight all of what the YPN does during Congress. The following events are specifically targeted for students and young professionals in attendance: YPN “Meet and Greet” Networking Breakfast (and yes, there is food!) on the first day of Congress; Take a Student or Young Professional to Lunch Program; the Career Center facilitated by the YPN; the YPN Meeting; the YPN Professional Panel; a YPN Social; and several educational sessions geared towards students and young professionals. Be on the lookout for updated Congress schedules, as they come out, for more details about these events.

From here, I encourage you all to join in our conference calls to hear more and potentially get involved. This year has been great and I have seen so many new people join our great team in 2013! This network is always thinking forward, and I cannot wait to see what it will produce in the future.

In the meantime, enjoy this edition of “The Young Professional.”

As always, thank you all for your support,

Thomas G. Venniro
2012-2013 NRPA Young Professional Network Chair
Life sometimes has a funny way of working things out, and the mere fact that I am writing this as your incoming Chair is no exception. When we meet in Houston for Congress, it will be less than two hours from where I grew up and now work. Even more so, it reminds me that my first Congress was in San Antonio in 2005, when I was serving as the student branch president of the Texas Recreation & Park Society. That was the last time NRPA was held in Texas, and we are excited to welcome you back this year!

NRPA has undergone significant change in the 8 years since San Antonio, and more is on the horizon as we seek to find the best ways to position the association and its members to serve our communities. One of the most significant changes in NRPA was the streamlining of our governance structure and the creation of the Network system allowing members to be as connected as they want to be. Gone are the perceived geographic and content-specific restrictions on participation. Instead, we are able to participate in as many, or as few, of NRPA’s 22 Networks.

With this increased encouragement for access and collaboration comes an important responsibility. We cannot allow ourselves to be simply consumers of information, we must be contributors! I realize that we are all comfortable contributing in different ways. Some of us are perfectly agreeable to meeting with the NRPA Leadership to influence governance issues affecting young professionals. Others have done excellent research on emerging topics and are comfortable presenting those in sessions, blog posts, and webinars. Still more of our members are comfortable participating in monthly conference calls, discussions on NRPA Connect, and writing for The Young Professional. Regardless of where you feel comfortable, I encourage you to participate, not only in YPN, but in NRPA as a whole. This is a membership driven organization. It can only be and become what we, its members, make of it. It will be nothing more, and nothing less.

In the last year, I have been asked to speak several times about NRPA and the benefits of membership. One of the things that I always discuss, in this regard, is the opportunity to lead that has been afforded to young professionals under the new network structure. Each of the NRPA Networks has either Young Professional or a New Professional as part of their leadership team. In addition to this, we were able to count 13 networks with a young professional as Chair or Chair-Elect during 2012-2013. That this was accomplished in only the 3rd year of the new NRPA network structure is something that we can all be proud of! (Note: I include students as young professionals; they are not “just” the future of the field – they are an integral part of what we do today.)

As I was preparing for the presentations regarding the benefits of NRPA membership and active participation, I found a quote from Dee Hock, Founder and CEO Emeritus of VISA:

“Control is not leadership; management is not leadership; leadership is leadership. If you seek to lead, invest at least 50% of your time in leading yourself—your own purpose, ethics, principles, motivation, conduct. Invest at least 20% leading those with authority over you and 15% leading your peers.”

If we follow this model, we find another important way that we can contribute to NRPA, by constantly seeking to improve ourselves as professionals. So, I challenge each member of YPN to begin this new NRPA year by contributing to your own development, the development of the YPN Network, and the development of the entire National Recreation and Park Association. By doing so, you will not only strengthen your position in the profession, but you will strengthen the profession itself, providing a better opportunity for us to make a difference in the quality of life of those we serve.
Just so you know, I am not asking you to do something that I would not do myself. After finding Hock’s quote, I challenged myself to obtain CPRP certification and complete at least 1.0 CEUs by the end of Congress. Obtaining professional certification is a fundamental way that we can improve ourselves and support the organization. If you haven’t considered NRPA’s certification program (CPRP, AFO, CPSI), please do so. If you are a CPRP (or will be), consider elevating your designation to the new Certified Parks & Recreation Executive once you meet the requirements.

As the Young Professional Network enters our fourth year, let us take up the challenge to contribute to NRPA in every way possible. We are leaders in this organization, and people look to us to help strengthen and improve this profession into the future. This is our time to lead by example!

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The Benefits of Professional Certification
by Kara Kish

The benefits of obtaining a professional certification can strengthen and support your career, especially as a young professional. As a certified professional, I am a strong advocate and can personally attest to their importance and significance.

The CPRP, or Certified Park and Recreation Professional, is considered the most respected certification a young professional in the field of public parks and recreation can obtain. This certification is offered by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). NRPA states that the CPRP is, “an investment in your career that demonstrates your practical knowledge and that you have the current real-world skills necessary in today’s changing park and recreation environment” (www.nrpa.org).

There are differing opinions among current professional as to their true value. The biggest dispute I hear regarding the value of the CPRP, is that professionals do not feel that the certification makes them a better practitioner...that his/her experience in the field speaks for itself. There is no denying that a professional certification cannot and should not replace the significance of experience; however, a professional certification holds a different purpose. The attainment and continued sustainability of a professional certification exists to demonstrate a level of competency to other professionals, the elected officials that may appoint you, potential new employers, the grantors you apply to, and the citizens you serve. In the field of public parks and recreation, positions often list “CPRP preferred” if not “CPRP required” as it is a symbol of accomplishment and credibility. For the potential employer, the CPRP, along with our previous achievements and letters of recommendation, serves as a designation that our knowledge and competence have been tested and meet national standards deemed necessary as a precursor for success.

Certification requires that you commit to professional development; education does not stop after graduation. You must receive 2.0 continuing education credits (CEU’s) to qualify for recertification at the termination of the two year certification period which equates to twenty hours of continued education. CEU’s can be obtained in many different formats. The NRPA Congress, your state association annual conferences, local education workshops, college courses, and a plethora of webinars and additional online opportunities offered through the NRPA.
The CPRP has recently been made available to college seniors, in their final semester, preparing to graduate from a COAPRT accredited university. Students are strongly encouraged to pursue their CPRP prior to exiting their undergraduate program to give them another tool to open doors in an extremely competitive entry-level environment.

It is important to keep in mind that the Certified Park and Recreation Professional is not the only professional certification that can benefit a young professional in the field of parks and recreation. The National Recreation and Park Association sponsors several other tailored certifications. These certifications include Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) and Aquatic Facility Operator (AFO). The CPSI, “provides the credentials to inspect playgrounds for safety ensuring that each playground meets the current national standards set by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) and U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) (www.nrpa.org). The AFO, “is a state-of-the-art certification for pool operators and aquatic facility managers” (www.nrpa.org). Certification in a specific area of expertise can highly improve the preparedness and competence of a young professional that may work or hopes to work in a specialized position.

In addition to NRPA sponsored professional certifications, there are many certifications available to young public park and recreation professionals. The Certified Pool/Spa Operator (CPO) certification administered by the National Swimming Pool Foundation is a highly valued certification for individuals employed or managing aquatics. The Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS) certification administered by the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification has seen a dramatic increase as parks and recreation departments have expanded inclusive recreation or special recreation divisions. The changing economic environment has empowered many parks and recreation departments to pursue alternate forms of funding and support. In this environment, a Certified Nonprofit Professional (CNP) certification administered by the National Leadership Alliance can signify to your employer that you are able to operate and provide services outside of the support of the tax dollar.

A future goal and option for young professionals should include seeking the Certified Park and Recreation Executive (CPRE). After a proscribed number of years serving in a full-time managerial position, which differs based on obtained education levels, a CPRP may sit for the CPRE exam. This newly created professional certification by the National Recreation and Park Association, “establishes a national standard for managerial, administrative and executive parks and recreation professionals. This mastery-level credential focuses on the practical knowledge and current real-world skills necessary in today’s changing park and recreation environment” (www.nrpa.org).

