

2026 MPRA CONFERENCE & EXPO

Education Sessions



Tuesday, February 24

1:00 PM – 2:15 PM

The Power of Play - Finding Your Purpose/Reigniting Your Passion (0.1 CEU)

Gale Gorke, Kids Kan Inc

Finding meaning beyond ourselves keeps us healthier, happier, and we live longer. It is vital that we maintain a powerful sense of purpose to preserve our well-being. Intentionally adding the benefits of play allows us to live our passions, explore our gifts, and share our greatness with the world. [KEY,DEV]

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Building a High-Trust Workplace (0.1 CEU)

Nancy Kaiser, MRG, LLC Affiliate

Low trust consumes precious time and resources, but it doesn't have to! High trust fosters engagement and productivity, which drives organizational success. If you depend on others to get things done and want to improve an organization's culture from the ground up, come learn how to build better relationships in your workplace. [M&L,DEV]

Community Gardens in City Park: Precedents and Possibilities (0.1 CEU)

Lindsey Smith, Community Garden Coalition of Columbia MO

Discover how community gardens can enhance parks by fostering community, improving citizen health, and transforming underused space. This session explores the research behind these benefits and shares practical guidance from community garden nonprofit leaders who have successfully partnered with municipal parks departments to incorporate food-producing gardens into public parkland. [PNR]

Courage in the Water: Developing Leadership in Young Aquatic Professionals (0.1 CEU)

Kymbriell Finch, Courageous Leap Inc.

Step beyond policies and whistles—this session dives into how aquatics can serve as a launchpad for courage, confidence, and leadership among young professionals. Through powerful stories and practical tools, you'll learn how to mentor staff in ways that inspire loyalty, purpose, and growth far beyond the pool deck! [AQU,M&L,DEV]

Culture Shaping for Youth Sports Leaders (0.1 CEU)

Ali Scruggs, Positive Coaching Alliance

Organizational and athletic department leadership can create positive experiences for all athletes across their programs by building a culture of equity and accessibility. This interactive workshop provides tools to shape and maintain a positive sports culture and introduces the Positive Youth Sports Culture Index (PCA's comprehensive tool for culture shaping and evaluation). [SPO]

Filling the Cup: Self-Care for Leaders and Frontline Staff (0.1 CEU)

Christi David, City of Jackson Recreation and Parks Department

Burnout is one of the greatest challenges in parks and recreation. This session explores realistic self-care strategies for staff at all levels, emphasizing how personal well-being strengthens professional impact. [M&L,H&W]

Innovate to Elevate (0.1 CEU)

Debbie Woodbury, Meritology Institute

Our world is rapidly changing, yet many organizations and teams struggle to adapt, often resisting change out of discomfort and uncertainty. Reacting instead of leading means missing opportunities to innovate and improve. This workshop teaches leaders to prioritize innovation and build a culture focused on creativity, experimentation, and continuous learning [CUS,M&L,DEV]

Reimagining Tradition: Embracing New, Curated Events in Your Event Portfolio (0.1 CEU)

Ashley Bush, Baltimore City Recreation and Parks - Special Events and Permits

Explore the dynamic world of event planning in recreation and parks, and how to break free from the confines of "we have always done it this way." Discover how to infuse your event portfolio with fresh, curated experiences that captivate, invigorate your organization, and pave the way for success. [PRO]

Tapping into Community Sponsors to Help Fund Park Improvements and Improve Community Health (0.1 CEU)

Victoria Babb, Cunningham Recreation

Sponsorships and naming rights can fund recreation amenities but involve legal and administrative challenges. This session explores strategies for engaging donors, creating win-win programs, and balancing budgets with community wellness needs while addressing pitfalls, benefits, and challenges of temporary and permanent sponsorship opportunities.

[M&C,M&L,PNR,PRO]

3:45 PM – 4:45 PM

Communicate with Anyone and Succeed (0.1 CEU)

Lori Klinka, Dramatic Impact

This program is entertaining, highly informative, and interactive. Lori uses humorous characterizations to help people learn to resolve conflict and create a more productive work environment. Learn how to talk to people with different personalities and communication styles. Lori's goal is to have the audience leave with specific skills they can use immediately.

