

FOCUS

The Official Publication of the North Dakota Recreation and Park Association

Fall 2022

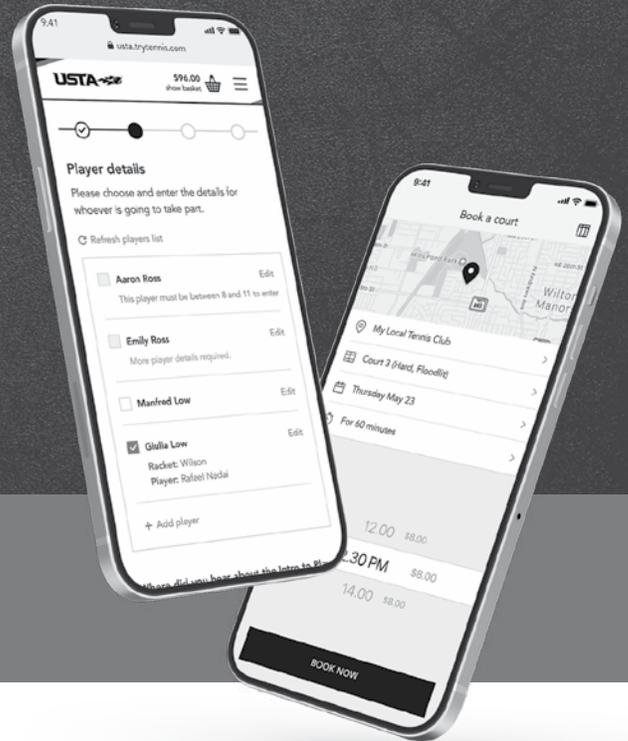




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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I've often said fall is my favorite season. I enjoy the mild temperature and colorful trees. For my wife, Teresa, and our children, Alex (and his wife Brittany), Emily, Matthew, and Grace, fall kicks off with our annual camping reunion over Labor Day weekend. It's a ritual that began in 1991 on a lakeshore near Watertown, S.D., and has lasted to this day.

The original group consisted of 17 people, including my parents, my brothers, sisters, and each of our young families. Requirements for selecting a location include a church nearby, a lake for swimming and fishing, a golf course for the Orr Family Golf Challenge, and open space for our Wacky Olympics. More than 30 years later, with a family that now exceeds 50 people and 12 dogs (just to add extra chaos to the extended weekend), we are fortunate this event remains a priority each year. Most family members are in our region, but others arrive from Florida, North Carolina and Washington. Due to travel and the sheer size of the event, we've upgraded to a camp with cabins, but still spend most of our time outside. The weather usually varies and can be a reminder that our wonderful summer is over, fall is brief and winter is near.

As winter approaches, most North Dakotans begin to seek indoor activity. When I began working for the Grand Forks Park District, it had recently purchased a six-court, indoor tennis facility that was privately owned and we operated as Center Court Fitness Club. Within a few years, park districts in Bismarck, Fargo and Minot were also operating similar indoor facilities. Few park district employees at these fitness facilities were involved in NDRPA, so we often sought national resources for information.

Since then, NDRPA has witnessed the construction of the West River Community Center, BSC Aquatic & Wellness Center, Choice Health & Fitness, Williston Area Recreation Center, Gaukler Wellness Center, Starion Sports Complex, Two Rivers Activity Center, Rustad Recreation Center, Roughrider Center and Energy Wellness Center.



These are all extraordinary facilities focused on creating indoor health, wellness and recreation spaces for our communities. Like all departments in our districts, these fitness and recreation facilities are fortunate to have a growing number of NDRPA colleagues that serve as local resources.

I, and others, commented on the many new faces at the NDRPA state conference in Minot. It was refreshing to witness, and we'll strive for even more next year in Grand Forks. It was also rewarding to hear speakers at the conference express their appreciation and gratitude for what we accomplish in parks and recreation.

Thank you for your work and the personal time each of you sacrifice to create opportunities for individuals and families in our communities to enjoy our vast array of programs, parks and facilities. Always remember to prioritize time for you and your family to enjoy the fruits of our labor. I'll give you a heads up if the Orr family camping reunion is ever scheduled near you.

On behalf of the Grand Forks Park District family and the Orr family, we wish you health and happiness this holiday season!

Mike Orr, NDRPA President



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

JAN. 15

FOCUS Deadline

FEB. 16

Parks Day at the Capitol

MARCH 21-23

Certified Playground Safety Inspector Course, Bismarck

SEPT. 12-14

NDRPA State Conference, Minot

Mission

Advancing parks, recreation and conservation for an enhanced quality of life in North Dakota.