In closing, the National Recreation and Park Association has created their own listing of the benefits of professional certification. Here they are, NRPA’s top 5 reasons to become a certified professional:

1. Greater career opportunities and advancement
2. Demonstration of your commitment to the parks and recreation profession
3. Enhanced quality of parks and recreation services nationwide
4. Recognition for your accomplishments and ability to meet national standards
5. Expansion of your skills and knowledge through continuing professional development

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GET CONNECTED
Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/nrpastudentyoung-professionals/
Twitter: www.twitter.com/YoungProf_NRPA
NRPAConnect: www.nrpaconnect.org/youngprofessional
Deep in the Heart of Texas
by Jennifer Jones

1. Beaumont, TX to El Paso, TX: 742 miles
2. Beaumont, TX to Chicago: 770 miles
3. El Paso, TX is closer to California than to Dallas, TX
4. World’s first Rodeo was in Pecos, TX July 4, 1883
5. The Flagship hotel in Galveston is the only hotel in North America built over water. Destroyed by Hurricane Ike in 2008
6. The Heisman trophy was named after John William Heisman who was the first full time coach at Rice University in Houston, TX
7. Brazoria county has more species of birds than any other area in North America
8. Aransas Wildlife Refuge is the winter home of North America’s only remaining flock of whooping cranes
9. Jalapeño jelly originated in Lake Jackson in 1978
10. The worst natural disaster in US history was in 1900, caused by a hurricane, in which over 8,000 lives were lost in Galveston island
11. The first word spoken from the moon, July 20, 1969, was “HOUSTON”, but the space center was actually in Clear Lake City at the time
12. King Ranch in south Texas is larger than Rhode Island
13. Tropical Storm Claudette brought a U.S. rainfall record of 43’ in 24 hours in and around Alvin, TX in July of 1979
14. Texas is the only state to enter the US by Treaty, (known as the Constitution of 1845 by the Republic of Texas to enter the Union) instead of by annexation. This allows the Texas Flag to fly at the same height as the US Flag and may divide into 5 states.
15. A Live Oak tree near Fulton is estimated to be 1500 years old
16. Caddo Lake is the only natural lake in the state
17. Dr Pepper was invented in Waco in 1885. There is no period in Dr Pepper
18. Texas has had six capital cities: Washington-on-the-Brazos, Harrisburg, Galveston, Velasco, West Columbia and Austin (the current Capital)
19. The Capital Dome in Austin is the only dome in the US which is taller than the Capital Building in Washington DC (by 7 feet).
20. The San Jacinto Monument is the tallest free standing monument in the world and it is taller than Washington Monument
21. The name ‘Texas’ comes from the Hasini Indian word ‘Tejas’ meaning friends. ‘Tejas’ is not Spanish for Texas
22. The state mascot is the Armadillo (an interesting bit of trivia about the armadillo is they always have four babies. They have one egg, which splits into four, and they either have four males or four females)
23. The first domed stadium in the US was the Astrodome in Houston

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NPRA Congress Week 2013
by Karen Lussier & Jennifer Jones

Congress week is a great way for young professionals from all over the country to get together, network, share ideas and just have fun. The 2013 NRPA Congress will be held on Oct 8 -10 in Houston, TX. The week will be jam-packed with sessions, events, socials and more. The Young Professional Network plans many things throughout this time to get students and young professionals involved and we have provided you with a list of them below. Whether you are already involved or new to NRPA, being involved with the Young Professional Network is very beneficial. It is amazing how much you will learn by sharing stories, strategies, contacts and more from other professionals in the Parks and Recreation field.

Here are some things that you can look forward to as a young professional if you come to Congress in Houston this year:

Young Professional Retreat
This is held the evening before the conference begins. Meet the YPN in person and talk about things that the network has been doing this year. Plans for the following year will also be discussed. This is great opportunity to get to know the YPN members and possibly get more involved.

Young Professionals Meet and Greet Breakfast
On the first morning of the conference come start it off right! Free breakfast and meet the YPN members and NRPA staff.

Career Center
Stop by the Career Center located in the Exhibit Hall! There you can find job postings, apply for jobs on the spot, practice your skills with mock interviews and get info on the Graduate Schools. There is also an area if you want to relax and take a break for a little bit.

Young Professional Network Meeting
A meeting that is similar to YPN monthly conference calls but in person. We will discuss updates on each leadership role and what will be happening in the next year.

Young Professional Panel
The question and answer CEU session is an opportunity to ask some of the top professionals in the recreation field about a wide variety of topics. This is an audience driven session so feel free to ask as many questions as you want.

Park and Recreation Student Quiz Bowl
The Student Quiz Bowl pits various Student Recreation Clubs from around the nation in a tournament style competition. Team will answer various questions pertaining to knowledge gained in their years of study at their respective universities.

Take a Student/Young Professional to Lunch
If you are looking for some more personal networking time, this is a great opportunity to get to know a more established professional. An email to the Young Professional Network, Administrative Network and Congress Week participants will be sent out in August with more details on how to register for this event. If you register, you will be paired with someone in the field that can provide you with valuable knowledge when you meet up with them one day at conference for lunch.

Young Professional Social
Come out and hang with us! Have a drink, talk and just relax before going back home.

There are many sessions that are offered throughout Congress which are geared toward students, new professionals or those that are looking to gain some more in their current positions. Look for an email or posting in the NRPA connect that will note any sessions that would be beneficial to young professionals when it gets closer to October. Hope to see everyone in Houston!

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Why Should You Attend the 2013 NRPA Congress?

by Steve Thompson

Why attend the NRPA Congress? It’s a legitimate and important question to ask, given that those who work in the parks and recreation industry are blessed by a veritable cornucopia of events dedicated to addressing critical issues from a range of perspectives at a local, state and national level. More importantly, the costs associated with attending, including travel, lodging, and Congress registration, not to mention the investment of time, make the decision to attend a significant one.

While criteria for attending specific events will vary, I see a number of solid reasons why you should commit to attending the NRPA Congress as an important part of your career and professional development. Here’s a summary of those reasons:

1. To learn about key issues in the park and recreation industry as a whole, (and your area of interest in particular) as articulated by seasoned practitioners and industry leaders.
2. To meet other professionals and agencies addressing these same key issues.
3. To meet with professionals with whom you’ve established a relationship on one of the NRPA Networks.
4. To initiate relationships with other professionals that you can continue by social media and/or meetings in person.
5. To learn about job, internship, project and other work-based possibilities.
6. To gain insight into the experiences of others who face challenges similar to yours.
7. To learn about the vast array of resources relevant to your area(s) of interest.
8. To forge partnerships with colleagues who address key common issues/concerns.
9. To identify opportunities for service within the profession as a whole, and possibly through NRPA at the Network or even the Board level.
10. To demonstrate your commitment to the profession and to YOUR national association.
11. To become familiar with Houston and the culture where the 2013 NRPA Congress will be held.

So, are you a professional who will succeed in the next millennium? We need professionals who understand and can articulate our role in creating community; individuals who master the political process to achieve their goals; leaders in their own communities; individuals who have compassion for people; professionals who not only respond and react to changes and trends, but can be trendsetters; innovative professionals who have relevant, finely honed skills; multifaceted individuals who can broker resources and bring coalitions together; and leaders who are called to the table when important decisions are made. Those who prefer the status quo and do not recognize the forces that shape us will flounder.

Don’t be one of the status quo, visit the NRPA website TODAY and register for the 2013 NRPA Congress & Expo!

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Visit a Park Day  
by Chris Lucas & Jennifer Upah

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Young Professional Network is pleased to announce that Visit a Park Day will be Friday, October 4, 2013. The public is encouraged to set aside unnecessary obligations on October 4 and take time to visit a local, state, regional, or national park and enjoy the many benefits of these locations. The mission of Visit a Park is to foster future enjoyment, visitation and advocacy towards our park systems.

The goal of getting the public involved has quite a few benefits such as: With recent data showing increases in youth obesity rates, as well as the decrease in overall health for a vast number of Americans, there is no doubt that parks can play a pivotal role in turning the tide against these societal ills by providing a multitude of experiences all while accomplishing the same outcome, which is to enhance the quality of life for the people and communities visiting those areas. Unfortunately, through the rigors of everyday life, the benefits of parks and open space have slowly been lost. According to the American Time Use survey the average person 15 years old and older has 5 hours a day of leisure time and they spend the majority if this time (3.2 hours) utilizing technology by watching television, or using another electronic devise such as a computer. Visit a Park Day continues to address this by placing the necessary spotlight on the benefits parks and open space has on not only the individual, but the community as a whole.

Since the inception of Visit a Park Day, many questions have been asked regarding the types of programming opportunities that need be present for the event. The genius behind Visit a Park Day is that it provides the opportunity for parks and recreation professionals, along with community advocates to educate the public on the benefits of parks and open space in an unlimited capacity. In the past, agencies have programmed park grand openings, park dedications, outdoor educational seminars, athletic tournaments, outdoor fitness challenges, historical and active interpretive tours, and on-going sustainability and care efforts at local parks. The number one aspect that each agency needs to consider before facilitating a program is what are the needs and wants of their local park users. By understanding your local community’s needs and wants, you can plan an event which will encourage participation. Once each agency has a firm grasp of that concept, it is up to each agency/advocate to program to meet that need.

To state it simply, Visit a Park Day is an opportunity to create special park programs, draw attention to on-going park efforts, and increase visitation to our parks. While it is vital that we understand and position ourselves in the local and regional communities, it is also vital to educate the public as to the life-enhancing benefits of parks and recreation. By reminding people about the research supporting the benefits of enjoying nature, this can assist in motivating them to take advantage of the local spaces provided for citizens. The Young Professional Network seeks to plant the seed in the leaders and various groups, such as non-profits, youth organizations, college students, and other community members allowing this special day to grow through various agencies and events. It is through enthusiastic leaders and involved agencies and groups that an event such as Visit a Park Day will continue to prosper.