[M&C,M&L,DEV]

Facility Design and Maintenance for Park Operations Professional (0.1 CEU)

William Rein, Great Rivers Greenway

This session explores how park and recreation facilities are designed, constructed, and maintained, with an emphasis on the vital role maintenance professionals play throughout a facility's life cycle. Attendees will learn how to contribute to the design process, apply life-cycle cost analysis, and structure maintenance strategies to support sustainability and functionality.

[M&L,PNR]

Leadership That Teaches Others to Play Well (0.1 CEU)

Gale Gorke, Kids Kan Inc

Develop an understanding of various leadership styles. Apply multiple methods to help resolve conflicts with staff members and practice practical communication skills through teambuilding activities. See the value of "playing" with staff members to help build cohesiveness and consistency in program quality, leadership, and staff expectations across various sites. [DEV,M&L]

Leading from the Deep End: Lessons in Calm Leadership from the Pool Deck (0.1 CEU)

Ryan Harrison, City of Clayton

"Leading from the Deep End" is a practical and inspiring look at how leading a pool operation teaches critical lessons in emotional control, team development, and pressure-tested leadership. This session is for anyone who supervises seasonal staff, manages high-risk environments, or wants to lead with composure when it matters most. [AQU,M&L]

Secrets to Crafting Successful Grant Proposals (0.1 CEU)

Ron Schmidt, Columbia Parks & Recreation

In today's highly competitive funding environment, a well-crafted grant proposal is essential for success. This practical workshop will help you secure the funding you need. You will learn what to

do and what to avoid during the grant proposal writing process, as well as before and after submitting the proposal. [M&L,DEV]

The Modern Space and Wellness Audit: Re-Imagining Underutilized Spaces for Fitness and Wellness (0.1 CEU)

Lisa Miceli Standage, Advanced Exercise

Laura VanLanduit, EcoFit Solutions

Tim Cluny, Advanced Exercise

Unlock hidden potential in your facility! Learn to identify "dead space," design high-impact functional and recovery zones, and build local business partnerships. Based on years of experience and a great discussion, we'll explore how to modernize your center's flow to boost community engagement and promote holistic wellness without a total renovation. [H&W]

The Power of Partnerships (0.1 CEU)

Tosha Jackson, City of Lawson/Lawson Park Board

Every agency - big or small - wishes they had more resources. That's where the power of partnerships comes in! Learn how to seek out and leverage partners to stretch your agency's capacity in funding, programming, and community outreach. [PNR,PRO]

USTA Tennis Court Grants for Resurfacing or Building New (0.1 CEU)

John Terpkosh, USTA Missouri Valley

Use the USTA's facility grant program (called Tennis Venue Services) to resurface or build new tennis courts in your community. Grants range from \$60,000 to \$200,000, depending on qualified tennis projects. This session will explain the requirements and grant process. [M&L,PNR,SPO]

Wednesday, February 25

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Building Community Through Parks: From Planning to Construction (0.1 CEU)

Katie Aholt, Navigate Building Solutions

Maralee Britton, St. Charles Parks & Recreation

The development of a new park or park amenities is a collaborative process that begins with community-driven planning and extends through thoughtful design, sustainable construction, and careful integration of inclusive amenities such as playgrounds, splash pads, and gathering spaces. By prioritizing accessibility, equity, and long-term stewardship, the park planning and construction process ensures the creation of vibrant public spaces that promote recreation, connection, and well-being for all community members. [M&L]

Building Loyalty Through Member Engagement Strategies (0.1 CEU)

Aarica Stephenson, MizzouRec Services & Facilities

Getting people through the door is only half the battle. The true measure of success in public recreation is converting first-time users into lifelong participants and advocates. This session explores practical engagement strategies that help agencies build loyalty, deepen relationships, and increase retention without requiring major budgets. Using a “loyalty ladder” framework, we’ll look at how to recognize and celebrate members, create meaningful touchpoints, and design programming that cultivates connection. Attendees will leave with a clear action plan to strengthen loyalty at their own agencies—starting small but thinking big. [CUS]

Communicate for the WIN (0.1 CEU)

Lori Klinka, Dramatic Impact

Business experts have stated that 85% of your overall career success is in direct proportion to your ability to communicate well. As a park and recreation professional, exceptional communication skills are not optional; they’re critical to your success. In this interactive program, communication strategist Lori Klinka will help you improve your communication skills to build bridges and create connections. Lori will help you gain confidence, build better rapport with your audience, and share other tips for success. Whether speaking internally or to stakeholders, improving your communication skills can make a huge difference in getting the results you want. [M&C,M&L,DEV]

Diving into Your Purpose: Streamlining Aquatic Leadership with Passion and Vision (0.1 CEU)

Kymbriell Finch, Courageous Leap Inc.