Strategic Goals

1. Member Services: Provide training, information and networking for parks and recreation stakeholders.
2. Policy Advocacy: Represent parks and recreation interests on public policy issues.
3. Public Outreach: Promote the benefits of parks and recreation and the importance of conservation, health and wellness, and access.

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FOCUS is the official newsletter of the North Dakota Recreation & Park Association (NDRPA). It is distributed quarterly to almost 900 parks and recreation professionals and posted on the NDRPA website. Submission of articles and photographs are encouraged in digital format to ndrpaoffice@gmail.com. Photographs should be high-resolution (300 dpi or greater). Advertising information is available online at www.ndrpa.com.

Next *FOCUS* deadline: Jan. 15, 2023

Cover photo: Golfing at Williston Municipal Golf Course, Williston Parks and Recreation District

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New Leadership Elected to Board of Directors

Mike Orr from Grand Forks is the new president, Mike Wald from Bismarck is the new president-elect, Ashley Martinson from Valley City is the new secretary-treasurer, Cole Higlin from Mandan continues to serve as Public Policy Committee chair, Amy Walters from Jamestown is the chair of the Education Committee, and Dylan Thiem from Bismarck was elected as chair of the Engagement Committee. New leadership joined the NDRPA Board of Directors at the Sept. 15 annual meeting in Minot. Board contact information and a list of committee members can be found at www.ndrpa.com.



NDRPA Members Urged to Submit Articles

NDRPA encourages members to submit articles for *FOCUS*. The quarterly publication is a resource for park districts to gain insight and ideas from each other. Sharing stories about the events or projects you are working on in your communities provides that insight and ideas.

Take advantage of this FREE opportunity to share activities, staffing or ongoing and planned infrastructure changes. *FOCUS* deadlines are Jan. 15, April 15, July 15, and Oct. 15. Send your stories to ndrpaoffice@gmail.com or contact Scooter Pursley at 701-355-4458 with questions regarding articles for upcoming issues.

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COMMISSIONER'S CORNER

Matt Chandler – Thompson



Matt Chandler

Matt Chandler knows what it takes to be a team leader. The Thompson, N.D., native spent the last six summers as softball coordinator and coach in his hometown, including the last two as a member of the park board, and recently as park board president for the Thompson Park District.

As Chandler explains, his history with the town's softball programs and park board made ascension to his current position easier than it might have been.

"We have a three-person board that share responsibilities equally, although we have responsibilities specific to our summer rec activities," Chandler says. "I oversee all softball activities from our 8-under programs to our 18-under programs. It makes my job a little easier because I coach all these teams, but my main responsibilities are field maintenance, scheduling games and practices, and lining up officials."

Chandler didn't shy away from the challenges that came with serving on the park board, even though he knew what they entailed. He saw what it took growing up in Thompson, where his dad served on the park board and city council. After moving away for 10 years, Chandler and wife, Katie, moved back to Thompson because of the family-oriented environment the small town offered. Their children, Josie (7) and Connor (3), and others like them benefit from the efforts of Chandler and other board members.



Thompson is recognized statewide for its high-quality youth athletic teams. It's through the hands-on efforts of residents like Chandler that Thompson maintains its quality programs and facilities.

"Because I coach high school fastpitch, I first became involved with park activities because of the opportunity to work and develop players at a young age," Chandler explains. "Living in a small community, you take pride in your facilities, and our former board did a great job with park improvements. I wanted to continue with the progress that they had made and provide a place for our

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community to be proud of.” Southbrook Park is Thompson’s recreation hub. With three ball fields, a rentable recreation building and a playground, it is the centerpiece and a conduit through which many of the town’s younger residents have launched athletic careers or just spent sunny afternoons with friends.

“Our goal as a board is to provide as many opportunities as possible for our youth to participate and succeed in. Another goal is to provide top-notch facilities that our kids and community are proud of,” Chandler says. “We have very knowledgeable and caring coaches that do a great job of teaching skills and sportsmanship. My favorite activity is softball; it is fun to watch kids develop from year to year as they progress through our programs. It is also encouraging to see the growth of girls’ softball throughout the state.”

Given Thompson’s limited resources and staffing (population 1,143), board members and volunteers often take on additional duties. “Resources and time are the biggest challenges we face. We do not have any full-time employees, so a lot of sweat equity goes into the upkeep of our park,” Chandler notes. “There are always projects that need to be done, with our budget, we must plan in advance.”



