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The Official Publication of the North Dakota Recreation and Park Association

Spring 2023



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I will start this month's message with a few words of thanks. First, it was wonderful to see the turnout for Parks Day at the Capitol in Bismarck. Thank you to all who participated in the meeting, networking and event at the state capitol. The coffee/cocoa bar and activities were a hit. More importantly, this was an opportunity to connect with our legislators and each other regarding issues that affect parks and recreation. Thank you to NDRPA Executive Director Shannon Schutt and the Public Policy Committee for their extensive time and effort during this legislative session. Lastly, thank you to the contingent from Mandan Park District that traveled to Grand Forks to spend time with a group of our staff to share best practices and visit facilities. We look forward to mentoring opportunities with other park districts and encourage others to do the same. With that in mind, now would be a suitable time to put the NDRPA State Conference on your calendar. The conference will be in Grand Forks on Sept. 12-14. Our co-chairs and planning committee are working diligently to ensure a successful event.

Unlike many others, the forestry department in Grand Forks is part of the park district rather than the city of Grand Forks. Our forestry department maintains more than 31,000 berm trees; responds to calls from and consults with homeowners; and plans, plants and maintains park district floral and landscape gardens through the work of the horticulture department. The arborists have been removing diseased trees, primarily those affected by Dutch Elm disease, for years, and they expect to be dealing with trees impacted by Emerald Ash Borer soon.

Over the past few years, four elm trees have been removed and no longer reside on the berm along my corner lot. Shortly after the first elm's removal, a maple tree was planted in its place and has grown rapidly. Last fall, three new trees were planted on my berm. Using the TreePlotter feature on the park district

website, I was able to determine that all three trees are of a different variety, and I can anticipate something unique from each one. Such is the case with changes in many of our park districts.

We continue to see turnover from retirements and a challenging job market. While it's bittersweet to see our colleagues retire or pursue other opportunities, we can relish the fact that current and new employees have an opportunity to grow and flourish using their own unique sets of talents. The landscape within NDRPA and outside my home are different than in previous years, but I'm excited to see how both continue to develop.



Mike Orr, NDRPA President



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.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



JULY 17

FOCUS Deadline

SEPT. 12-14

NDRPA State Conference, Grand Forks

JULY 17

Awards Nomination Deadline

OCT. 10-12

NRPA Annual Conference, Dallas

CONTENTS

President's Message	3
Mark Your Calendar	3
NDRPA News	5
Commissioner's Corner	8
Park District News	10
NDRPA Awards Highlight	16
NDPRD Update	18
People on the Move	20

ADVERTISERS

Rough Rider Industries	2
Recreation Supply Company	5
MTI Distributing	7
Associated Supply Company, Inc.	9
Norby Golf Course Design	9
WSB	11
The Tessman Company	11
Rivard's Turf and Forage	12
R.J. Thomas Manufacturing/Pilot Rock ..	13
Grondahl Recreation Inc.	13
Flex Fiber	14
Ackerman Estvold	15
Cunningham Recreation/GameTime	19
ND State Procurement Office	19
Dakota Playground	22
NDRPA State Conference	23
Colliers	24

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Next *FOCUS* deadline: July 17, 2023

Cover photo: Mandan Tennis Center, Pickleball Court,
Mandan Park District

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NDRPA Seeks Nominees for Hall of Fame

NDRPA will honor individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the parks and recreation field in North Dakota, based on a reputable performance attested to a personal record of accomplishment. The Hall of Fame Council, under the jurisdiction of NDRPA, has a voting procedure to select worthy individuals.

Candidates are eligible if they satisfy at least two of the following three criteria:

1. Fifty years old.
2. Twenty years of parks and recreation service in North Dakota.
3. Retirement.

The application form includes the following:

- Personal information on the candidate.
- NDRPA contributions.
- Education history.
- Employment history.
- Professional organizations, career-related activities and civic activities.
- Honors and awards.
- Achievements in the parks and recreation field.
- Statements, if possible, from the candidate.
- Date and signature of the nominator.
- Letter of support from a Hall of Fame member or Hall of Fame Council member.



The candidate's nomination shall be judged on the following criteria:

- A successful record of accomplishment in the parks and recreation field in North Dakota.
- Active participation in the NDRPA shall be a high consideration.