Aquatic leadership goes beyond schedules and staffing; it’s about purpose. This session challenges professionals to connect their personal “why” to their leadership style. Through stories and practical strategies, participants will learn how purpose-driven leadership transforms ordinary management into mentorship that motivates staff and strengthens community impact. [AQU,M&L,DEV]

Failing Forward (0.1 CEU)

Debbie Woodbury, Meritology Institute

People often glamorize success, but true success includes the ups and the downs. So why are the downs less celebrated? Success is rewarding, complicated, and personal. It also requires resilience, perseverance, and commitment. Guess what? You won’t always get it right. There’s a lesson in the fall, let’s talk. [M&L,DEV]

Out-of-School Program Design (0.1 CEU)

Gale Gorke, Kids Kan Inc

How you show up for the game is how you show up for life. Discover beginning, intermediate, and advanced strategies and techniques for out-of-school programs, from conception to implementation and beyond. Learn how play is essential in building academic skills and student motivation. Gain knowledge on how to select, implement, and adapt activities that foster real-life learning, regardless of ability. [PRO]

Playground Safety and Maintenance Training (0.1 CEU)

Eddie LaRocque, CPSI, Playground Guardian

Playground Guardian's on-site training, led by a certified playground safety inspector, teaches staff playground inspections, maintenance, ADA accessibility, and hazard recognition. Participants learn proper documentation and digital record-keeping to streamline compliance. The session equips maintenance teams with the knowledge and tools to proactively manage risk, ensure safety, and extend the lifespan of playground equipment. [M&L,DEV,PNR]

Port KC Urban Bouldering Project Highlights (0.1 CEU)

Lance Klein, SWT Design

Julian Sabin, SWT Design

Aaron Plump, Port KC

This session will define urban bouldering and explore how it can add a distinctive, artful element to public parks. We'll examine recreation trends and key considerations related to climbing infrastructure, with a deeper look into the design and implementation at Kansas City's Berkley Riverfront from the designer and owner's perspectives. [PNR,SPO]

10:15 AM – 11:15 AM

Casting a Wider Net: Building Access and Inclusion Through a Community Catfishing Gear Library (0.1 CEU)

Kristen Schulte, Missouri River Relief

Lara Cox, Missouri River Relief

Explore the Catfish Gear Library, a community program that lends fishing gear and offers beginner-friendly instruction. Learn strategies for removing barriers such as cost, knowledge, language, and cultural representation. Hear from partners supporting veterans and youth, and discover how fishing builds connection, confidence, and belonging in river-based communities. [PRO]

Development of Play: How the Playground Supports Play Skill Acquisition (0.1 CEU)

Ariel Mansholt, Landscape Structures Inc. (LSI)

Outdoor play spaces can be very overwhelming for many kids, leaving them out of play and missing opportunities essential for development. This session is essential to attend as it highlights common pediatric diagnoses and how their play is impacted. We are providing key definitions and design strategies to help attendees feel confident advocating for an inclusive play space.

[PRO,H&W]

Disability Inclusion: No Budget? No Problem! Creative, Collaborative DIY Strategies (0.1 CEU)

Lisa Drennan, MERGE Diverse Abilities Inclusion Consulting

You don't need a big budget or a dedicated inclusion specialist to create meaningful, accessible, and welcoming recreation experiences. In this practical and empowering session, participants will explore low-cost, high-impact ways to implement inclusion in any camp or recreation program. We will bust the myth that inclusion is only possible with full-time experts and show how staff, volunteers, families, and participants themselves can become part of the inclusion equation. Attendees will leave with actionable tools to address behavior, promote belonging, and tap into local expertise—proving that inclusion is truly everyone's job. [CUS,M&L,DEV]

Five Linchpins of Your Aquatic Facility (0.1 CEU)

Brian Hill, Waters Edge Aquatic Design

Kyle McCawley, Water's Edge Aquatic Design

Many factors contribute to a successful aquatic facility, but some are critical. Identifying, understanding, and handling these factors will contribute to a successful and safe operation. In this session, you will learn strategies to stay ahead of maintenance issues and concerns that could threaten your operations. [AQU,M&L]