Chris Lucas and Jennifer Upah are the Co-Chairs of the Visit a Park Day committee.

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Military Recreation: Questions Answered
by Bo Hutchens

In the year 2013, when an unknown arises, the first reaction of many is to pull out the iPhone or other smart device (that is assuming one has a smart device and doesn’t still utilize a “dumb” phone like myself) and perform an internet search. When this search is made for military recreation, the findings range from RV campgrounds to lodging, but actual facts about military recreation and who provides it are difficult to gather. Like many things within a governmental organization, information can be difficult to discover; however, the organizations that deliver recreation for the military have a long history and are crucial to maintaining the mission readiness of the service members and their families.

So **WHO** provides recreational programming for the military? That is a great question and I’m glad you asked! First, it is important to discuss who military recreation is provided for. The 5 military services: Navy, Army, Air Force, Marine Corp, and Coast Guard service members are the primary targets. Also included in this customer base are: spouses, children, Reservists, retirees, Department of Defense civilian employees, and some contractors. The providers of recreation for the military and other eligible patrons come in a variety of means, which can often differ from service to service. For some services, the entire organization is comprised of civilian employees employed by the government; in others some military service members work within the department. These employees range from recreation professionals with degrees to former military personnel to military spouses, and more. Organizational names differ as well. Military recreation for each service is titled as: Navy Morale, Welfare, & Recreation (MWR), Army Family and Morale, Welfare, & Recreation (Family and MWR), Air Force Support Services Agency, Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS), and Coast Guard Morale, Well-Being, & Recreation (MWR).

**WHAT** exactly is included in military recreation? The services that are provided can vary depending on the installation and service; however, there are some mainstays that can be found at most installations. One would be a fitness/sports/aquatics facility and program. This facility/program is quite similar to one you might find at a college or university where authorized patrons provide little or no fee to participate in these programs. Other programs include: golf courses, bowling centers, outdoor recreation programs/gear rental, discounted attraction tickets, recreation centers, and activities designed for 18-25 year-old service members.

**WHERE** do these activities take place? As these programs are uniquely designed to meet the needs of the military and their families, they can be found wherever there is a military installation. Depending on the size of the base, number of active duty, and the mission, all play a role in what activities/facilities are offered. Most military installations often appear like small towns complete with housing, food stores, restaurants, and, in the case of installations overseas, even schools. Typical recreation facilities including fitness centers, athletic fields, parks, playgrounds, pools, bowling alleys, and golf courses can all be found as well.

**WHY** offer these programs when most installations are close to towns with some form of Parks and Recreation already established? There are several reasons that the government delivers specialized recreation for its military. First, there are unique challenges that military members and their families face which require specific and unique recreation in order to be productive and successful. Families are faced with only having one parent at home for extended periods of time due to deployments and long work hours. Also, military installations can be found all across the globe in countries such as Japan, Germany, and Cuba. Service members and their families stationed at these locations are positively impacted by the recreational opportunities that ease the locality of their mission.

**HOW** does this military recreation work exactly? An answer to this question is fairly simple but it is also to provide due to the intricacies of the government which are compounded with the current state of the government budget. Historically, different programs are funded in different ways depending on how crucial they are to the mission. Some programs like fitness, sports, and young single-service member activities are fully supported with government funds. Others like golf courses and RV campgrounds are activities
that receive no government funding and must fund themselves through their own revenue. In summary, most activities, excluding fitness/sports/aquatics and single service member programs, must now operate at a break-even or profitable budget. When the funding differences are omitted, there are many similarities to a city parks & recreation department such as the facilities, parks, and programs offered.

Now is an opportune time for young professionals to become involved in military recreation. As a professional already working outside the military, there has never been a greater need for partnerships for the military with community parks and recreation departments. Combined events, shared facilities, and possibly even shared staffing are all possibilities as military recreation departments should be seeking more than ever to become more effective and efficient. Seeking at an installation in your area would be the first step in beginning this process. Don't have an installation in your area? There are national guardsmen, reservists, and retirees throughout the country that might provide a perfect audience, to

During the last 10 years many concepts have emerged regarding branding, as evidenced by a variety of academic and trade publications. This occurred in an effort to provide businesses and agencies with an edge that will add to their competitive advantage. Unfortunately thought, when discussing brand-related topics with managers it often becomes evident that they are sometimes under the impression that the brand simply stands for the logo and the way this logo is communicated through different channels, and for nothing else. However, branding is something much more! If done effectively, branding can provide agency continuity!

Speaking from experience, if you are a manager in the parks and recreation field, you are in the “experience” industry. As a manager your job may be to provide stimuli that will result in users’ experiences. Speaking of users’ experiences, typically a brand is created and managed through these experiences – the points at which the agency interacts with users and potential users. These points of interaction include traditional marketing activities (including both visual and verbal communications) and all the services and operations of the agency. But branding is much more than marketing, because the unique power of the brand lies in its ability to transfer user loyalty across services. And user loyalty creates user continuity. In this way, branding can provide agency continuity. If you want to capitalize on agency continuity, here are some tips:

**Tip #1: Branding was never one person's game!**
Branding must involve by nature a variety of professionals. With that said, understand that apart from the individual responsible for branding (in absence of a brand manager), there are plenty of other staff (in sales, advertising, promotion, customer service, legal, finance, human resources) and professionals that have to work seamlessly together to create unique brand experiences. Simply put, branding was never one person's game, but a process of bringing together different professional with various professional functions.

**Tip #2: Find your Brand Champion!**
Yes, branding is not one's person game. However, it can be so much helpful to the process if you can identify the one person who can act as your brand champion within the organization. Furthermore, branding is about moving
people – internal staff, suppliers, top management, outside partners and other stakeholders, thus the success of branding largely depends on the performance of the person who integrates the team. The branding champion must behave like an enthusiastic entrepreneur, taking a risk, teaming up the right people, sharing the vision and motivating them to collaborate. If you are in charge of the branding project within your agency, ask yourself this “Are you passionate and enthusiastic enough? If yes, “Are you convinced that the project will succeed? If the answer is no, then you just need to find the right person for the job. A successful branding process requires internal support from someone who is respected and who can build consensus and drive change within your agency, so do not exclude anyone when looking for the right one.

Tip #3: It’s all about same pages!
Let’s assume that you are this branding champion. Before you sit at a table with your colleagues for a kick-off meeting of a branding project, ask yourself whether all the members are on the same page. If the answer is no, the meeting will be a waste of your time. Take a step back and get them on board. In doing so, devote some of your time to share your vision with each department’ manager, or higher officers, and the reasons why they should seamlessly collaborate for the sake of branding. Furthermore, if your agency has gone through a strategic planning process, it will be much easier to define brand objectives because you will know where the organization is and where it wants to be; and how it will achieve its mission in the future. In the absence of a strategic plan, research needs to be conducted to include all stakeholders, both internal and external in order to get a thorough picture of the agency.

Tip #4: Break outcomes in small pieces!
Unfortunately yet true, the process of creating a successful brand identity can seem daunting. That may range from changing typefaces, colors, and overall design approach in your agency’s brochures, website, annual reports, and more. Approaching the task in phases creates clear expectations for outcomes at specified intervals. Therefore, do create an organizational marketing calendar that outlines the steps you want to accomplish and who is responsible for each.

Tip #5: Play according to your budget!
When it comes to branding in particular, not all agencies have the same resources. For example, healthcare organizations and universities have sophisticated branding programs that have been refined by heavy competition and decades of experience with both in-house communications teams and professional branding agencies. In contrast, local community agencies usually lack the funds to create thoughtful branding programs; however, those agencies which have the funds to do so easily stand out among competition.

Tip #6: Use Benchmarking!
Regardless of the sector, competition among agencies can be fierce. Yet, you can benefit by conducting a competitive review. Take for example an Excel file and create headings like: Agency’s name, URL, Services provided, Audiences reached, Key Message Points, Social Media outlets (if applicable) and many more. Then, search in the WWW about agencies that have similar program areas. Write the information down. Furthermore, you can even take screen captures of each agency’s homepage and logo. In this way, you can compare the language, the colors, the typefaces used. A comprehensive review can help you see where your agency stands among the rest in the same sector.

Tip #7: Consistency, consistency, consistency!
Sometimes, when talking about steps agencies can take to improve their branding, this may include only updating its logo in order to leverage the recognition of its primary program. If you decide to update your agency’s logo keep in mind that using same typefaces, colors, and overall design approach you create consistency that will visually tie your agency to its programs.