Hall of Fame recipients will be announced and recognized at the NDRPA Annual Awards Banquet

on Sept. 13 in Grand Forks. The recipient will receive a plaque, and another plaque will be displayed at the North Dakota Sports Hall of Fame in Jamestown.


Nomination forms are available on the NDRPA website at www.ndrpa.com. The nomination deadline is July 17.

Nominations Needed for 2023 NDRPA Awards


Recognizing the people and organizations that make great things happen in our communities is very important. If you have an organization or an individual who has made a difference in parks, recreation and conservation, nominate them for an NDRPA award.

Consider nominating individuals or organizations in your communities for the following awards: Distinguished Professional Award, Outstanding Young Professional, Citizen Advocacy Award, Partnership Award, Golden Egg Award, Innovative Programming Award, and Impact Award.

Visit the NDRPA website at www.ndrpa.com to download the nomination form. The deadline to submit nominations for awards is July 17.



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2023 Parks Day at the Capitol

Thank you to all NDRPA members who participated in 2023 Parks Day at the Capitol on Feb.16.



HR Collaborative's Summer Virtual Series Subjects Announced



The HR Collaborative's six-session summer virtual series will kick off at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, June 7, featuring a question-and-answer session with North Dakota Labor Commissioner Nathan Svihovec. Additional series topics are trending employment issues, behavioral based interviewing, mindfulness, and remote work. The schedule is as follows:

- **Wednesday, June 7: 2-3:15 p.m. (CDT)**, Q & A with North Dakota Labor Commissioner Nathan Svihovec
- **Wednesday, June 21: 10-11:15 a.m.** Behavioral Based Interviewing with Chuck Horter, NDACo human resources coordinator
- **Wednesday, July 12: 10-11:15 a.m.** Trending Employment Issues with Brian D. Schmidt, attorney at law and partner at Smith Porsborg Schweigert, Armstrong, Moldenhauer and Smith
- **Wednesday, July 26: 10-11:15 a.m.** Remote Work with Tanya Wieler, Walsh County human resource coordinator, Dakota Dynamics HR consultant
- **Wednesday, Aug. 9: 10-11:15 a.m.** TBA
- **Wednesday, Aug. 23: 10-11:15 a.m.** TBA

The cost to attend the series is \$50. Registration opens May 1 at www.HRNDGOV.org. Links to each session's video recording will be emailed to registrants.



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Meredith Olson – Lisbon

Meredith Olson has spent much of her summers in and around Lisbon's parks and recreation areas, soaking up the small-town life and raising a family. It's only natural she found the perfect way to give back to the city by becoming a commissioner on the Lisbon Park Board.

"As a child, I spent most of my summers in Lisbon hanging out at the swimming pool and rollerblading in the Pavilion," says Olson, who has served on the park board for eight years. "What I enjoy most (now) is putting together an improvement plan and seeing it come to life, utilizing my creative skills when planning new and different events, and being able to keep the community up to date via our website (cityoflisbon.net/parks/) and on Facebook."

For a small North Dakota town, Lisbon has a lot of recreational opportunities to offer, starting with Sandager Park. The park features an outdoor swimming pool, miniature golf course, skate park, baseball complex and tennis, volleyball and basketball courts. Located along the Sheyenne River, the park also has two campgrounds and picnic shelters.

Olson said a volunteer group called Lisbon Pool Preservers raised \$600,000 in six years for much-needed improvements to the pool. "In addition to offering swimming lessons and water aerobics, the Lisbon Park District hosts open skate events



and leads a variety of youth arts and crafts activities," she said. "We also have two campgrounds and a small boat ramp alongside the Sheyenne River and an amazing walking trail at the edge of the park where the mature trees create a canopy of shade over the path."

In 2020, the district started a project to revitalize the 100-year-old Pavilion building that was moved to Sandager Park shortly after World War I. Civic engagement helped the board raise more than \$100,000 in 18 months

through local grants, donations and fundraising activities. "We were able to replace the doors and windows, update the electrical and lighting, add air conditioning and ceiling fans, and even purchase more than 50 pairs of new roller skates," Olson explains.

She says Lisbon isn't ready to stop there. "We were just awarded over \$50,000 from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) administered by the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department," she says. "We will be adding a playground near our baseball field, an ADA path over the FEMA dike that cuts the park in half, water hookups to our north campground sites and a large picnic shelter, three new sites and updating the electrical hookups in our west campground."