Through careful planning, Thompson has made several recent upgrades. Chandler says with assistance from the high school, the park board renovated one of its softball fields with a new grandstand, press box, brick backstop, brick dugouts, new fence, and scoreboard. A new playground was installed in spring 2022, and the roof on the shelter was also recently renovated. Between fall 2022 and spring 2023, the board plans to put new siding on its shelter, epoxy the floors throughout the building and renovate the bathrooms.

Chandler credits North Dakota Recreation and Park Association with fostering connections with people that members can lean on for advice and assistance in projects to enhance the livability of smaller communities.

“What makes me proudest about our park board is seeing the smiles on kids faces while enjoying the numerous activities that we offer,” Chandler said.

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BisParks BCycle Gets People Riding

Launched in August, BisParks BCycle is Bismarck's new bike share program. Bismarck Parks and Recreation District (BPRD) operates the program, which was founded by a 2020 Leadership Bismarck-Mandan Project Team.

The program offers residents and visitors the opportunity to rent a bike to explore the community with stations located at Sertoma Park, Pioneer Park, BSC Aquatic & Wellness Center, and Peace Park. The program's classic pedal bikes give people the chance to get active and enjoy

Bismarck's extensive shared-use trail system. Almost 300 riders enjoyed bike trips during the first month of operation.

Program sponsors include Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota Caring Foundation, North Dakota Department of Health Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, and MDU Resources Group Inc.

BisParks BCycle will operate seasonally from April to October, weather permitting. Learn more about the program at www.bisparks.org/bcycle.



King's Walk Golf Celebrates 20th Season

Twenty years ago, the site that now is occupied by King's Walk Golf Course in Grand Forks was completely flat and undeveloped. After moving and shaping over half a million cubic yards of soil, the links-style course, modeled after the same atmosphere found at the great links courses of Scotland and Ireland, transformed the landscape into the one-of-a-kind course it is today.

Last summer marked the 20th anniversary season for the Arnold Palmer Signature King's Walk Golf Course. Over the last two decades, King's Walk has recorded an astonishing 500,675 rounds, as well as 5,441 total adult memberships and 1,509 youth memberships. Due to its natural prairie-style bent greens, unforgiving fescue and challenging course design, King's Walk has been consistently ranked one of the premier courses in the state. With various leagues, programs and lesson options for golfers of all ages and abilities, the addition of this world-class

course has been instrumental in growing the game in the community.

Grand Forks and the surrounding regions have benefitted greatly from the addition of this breathtaking course. The Grand Forks Park District has been honored to own and operate King's Walk over the past 20 years and is looking forward to many more years to come.





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New Leadership in Dickinson

Benjamin Rae is the new executive director at Dickinson Parks and Recreation. Rae has been on the job for the past two months. He began his new position on Aug. 1 and worked with retiring executive director James Kramer through a short transition process. He has since taken the reins seamlessly.

Rae had a busy start. He attended the NDRPA conference in Minot, where he met colleagues from around the state, many of whom will be great resources for him through his first year as executive director. Rae also attended the NRPA conference in Phoenix, where he took part in many educational opportunities

that will further enhance Dickinson parks and services.

“Dickinson is a great community,” Rae says. “I look forward to building upon a legacy of excellence in recreation and contributing to the growth of parks and recreation in the great state of North Dakota. The work we do on a daily basis is absolutely essential to the health and well-being of our communities.”

Rae comes to Dickinson from Utah, where he was the assistant leisure services director for the city of Washington, and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in the parks and recreation field. He has a master’s in public administration from Southern Utah



University and is a certified parks and recreation executive (CPRE) through the National Recreation and Park Association. Rae and his wife, Jill, have three children, Jenna, Westley and Charlotte.



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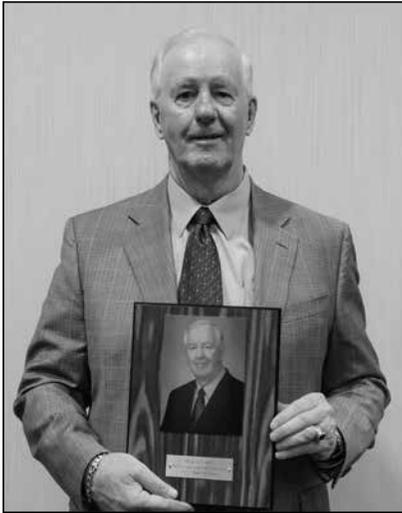
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NDRPA Inducts Two Members into Hall of Fame

Dick Gulmon with the Valley City Park Board and Ron Merritt of the Minot Park District were inducted into the NDRPA Hall of Fame in September.

