



2026 Annual Institute and Expo

Education Sessions

Subject to Change

*This continuing education session content is pre-approved by National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC)

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

RT Tuesday: ATRA Quality Internship Supervisor Training* (QIST) (0.4 CEUs)

Dr. Shelby Sharpe

8:00AM-5:00PM

\$50 Member/\$70 Non-Member

The ATRA Quality Internship Supervisor Training (QIST) was developed by a panel of experts, reviewed by practitioners and educators, and piloted at the ATRA 2022 Annual Conference. QIST is a beneficial training for new and experienced intern preceptors wanting to demonstrate their dedication to quality internships. As a pre-con, participants will complete the 8-module online training with the support of a CTRS facilitator and QIST Committee Co-Chair. This allows participants to schedule a dedicated time and location to complete their certification in a single session. Please note that participants must view and complete the quizzes for each module to earn CEUs.

Counseling the Counselors: Coaching Staff & Supporting Camper Behavior

Calie Willis and Sheri Willis

8:00AM-12:00PM

Fee: \$70 Member/\$90 Non-Member

Day camp staff face significant responsibilities after just one week of training. This interactive session equips camp coordinators and managers with tools to train young staff, manage camper behavior, and utilize games as a preventive measure. From coaching feedback to behavior scenarios and portable game kits, participants will leave with tools to build confident, prepared camp teams and create safe, engaging environments for every camper.

Personal Training Certification Prep (0.4 CEUs)

Jason Brown

8:00AM-5:00PM

Fee: \$85 Member/\$95 Non-Member

Lunch is included.

This Pre-Institute class prepares students for the next steps toward a national personal training certification, such as ACE, NASM, or ACSM. Participants will gain a foundational understanding of exercise science, program design, client assessment, and professional standards. The class combines interactive lectures, practical exercises, and exam preparation tips to help attendees feel confident and ready to pursue certification.

- Understand the different muscle movements for the major musculoskeletal system.
- Analyze a potential client for cardiovascular risk and decide whether or not to perform tests and/or exercise with them.
- Evaluate a potential client with basic physical assessments in order to understand their current level of fitness.

Rise Beyond to CPRE Certification Workshop

Katie Trolene

8:00AM-5:00PM

Fee: \$85 Member/\$95 Non-Member

Lunch is included.

This certification Prep Course will provide a solid foundation to help you prepare for the CPRE exam and attain your professional certification goals. This exam is for the mid-level or above professionals who are CPRPs or held that certification within the past two years. Professionals will have a better understanding of how they can best prepare to become a CPRE, gain clarity on the benefits of taking the exam and reduce personal anxiety of test preparation through review of exam content areas, engaging in practice questions, and sharing ways to succeed in exam preparation from professionals who have been involved in the creation and oversight of the exam as well as ones that have prepared for and taken the exam. The Certified Park and Recreation Executive (CPRE) certification has established the national standard for managerial, administrative, and executive parks and recreation professionals. CPRE certification places professionals in the company of an elite group of parks and recreation managers and executives demonstrating leadership in managing a recreation department, mastery of policy development, and management of fiscal, property and personnel resources. If you are ready to take the next step in your professional journey, this session is for you.

- Identify qualification requirements needed and reasons to take the CPRE exam.
- Examine content areas as well as exam composition and context in terms of differences between CPRE and CPRP questions.
- Review and evaluate available resources and strategies for successful test preparation.

Wednesday, February 11, 7:30 am - 12:00 pm

Maintenance Morning

Fee \$55 Member/\$75 Non-Member

The Bridge Between Park Planning and Maintenance: Real-World Solutions

Ziad Kharrat, Assistant Director, City of Denton;

Nick Nelson, Director of Landscape , Architecture, Teague, Nall, and Perkins

Explore the synergies between park planning and maintenance, demonstrating how collaborative planning can lead to effective, sustainable operational solutions. Participants will engage in real-world, hands-on exercises that simulate the process that planning and maintenance teams could perform to align their visions with implementation, ensuring that park projects are not only well-designed but also efficiently maintained.