Intentional Engagement: Designing Public Input that Shapes Parks Planning (0.1 CEU)

Jay W, SWT Design

Lance Klein, SWT Design

Community engagement is acknowledged as a vital component of planning efforts. We often discuss who to engage, but not why or how to engage. Whether you're preparing for an individual project, park, or system master plan, this session will equip you with an understanding of inclusive, actionable, and impactful engagement. [M&C,PNR]

Leading with Heart: Emotional Intelligence in Parks and Recreation (0.1 CEU)

Bryana Larimer, Missouri Training Institute

In parks and recreation, leadership is about people — staff, volunteers, and community members — working together to create spaces where everyone belongs. But leading people also means

managing emotions; our own and others'. In this energizing session, we'll explore how Emotional Intelligence (EI) helps managers and supervisors communicate better, defuse conflict, and build stronger, happier teams. Through interactive, lighthearted activities, you'll discover practical ways to "lead with heart" and create a culture where both staff and community thrive. [DEV,M&L]

Remember Anything and Make Employee Tasks Fun (0.1 CEU)

Dr. Kevin Mabie, Definitely, Mabie Speaking & Facilitation

Our workplaces thrive when our colleagues and employees follow details and directions. What if there was a way to make directions memorable AND fun? In this session, Dr. Kevin Mabie shares how "memory" is a skill that can be taught. Participants will learn the impact memory has on culture. [CUS,M&L,DEV,H&W]

Where Recreation Has No Bounds (0.1 CEU)

Melissa Clarke Wharff, Can Play

Where Recreation Has No Bounds equips park and recreation leaders with tools to build inclusive, barrier-free programs. Attendees will learn adaptable strategies and real-world practices that open opportunities for all abilities to experience recreation, wellness, and community connection. [DEV,SPO,H&W]

Thursday, February 26

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM

A Leadership Road Map for Enhancing Your Inclusion Initiative (0.1 CEU)

Lisa Drennan, MERGE Diverse Abilities Inclusion Consulting

Ready to strengthen your inclusion efforts? This session equips leaders, whether just beginning or already offering inclusive services, with a strategic roadmap to grow impact. Learn best practices across staffing, sustainability, community partnerships, hiring, and more to embed inclusion into your organization's culture and move from "good" to "great." [M&L,DEV]

Bridging the Generation Gap (0.1 CEU)

Alia Stowers, Tarath, LLC

Are you over the age of 60 and having a hard time understanding what your younger colleagues are saying? Perhaps you are new to the workforce but can't relate to your veteran coworkers' value set? Welcome to the generation gap! This workshop will take a humorous and realistic look at what it's like to have four very different generations in the workplace. We will explore the realities of this gap and identify ways to leap it... whether you're a Baby Boomer, GenXer, Millennial, or GenZer. It's gonna be bussin! (Attend the session for translation.) [M&C,M&L,DEV]

CANNONBALL! Aquatic In-Services with Impact (0.1 CEU)

Stephane Rebeck, Backyard Lifeguards

Let's put some FUN in First Aid! Do your in-services draw a willing and enthusiastic crowd of lifeguards and instructors eager to learn? This interactive session features many new ideas you can take home to ensure your in-services make a big splash with your supervisors and staff. [AQU,M&L,DEV,PRO]

Design for Everyone: Scaling Universal and Inclusive Design in Parks and Recreation (0.1 CEU)

Garret Munch, Shive-Hattery

Molly Wuebker, Uncurbed

Kayla Ruzicka, Shive-Hattery

Discover strategies to overcome accessibility barriers, scale universal design, and inspire equity in parks. Explore how Shive-Hattery and Uncurbed applied universal and inclusive design at Athene North Shore Recreation Area. Gain actionable insights to champion accessibility and belonging in your own projects through real-world successes and lessons learned. [PNR,H&W]

Has Your Facility Been Loved to Death? What now? (0.1 CEU)

*Darin Barr, Ballard*King & Associates*

*Scott Caron, Ballard*King & Associates*

You have a facility that has been well-used and loved. Facilities face challenges such as aging infrastructure, increased usage, and evolving community needs in order to maintain participation. This session will explore strategies for revitalizing and modernizing facilities to enhance functionality, sustainability, and user experience. Attendees will gain insights into best practices for maintenance, updates/renovations/expansions, and planning to ensure facilities remain valuable community assets. [SPO]