Dick Gulmon has been involved in parks and recreation for more than 40 years and is the 26th NDRPA Hall of Fame inductee. Early in his career, he served on the Valley City Recreation Board and the Valley City Park Board. With guidance from NDRPA,



Dick Gulmon

the city successfully combined the boards, and Gulmon served as president of the Valley City Parks and Recreation Board of Directors for 24 years.

Gulmon served on the Valley City Park Board for 36 years, during which time the agency built a public golf course, tennis courts, outdoor swimming

pool and softball complex. It renovated the City Park Bandshell for musical programs and built the 66,000-square-foot Gaukler Wellness Center. Of all these accomplishments, Gulmon considers the Gaukler Wellness Center one of the greatest, as it required collaboration with Valley City State University, the city of Valley City and the Valley City Development Corporation. Gulmon says many of the district's accomplishments over the years would not have been possible without the combination of the boards and a full-time district.

"Dick's fingerprints are all over the Valley City Park District," Valley City Park District President Tyler Jacobson said. "I truly feel like Dick has been a huge pillar in the community and wants the best for the people of Valley City. He has made our community a better place for families, citizens and visitors. I feel like I am a better director to the community and my staff because of his leadership as park board president."

Gulmon has been active in his profession and in his community for decades, including Valley City Rural Fire Department, Valley City Rotary Club, USA Softball National, USA Softball of North Dakota,

Valley City State University Board of Directors, Independent Community Banks of North Dakota, South Central Senior Center, and Valley City Commission. He has been awarded the USA Softball of North Dakota Distinguished Service Award, 20-Year Service Award, 25-Year Service Award, and NDRPA's Citizen Advocacy Award, and he has been inducted into the McQuade Charity Softball Tournament Hall of Fame, Valley City Bowling Association Hall of Fame and USA Softball National Hall of Fame.

When NDRPA undertook a complete rewrite of the North Dakota Park Board Manual in 2008 and a revision in 2017, Gulmon served on the committees that spent countless hours meeting and revising the manual. Gulmon also has been active in the legislative process, always willing to testify or contact legislators about park district issues.

"Dick has shown deep commitment to the parks and recreation field and incredible support of NDRPA through the years. He could be counted on when the association reached out for assistance, and his willingness to share his knowledge and advocate for the field has had a positive impact on parks and recreation in North Dakota and NDRPA's ability to serve its members," former NDRPA Executive Director Dana Schaar Jahner said.

Ron Merritt, executive director of the Minot Park District, was the 27th NDRPA Hall of Fame inductee.

In 1991, Merritt earned a bachelor's degree in zoology from North Dakota State University and started his career as a zookeeper for Minot Roosevelt Park Zoo. He became zoo director within six years and in 2005, he took the position of executive director of Minot Park District.

During his career, Merritt assisted in the completion of the Hoeven Baseball Complex, Roosevelt Pool and Bath House, Hammond Tennis Complex,



Ron Merritt

HALL OF FAME

the combination of the parks and recreation boards, multiple facility upgrades, flood recovery, greenway development, Magic City Discovery Center partnership, and Outdoor Recreation Area Development.

“I have had the pleasure of getting to know and working with Ron for the last 20 years with the Minot Park District,” former Williston Parks and Recreation District Board President Larry Grondahl said. “Ron’s experience, professionalism and work ethic has made him a valuable member of NDRPA. One of the most important accomplishments Ron achieved was guiding the park district through the 2011 flood. His leadership, positive attitude and determination ‘showed the way’ for Minot and his agency to recover as quickly as possible from the devastating catastrophe.”

Merritt’s many honors include two successful Association of Zoos and Aquariums accreditations for the zoo, the Minot Chamber of Commerce Above and Beyond Award and the Mayoral Coin. Under his leadership, Minot Park District received the 1996 NDRPA Golden Egg Award for the Penguin Exhibit and the 2009 Golden Egg Award for Jack Hoeven Park. Merritt received the 2014 NDRPA Fellow Award – now known as the Distinguished Professional Award.