- Formulate park development solutions that bridge park planning and maintenance operations.
- Compare the influence between park planning and operations.
- Analyze foundations of interpreting site plans and developing maintenance programs to formulate ideas.

Wednesday, February 11, 2026, 11 am - 12 pm

Park Tank: Innovation Powered by Staff* (0.1 CEU)

Robin Steinshnider, Superintendent, City of Dallas

Tiffanie Willis, Supervisor, Workforce Development, City of Dallas

Inspired by the popular “Shark Tank” format, Park Tank is Dallas Park and Recreation’s platform where front-line staff pitch innovative ideas to executive leadership. This interactive session showcases how the department fosters creativity, empowers employees, and funds actionable ideas that improve engagement across the park system.

- Understand how to structure and implement an internal pitch competition to generate innovative solutions.
- Identify ways to promote staff engagement and ownership of strategic goals through creative programming
- Apply equity-centered evaluation criteria to fund and support community-informed projects.

Navigating Inclusive Recreation with Assistive Technology* (0.1 CEU)

Anita Swanson, Senior Project Manager, University of Texas at Austin

Shannon Paige, Education Project Manager, University of Texas at Austin, University of Texas at Austin

Assistive technology (AT) promotes accessibility by enabling individuals with disabilities to participate in outdoor activities, including those at state and local parks. AT is any tool or device that helps people with disabilities do things more easily or independently. This can include adaptive equipment and specialized

recreational tools. Participants will develop an understanding of AT and explore ways to increase access to outdoor activities through the thoughtful inclusion of these tools.

- Define assistive technology
- List 3 adapted tools/AT for outdoor recreation
- Describe 2 benefits of including AT in outdoor programs

Partnerships: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly (0.1 CEU)

Michael Kirschman, Director, City of Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation

It's impossible for P&R to be everything, for everybody, all the time, everywhere - yet that is frequently the expectation. Hence... partnerships. But from the first thought of "hey, let's partner" to the final agreement, success is far from guaranteed. Let's explore when and why to partner, common pitfalls, and then dive into dozens of examples ranging from "one and done" programs to multi-million dollar capital facilities. Come prepared to share your (successful or tragic) partnership story!

- Recognize the benefits of why and when to pursue partnerships
- Identify the pitfalls and challenges of partnerships
- Assess the success or failure of dozens of real-world P&R partnerships

Mission: Camp Possible - The Ultimate Guide to Summer Camp Success!* (0.1 CEU)

Mariah Wallace, Recreation Supervisor, The City of Grapevine – The REC of Grapevine

Ana Rodenas, Recreation Membership Coordinator, The City of Grapevine – The REC of Grapevine

Get ready to gear up for your most successful summer yet! This interactive session will equip recreation staff with the tools and strategies to run top-notch camps—from promotion and staff onboarding to planning engaging activities, field trips, ice breakers, and gym games. Whether you're a first-time leader or seasoned coordinator, this mission is 100% possible—with the right game plan.

- Apply techniques to create a safe, inclusive, and engaging environment for campers.
- Access resources and tools to support successful camp planning and daily operations.
- Plan and adapt a variety of camp activities, including gym games, field trips, and ice breakers.

Next-Level Leadership: Building Impact, Inclusion, and Innovation in Texas* (0.1 CEU)

Miranda Maloy, Program Supervisor, City of Lewisville

Chris Chastain, Preserve and Greenbelt Manager - City of Lewisville

Joshua Rodrigue, Recreation Manager - City of Cedar Park

Dr. Allie Thomas, Assistant Professor, Department of Health and Human Performance - Texas State University

Sydney Parades, Recreation Coordinator - City of Shertz

Jonathon Hanson, Recreation Superintendent - City of Pflugerville

This interactive panel, hosted by the Future and Young Professional (F&YP) Branch of TRAPS, invites young professionals to explore the evolving landscape of municipal recreation. This year's discussion will spotlight how the next generation can drive impact through inclusive leadership, innovative programming, and community connections. Panelists will share real stories, strategies, and lessons learned to help you navigate your own leadership journey.