Olson noted the NDRPA's role in helping local districts achieve their goals. "The NDRPA helps guide park board members (both new and experienced) with the information necessary to effectively carry out our roles," she says. "At the beginning of each year, all of our members review the North Dakota Park Board Manual, and it's really helped us level set as a group how we should be functioning."

Lisbon Park Board responsibilities include setting goals, formulating policies and establishing services that meet present and future needs; being active in community affairs and interested in the total recreational needs of the community; representing fellow citizens and interpreting their views; and being responsible for spending tax money, fees and donations designated for park and recreational services.

One of the best things about her time on the board and working on projects is involving her family, Olson says "When I joined the park board, my kids were four and eight at that time, and it was really a great time for me to get more involved in the community," she notes. "I love that my children can spend time with me at the park when I'm volunteering. They have both done their fair share of painting, picking up broken tree branches after a storm and helping me when two hands just aren't enough."

Olson's oldest son, Levi, is a lifeguard during the summer months, and her youngest son, Cody, loves to rollerblade.



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Fargo Park District Starts Construction at Island Park Pool

Construction has begun on the \$17.9 million Island Park Pool project. The Fargo Park District Board approved using private funds of \$1 million raised by the Fargo Park District Foundation to help offset construction cost increases while still allowing the pool to be built with the most overall recreational value. The Fargo Park District Foundation has secured the \$1 million donation and the proposed increase to the budget will not require any additional funding from the public.

As construction costs have increased due to inflation, the additional budget will allow the district to pursue all the amenities proposed in the original master plan and allow for additional amenities to be included like a timing system, scoreboard, starting blocks, and deck shade structures.

The project, to be completed in the fall of 2024 and



re-opened for the 2025 season, will boast a lazy river, 50-meter competitive lap swimming pool, multiple diving platforms, a tube and fly-time slide, and a zero-depth entry pool. The renovation project will also include a remodel of the existing pool house.

Fargo Park District Launches Discover Junior Golf Tour

Fargo Park District has launched a Discover Junior Golf Tour, the first of its kind in the state, to offer a competitive golf experience for junior golfers between the ages of 7 and 18.

The tour is designed to be accessible to children of all skill levels while still providing a competitive tournament experience. Divisions include 9U (ages 7-9), 12U (ages 10-12), 18U (ages 13-18), and the Players Tour Division, which is the most advanced division designed for ages 13-18 looking to play competitively on their high school varsity golf teams or at the collegiate level. Players will compete in tournaments at several courses in Fargo-Moorhead and the surrounding region.

"We are thrilled to offer young golfers the opportunity to play the sport competitively," says Matt Cook, Rose Creek Public Golf Course head



professional. "The best way to create lifelong golf athletes is to start young, and we look forward to the growth of the program for years to come."

Tournaments will be played in June and July.

Dickinson Parks and Recreation Unveils New Logo

Dickinson Parks and Recreation (DPR) has unveiled a new logo representing the district's evolution and future growth. The logo reflects the heart or pulse of the community and the commitment to innovation and excellence, as well as the district's desire to be a model for health and wellness for the citizens of Dickinson.



DPR has been a strong player in the parks and recreation sector for 75 years. The new logo is a testament to its ongoing commitment to innovation and progress. Executive Director Benjamin Rae expressed his enthusiasm for the new logo. "It represents an important step forward, and we are excited to see how it will help us grow and evolve in the years to come," he says.

DPR is confident the new logo will resonate with the community. It features a modern and sleek design, with bold, clean lines capturing the essence of the DPR brand. The logo's typography is striking, and the pulse icon is easily recognizable and memorable. The colors are representative, with blue being purpose and success, green showing nature and health, red as strength and leadership, and orange for optimism and energy. The multi-color icon carries a meaning of connection, inclusivity and diversity.



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Minot Parks Executive Director Ron Merritt Retires

Minot Park District Executive Director Ron Merritt announced his retirement after 30 years. Merritt has been with the Minot Park District since May 2, 1992, when he became a zookeeper at Roosevelt Park Zoo.

Merritt was promoted to Roosevelt Park Zoo director in 1998 and Minot Park District executive director in 2005. He played a vital role in the success of the Minot Park District through the years.

"Many things have changed over the years, and I am proud of our many accomplishments," Merritt said in his letter of resignation. "You always hope that you can make a difference in your place of work, to leave things better than they were when you started, and I

do feel that is the case ..."