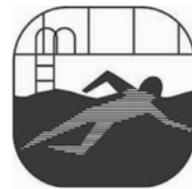
Merritt has been active in several organizations: Minot Chamber of Commerce, Minot Convention and Visitors Bureau, Community Leadership Institute, State Museum Association Board of Directors, Souris Valley Amateur Radio Club, and Minot Rotary Club. He was an AZA Professional Fellow from 1998 to 2005 and attended AZA Directors School in 2000. He also is a certified park and recreation professional and attended NRPA’s Directors School in 2019 and 2022.

Merritt has been a member of NDRPA for 17 years. He has served several roles with NDRPA, including professional development chair from 2007-2008, president of NDRPA in 2009-2010 and chair of the Legislative Committee from 2010 to 2015. He currently serves on the Revenue Committee.

As president, Merritt led the effort to increase the concession bidding threshold for political subdivisions and the state from \$500 in estimated annual gross sales to more than \$25,000 during the 2011 State Legislative Session. Work began in the 2009-2010 interim to secure support from

the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR), which ensured a well-vetted bill was introduced when the session began. Ron was instrumental throughout the entire legislative process, testifying before the interim committee as well as during the session to ensure the bill passed without any significant opposition.

Ron also provided support for hiring the association’s first full-time executive director and the completion of the Economic Contribution Study. He is a strong supporter of the association and encourages his staff to get involved and participate in NDRPA activities.



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NDRPA Awards Presented

NDRPA presented seven awards during the 2022 Awards Banquet on **Sept. 14** at the NDRPA State Conference in Minot. Congratulations to all the award winners!

IMPACT AWARD & GOLDEN EGG AWARD



Maplewood Park Inclusive Playground,
West Fargo Park District
Barb Erbstoesser, director

GOLDEN EGG AWARD



Broadway Square, Fargo
Left to right: **Carolyn Boutain, enterprise director; Joe Deutsch, park board member; Dave Leker, executive director; and Kevin Boe, recreation director**

OUTSTANDING YOUNG PROFESSIONAL AWARD



Outstanding Young Professional Award Recipient:
Randi Litchy, Fargo Park District

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMMING AWARD



Innovative Programming Award Recipient:
Indoor Mini Golf, Watford City Parks and Recreation – Left to right: **Robin Arndt, Watford City Park District parks director, and Ian Eisenschenk, Watford City Park District recreation coordinator**

CITIZEN ADVOCACY AWARD



Citizen Advocacy Award Recipient:
Joe Deutsch, NDSU Fargo

PARTNERSHIP AWARD



Partnership Award Recipient:
Wings on Strings Kite Club
Left to right: **Mike Gee, Wings on Strings Kite Club co-founder; Amy Walters, Jamestown Parks and Recreation executive director; Chris Dodson, Wings on Strings Kite Club co-founder**

PARK DISTRICT NEWS

Fargo Parks Moves Forward with Phase II of Fargo Parks Sports Complex

With Phase I of the Fargo Parks Sports Complex currently under construction, the Fargo Park Board unanimously approved the 2023 budget as presented in October, which included a key decision to move forward with Phase II of the Fargo Parks Sports Complex project.

This expanded facility will accommodate indoor sports, community activities, tournaments, and special events. Phase II of the Fargo Parks Sports Complex will benefit an additional 7,000 children, bringing the total project benefit to more than 20,000 children in the community in its first year of operation.

Phase I is currently under construction and includes one full-size indoor soccer turf field, four multipurpose hardwood courts, administrative offices, multipurpose community space, and an indoor walking track. Phase II features four additional multipurpose hardwood courts, two



sheets of ice, two community rooms, six pickleball courts, and an indoor play area with associated birthday party rooms.

The Fargo Park District Foundation continues to pursue private funding sources to reduce the current burden of \$95.1 million of public funds for this project. Several funding sources have been identified

and efforts are ongoing. The total estimated cost, with Phase I and predesign estimated Phase II included, is \$127.5 million, with \$95.1 million in public funds and \$32.4 million in private funds to date. The sources of the public funds are \$80.8 million in bonded indebtedness, 8.73 mills of increased property taxes to support debt, and \$14 million in cash reserves. Any additional private funds serve as an offset to the public portion of this current funding model. Construction updates are posted on fargoparks.com.

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PARK DISTRICT NEWS

Choice Health & Fitness Celebrates 10 Years

Choice Health & Fitness and the Grand Forks Park District (GFPD) hosted a 10th anniversary celebration in September. The three-day celebration featured themed fitness classes, prize giveaways, discounted guest fees, discounted tennis drills and court time, a fitness challenge, social media contests, and a lobby full of fun, games and refreshments for members and the public.