Making Mental Health a Priority (0.1 CEU)

Kelly Pettis, City of St. Peters

Exploring the importance of mental health and why it should be treated as a top priority in both personal and professional life. We'll discuss how mental well-being impacts overall health, productivity, and relationships, and provide practical tools to help create and maintain healthy habits that strengthen your mind. [DEV,H&W]

Reel Quick: Maximizing your Social Media (0.1 CEU)

Megan Keul, North Carolina Recreation and Parks Association

Creating dynamic video content can be impactful for departments looking to connect with their communities. This workshop is designed to equip government professionals with the skills and knowledge needed to produce engaging reels tailored explicitly for social media platforms. This

workshop will go over how reels increase engagement and improve communication effectiveness, and techniques for crafting entertaining, high-quality government messages through video. [CUS,M&C]

We All Want to BELONG: The Work Starts With Us (0.1 CEU)

Jason Elissalde, Next Practice Partners

Explore the impact and responsibility of privilege in this eye-opening session. Through real-world experiences, discover how to leverage privilege to amplify unheard voices, advance inclusivity, and create lasting equity. Leave with actionable strategies to drive positive change in your community and beyond. [CUS,M&L,DEV,PRO]

9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

TOUR: Behind the Scenes Tour at MizzouRec (0.2 CEU)

Aarica Stephenson, MizzouRec Services & Facilities

Step inside one of the nation's most comprehensive recreation facilities and discover how MizzouRec continues to evolve to meet student and community needs. This guided tour will highlight both recent renovations and upcoming projects, including the transformation of the outdoor oval pool into a turf fitness space, boutique fitness studios, a climbing wall modeled after Missouri's Ozark formations, and a reimagined lobby. Participants will gain insight into balancing aesthetics with function, managing phased renovations in an active facility, and weaving unique program spaces into a cohesive member experience. A post-tour Q&A will allow for deeper discussion on design decisions, operational challenges, and lessons learned. [DEV,PNR,TOUR]

10:15 AM – 11:15 AM

Accountability: It's Everybody's Responsibility (0.1 CEU)

Lori A. Hoffner, Supporting CommUnity, Inc.

We will discuss how we move beyond understanding the need for accountability to engaging your team in ways that win their hearts, minds, and commitment. You'll learn how to create a philosophy of accountability that everyone can embrace and practice. A philosophy that removes fear; increases skills, confidence, and reliability. [M&L,DEV]

Communicate to De-Escalate (0.1 CEU)

Ashley Virtue, National Conflict Resolution Center

People today seem to have less patience and shorter fuses. This training equips frontline employees with effective de-escalation strategies and prepares them to navigate difficult

conversations while promoting safety, respect, and dignity for everyone involved. By de-escalating tense situations, employees can slow down, reduce, and prevent further conflict. [CUS,M&L,DEV]

Conversation Links: Getting to Truly Know Colleagues, Employees, and Customers (0.1 CEU)

Dr. Kevin Mabie, Definitely, Mabie Speaking & Facilitation

A positive workplace culture can help an organization maintain employees and draw customers. But often, a workplace is not purposeful in developing culture positively. In this session, Dr. Kevin Mabie will share how "conversation" can be more than making small talk; it can be a key element to organizational success. [CUS,M&C,M&L,DEV]

Innovating Park Management: Modern Tools for Safer, Smarter Parks (0.1 CEU)

Ben Grossman, Great Rivers Greenway

Andrew Petrolina, Utilitra

Park security is evolving to make parks safer and make managing them easier and more efficient. This session will cover some processes and product releases that help accomplish this task. It will be comprised of an integrator to talk through how this all comes together and a park district sharing how it helped them. [PNR]

Libraries and Parks: The Partnership You Didn't Know Would Rock (0.1 CEU)

Rachael Grime, Little Dixie Regional Libraries

Libraries and park systems are in almost all communities, but rarely work together. We will discuss and share ideas for partnerships for the 2026 summer, as libraries celebrate their summer theme of "Unearth a Story." This theme will work perfectly to form a more perfect union between these two community entities as we explore dinosaurs, archaeology, and more. [CUS,M&L,PRO]

National Goals, Local Action: Adapting the National Physical Activity Plan (0.1 CEU)