In conclusion, branding is the process of creating a unique experience of the brand that the user can enjoy at every point: the service, the advertising, the promotions, the publicity, the website, the front desk officers and many more. Consumers no longer expect to find experiences and entertainment just at the movie theater. It can be just around the corner; in your own park or rec facility!
Church recreation has been around for a long time and today many religious organizations and places of worship offer leisure activities for their congregation. Quillian Recreation Center is a prime example of this outreach ministry drawing thousands of visitors each week to First Methodist Houston – Westchase campus.

Quillian Center was the brain child of Pastor Paul Quillian who literally had a heart attack while working on the plans to establish a youth center in the late 1950's. Soon thereafter, Dr. Quillian's dream became a reality when the doors of a 40 acre recreation facility opened in 1959 in his memory. Since 1958, the Quillian Center has served the Houston community with a wide range of high-quality recreational opportunities. Whether a member of First Methodist Houston or not, you are certainly welcome to visit the Quillian Recreation Center anytime!

Today, Quillian Center is located on the campus of First Methodist – Westchase along with a private school. All of the programs at Quillian Center are not only open for the congregation but for the community as well.

Facilities at Quillian Center include a competition swimming pool, gymnasium, climbing wall, game room, athletic fields, playground and an outdoor covered pavilion. The swimming pool area encompasses a “Noah’s Ark” themed play pool designed especially for pre-school aged children. This is a very popular spot to cool down during the hot Houston summers. In fact, the “Noah’s Ark” pool was voted Best Swimming Pool in the greater Houston area by a local television talk show.

Blessed with these facilities, Quillian Center’s staff has incredible resources to program activities and special events for the community and the church. Quillian’s Summer Day Camp is accredited by the American Camp Association and is the only day camp in Houston that holds this honor. Over 400 campers attend summer camp each summer. First Methodist Church and other community donors assist in scholarships and financial aid for families who need a little assistance in attending camp. Campers enjoy sports, games, crafts, Vacation Bible School, and special events throughout the summer.

Quillian Center is also a state licensed day care facility and operates an after school program throughout the school year. Alongside after school care, daily enrichment classes such as gymnastics, martial arts, cheerleading, chess, and indoor rock climbing are offered.
Sports are a big part of Quillian's ministry too. Youth basketball, soccer, and flag football keep the neighborhood kids busy. Adult sports such as volleyball, basketball, softball, and flag football are also offered.

Senior adult programs include exercise classes, games, day trips, luncheons, and weekly golf outings.

Quillian Center also hosts many special events each year. The community loves Wonderland in Westchase which entertains thousands of guests who play in the snow, visit Santa and his reindeer, and enjoy local school choirs and treats from area restaurants. This event is free to the public and food and toys are collected for local agencies. The evening is capped off with a fantastic fireworks display.

Of course we also have a large Easter egg hunt, Fall Festival. Corporate Challenge, and facilitate events from organizations fighting diseases such as Alzheimer’s, Arthritis, Diabetes, and obesity.

All of this would not have been possible if not for a dream and plans and contributions from a generation now gone. Because of this, Quillian Center has answered the challenge to change lives and has impacted a city for God.

The programs we offer are available on a fee-based structure, and you do not need to be a member of Quillian Center to enjoy any activity here. However, membership privileges include discounts, priority registration, open gym/pavilion times, free swim dates, and quarterly publications. We're very proud of our first-class facility, our dynamic, low-cost programs, and our nurturing staff - who love and care for all who visit us every day.

To learn more visit the Quillian Recreation Center website at www.quilliancenter.org.

The Quillian Center is a Sports and Recreation Ministry of First Methodist Houston. Located on the Westchase Campus of the First Methodist Church at 10570 Westpark Drive, you’ve probably seen the facility if you’ve driven down the Sam Houston Tollway near Westpark on the west side of the city.
An Anaheim Reflection
by Jennifer Upah

Last October I was able to attend the NRPA National Conference in Anaheim, California. This was an incredible conference full of educational sessions, meetings, and networking. Along with receiving funding to attend the national conference, you also have the opportunity to be paired up with a mentor, who is a profession from the field and active with NRPA. The Young Professional Fellowship gave me an opportunity to network with my assigned mentor Becky Benna who is the Executive Director at Five Rivers Metro Parks in Dayton, Ohio. She is a wonderful resource that I feel fortunate to have been paired up with for the conference. The mentor opportunities NRPA allow for create a meaningful opportunity for professionals to connect while physically in the same location.

My week started with the Young Professional Meet and Greet Breakfast on Tuesday morning October 16. At this breakfast, I was able to visit with other young professionals I have met through the network along with meeting Becky for the first time. This breakfast has been a great way to start the conference off by meeting other young professionals. From breakfast I attended the general session. I truly enjoyed the keynote speaker, Lowell Catlett and volunteered at the Career Center once the Expo Hall opened and toured the hall after my volunteer hour. For lunch, I met with a faculty member from North Carolina State University, Karla Henderson. She was assigned to me through the “Take a Student/Young Professional to Lunch” program. I love this program and feel so privileged to be able to meet seasoned professionals in the field and have time to socialize with them one-on-one. In the afternoon, I attended a few educational sessions including “Obesity Bites: Lessons from a small town in Mississippi” I was particularly interested in this session as I am doing research related to increasing physical activity. So having the opportunity to learn what an agency is doing to assist with providing opportunities to become physically active is a great learning experience. Then I attended the Leisure Research Symposium George Butler Lecture, “Social Justice and Leisure: The Usefulness and Uselessness of Research.” This was a very interesting account of how a lawyer was able to use laws to assist people with equal access to parks in Los Angeles. I also attended the financial meeting in the afternoon with the NRPA board members. Following the afternoon sessions, I attended the opening reception at Disney and I really enjoyed the event overall. I have never been to this Disney theme park so having it scheduled as part of the opening reception is a great opportunity to see the park with other NRPA members without missing out on anything related to the conference.

Wednesday, October 17 I started my day by attending the Leisure Research Symposium: Physical Activity 1 and volunteered again at the Career Center within the Expo hall. I had a long lunch meeting with Becky, and then attended the Young Professional Meeting in the afternoon. It was an amazing meeting with approximately 80 young professionals and students at the meeting. I also reported on the recent Visit a Park Day event in which we had 8 registered participants along with several unreported events that we found through a Google search. Wednesday evening I attended the Leisure Research Symposium: Poster Session prior to the Best of the Best Ceremony. The poster session was full of interesting research studies. I had particularly enjoyed a study about couples that participated in outdoor winter skills over the course of a few days. The researcher had taken time to explain in detail a few of skills and how the couples worked through them along with the follow up meeting conversations. This was a small study with 6 couples and had interesting perceptions and interactions.
between the couples. The Best of the Best Ceremony was short but nice and the MC for the event was very entertaining. Following the ceremony we attended the small reception including appetizers which was also a nice gesture.

I started Thursday, October 18 off by attending the LRS: Leisure Behavior II session and learned about research related to gambling and dog parks, both were very interesting studies and brought up interesting points I had not thought about, especially the research about dog parks related to citizens taking ownership of a space that had previously been seen as a nuisance before it was a dog park, then citizens fighting over park space for pets verses kids. After lunch I attended the National Forum Meeting. This was my first time at this meeting. This meeting provides an opportunity for other leaders with in each network to share what is currently going on in the network. So it is an eye opening learning experience to hear about each network. This meeting also focused on some of the issues with NRPA connects so the board members could start to make it more user-friendly. In the end the meeting ended with a board member starting a small committee to try to resolve some of the issues with access to NRPA connect and Mary stating she would make a few webinars and possibly a Youtube video on how to best utilize NRPA connect to share with members in hopes to get more people utilizing this resource. In the evening, I attended the Young Professionals Social at a local bar. It was a great way to end the busy week and chat with a few new colleagues and friends.

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The Young Professional

The Young Professional is currently accepting submissions for publication.

The Young Professional is a biannual publication digitally distributed by the Young Professional Network of the National Recreation and Park Association.

“The YP” as it has become known, publishes current, original, and stimulating articles related to parks, recreation, leisure, sports, and associated professional areas. Articles range from opinion pieces, research briefs, case studies, best practices, creative pieces, and general necessary information (among others) for young professionals and students.

For more information or to submit an article for consideration, please contact the editor at michael.bradley@eku.edu.

To learn more about The Young Professional Network follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/YoungProf_NRPA or Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/groups/nrpastudentyoungprofessionals/.
Dear Steven, Advice Needed

A new park manager struggles with staff starting late and leaving early.

Dear Steven,

I'm a relatively new park manager (8 months). I am coming from the position of teammate to most of the staff I now manage, but they all seem to have adjusted well to my new role and respected my move from peer to manager.

I seem, however, to be having an issue with several of my staff coming in 20-30 minutes after the start of their shift, or sneaking out 10-15 minutes early from work. I've started to catch on, and when I ask, the individual(s) who arrive late, they usually say that the traffic was simply horrendous, or they say that they didn't take their 15-minute break so that they could leave early (which, if that's the case, needs to be arranged and agreed upon with me). Then they usually proceed to talk my ear off about their family and everything they did that day and then rush out the door before I can get a word in edgewise. I can't seem to get across to these individuals that it's not acceptable to be late, or because if they did skip their break. They still technically worked the amount of time they were supposed to, and there are other people to cover should they be needed (the work time at my park operations is split, so there is no real need for them to be there other than they're scheduled until a certain point in time.