"The positive feedback we have received from our community over the last five years has been overwhelming," says Mike Orr, director of facilities and programs for the GFPD. "With the support of our strong partnerships, we are honored to serve our loyal members and the Grand Forks region."

The anniversary celebration was made possible by Choice Health & Fitness's amazing partners who have been a huge part of the facility's success since the inception of the IMAGINE campaign, the community fundraising campaign that built Choice Health & Fitness 10 years ago.

"The partnership between the Altru Family YMCA and Choice Health & Fitness has been beneficial to so many people in the greater Grand Forks area," President/CEO of Altru Family YMCA Bob McWilliams says. "To be able to offer locations on both ends of town has made it convenient and accessible to everyone in the city."

Choice Health & Fitness is honored by its partners' continued support and would like to say "Thank You" to the Grand Forks Family Altru YMCA, Choice Bank, Altru Health System, Truyu Aesthetic Center, USDA Human Nutrition Research Center, and the Grand Forks Park District for 10 great years of partnership and helping inspire health and happiness in the community!



Dickinson Parks and Recreation Fall Highlights

Dickinson Parks and Recreation (DPR) announces the promotion of Caleb Burgard, CPRP, as its new director of recreation/facilities. Burgard took over the position on Sept. 1 and is looking forward to his new

role in leading the recreation/facilities department. Other staff changes include the promotion of Andrew Grafton to recreation/facilities manager, transitioning from facility supervisor-aquatics.

DPR staff attended the NRPA Conference in Phoenix, where they were recognized as a finalist for the AAPRA/NRPA National Gold Medal Award. Staff members in the photo (left to right) include Director of Recreation/Facilities Caleb Burgard, Marketing Supervisor Kara Visger, Executive Director Benjamin Rae, Administrative Manager Leah Hoenke, Retired Executive Director James Kramer, and Park Board President Scott Karsky. DPR is proud and honored to have been named a finalist and is looking forward to providing continued excellence in parks and recreation to the community of Dickinson.



Devils Lake Park Board Hires New Director

The Devils Lake Park Board has hired Josh Janzen as the new superintendent of parks and recreation. Janzen will replace Terry Wallace, who held the position since 1992. Wallace started with the Devils Lake Park Board in May 1991 as recreation supervisor.



Janzen started Oct. 18. Wallace will stay on part-time during a transition process and help with a couple of large projects underway with the Devils Lake Park Board.

Janzen is a Devils Lake native and has been employed at the Grand Forks Park District for the past six years. He received his bachelor's degree in sports management from Mayville State University. He is presently the arena supervisor for the Icon Sports Center in Grand Forks.

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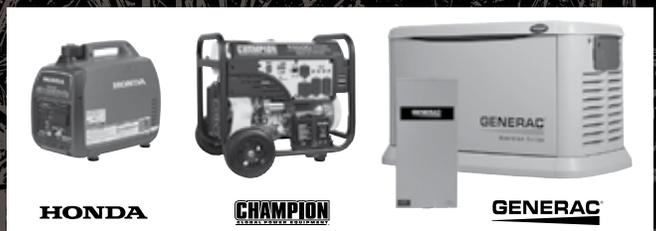
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Bismarck Celebrates Improvements at Two Parks

Bismarck Parks and Recreation District (BPRD) celebrated improvements to two well-loved parks with open houses the last week in September. Residents enjoyed playing pickleball, tennis and basketball, along with the new play features and fitness equipment at the parks.

North Central Park, located in the heart of Bismarck, received a new fully inclusive playground structure, along with poured-in-place rubber surfacing. The basketball court was replaced with a concrete color-coated court. A new perimeter one-third mile loop trail was constructed in partnership with the City of Bismarck. The picnic shelter was replaced, and the existing warming house/restroom building was renovated. The new parking lot provides accessible parking, along with accessible routes to the playground, tennis/pickleball courts and basketball court.

Sertoma Park, Bismarck's busiest park, has a new obstacle course for ages 5-12 and FitLot fitness equipment for outdoor workouts. Playing time was extended on the resurfaced tennis courts with the addition of lights, and the junior tennis courts were also resurfaced and pickleball stripes were added. Accessible pathways connect all the new components to the shared use trail system in the park.

Both projects were supported by Land and Water Conservation Fund grants through the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department, as well as Garrison Diversion Conservancy District funding.



Fargo's Yunker Farm Park Undergoes Master Plan

As one of north Fargo's largest parks, Yunker Farm Park has created a lot of interest in recent years. The park was the former home of Yunker Farm Children's Museum, which closed due to the pandemic. Today, the Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society operates a collection of gardens on six acres of Yunker Farm Park and showcases garden design ideas for different habitats. Visitation is free and open to the public.