- Identify at least three emerging trends shaping the future of municipal recreation in Texas.
- Outline actionable ways to develop inclusive leadership skills and foster equitable community engagement.
- Create a personal “next step” plan to pursue innovation and growth within their current role and beyond.

Decoding - The ABC's of Acronyms (0.1 CEU)

Kasey Kelly Allen, Recreation Coordinator - Special Events, City of Hutto

Ever feel like you're swimming in a sea of letters at City Hall? Between the CIP, TIRZ, ETJ, and the ever-mysterious P&Z, it can feel like you need a decoder ring just to follow a conversation.

Join us for a laugh-filled session as we decode the alphabet soup of city acronyms and finally figure out what all those letters actually mean. You'll leave knowing your EDC from your MUD, and we promise—no pop quiz at the end (though we might hand out honorary degrees in "Municipalese").

- Identify and define at least 10 commonly used municipal acronyms (e.g., CIP, ETJ, P&Z).
- Explain the practical role of key acronyms in city government operations.
- Confidently use at least 5 city acronyms in context during a mock meeting or conversation.

Wednesday, February 11, 2026, 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm

Charting a Course Through Conflict: Dealing with Difficult People in Youth* (0.1 CEU)

Chris Stevenson, Founder, The Empower Group

People can be challenging, especially in youth sports. Navigating the rough waters of the athletic triangle (coach, athlete, and parent) is essential for creating a positive experience. This interactive session helps attendees chart a path for handling difficult people with confidence and composure. Participants will learn how to communicate expectations, master the art of crucial conversations, and develop the interpersonal skills needed to navigate even the most turbulent situations.

- Analyze key challenges within the coach-athlete-parent triangle to understand the root causes of conflict in youth sports.
- Demonstrate communication strategies that set and manage expectations effectively across all parties.
- Apply techniques for navigating difficult conversations using conflict resolution tools to foster cooperation and de-escalate tension.

Crisis Ready: Emergency Preparedness for Parks and Recreation Professionals (0.1 CEU)

Cassie Paddock, Recreation Manager, City of Schertz

Brandon High, Emergency Management Coordinator, City of Schertz

From parades to pandemics, Parks and Recreation professionals are on the front lines of community response. Come hear how a Recreation Manager and an Emergency Management Coordinator have teamed up to enhance special event emergency planning in their community. Learn how to strengthen your emergency preparedness through strategic planning, effective communication, and collaboration with key partners to ensure your team is ready when it matters most.

- Identify potential community partners and agencies that can be leveraged to support emergency preparedness and event logistics.
- Describe key emergency management considerations for large-scale events, including ingress/egress, crowd control, and weather monitoring.
- Recognize relevant training opportunities and certifications that can enhance Parks and Recreation staff readiness for emergencies.

No Limits: The Teen All Access Pass Model for Equitable Recreation (0.1 CEU)

Bakahri Thornton, Service Area Manager, City of Dallas

Brandon Huey, Events Coordinator, City of Dallas

The Teen All Access Pass is a bold initiative by the Dallas Park and Recreation Department that offers teens free access to recreation centers, pools, cultural venues, and more. Designed to increase equity and improve public safety, this citywide program redefines inclusive teen engagement.

Presenters will unpack how the program was designed, launched, and promoted, resulting in thousands of sign-ups and community wide buzz.

- Identify key design elements of a free, citywide teen access program.
- Explore strategies to build cross-agency and community partnerships for expanded youth engagement.
- Understand outreach methods and messaging that resonate with teens and caregivers

Crafting Lasting Partnerships: A Guide to Writing Effective RFPs (0.1 CEU)

Craig Bouck, Principal, Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture

Bill Weaver, Project Director, Water Technology, Inc., Water Technology, Inc.