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

He earned many honors during his tenure, including 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.

He received the 2014 NDRPA Fellow Award – now known as the Distinguished Professional Award.

Most recently, Merritt was inducted into the NDRPA Hall of Fame. He has been an active member of NDRPA for 17 years.

The Minot Park District is grateful for Merritt's commitment to the community during his time as the executive director. He made Minot a better place to live, work and play for generations to come.



Ron Merritt

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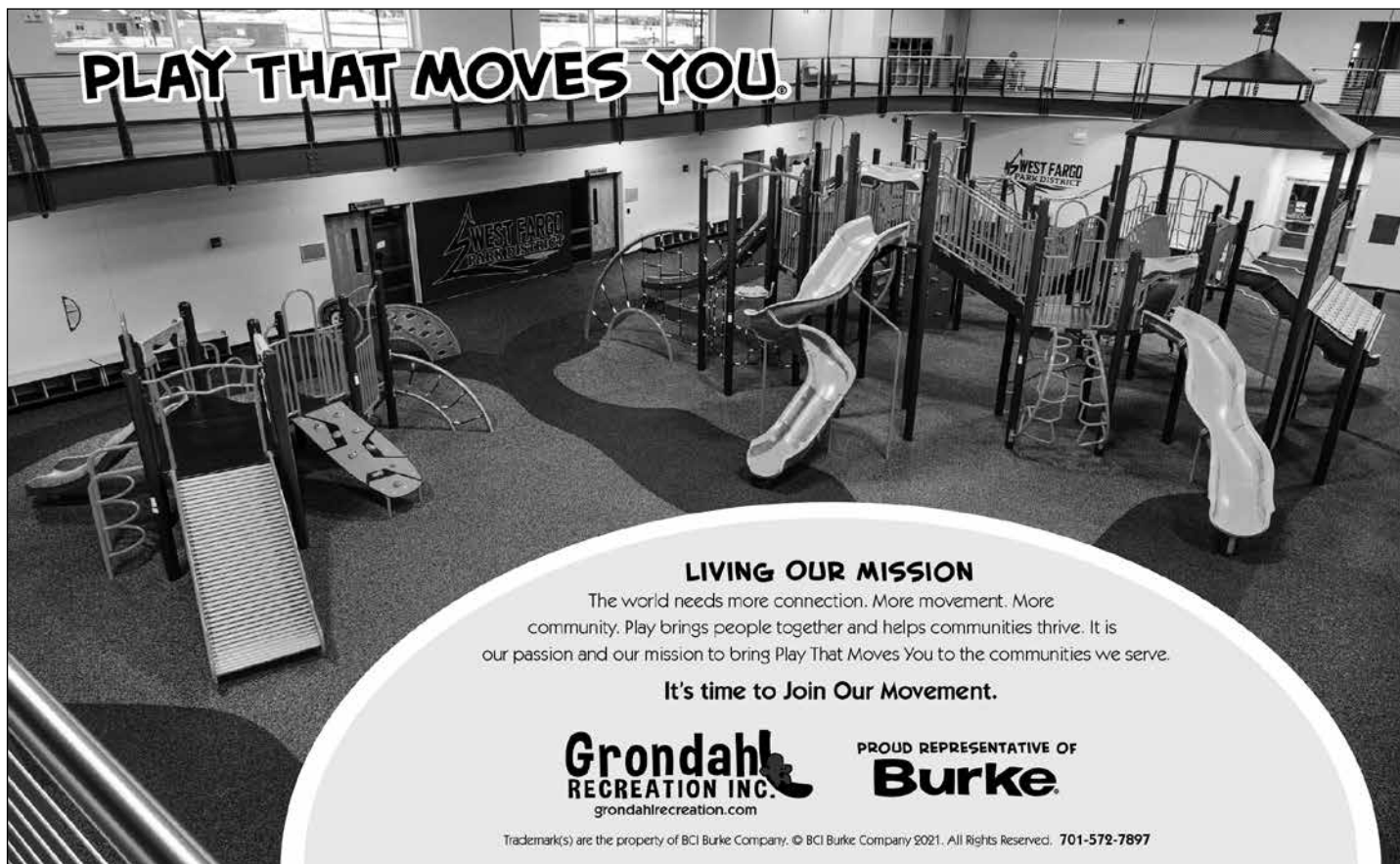
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SAIL Program Improves Lives in West Fargo

The SAIL (Stay Active and Independent for Life) program in West Fargo was implemented five years ago to expand on the existing Bone Builders program. Due to growing interest in the programs, West Fargo Park District (WFPD) now offers the programs at two locations: Bone Builders at Veterans Memorial Arena and SAIL at Rustad Recreation Center.