I know I need to be more assertive but I do not know how to prove my point when these individuals basically have found a loophole. I would be okay with this once in a while (and if we discussed it first), but I do not like the sneakiness of it.

Sincerely,
New Park Manager

Dear New Park Manager,

Yes, the issue is far less the 10-15 minutes departing early, and much more the sneakiness, because it goes to trustworthiness and integrity. The individuals who are also running late on a habitual basis also need to be dealt with immediately.

As for the early park employee “departer,” he really has not “found a loophole.” You say above that your rule is that if he wants to leave early in exchange for not taking his break that day, he needs to get you are okay first. He is not doing that, so there is no loophole here. He is simply not following your policies and hoping he may get away with it.

The reason he is getting away with it is simply that you are letting him. It sounds like that is because you are not yet comfortable with the authority of your position. Letting someone do something they should not be doing just because they start talking rapidly about their family is not an effective management technique.

Set up a meeting with this person. Say the following; “I want to clarify our rules on leaving early. If you want to leave early to make up for not taking a break that day, you need to talk to me about it first so that I can clear it. If you do not have explicit permission to leave early on a particular day, you need to work until the end of the time you are scheduled for.”

Then, stick to it. If you see him leaving early again without your permission, you need to call him on it. You can do this in two ways: You can stop him on the spot, tell him it is not time to leave, and send him back to work, or you can talk to him about it first thing the next day. Either way, you need to start setting up consequences at that point.

So you might tell him, “Sam, I was extremely clear about this when we talked last week. Where did we miscommunicate?” Then, assuming that he does not explain that he was rushing out the door because of a gunshot wound or something, you say, “By continuing to do this after we have talked about it, it has turned into something more serious. You are now violating a policy that I warned you about. I need to be able to trust you to follow our policies. This is an easy thing to correct and I hope that you will, but if it continues to happen, it could jeopardize your job.”

If that seems like an extreme consequence for leaving
15 minutes early, keep in mind that the issue here is integrity, not 15 minutes of time. It is about integrity because he is trying to do something without you noticing it, and he is continuing to do so after you have already warned him. This is a much bigger deal than 15 minutes of time; you cannot have someone working for you who deliberately tries to get away with things behind your back. I can almost guarantee you that with someone who operates this way, there are other problems with how he approaches his work.

The same applies to the habitual late starter. Your policies should clearly indicate what “late” means and consequences for not being ready for an employee to begin their shift. By the way, I strongly recommend that this applies to management as well...you need to set the example by ALWAYS being on time for the start of your shift and never departing early. Of course there are those times when you have additional time commitments due to attendance at meetings, special events, etc. However, these should be clearly noted and listed in your posted weekly work schedule so that your employees are aware of your expected hours.

The bigger-picture issue here is learning how to deal with situations where the people working for you are not performing in the way that you need. Be comfortable raising the issue, correcting the behavior, setting consequences if it continues, and then enforcing those consequences, and doing it all in way that is direct, straightforward, and fair (not defensive, insecure, or overly harsh). These are essential pieces of being a manager.

More situations like this are going to come up — and some of them will be more complicated than what time someone is leaving — and you will need to be prepared to handle them. So I would recommend starting to think about how you are going to handle other types of performance problems, like someone who is communicating poorly with park patrons, or someone trying really hard but just not doing a good job, or someone who does not follow through on things you ask them to do. Your job now is to handle this stuff, and you do not want to wing it.

Steven Thompson, CPRP, is the Executive Director and CEO of the Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association. sthompson@wpraweb.org
Procrastination! A simple word that makes even the most well-organized and punctual individuals fall victims of at some point or another. I truly believe that there is no one that hasn’t experienced even once the feeling of procrastination. Personally, after returning to Greece from my studies in USA, it took me 3 months to start moving forward with collecting all the proper documentation that would allow the National Academic Recognition Information Center to “recognize” my Ph.D. as equivalent to the ones that Greek Universities give. The reason— the thought of even dealing with this bureaucratic procedure (which is necessary if I want to work in academia in Greece) was so daunting that it made me postpone this simple task for “next week”. As the old joke that asks “What’s a procrastinator’s busiest day?” only to get the answer “Tomorrow”.

Like me, you can probably think of at least a few times that you have found yourself doing things at work (like surfing the internet, or Facebook), or at home (watching TV or playing video games), when you really should have been dealing with more important tasks; or even the tasks that are within your responsibilities and maybe not important at all. According to Steel (2007), there are four reasons that affect our inclination toward procrastination. Those are personality-, task-, expectation-, and goal-related. Let’s take a look at those reasons and see how we can deal with them:

1. Procrastination as a personality trait!
Unfortunately, yet true, some people are born procrastinators! I can name at least two of my friends who are. The typical behavior is for them to be easily distracted and impulsive. Even when they have planned their workday, a minor distraction may derail all their planning with a blink of an eye. Despite the fact that it is hard to change a personality, it is much easier to take measures to adjust the surroundings and eliminate the distractions.

For example, it’s hard to get any real work done when you keep checking your friends Facebook status updates or shifting your attention to what’s on television. Therefore, try to assign yourself a period of time during which you turn off all distractions and use that time to focus all of your attention on the task at hand.

For other people, procrastination is not just a personality trait. It can be fear-related. For example, the fear of failure, the fear of making mistakes, or even the fear of success can act as triggers for procrastination. To deal with that, try to challenge your faulty beliefs. If you feel that you do not deserve success, try to overturn this assumption even by repeating to yourself that “You do deserve this”, so dealing with what stops you from getting started doing that task.

2. Task characteristics
Like me, you all have to deal with tasks that you have found to be meaningless or of low value. Unfortunately, the value of the goal naturally affects your inclination towards procrastination. Other times, the task may simply be boring to you and that is another trigger for procrastination. To deal with it, you can offer yourself small rewards whenever you complete the task (or even a small portion of a larger task). Small rewards may include any opportunity to do something fun and enjoyable, like playing a video game, playing with your dog, attending a sporting event, watching your favorite TV show, or anything else that makes you happy.

3. Expectations
Sometimes, you tend to estimate the completion of a task within a specific period of time, only to realize that you have underestimated the actual time needed for the completion of this task. It is helpful to know that once you do get going on a task and successfully complete it, you are unlikely to procrastinate as much in the future on that same task. Keep in mind that the more experienced you are, the less likely is for you to procrastinate. If you have no previous experience with the task, it might be wise to start your own “to-do” list with things that are essential for you to accomplish. If necessary, put a date next to each item if there is a deadline that you need to meet. Estimate how long each task will take to complete. Feel free to be more generous with your estimation so you will not be restricted when adjusting your schedule for various things that end up taking longer than expected. Especially, in the case of big projects that look intimidating to you, make sure to break projects down into manageable pieces. In other words, start taking “baby steps” towards the completion of your project.
4. Goal failure
Almost by definition, procrastination is a failure to meet goals. So setting short-term as well as long-term goals and even artificial deadlines can be helpful to you. This is also tied with your expectations about the completion of the task, which was addressed earlier.

As a final thought, keep in mind that reversing the habit of procrastination is not easy. If it was simple, people wouldn't procrastinate on a regular basis. Unfortunately, the urge to put things off is usually strong, especially when there are so many things around us to provide fun and entertaining distractions. While common, procrastination can have a detrimental impact on your life, including your work performance, your personal relationship with your significant other and so more. Therefore, becoming aware of the reasons that make you procrastinate and strategies to help you overcome those tendencies can help.

References:

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The State of Social
by Michael Biedenstein & Lindsay Labas

As the Social Media Chairs for the Young Professional Network, we spearhead the outreach on NRPA Connect, Facebook and Twitter. Michael Biedenstein is the outgoing chair passing along the responsibilities to Lindsay Labas as we approach NRPA Congress. Currently the Young Professional Network primarily uses three social networks to share information and promote initiatives:

NRPA Connect (http://NRPAConnect.org/YoungProfessional) is YPN’s most comprehensive tool available (NRPA membership required). Each user may customize how often they receive email notifications of group messages (instantaneously or all together at the end of each day). Messages are focused on internal communication within the network ranging from information about upcoming conference calls and initiatives to scholarship and mentorship opportunities. NRPA Connect also features a document library for both YPN specific and general professional collaboration. Though hard to remember from time to time, individual responses to the email listserv are sent to all members. NRPA Connect offers a discussion board for dialog on various topics. For professionals considering membership to NRPA, this is certainly one of the best benefits and tools!