Join us to discover parallels between RFP writing and the nuances of an arranged marriage and online dating. Gain insights into transparent communication, crafting comprehensive evaluation criteria, and navigating this critical process. Know when to swipe right for a successful and enduring relationship with your design partner, ensuring the realization of a remarkable community recreation center.

- Understand the Analogous Nature: Explore the analogy of an arranged marriage and online dating to underscore the importance of a well-crafted RFP.
- Mastering Communication in RFPs: Learn effective communication strategies within an RFP to ensure clear understanding between the client and potential design partners.
- Developing Comprehensive Evaluation Criteria: Explore the process of defining and prioritizing evaluation criteria within an RFP, aligning design, creativity, and execution goals.

Building For The Future (0.1 CEU)

Jason Chadock, CEO/Parks and Recreation Director, The Chadock Group/City of Macedonia

As Parks and Recreation professionals, understanding our daily operations and facility usage is a key to how we serve a community. Adjusting operations and preventative maintenance are also imperative. Even bigger perhaps is seeing the future and meeting new needs of your community. We do this through

intentionally focusing on the future while building capital and strategic plans while also incorporating master plans. Through this session we will educate on the methods to build forward.

- Create internal and external communication to "tell your story " as a department.
- Evaluate operations and amenities while identifying the good, potential shortcomings, and being solution oriented.
- Learn how to develop a strategic plan and make big asks.

DIY GPT: Building a Custom AI Assistant

Adina McCollough, Recreation Manager & Community Health Coordinator, Recreation, Parks & Community Health

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer just for tech experts — it's a practical tool that park and recreation professionals can use to streamline operations and improve service delivery. In this session, you'll learn how to create a custom AI assistant using OpenAI's GPT technology to handle tasks like automating FAQs, assisting with event scheduling, and enhancing customer engagement. Designed specifically for planners, supervisors and event organizers, this hands-on session will walk you through step-by-step instructions to build and deploy your own AI assistant, even with minimal technical experience. You'll leave equipped with practical tools, actionable ideas, and a clear understanding of how AI can save time and resources while elevating your department's productivity.

- Understand the benefits of AI and GPT technology in park and recreation operations.
- Create and customize a GPT assistant using OpenAI's user-friendly tools.
- Discover actionable strategies to integrate AI into their everyday workflows.

Design and Communication Essentials for non-Marketing Professionals* (0.1 CEU)

Dave Crow, Director of Product and Design, Athletify, Inc.

Even without a marketing background, you can design and communicate effectively! This session provides essential skills to create visually appealing materials promoting recreational programs. Learn practical techniques for impactful flyers, websites, and more, with clear and engaging messages. Analyze and improve existing materials and collaboratively design a new program flyer. Connect better with your community and promote your programs effectively.

- Identify and explain at least three key design principles for creating visually appealing marketing materials.
- Critique an existing recreational program flyer or website element and suggest at least two specific improvements based on the communication techniques discussed.
- Apply learned design and communication principles to create a basic program flyer or marketing piece.

Cemetery Chic: Making the Past Trendy Again Through Creative Programming* (0.1 CEU)

Mary Foster, Heritage & Cultural Arts Program Manager, City of Allen

This session explores how creative public programming can breathe new life into these sacred spaces and turn passive interest into active preservation.

- Identify at least 3 types of public programs that can be successfully implemented in historic cemeteries.

- Design a basic outline for a cemetery program that aligns with both historical interpretation and preservation goals.
- Evaluate the ethical considerations and community sensitivities involved in cemetery programming.