Bone Builders focuses on balance, strength and stretching. However, participants wanted cardio included in their workouts, leading to the SAIL program. SAIL is an evidence-based strength, balance and fitness program for adults 65 and older.

Exercising in ways that improve strength, balance and fitness is the most important activity adults can do to stay active and reduce their chances of falling. More than 11 million adults in the U.S. fall each year. SAIL has allowed participants to not only become more robust in certain muscle families they use every day, but it also encourages them to regain confidence in themselves.

A typical SAIL class consists of a warm-up, aerobics, balance exercises, strength exercises, and stretching. A daily health tip is provided at the end of each session.

SAIL has been an excellent addition to senior programming at WFPD. Participants develop relationships that enhance mental health through

monthly "Coffee Day" events and other gatherings for holidays, birthdays and special occasions.

"Not only does SAIL offer a wide range

of exercises three times a week, but it also builds friendships among participants," says Mary Margaret Nelson, a participant in the program. "It gets me going in the morning. The exercise program is very well thought-out for all ages. The friendships I have made since I started are awesome."

WFPD Recreation Manager Lance Belisle conducted extensive research before delegating the program to WFPD Recreation Specialist Allison Hauschild, who enrolled in a three-month online college course to learn more about SAIL and become a certified SAIL trainer. Since passing all the requirements in July 2018, Hauschild is qualified to train future SAIL leaders for classes.

The WFPD SAIL class has grown from 21 to more than 80 participants each session.



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Minot Parks Names DesLauriers as New Executive Director

Minot Park District Director of Marketing and Development Elly DesLauriers has been named new executive director of the Minot Park District, replacing recently retired Ron Merritt. She will begin as the executive director on May 1.



Elly DesLauriers

DesLauriers has been an integral part of the park district for the past 10 years. Her passion for the community and vision for the park district makes DesLauriers an excellent asset to the city of Minot and the surrounding area.

DesLauriers coined the term “planning for the future” in the park district’s mission and has done that during her decade with the park district, assisting on projects like the MAYSA expansion, Roosevelt Park Zoo exhibit renovations, Woodland Trail, outdoor recreation area development, greenway planning, and more.

“The commissioners of the Minot Park Board are excited for Elly to transition into her new role,” says Park Board Vice President Justin Hammer. “The park district has some exciting and big projects in the planning stages, and we are excited for Elly to move into this leadership role as we work through these projects and continue to offer the citizens of Minot a great parks and recreation department.”

DesLauriers received her communications degree from the University of North Dakota in 2007. In 2019, she was awarded the NDRPA Outstanding Young Professional Award and served as the NDRPA board president from 2020-2021.

“It truly is an honor to have the opportunity to lead the Minot Park District and continue to improve the quality of life for our community,” DesLauriers says. “As we move forward, planning will continue to be an integral part of our progression in maintaining our parks and facilities, completing future projects and being a fiscally responsible organization.”

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NDRPA Awards Highlight – Outstanding Young Professional Award

The NDRPA Outstanding Young Professional Award is given to an NDRPA member 35 years of age or younger exhibiting leadership skills through involvement in local associations, advocacy efforts, community outreach, elected positions within local organizations, and volunteering. They must have achieved accomplishments, including awards, commendations, honors, and professional advancement through their work in parks and recreation and must contribute to the park, recreation, and leisure field in North Dakota. The recipient of the 2022 NDRPA Outstanding Young Professional Award was **Randi Litchy**, Fargo Park District recreation supervisor.

In her seven years with the Fargo Park District, Litchy has done an outstanding job adapting efficiently to the constant change that the recreation world brings. One of her responsibilities is the Happy Rollers Adaptive Program, a program open to anyone with Multiple Sclerosis, where participants partake in recreational activities and field trips. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she was asked by participants for a way for them to continue to stay connected. Litchy organized a system for participants to write letters to each other. The service was invaluable to the health and wellbeing of members of the MS community.