Twitter (http://twitter.com/YoungProf_NRPA) is YPN’s primary tool for outreach to other groups and like-minded people. @YoungProf_NRPA is still used to spread information about upcoming conference calls, but more focused on sharing links to interesting articles or important initiatives both within NRPA and outside. Hashtags such as #NRPACongress and #NRPALegForum are encouraged and utilized in conjunction with NRPA staff to encourage interaction with NRPA members, agencies and supportive citizens. YPN is always looking for interesting content (blog posts, articles or other links) to retweet or directly share on Twitter.

Facebook (http://facebook.com/groups/NRPASTudentYoungProfessionals/) is used by YPN to conveniently share its messages and photos to NRPA members and interested professionals. Though permission is required to join the group (to cut down on Spam posts), most requests are approved quickly. Not every message from NRPA Connect makes its way to Facebook, but sharing links and pictures is a bit easier for each member to do on their own.
If you are among these managers who have not yet been involved with social media tools, hopefully, this article may answer many of your questions. If you are among those one who already have been involved, perhaps we can stir something new! Here are some questions for you to answer, and some tips for you to follow:

1. **Why do you want to use social media tools?**
   If the first thing that comes to mind is, “because everyone else is doing it,” you are probably not ready to start using social media. If you jump in without good reason and consequently without any goals in mind, you are not going to be able to measure or justify your time. Having no goals means no way to measure what you have accomplished. It is as simple as that!

2. **Do sales mean more to you than relationships?**
   Can you step aside from the sales-first mind-set and build relationships over time? Are you willing to invest effort to participate in social networks (at least the ones you focus on) regularly? How much time and effort are you willing to invest? Can you be transparent and honest? For example, by putting good comments or reviews from anonymous accounts only to give your organization a boost is not completely honest. Being transparent also means that when someone complains about your organization, you allow that freedom and perhaps offer a response. In case you manage to solve their problem, or answer their question, you can distribute this information accordingly. In fact, you can do it in the same place where they complained or asked the question, so everyone can see that you are caring and responsive to customers and clients.

3. **Be completely responsible for social media communication, or assign it to someone who cares about the organization’s success.**
   As an organization, find someone who will deal with all of the tasks associated with social media. Regardless of who it is, you need the person building your social networks, communicating on your behalf, and so forth. Furthermore, you also need to assign at least one employee, a trusted and ethical person, to speak on behalf of the organization in the case of customer complaints, compliments, and questions. That individual has to be knowledgeable, patient enough to handle angry customers, able to hold friendly conversations, and be able to craft persuasive messages. Additionally, this individual the freedom to monitor the social media networks several times a day. Thus, acknowledging that organizational involvement in the process will be time-consuming is a necessity and you should give the responsible person a flexible workload. Your customers
are online at different times, so someone should be handling customer communication as often as possible.

4. What is your strategy to launch your social media presence?
Launching social media will not be a one-time event, nor is it an overnight event. It will be important to keep customers informed about your efforts related to social media on an ongoing basis. Putting some information of the official website of the organization is always a good starting point.

5. Define success and your way to measure it!
As previously stated, utilizing social media because you are following a trend cannot be the rationale for doing so. Unsuccessful organizations usually decide to add social media, only to quit their efforts a few months later because they did not see quantifiable results. The problem lies in the lack of the definition of their “success.” Like the old adage says: “If you do not know where you are going, how will you know when you get there?” Additionally, if your organization is unsure of how to measure a successful social media endeavor, any measurable results may not mean anything substantial. So, try to quantify the success by choosing your goals. For example, a successful campaign for a state park lodge will “result in a 50% increase in web traffic, 2,000 new newsletter subscribers, and a 50% increase in online booking of sales, within one year.” One of the great features of social media tools is that those are easily measurable. For example, measuring the web traffic only requires you to check your website’s measurement tools (web analytics), to see if the number has increased by 50%. In contrast to traditional marketing (like radio advertising, print advertising, direct mail, billboards) where outcomes are harder to quantify, measuring social media is the best way to understand whether your strategy is working and whether goals are being met. There is, however, a pitfall behind many statistics, especially if you are one of these managers that love numbers and believe that the more numbers you know the better. With analytics, for example, you can learn how many people visit your website on a daily basis, or even what time of the day they do so. Now ask yourself, “Is this something you need to know?” It is important to not fall into the analytics traps of trying to know and figured out everything. Attempt to understand and know only the things that are important to you, like the visitation to your website, or the increase in online booking. Do not lose focus of what is important to you.

6. Put customer value into perspective and identify the lifetime value of a customer.
If you are the manager of a state park lodge and you have a couple that comes in one time per month, 12 months per year, and pays an average of $85 per visit. The value of this particular couple is $1,020 per year, for as many years as they keep visiting your lodge. If the particular couple is doing so the last 10 years, they have a $10,200 lifetime value. Knowing how much money they spent on a yearly basis, try to think of ways to possibly reward them and increase their happiness. Maybe you should consider giving them two weekends for free, especially those months that visitation is low. Furthermore, how serious do you handle their complaints, if they bring them to you?

7. Customers using social media are only a portion of your entire customer base.
Even as social media tends to become more popular, there will still be plenty of customers that will never go to your website, or your social media accounts. While some will want you to email them, or get alerts for new offers about your products or services, many will not even want to share an email address with you. Likewise, social media tools will be used by different target groups. Some of your customers will check into your store via Foursquare and some will follow your business on Twitter. Others may “like” your brand on Facebook and other customers may not. The only way social media marketing really differs from traditional marketing is that it requires you to listen as well as talk, to participate in conversations, and to build relationships.

Social media is an additional avenue for marketing your organization or business. It does require resource investment similarly to traditional marketing, but it may create and build relationships with an audience that was previously neglected in your current marketing endeavors. As a matter of fact, it has revolutionized business in a way that can no longer be ignored by those seeking to gain competitive advantage over their competitors. Social media offers several key business opportunities that have been capitalized on by many companies, but far too often overlooked or ignored by many others. For others, social media in business is no longer a choice. One thing is for sure; Social media for business is here to stay. So, here is the question: Are you going to embrace it or not?

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Staying passionate on and off the job
by Sarah Sandquist

Hi, my name is Sarah. I work in recreation and I really like running. I am what some would call “one of those crazy runners,” but, I have not always been this way. Growing up I swam competitively and hated running. At the not so gentle prod of my parents I participated in high school track and field; I quickly moved from the long distance running group to the throwers after three weeks of awful runs and instantaneous shin splints. Around five years ago I decided to give running another try. It began as a faster way to get a good workout, but has blossomed into something so much more than just exercise, including a career.

Turning what you love to do into a career
I have a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education, and I never imagined that my career path would lead me to where I am now. One of the many benefits of working in various recreation positions since college is that I have never had a job that felt like actual work. There have been few days during my eight years working in the field where I have awoken and dreaded going to the office. I was excited to be hired as the Fitness Coordinator with the City of Redmond because health and wellness has always been an interest of mine. In fact, I have considered becoming a personal trainer on more than one occasion. When I started in my position, we offered some fitness classes but lacked variety. I have been afforded a lot of freedom to add new classes and build up the fitness program. One road block I faced was that our community center was already completely booked; consequently, adding new classes was a challenge. With the mild climate, Seattle has a large running community and no shortage of races offered every weekend. On the contrary, Redmond is just 20 miles East of Seattle and has only a handful of races annually. Instead of giving up, I turned the challenge into an opportunity and took fitness outside, by offering running races.

The word running in terms of as a participant or as an event director has very different meanings. I made an incorrect assumption that my experience running in lots of 5k’s would easily transfer into organizing races. Although the first race was successful overall; it was very small and we barely broke even. I planned for a minimum of 300 people, we got 139. The first lesson I learned was that my goals for the race were not realistic.

Goal Setting
We all set goals for ourselves in our personal and professional lives. In our professional lives, meeting goals has an impact on performance evaluations and merit increases. Just as our performance goals change annually, we must also continue to set new goals for ourselves in our personal lives. It’s easy to make excuses and lose the motivation to complete our personal goals. It has been beneficial for me to set Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely (SMART) goals. Sometimes this means breaking a larger goal into smaller components. It feels a lot better to celebrate lots of small victories rather than one large defeat. Although each letter of the acronym is equally important, Attainable is the most significant one for me. My goal could be to qualify for the Boston Marathon, which would fit the other characteristics of the SMART principle, but is not attainable for me at this point in my running career. It is definitely a long-term goal, but will not be in the forefront until I can be honest with myself that I can make it happen.

On New Year’s Eve (2010), I told myself, friends, and family that I was going to run a marathon before turning 30 in October; I announced this goal so that I had to remain accountable. I did not want to face anyone at a later date, asking how my race concluded and not be able to say I completed it. I woke up the next morning, found a race, and signed up. Goal set! I received my first medal on April 10, 2011 for completing the Whidbey Island Marathon. Goal complete!