Eric Nehlsen, Blue Springs Parks and Recreation

Discover how the City of Blue Springs is localizing the National Physical Activity Plan to create a community-driven strategy for health, equity, and engagement. This session highlights alignment with city initiatives, partnerships, and innovative programming, positioning parks and recreation as a public health leader and model for Missouri communities. [H&W]

Swimming for All: Inclusive Strategies for Accommodating Children with Disabilities in Group Swimming Lessons (0.1 CEU)

Renee Reis, City of Fairway Kansas

Dr. Katy Tepper, Children's Mercy Hospital

Learn how to integrate children with a variety of disabilities into group swimming lessons without costly training programs. Drawing on insights from experts in special education, autism, and child

psychology, as well as experienced swimming instructors, this session offers practical strategies and simple, affordable tools to support diverse learners. The presenters will share actionable advice to help every child thrive in the pool. [AQU]

The Shortage of Sports Officials: A National Crisis (0.1 CEU)

Ron Schmidt, University of Missouri PRST

Why don't we have enough young officials to replace those who will soon retire? What will happen if we continue losing officials? How can we attract new officials and retain them? Attend this session to find out the answers to all of these questions and more. [SPO]

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

A Dog, a Mouse, and Searching for Unicorns (0.1 CEU)

Jason Elissalde, Next Practice Partners

From Disney magic to retail grit, discover over 20 years of hilarious, heartfelt lessons on building dream teams, delivering unforgettable experiences, managing talent, achieving results, and chasing excellence—proving it's always about people. [CUS,M&L,DEV]

Blame the Manager (0.1 CEU)

Alia Stowers, Tarath, LLC

In a comprehensive study of management, Gallup found that managers are the one lever that could drive the most change in culture and identified that a startling minority of American managers are leading effectively. This session helps you identify the most important factors you can address to begin shifting your management to a high-performing asset. [M&L,DEV]

Engaging Emerging Audiences: Lessons from Powder Valley's Moth Ball (0.1 CEU)

Lauren Baker, Missouri Department of Conservation

Abby Luebbert, Missouri Department of Conservation

Discover how Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center's Moth Ball captivated young adults ages 18 to 34 through an immersive evening of moth-inspired wonder. From enchanted trails and citizen science BioBlitzes to creative crafts, interactive games, and the crowning of a Queen Monarch, this session explores creative strategies, behind-the-scenes lessons, and partnerships that made this magical conservation event a success. [PRO]

How to Modernize Youth Cycling Education and Build Healthier Communities (0.1 CEU)

Scott Fitzgerald, Pedal Kids USA

Research shows that youth cycling participation is more than just a recreational trend. It's a leading indicator of overall community health, impacting everything from physical activity

levels to social connectedness, environmental engagement, and long-term mobility habits. In this engaging and actionable session, Pedal Kids USA will guide parks and recreation leaders through the process of modernizing youth cycling education to meet today's realities and tomorrow's needs. We'll explore how structured, age-appropriate programming can unlock a powerful health and equity multiplier effect for your entire community. [SPO,PRO,H&W]

No More Suspensions! Supporting Children with Challenging Behaviors for Program Success

(0.1 CEU)

Lisa Drennan, MERGE Diverse Abilities Inclusion Consulting

Being disability welcoming takes intentional work to ensure that ALL are successful. But... we recognize that some children may be more challenging and may require a different mindset and strategies to set them up for successful participation in your recreation program. From working with families and tips for an effective intake process to staff training and strategies for dealing with challenging behaviors, attendees will leave with the tools and confidence to reduce or, better yet, ELIMINATE suspension practices within your recreation programs. We will wrap up the session with a demonstration on the difference between a meltdown and a tantrum, and share approaches for dealing with each of these situations, yielding a more successful outcome for everyone. [CUS,M&L,DEV,H&W]

So What? Who Cares? Build Messages That Move People to Action (0.1 CEU)

Denise Bentele, Common Ground Public Relations

Pia Reinhold, Common Ground Public Relations

Strong messaging is the cornerstone of every successful communication effort. From speeches to brochures, and media interviews to city council meetings, making sure your content is anchored in compelling messaging is essential. This 60-minute, participatory workshop gives you the tools to create a message map to support communication across all platforms. [M&C,M&L,DEV]