Homeward Animal Shelter is a local and community-funded nonprofit animal shelter that also has space at the park with fenced-in areas for large and small dogs to exercise and socialize, seating for dog owners, a dog shelter, and open space.

The Fargo Park District

received six proposals for Yunker Farm Park Master Planning Services. Fargo Park District staff reviewed and scored all six and moved forward to interview two proposals, selecting with Norris Design. The board approved the selection at its September meeting.

The vision for the Yunker Farm Park master plan is to respect the existing natural beauty while thoughtfully guiding future short- and long-term park improvements with respect to the historical and existing facilities on the property.

Over the next six months, Norris Design will undergo a process of data collection for base mapping to prepare inventory and analysis maps related to cultural and historical elements, parking, pedestrian use, programming use,

the arts-related marketplace in the FM area, access, safety, natural elements, and existing structures. A project steering team comprised of park district staff, community stakeholders and user groups will be assembled to draft plan goals, objectives and priorities, as well as discuss project schedule and public participation. Norris Design will develop an online public participation platform as well as facilitate open-house design workshops.

Utilizing the information it gathers throughout the process, Norris Design will prepare a draft master plan of Yunker Farm Park with recommendations for implementation. The goal is to complete the process for a board presentation in early summer 2023.



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Outgoing Directors Charted Course for State's Parks and Recreation Districts

By Wayne Beyer

The directorships of North Dakota's parks and recreation scene has changed recently in eight of the state's 12 largest cities. It was a pleasure to learn from a great bunch of professionals.

Lifelong learning is enhanced by studying and emulating the successful methods of cohorts. Everybody and every city has unique strengths that peers can learn from and emulate. I know I did, and I hope those who follow in the footsteps of these great leaders take note of their dedication, drive and accomplishments.

Roger Gress of Fargo started the exodus several years ago. His personal license plate reads "fargoparks." Roger was a landscape architect who worked phenomenally with the dreamer – Bob 'Goose' Johnson, i.e., Fargodome. They designed colorful, welcoming flower entrances to Lindenwood Park. In Wahpeton, we followed suit with long, railroad tie marigold entrances to the Chalet and Chahinkapa Zoo. Fargo's Trollwood Park started the public art movement.

Roger organized monthly school/city/Fargo Park District meetings to keep communication open between local government. In Wahpeton, we started our Recreation Committee with local reps.

Bill Palmiscno of Grand Forks is a revered hockey name, but "The Forks" is much more than a hockey town. Bill was a hands-on guy and meticulous ballfield groundskeeper who spent many hours edging, weeding and manicuring ballfields off-hours so they would be high quality for users. He reminded us about the importance of attention to detail and taking pride in your facilities, which inspired me to pick weeds and toss infield rocks while umpiring.

The Grand Forks Greenway along the Red River is a model for all cities. It shows how you could turn a bad (the flood) into a good. Appreciate, respect, develop, and use local natural resources.

Randy Bina of Bismarck was the consummate professional. Through Randy's leadership, Bismarck is the only North Dakota city to be accredited by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). He served on the NRPA, ND Insurance Reserve Fund and Outdoor Heritage Fund boards. Randy taught us the value of serving and involvement with professional organizations that support parks and recreation, not always depending on somebody else to do it.

Randy was personable and took time to make phone calls and always did things the right way.

Doug Hogan of Jamestown was a terrific athlete and former softball opponent. His tenacity was admirable. Jamestown has Jack Brown Baseball Field, one that sets the ballfield standard and is long-time home of state amateur tournaments for baseball players of all ages.

Wahpeton started basketball for grades 1-4 after Jamestown had success with it.

Darin Krueger of Williston showed much passion with his position, reminding us of our fortune to work a profession we love. He was very active with the NRPA Midwest Region, which was great training for us when national conference costs are challenging for small park districts.

Williston hosts baseball tourneys, especially Babe Ruth World Series, like no other. It is an incredible production that I was lucky to attend and meet former Detroit Tigers and Minnesota Twins pitcher Jack Morris.

James Kramer of Dickinson had a remarkably calm demeanor. He taught us not to get too high or too low and manage with a friendly, accommodating style.

The "Queen City" is persistent and eventually built an impressive recreation center project after seven tries. It showed the rest of us to never give up if you have a vision.