She has taken existing programs and brought them to the next level, expanding the youth flag football leagues to include grades 4, 5 and 6. She also expanded the level of competition by working with the Moorhead and West Fargo programs to provide more opportunities for the teams to play other leagues in the Metro area.

She has sought out needs in the community and started multiple new programs for the Fargo Park District. Early in her career with the park district, she started the first youth rugby camp in North Dakota to introduce elementary age youth to the sport. With the help of enthusiastic adult rugby players, Litchy used her leadership skills to energize the rugby community. It has now expanded to include all ages in middle school and high school.

The most recent new program Litchy has been involved in is Fargo Park District's Boulder Climbing Program. The one-month program is open to youth, ages 5 to 14, and introduces young people to the thrill of rock climbing. With Litchy's help, the program will be held for the very first time this fall. The program is in conjunction with Fargo Climbing, a new climbing business in Fargo.

As the needs of the community change, Litchy has offered her skills to advance advocacy and equity.



Randi Litchy, Fargo Park District

She has held a major role in helping to write the transgender policy that the Fargo Park District is looking to adopt for safety and inclusion.

She is also active in the community outside of the park district, delivering Meals on Wheels for Valley Senior Services and Christmas gifts for families through The Great North Pole. She also volunteers as a part of youth softball camps and lessons and coached two seasons for a local high school.

Litchy has also been involved with NDRPA, serving on the Education Committee since 2019. She helped create and continues to help administer the Parks and Recreation Professionals of North Dakota Facebook Group, a resource to parks and recreation professionals to connect state-wide to share ideas and collaborate.

NDRPA Awards Highlight - Citizen Advocacy Award

The NDRPA Citizen Advocacy Award recognizes a citizen, elected or appointed official, or volunteer who has demonstrated outstanding contribution to the park, recreation and conservation movement through education and activating the public in their community or state or at the national level. The recipient of the 2022 award was **Joe Deutsch** of the Fargo Park Board.

As a professor in physical education and coaching at North Dakota State University, Deutsch has worked with his students and the Fargo Park District to provide great employment opportunities for his students and highly skilled employees for the park district. A great ambassador for the parks system, Deutsch works to utilize his position and relationships to make connections that ultimately provide even more recreational opportunities for the community.

Throughout the years, Deutsch has played a pivotal role in his park board commissioner position in major projects for the Fargo Park District, including one of the most recent projects, the Broadway Square in downtown Fargo. Envisioned by Deutsch and The Kilbourne Group's Mike Allmendinger on the back of a napkin, they made a trip to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, to see how a similar model worked. Today, this project is a much-needed family draw to downtown Fargo.

Deutsch has also been a strong supporter for another major Fargo Park District project that is currently under construction: a multi-use facility being built in partnership with Sanford Health. The facility will feature an Olympic-size soccer field of turf, which can be sectioned off to serve a wide variety of youth activities, a walking track open to the general public and up to eight courts to be used as a tournament facility for both basketball and volleyball. Future plans for ice, additional hardwood courts and pickleball are ongoing. Deutsch has taken a pivotal role in gaining board approval and helping to find additional private funds to help break ground on the facility.

Deutsch is also the main contact line between NDRPA and NDSU's Sport Management program, encouraging students to participate in NDRPA and the student scholarship program. As a professor who does research on emotional intelligence, he has presented at both the NDRPA and NRPA



Joe Deutsch, Fargo Park Board

conferences sharing how to utilize emotional intelligence through leadership in the workplace.

Deutsch's initiative, leadership and advocacy for parks has had a direct impact on the Fargo area. His multiple roles in the community and parks and recreation field afford him the opportunity to make connections and relationships for the benefit of families, children and recreation in general.

NDPRD UPDATE

LWCF Funds Help Complete Gackle Little Park Updates

The City of Gackle recently completed updates to Gackle Little Park with the help of funding through a Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant. Among the projects completed by the Gackle Park Board were new pickleball and basketball courts, an ice rink and an accessible sidewalk to create barrier-free (ABA) access into the park. A warming house/ outdoor support building maximizes the ice rink/green space, and an ADA accessible restroom was installed for use in the winter and at park events during the summer.

The LWCF is a federal program created by Congress in 1964 and funded by offshore oil and gas royalties to safeguard natural areas, water resources and cultural heritage and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans. This 50/50 matching grant reimbursement program is administered at the state level by the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department (NDPRD).