Stronger Together: Leveraging the Missouri Department of Conservation Support for Parks and Recreation Success (0.1 CEU)

Danielle Fox, Missouri Department of Conservation

Discover how the Missouri Department of Conservation partners with local parks and recreation agencies to bring conservation to life in communities across the state. This session will introduce MDC's Community Conservation Cost-Share Program and technical guidance opportunities that help expand tree canopy, restore native habitats, and integrate green infrastructure into public spaces. Learn how your department can access funding, expertise, and long-term support to strengthen community connections, improve environmental health, and create parks that thrive for generations. [PNR]

Understanding Adolescent Brain Development: It's All about Relationships (0.1 CEU)

Lori A. Hoffner, Supporting CommUnity, Inc.

If you work with youth or employ teens and young adults, you may often wonder, "Why do they act that way?" In this session, we'll explore the science behind adolescent brain development and learn creative strategies for programming and relationship-building that lead to positive outcomes. [AQU,SPO]

2:15 PM – 3:15 PM

50 Lifeguard In-Service Trainings in 50 Minutes (0.1 CEU)

Renee Reis, City of Fairway Kansas

Tired of using the same icebreakers, drills, and games in your trainings? Looking for new ways to engage your staff and develop future leaders? This fast-paced session is packed with creative, hands-on ideas to refresh your in-service training. From energizing icebreakers to leadership development and scenario-based learning, you'll leave with 50 actionable ideas to keep your lifeguards motivated, skilled, and ready for anything. [AQU]

Day Camp Adventures, Oh My! (0.1 CEU)

Angie Toebben, JC Parks

Is your day camp a true adventure for your campers? Do you offer unique and fun activities that your campers won't find anywhere else? This session will cover a lot of different resources that JC Parks Youth Day Camps have used over the past few years to enhance their day camps and provide environmental education to their campers, with whom they have partnered, and the programs they have participated in to prepare them for these offerings at their camp. [PRO]

Fostering Bird-Friendly Communities in Missouri for Ecosystems and People (0.1 CEU)

Kaylee Woelfel, Missouri River Bird Observatory

Sarah Kendrick, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Tessa Poolman, Missouri River Bird Observatory

Join us to learn about Missouri's new Bird-Friendly Communities Program and how parks can get involved in curbing threats to wild bird populations while improving human health. Evidence-based strategies and practical tools can mitigate the impacts of artificial light, glass collisions, and pesticides on bird populations in parks and communities. [PNR,H&W]

Harnessing the Explosive Growth of Disc Golf (0.1 CEU)

Matt Boehner, Columbia Parks and Recreation

Forged in history as a frisbee trick shot sport that crossed over with traditional golf, disc golf was cost-effective and straightforward to install a few tee pads and baskets in and around a park to

satisfy a small group of park users, to increase park use, and support for park activities and programs. Over the past two decades, disc golf has grown exponentially into a multi-generational, professional, and amateur sport that requires much more investment, not just for local play but also as a global tourism generator. [PNR,SPO,PRO]

Play at Work: Boosting Satisfaction, Creativity, and Collaboration (0.1 CEU)

Kasey Hammock , Partner for Better

Discover your unique play style and explore how it strengthens creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork across generations. This engaging session blends playful activities, reflection, and assessment, equipping you with practical strategies to reduce stress, recharge your energy, and enhance satisfaction in both work and life. [H&W,DEV,M&L]

The Exchange (0.1 CEU)

Ashley Virtue, National Conflict Resolution Center

The National Conflict Resolution Center has developed a state-of-the-art approach for leaders to resolve conflicts in a way that empowers the participants to be fully engaged in problem-solving. This strategic process allows each participant to share her/his perspective, be heard by everyone involved, and then move together to create possible solutions. [CUS,M&L,DEV]

Time Management for Mission-Driven People: How to Lead Without Burning Out (0.1 CEU)

Ryan Harrison, City of Clayton

Learn practical strategies to manage your time, energy, and priorities without sacrificing your passion for service. This session equips parks and recreation professionals with tools to prevent burnout, boost productivity, and stay focused on what matters most both on the job and beyond. [M&L,DEV]

Utilizing Story-Telling to Invoke Emotion and Generate Change (0.1 CEU)