Finding Mentors
I was lamenting to a fellow running friend about my inability to run a sub two-hour half marathon, it seemed like such an attainable goal and yet at the same time impossible. Instead of validating my complaints, he staged what I would call an on the spot intervention. He asked what kind of training I had been doing to meet this goal.

“Was I doing speed work?” “No.”
“Was I doing tempo runs?” “No.”
“Was I running with people that were faster than me?” “No.”
Why was I not doing these things? How did I expect to get faster by continuing to run all of my runs at the same slow, steady pace? I did not have one single compelling answer to his questions. He then reminded me of the Seattle Green Lake Running Group. I was familiar with this group; I had been to their website several times and had yet to sign up to run with them. I was comfortable in my routine, but he was right in this aspect of advice. There was no way I was going to magically get faster if I did not change how I was training. The next week I took the plunge and signed up with the group. Even after signing up, it took me about two weeks to actually show up for a run. This was in early April. Just three months later, I achieved my goal and broke the 2 hour barrier. In addition to providing the catalyst I needed to take my running to the next level, my mentor also helped me recognize the value of running with other people. The group I joined includes runners of all shapes and speeds. We are all in different stages of our running career, but there is one constant, the support we provide each other.

It is important for us to surround ourselves with like-minded people, and to seek out mentors. People who have been there, done that, and are able to have those hard conversations with you, as well as to be your personal cheerleader when you achieve your goals. Good mentors push you to step outside your comfort zone and step into the unfamiliar.

**Spreading activity**

One of the best things that happened as a result of my newfound love of running is it has inspired others around me to become more active. One example is just last year there was a new Rock-n-Roll race in Portland, Oregon. There was a one day deal, to register a complete year in advance, for only $40. The following day, the price would jump to $80. Half-jokingly, I asked my co-workers if anyone was interested in signing up with me, and to my surprise one was! She had never run before in her life, but figured the race was a year away and she would have plenty of time to train. One year later, she completed the half marathon and then signed up for a full one! There are others that are determined running is not their thing, and that’s okay! It was never my goal to turn every person into a runner. We spend one third of our lives at work and many work lessons are inextricably tied to our development as a person. Consequently, this synergy between work and life is incredibly powerful in making us passionate about our chosen professions. Being passionate is contagious. I have been lucky to experience the positive effects it has had for me on and off the job, and I challenge you to find your passion.

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In 2009, the City of Winona’s East Recreation Center playground made the capital improvement list, which is an annual funding source within the City of Winona that provides funding for items such as roofs, remodeling, major maintenance projects and in our case, park improvements. With fifty thousand dollars allocated to replace an aging play structure, the plan seemed to be set; take out the dated play structure, choose a replacement from one of the play structure manufacturers and move on. But it wasn’t quite that simple. Lydia, a Recreation Coordinator for the Parks & Recreation Department, was determined to do more than simply take out a play structure and put one back in. In a presentation prepared for the director(s) of the department, she said “Our mission is not ‘Enhancing community through people, playgrounds, and programs.’ It is ‘Enhancing community through people, parks, and programs’.” In her effort to do more to meet the mission of the department she discovered Project for Public Spaces, a nonprofit organization which seeks “to help people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities” as well as expand on the efforts of William H. Whyte. The core of Whyte’s work include work on the study of human behavior in urban settings. “Whyte wrote that the social life in public spaces contributes fundamentally to the quality of life of individuals and society. He suggested that we have a moral responsibility to create physical places that facilitate civic engagement and community interaction.” (pps.org)

After collecting enough data which gave us direction in theory and in practice, we concluded that a successful park should meet the following three criteria: 1) enhance community life 2) support well-executed, uncluttered design 3) echo the latest perspectives on play. With the criteria in place, the transition from playground replacement to a park, a public space, and an opportunity to build community began. The planning continued with reading, researching, and simply searching for the right things to do with this space. We examined books, such as American Playgrounds, Revitalizing Community Space by Susan G. Soloman, Better Together by Robert D. Putman, professional recreation industry reading, in the National Recreation and Parks Magazine, and searches on the internet specifically with in the Project for Public Spaces (pps.org) spurred ideas that spoke to the vision and ideas of this public space. Through conversation with stakeholders, users,
neighbors, recreation professionals and the community in general the strongest ideas which surfaced were:

- Creating at least ten destinations within the space, which could include a wide variety of destinations such as a garden, sitting area, interactive play space or walking path?
- Collaborate with a variety of artists and landscape architects, current users, and futures users to fashion unique environments
- Allow transition areas to be play spaces of their own, by creating a space which has nice flow from space to space within the park.
- Equipment alone does not constitute a playground
- Children thrive in natural play environments
- Investing in parks as community assets is an important economic development strategy to promote strong neighborhoods, attract businesses, and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors.
- Social capital can be generated with parks and is one of the most important assets to a community and its leaders

With our ideas prepared, the next hurdle was turning these ideas into the park. It took the right sequence of interactions with landscape professionals to lead us to Christine’s Landscape Design, LLC. Our request was not a typical ask of a landscape company, and was also not a typical request for companies who provide play structures. After seeing photos of inspiration and a summary of our theories and ideas that had been collected Chris of Christine’s Landscape Design was in. She understood and believed in the idea of this park and would help move this space from a playground to a park! Chris’ willingness to take on this project, even though she knew the limited budget, and our desire to build community by using volunteers, confirmed that
she and her company were the right fit. Finding the right company to match our vision, made us feel our project could be a success.

Chris developed a park plan that further cemented the concept from our ideas to practice. Considering the ideas mentioned above, the plans included both natural and manufactured elements which would serve for all season play, a walkway, natural elevated stage, a sensory garden, swing set, an old oak climbing space, a play burm with built in slides and a tunnel, a labyrinth, and a Star Wars type Jedi training course including parallel bars, balance beam structure, and climbing wall. The plans also included open green space, shade, seating, and transitions from one space to another. In an effort to collaborate with the community through art, two specific art projects were included in the design. The labyrinth, designed by local artist Monta May included community work days and shows the contribution of over one hundred neighbors, volunteers, and community members who completed the 178 individual mosaic paver stones which represent the stunning Mississippi river valley that Winona is nestled within. The second project, a balance beam structure within the ‘Jedi’ training course, was completed by local woodworking artist Jamie Schell, of Ulmus Americana.

The community collaboration which created this public space, attracts people into the park. Expanding the user group beyond the previous neighboring adolescents. Community and investment in the space was build through the efforts of many citizens. Support from a local wood recycler, Bruce Reed, brought the project wood chips, hours of bobcat time, inspiration, and gratitude. Winona State University provided football team members who along with individual volunteers laid 900 square yards of sod in a short 100 minutes. The Cotter Cross Country team moved two truckloads (thirty yards) of mulch in mere minutes, neighbors watered trees, sod, and plants, the also dug the trench for the labyrinth, planted, and now those neighbors watch over the park and continue to make the space their own.

The community who built this park will always be connected to it, and they will see the trees grow with the children and families who use it. Although the work on this park project is completed, one of the main ideas to generate social capital will never really be done. This park will continue to grow with the community; it is already being used as a research lab for University Recreation students studying place making and public spaces, which will affects lives beyond those we can see here today. This park, this place will house programs, events, school recess, days and evenings of play, sledding and snowman building, swinging and sliding, all while enhancing community through people parks and programs along the way.

Take a chance on increasing social capital by building a park, a place for the community to grow, for relationships to thrive. Refuse to settle for cookie cutter design, the easiest, or what everyone else is doing. As we have all seen and read, it isn’t the destination it’s the journey, and to have a journey with a ‘place’ for enhancing community is worth signing on for the adventure.

This article is contributed by:
Lydia Boysen; Recreation Coordinator, City of Winona
Julie Fassbender, Recreation Program Director, City of Winona
Chris Florin, Owner, Christine’s Landscape Design, LLC.

Watch a video about the Winona East Recreation Center at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rh5pZ9kloGU
Interviewing Mr. Mize
by Adrienne Lacy

Shane Mize is one of a kind. Once you meet the 2012 NRPA Robert W. Crawford Young Professional Award winner, you will always remember him. Whether you are the child that he taught archery to in the summer of 2005 or the NRPA Board Members that he helped to convince that a Young Professional Network was needed in 2010, you probably still remember him to this day.

For all the good that Shane has done for the recreation profession as a whole, it turns out that the profession almost didn’t have him in it. If it wasn’t for Shane leaving an impression on the intramural fields during his undergraduate days, Shane wouldn’t be a part of NRPA. He originally went to college at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, to play football, and planned on coaching football once he graduated. However, that all changed the day that he got into a fight on the intramural fields. As punishment, the Intramural Director ordered Shane to officiate intramural games, and it turned out that he loved it. “It was great to see others competing and socializing during the different intramural events,” Shane explained, “The best part was that I felt like I was a part of improving their college experience, and I was adding to the students’ quality of life.”