Terry Wallace of Devils Lake was a do-everything guy. He managed every sport that we did in Wahpeton, plus hockey, which is a serious time commitment. Terry reached the pinnacle of sports officiating when he was named to the North Dakota Officials Hall of Fame for his 40-plus-year career. He is known for getting many young officials started, a gift to pass to others.

Terry worked well with North Dakota Game and Fish Department to host a youth fishing camp on Devils Lake, providing outdoor recreation on a local natural resource, just like we try to do with the Red River.

These North Dakota parks and recreation directors were a great bunch to be associated with!

Wayne Beyer is the former Wahpeton Parks and Recreation Director, who recently retired after 41 years on the job. Elected to the NDRPA Hall of Fame in 2013, Beyer earned many awards during his career, including the North Dakota Wildlife Federation North Dakota Sportsman of the Year Award in 2011; the North Dakota Sports Hall of Fame honors for Special Olympics North Dakota in 2009; North Dakota Amateur Softball Association in 1999; North Dakota Game and Fish Department Boat and Water Safety Educator of the Year in 2006; and National Arbor Day Association Sterling Morton Award in 2005.

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PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Grand Forks Park District Personnel Updates



Katy Cavanaugh has been hired as the Forestry Department's landscape supervisor, where she manages the maintenance and design of the district's ornamental beds. Cavanaugh is originally from Grand Forks and graduated from the University of North Dakota, where she majored in biology and music. She has spent the last 15 years as a horticulturalist, working at local greenhouses and on several landscaping crews in Eugene, Ore.



Mercedes Coan is the district's new social media and website strategist, focusing on updating websites, event photography and the creation and implementation of fun content for all the district's various social media accounts. A native of Goodridge, Minn., Coan is a 2022 graduate of the University of Minnesota

Crookston, earning a bachelor's degree in communications and humanities.



Steve Hell has been named parks operations manager. He has been with the Grand Forks Park District for 30 years, with 23 of those years serving as the parks operations assistant manager.



Darick Richard has joined park maintenance, where he works with a crew of nine to keep park buildings and other structures in good condition. In the summer, his duties include mowing, weed trimming, daily bathroom cleaning, shelter and grill cleaning at Lincoln Drive Park. In the winter, Richard will help the crew clear sidewalks and maintain outdoor ice rinks.

Fargo Park District Personnel Updates



Tori Benders has been hired as a marketing and communications specialist. A Montana native, she is a graduate of Concordia College and North Dakota State University (NDSU). Her hobbies include hiking, backpacking, reading, working out, and teaching her German Shepherd new tricks.



Craig Bjur was promoted to executive director of the Fargo Park District Foundation, effective Nov. 7. Bjur currently serves the Foundation as a project manager focusing on fundraising efforts for major projects, including the Fargo Parks Sports Complex and Island Park Pool. Bjur began his career at the Fargo Park District in 2006 as a recreation supervisor.



Casandra Doll has joined the district as a marketing and communications specialist. She is an NDSU graduate and lives in north Fargo with her husband and daughter. Her hobbies include gardening, reading, organizing, and spending time with family.



Paul Grindeland was promoted to Valley Senior Services Director. He replaces current director Brian Arett, who is retiring as director after more than 40 years with the organization. Grindeland currently serves as the Valley Senior Services transit manager, a position he has held since 1995.



Julie Haeder has been hired as an HR generalist. She is from South Dakota and has lived in Fargo about 15 years. Haeder and her fiancé, Tony, are getting married in December in Las Vegas. Her hobbies include cross-stitching, any kind of crafting, watching and re-watching funny TV shows, riding bike and spending time with family, friends and her cat, Ariel.



Kylie Kanwischer has been hired as a marketing and communications specialist. She is a Fargo native and lives in downtown Fargo. Kanwischer loves walking her rescue dog, Levi, to coffee on the weekends.

Fargo Park District Personnel Updates



Chad Pfau has been promoted to concessions manager. He has been with the district since 2019. He lives in north Fargo with his wife, Amanda, and their three sons.



Mike Steffen has been hired as a facility manager. He grew up in Grand Forks and has lived in Fargo for five years. Steffan and his wife, Kim, have three children, Jordyn, Hadley and Maggie. Steffan enjoys spending time with their granddaughter, Niklyn. He likes to hunt, fish and take his dog, Zuno, to compete in Dock Dogs.



Nate Young has been hired as a tennis professional. He is a graduate of Minnesota State University Moorhead and loves to travel, bike, spend time with family, and watch tennis.



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