Dr. Kevin Mabie, Definitely, Mabie Speaking & Facilitation

Story-telling is an art. If the story is too long, it loses its impact. If the story lacks an actionable point, it loses its impact. But sometimes, a good story is the only way to inspire action. Join us! We'll learn how to make stories useful in the workplace. [CUS,M&C,M&L,DEV]

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Feedback Loops that Improve the Experience: Listening and Acting on Visitor Input (0.1 CEU)

Aarica Stephenson, MizzouRec Services & Facilities

Patrons constantly tell us what they value—through surveys, social media, conversations at the front desk, and even body language in programs. But too often, feedback gets collected and

shelved. This session shows how to design simple, scalable feedback loops that capture meaningful insights, prioritize what matters most, and, most importantly, close the loop by showing patrons how their voice influenced change. By integrating feedback into everyday practice, agencies can build trust, improve service quality, and strengthen long-term relationships with their communities. [CUS]

More Than Just July: Making the Most of Parks and Rec Month and Summer Programming (0.1 CEU)

Alexandria Arnold, Excelsior Springs Community Center

Discover creative, budget-friendly ways to celebrate Parks & Rec Month! This session highlights unique, low-cost programming ideas and community engagement strategies that help agencies showcase their services, boost participation, and create memorable experiences, all without stretching your budget. [PRO]

Park Accessibility Master Planning (0.1 CEU)

Dave Roberts, Crafton Tull

Aaron Grefrath, City Jefferson, MO

How accessible and inclusive are your city parks? This session will review the master planning process utilized in Jefferson City, MO. The presenters will walk attendees through each step of the project that assessed eight city parks, engaged the public, recommended ADA design solutions for each park, and located a site for a new fully inclusive destination playground.

[M&C,DEV,PNR,H&W]

Purposed Based Recognition - Recognizing, Rewarding, and Retaining Your Staff (0.1 CEU)

Lori A. Hoffner, Supporting CommUnity, Inc.

Implementing a Purpose-Based Recognition program intentionally reduces turnover and fosters employee buy-in, creating a supportive and enthusiastic environment. This session will help you identify leadership goals and responsibilities to effectively retain your most valuable asset: your employees. Embrace recognition as a key strategy for enhancing workplace culture and engagement. [M&L,DEV]

Serving Up Data: How to Maximize Pickleball's Growth for Your Community. (0.1 CEU)

Samuel Norman, University of Missouri - Columbia

Jennifer Wentz, University of Missouri - Columbia

Pickleball: a sport phenomenon taking over the world. Wanna know how your parks and recreation team can ride the wave rather than be consumed by it? Check out this session where we'll dive into strategies to use your supply of pickleball courts to combat the ever-increasing demand!

[PNR,SPO]

Train & Retain: Building a Cohesive Aquatic Team (0.1 CEU)

Sydney Philpot, Columbia Parks and Recreation Department

Cavelle Cole-Neal, Columbia Parks and Recreation Department

Attendance is returning from the pandemic, but are your lifeguards? Hear from the Columbia Aquatics Team, including some of their part-time staff, on their response to staffing shortages by focusing on team building, relationships, consistent recruitment strategies, and advocating for staff pay and growth opportunities. [AQU,M&L]

Workshopping Conflict: How to Engage with Conflict and Clarity (0.1 CEU)

Whitney Guison, Nixa Area Chamber of Commerce

Learn a five-point strategy to navigate conflict with confidence. This workshop explores the inner process that turns tension into understanding, equipping you with tools to approach difficult conversations with clarity and purpose. [CUS,M&L,DEV]

Friday, February 27

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

TOUR: Sports Facility Tour: Columbia Sports Fieldhouse and Gans Creek Recreation Area (0.2 CEU)

Joey Wilmes, Columbia Parks and Recreation

Josh Ebbesmeyer, Columbia Parks and Recreation

Adam Zier vogel, Columbia Convention and Visitors Bureau

Toney Lowery, Columbia Parks & Recreation

Matthew Boehner, Columbia Parks & Recreation

Columbia Sports Fieldhouse opened in 2019 and has recently expanded from four indoor multi-sport courts to eight. Gans Creek Recreation Area is home to five outdoor multi-sport grass fields, a nationally recognized cross-country course, and a newly opened natural surface bike trail. Tour both facilities to learn about facility management, how they are programmed, and how the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department partners with the Columbia Sports Commission to bring youth and adult tournaments to Columbia. [SPO,PRO,H&W,TOUR]