In response to recent growth, and with LWCF help, the park board took on the Gackle Little Park project as part of community improvement efforts that also included removal of a swimming pool in disrepair, several uninhabitable buildings and an unusable stadium at the baseball field.

The goal of the Little Gackle Park project was to create a year-round recreational area to maximize park usage. Almost every aspect of recreation was modified by the project and every season was considered to maximize play space.



New Video Series Highlights Grant Projects' Impact on North Dakota Communities

NDPRD has launched a new video series recognizing the impact of the department's grant program on towns like Gackle.

Miles and Moments: Partnering with Communities through Grants highlights notable projects as they are completed and the difference the projects are making for people seeking recreational opportunities in North Dakota. From state parks to small and large community park districts, the grants fund new or improved recreation opportunities where it may not otherwise be possible, in areas eager for ways to promote vibrant, healthy living. The public is

encouraged to subscribe to the NDPRD YouTube page by searching @ndparkrec on YouTube to receive alerts to new videos in the series.

NDPRD facilitates grants through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Recreational Trails Program, the Park District Facility Renovation Grant, and other opportunities. For more information on the grant opportunities, visit the NDPRD website at www.parkrec.nd.gov/business/grants or contact NDPRD Grants Coordinator Char Langehaug at cbinstock@nd.gov or 701-328-5357.

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PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Bismarck Parks and Recreation District



Mike Schaaf was hired as golf course superintendent at Pebble Creek Golf Course and Fore Seasons Center in March. He graduated from New Mexico State University with a bachelor's degree in agriculture, majoring in recreational areas management focused on turfgrass. Schaaf has commercial pesticide applicators certification for ground and ornamental turf. He worked for Bismarck State College before joining BPRD at Riverwood Golf Course in 2017. He enjoys coffee, camping, fishing, golfing, and answering his preschooler's 1,000 questions a day.



Mike Sullivan was hired as park operations manager. He grew up in Williston and earned his bachelor's degree from Minnesota State University-Moorhead and master's degree from the University of Mary. Sullivan was facility specialist for arenas and outdoor pools at BPRD. His prior experience includes construction and working at the Williston Parks and Recreation District. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his son, Carter, and outdoor activities.



Mac Weigel is a 10-year BPRD employee who accepted the role of golf course superintendent at Tom O'Leary Golf Course in March. He is a Bismarck native and North Dakota State University graduate where he earned his bachelor's degree in sports and urban turfgrass management. He also obtained his commercial pesticide applicators certification for ground and ornamental turf. During his time at BPRD, Weigel has worked at Riverwood Golf Course, and for the past five years was golf course superintendent at Pebble Creek Golf Course and Fore Seasons Center. He enjoys spending leisure time with family and friends and training his seven-month-old Weimaraner, Haze, for the upcoming hunting season.

Dickinson Parks and Recreation District



Colter Hickok has been hired as facility supervisor-aquatics. He has been part of the aquatics team since 2017 while working as a lifeguard in college. Colter is originally from Bridger, Mont., and played offensive line for Dickinson State University before joining the DSU football coaching staff. He graduates in May with a bachelor's degree in university studies with a minor in coaching and history.



Heidi Kirkpatrick has been hired as an administrative specialist. She worked for DPR last year as a part-time receptionist and will start her full-time status on June 1. She is originally from Ludlow, S.D., and has been living in Dickinson since 2001. Heidi has four children: Cheyenne, Alix, Kiara, and Declan. She is married to Chris and enjoys camping and gardening.



Hannah Pepich began as program supervisor on Feb. 2. She participated in parks and recreation programs in her hometown of Richland Center, Wis., and coached programs and running events for her hometown park and recreation department.

Fargo Park District



Joe Gross has been hired as assistant superintendent at Osgood Golf Course. Gross was born and raised in Bismarck and moved to Fargo in 2018 where he attended Bismarck State College online. He has an associate degree in process technology. His favorite hobbies are golfing, fishing, hunting, and camping. When he's not at work, Gross enjoys hanging out with his friends and family.



Sidney Kaufman has been hired as an assistant horticulturalist. Kaufman, who studied biology at NDSU, loves the outdoors, camping and concerts. She has two cats and a corn snake.