Shane never got over that sense of accomplishment and continued to work for the intramural department after he fulfilled his time requirement. He then went to Western Illinois University (WIU) where he earned a Masters in Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration. While at WIU, he continued working with intramurals, as a graduate assistant.

After interning for the City of Arlington (Texas) for five months, Shane obtained his first professional job with the City of Fort Worth as a Recreation Programmer in 2004. He quickly made an impression on the Parks and Community Services Department in 2004, and by the end of 2005 had already risen to the rank of Community Center Supervisor at Greenbriar Community Center. While at Greenbriar, Shane was awarded more than $85,000 in grant funding from partnerships with Texas Parks and Wildlife, National Archery in Schools, First Tee-Sticks for Kids, and the Recreation Boating and Fishing Foundation.

During his tenure in Fort Worth, Shane began to accumulate many awards for the work he was doing in Greenbriar’s community. In 2008, he was TEX-Tern for the Texas Recreation and Park Society and a NRPA Young Professional Fellowship Award Winner in 2009. Shane was also named by the American Academy for Parks and Recreation Administration as a Young Professional Extern in 2010.

As Shane became active in NRPA, he looked around Congress and noticed many young professionals like himself who didn’t feel they had a voice. With the help of others, his original vision for the network has taken off in directions he never imagined. “Looking at the Young Professional Network now, I have learned that even though it isn’t easy being the first person through the door, it was totally worth it in the end.”

The impression that Shane has left on NRPA has been far reaching, as many networks now strive to follow the Young Professional Network model and all have a Young Professional leadership position that is part of the Network Leadership.

In January 2011, Shane left the City of Fort Worth to become the Recreation Superintendent for Missouri City, Texas. There, Shane oversees the day-to-day operations of a 24,600 square foot facility, while
supervising full time staff who run various aspects of recreation including athletics, fitness, special events, and programming. From the tennis contractors on his outdoor courts to rentals and everything in between, Shane manages a budget of close to $1 million in Missouri City. But don’t believe that Shane has changed too much since he was promoted. Having been known to try to convince supervisors that he was wearing his “good jeans” to special occasions, he still showed up to be honored for his award at the Missouri City City Council meeting wearing, you guessed it, his good jeans.

The people who Shane has left the biggest impression on are his children. While he might refer to his children as Numbers 1 through 4 in jest, Gracie, Gibson, Hayden, and Landry are the lights of his life. Married for the past 12 years to his college sweetheart, Hannah, Shane feels that one of his biggest accomplishments is being the best husband and father possible.

Shane is very honored to have his name associated with Robert W. Crawford. After learning that he had been honored with the award, Shane decided to do research on Robert Crawford. “I am honored to have my name associated with an award named after him,” Shane said, “He was a great leader in the field and was a mentor to many students and young professionals in his career.”

Shane has good news for next year’s Robert W. Crawford Young Professional Award winner. A previous winner has bought a book about Robert Crawford and it is being passed down from winner to winner. Shane is looking forward to passing both the book and the award to next year’s winner. No matter when the two meet, Shane will leave a big impression.

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MWR - Visual Methods Pilot Study
by Kelly Ulm

The Morale, Welfare and Recreation department at the Blue Grass Army Depot in Richmond, Kentucky is a facility that is utilized by active military, veterans, retirees, civilians, and Department of Defense contractors. MWR knows the importance of a soldier’s health and fitness and therefore a gym must be part of the facilities available for those on base at any given time. The Blue Grass Army Depot is a small garrison and is not utilized by many soldiers, but the gym and other facilities are of high importance to the employees and contractors on base and is seen as a valuable commodity. However, the MWR offers other services that many people do not know exist. This is due to ineffective marketing and the fact that these other services are too often underutilized. The depot has a lot of quality services to offer but the needs and wants of the users are not considered when planning for events or facility use.

The value of this pilot study will show what MWR users see as valuable and what they would like to see more of. With this information, the MWR staff can plan appropriate programs to enhance customer satisfaction, market effectively, gain new users and expand business. For most garrisons the issue of finding new members is not a prominent problem due to the numbers of soldiers they have every day. However, at the Blue Grass Army Depot, an installation that is largely ran for civilians due to the small size and lack of soldiers, it is important to find out what they want and what would draw them to use MWR services more often. These findings can help be a resource for MWR staff to know where more attention needs to be focused to enhance customer satisfaction and gain new memberships.

Description of Study
17 people volunteered to complete a visual research pilot study at the Blue Grass Army Depot. Of the 17 volunteers, 6 were females and 11 were males; the youngest was 19 years of age, while the oldest was 63. 3 of the volunteers were active military members, 8 of them were employees with 4 of those being retired veterans. 4 volunteers were civilians and 2 were not employees but were retired veterans. Each one had come to the depot to use the gym and fitness center. This visual study used photographs of different activities or facilities offered by MWR at the Blue Grass Army Depot. The six photographs represented the facilities offered at the Blue Grass Army Depot. The photographs showed fitness equipment, a basketball court, fishing, outdoor equipment rentals, a golf course and a pool. Each one was also labeled with the corresponding activity so that there were no misconstrued perceptions as to what the photographs meant (see Appendix A). Participants were asked to put the photographs in order from the first one being the main reason they use the depot and the last being the activity or facility that they use the least. After
they arranged the photographs, they were asked for any additional information on why they chose how they did and if there were any particular reasons that the lowest ranked were chosen last.

Analysis
After reviewing the results of the pilot study, it was found that 13 of the 17 participants come to the depot for the fitness center and 4 come for the basketball courts with the fitness center as their second choice. Golf was in the top three for the majority of participants while the swimming pool and outdoor equipment rental was ranked in the lowest spot for all participants. Fishing was ranked higher for all men than for woman participants but was ranked in the bottom three in eight cases for the men. Swimming and outdoor equipment rental were chosen in the bottom spots because they are not year round activities. The pool is open Memorial Day thru Labor Day and the equipment rentals are not as readily available during the winter months. What was interesting was that 7 participants did not know that the MWR had outdoor equipment rentals and therefore they did not choose it. Most people that had the swimming pool ranked low said they do not enjoy public pools by themselves but said if they had young kids they would be happy to take them to the pool during the summer.

Discussion
The results of this pilot study can help the MWR at the Blue Grass Army Depot plan for marketing to a new audience and also enhance the facilities that current members use most often. The fitness center and basketball courts were highly ranked for each participant and that is partly because it is free to employees, contractors and any active military or retired veteran. However, because the MWR is looking to get more membership accounts, it is important to see what people want and target those who would enjoy what it has to offer. Using the responses of these participants can help MWR staff see what members like about the facility and target audiences that may want a cheaper or different facility than they currently use. The depot offers very similar programs as other gyms and fitness centers, but at a competitively low price. However, what they lack is effective marketing to gain new members.

It would prove helpful if the MWR department does more marketing for the outdoor rentals because most people said they would love to take part in that if they knew it existed. There is a lack of communication on all of the services that are offered and it is the responsibility of MWR staff to ensure that each new member or interested party gets a tour of all the facilities and programs that are offered.

Morale, Welfare, and Recreation is designed for soldiers and their families, however at this particular installation, programs and facilities are also important to employees and civilians. For current members, they should know about all programs and facilities that are offered and this was not the case. For membership satisfactions, MWR should make sure that each person fully understands what is offered. For new membership recruiting, focusing on the main reasons people use the facilities may help in figuring out a target audience. This can help them figure out where they should market and what the most effective ways to do so. The depot wants to increase memberships but there seems to be a disconnect that needs to be bridged and by marketing to specific groups, this might happen. Eastern Kentucky University’s Veteran Affairs Department may be a good starting place for getting veterans out to the depot. EKU is ranked as a top school for military veterans and yet the department has no brochures or has ever had a MWR employee come speak to service members about what the depot offers. There is potential for growth in the MWR department but only if the appropriate steps are taken. Seeing what current members want, need and enjoy can help in programming and also in facility management. Enhancing a visitor or members experience may help in the word of mouth marketing for the overall Morale, Welfare and Recreation department.

My study found that those participants that come to the depot, it is mainly for the gym and fitness center. The depot has much more to offer than those facilities, and therefore, MWR staff should ensure that all our programs are marketed fully so that each person knows that they exist for their use. To increase memberships for the depot, marketing outside to new groups needs to happen. MWR facilities are open to the public, but if they are not known about, people will not come out there. It would be valuable to MWR at the Bluegrass Army Depot if they went to market at Eastern Kentucky University, Lake Reba where there are fisherman and other facilities that may have a good target for the programs the depot has to offer. In the long run this may help increase memberships and visitors to the Blue Grass Army Depot.

Kelly Ulm, originally from Morgan Hill, CA is in the final semester of earning her Masters of Science in Recreation & Park Administration at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, KY. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from West Texas A&M in Canyon, TX and currently works at the Blue Grass Army Depot MWR as a Recreation Aid.