Liana Long has been hired as a recreation administrative assistant. She is originally from Carlos, Minn., but she and her family now live in Moorhead. Long has a husband named Jake and a daughter named Amira. They love to garden, camp, fish, and do anything outside.



William Lyons has been hired as a network administrator. He grew up in Fargo, is the youngest of three siblings and is a fan of retro games.



Cade Merrigan is the district's new concession coordinator. He graduated from NDSU with a degree in sport management. He and his fiancée, Abby, have a pit bull mix named Nelly. Merrigan enjoys coaching and watching sports, hunting, fishing, and being outdoors. His favorite NFL team is the Cleveland Browns.



Tom Porten has been hired as assistant golf professional at Edgewood and El Zagal golf courses. Porten has worked in Division I golf for 27 years at various colleges. He has a bachelor's degree in history from Cleveland State University. He has a fiancé, Karen, and three adult children: Ryan, Victoria and Anna. Porten's passions are golf instruction and marathon running.



Jack Powers is the new assistant golf professional at Rose Creek Golf Course. Powers was born and raised in Fargo. He graduated from Fargo South in 2019 where he played on the golf team. He spends most of his time playing or practicing golf at Rose Creek.



Tony Schmitt is the new park director. Schmitt previously worked for the BPRD as the park operations manager before being hired by the Fargo Park District. He has worked in the parks and recreation field for 17 years. Schmitt majored in park management at South Dakota State University and graduated

with a bachelor's degree in agriculture. He also has a master of public administration degree from the University of Mary. In his free time, he likes to travel, hike, garden, visit and explore state parks, and attend and watch sporting events. He is a huge Dallas Cowboys fan and has been to Texas often.



Eric Smith has been hired as first golf assistant at Edgewood and El Zagal golf courses. Smith graduated from North Dakota State University with a horticulture degree focusing on turfgrass management. He is entering his fifth year working on golf courses and second year as an assistant superintendent. He is originally from Danville, Penn., but fell in love with Fargo while in school. Smith played baseball growing up and for the club team at NDSU. In his free time, he enjoys hanging out with friends, playing golf and watching football.



Christian Stensgard is the new assistant golf professional at Osgood Golf Course. A Maple Grove, Minn., native, he graduated from NDSU in 2020 with a degree in sports management and minor in business. In the summer, he enjoys working on his golf game and helping others do the same. In the winter, Stensgard is a youth and high school hockey official. His other hobbies include fishing, water skiing and snowboarding.

Grand Forks Park District



Aaron Judovsky has joined the district as golf course assistant and facility assistant supervisor. He works primarily at Lincoln Golf Course during golf season and at ICON Sports Center otherwise. Aaron hails from Warren, Minn., but moved to Grand Forks six years ago. He enjoys playing and watching sports, working out, fishing, hunting, and hanging out with family.



Haley Knight is the newest member of the forestry department, joining the team as arborist I. She is originally from Wisconsin, having moved to Grand Forks two years ago. In her free time, Knight enjoys CrossFit, reading, water coloring, hiking, and camping.

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE



Bradley Page joined the Forestry Department back in March as an arborist I. Originally from the United Kingdom, Page moved to Grand Forks five years ago. He enjoys playing the drums, hiking and playing soccer.

Mandan Park District



Andy Pack has been hired as a park maintenance employee. He grew up in Rapid City, S.D., and also is employed with Eureka Manufacturing. Pack currently resides in Mandan with his two daughters and one son. In his free time, he enjoys hunting, fishing, camping, and spending time with his family.




Drew Van Briesen is the district's new assistant golf superintendent. Van Briesen's primary focus will be management of Mandan Municipal Golf Course, as well as assisting in the golf operations at Prairie West Golf

Course. He will manage golf course playing conditions, irrigation systems, agronomic programs, equipment, building and overall facility maintenance. A native of George, Iowa, Van Briesen comes to the district with more than 16 years of experience in turf management at golf courses and a college campus. He most recently was a ground maintenance worker at Bismarck State College. In addition, Van Briesen has worked part time at Prairie West Golf Course for the past nine seasons. He has an associate degree in sports turf management from Southeast Technical Institute in Sioux Falls, S.D., and is an active member of the North Central Turfgrass Association.




Ryan Wintermeyer has been hired as a park maintenance employee. He grew up in Bismarck and resides in Mandan with his wife and two children. In his free time, Wintermeyer likes to camp, work around the house and spend time with family.




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