Wednesday, February 11, 2026, 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Beyond the Buzz: What AI Can Actually Do for Parks & Rec Today (0.1 CEU)

S. David Ramirez, Founder, Principal Consultant, SDMRamirez

Use Artificial Intelligence with intention. Discover how to leverage AI at the task, role, and organizational levels. We'll explore popular tools like ChatGPT, Midjourney, and Perplexity. We'll also discuss how to incorporate AI into your current processes and tools. Finally, attendees will consider the implications of AI from a privacy and compliance perspective.

- Differentiate between AI tools for tasks, roles, and organizational transformation.
- Identify one practical AI application for their specific job function.
- Design a small-scale AI experiment or workflow improvement to take back to their department.

Facebook Roasted Us—Now What? (0.1 CEU)

Erica Flocke, Park Operations Manager, City of Wimberley

Rachel Littleton, Recreation Manager, City of Wimberley

How to manage online criticism with humor, honesty, and strategy. Learn how our department navigated viral criticism in Facebook forums—from angry posts to laugh-out-loud roasts. We'll share real examples, how we responded, what worked, and what didn't. Leave with strategies to manage online community engagement with transparency, tact, and maybe even a little humor.

- Identify and categorize common types of online public feedback, including constructive criticism, misinformation, and satire.
- Formulate appropriate response strategies for different types of online criticism.
- Evaluate their department's current approach to online engagement and identify areas for improvement.

Leadership Lessons: What I Wish I Knew Before Becoming a Manager* (0.1 CEU)

Cassie Paddock, Recreation Manager, City of Schertz

Calie Willis, Chief of Strategic Relationships, City of Coppel

Stepping into leadership is exciting—but it's also full of challenges you might not see coming. This session offers real-world insights and candid advice from two young professionals about the lessons they've learned along the way. Whether you're preparing for your first supervisory role or just starting out as a manager, you'll walk away with practical tips, mindset shifts, and leadership strategies to help you lead with confidence from day one.

- Evaluate their own readiness for leadership and areas for development.
- Identify common challenges new managers and supervisors face during their transition into leadership.
- Recall methods for earning trust and building credibility as a new manager or supervisor.

From Juice Boxes to Job Apps: Growing Great Kids Through Out of School Time (OST) & Teen Program* (0.1 CEU)

Christi Giles-Reed, Service Area Manager, City of Dallas Park and Recreation

Vernon Pellum, TOPS Manager, City of Dallas Park and Recreation

How do you keep kids engaged year after year and help them grow into confident teens? This session shares how our OST program builds the foundation for youth development and intentionally transitions kids into teen programs. From relationship-building and youth voice to leadership and job-readiness, learn how to create a pipeline supporting youth from juice boxes to job apps. Gain practical strategies, real examples, and creative ideas for your programs.

- Understand the importance of early relationship-building and identify at least three strategies for successfully transitioning youth from OST programs into teen programs.
- Describe one model or framework for developing leadership pathways within youth programs.
- Discuss the social-emotional and developmental needs of youth as they age out of OST and into teen programs.

The Candidate VS The Hiring Manager: A Look at Varying Perspectives (0.1 CEU)

Willette Middleton, Recreation Operations Supervisor, City of West University Place

Stacie Anaya, Director of Parks and Recreation, City of Lewisville

The interview process can vary widely depending on the organization vision, company culture, and role level—but there are several perspectives that shape how it's experienced and evaluated. Join us as we take a glimpse into our experiences with the recruitment process through the lens of a candidate and a hiring manager.

- Explore interview suggested practices and red flags in the parks and recreation industry.
- Examine how job titles and descriptions impact the interview process with an organization.
- Discuss two effective practices to highlight organizational culture in the recruitment process.

Turf vs. Grass - Which is the “Greener” Choice? (0.1 CEU)

Jeff Bresee, Sports Facilities Client Sector Leader, CEI Engineering Associates

John Valastro, Sports Facilities Business Development, CEI Engineering Associates

Increased demands for field use, rising costs of maintenance, weather impacts, water restrictions, and other factors are important for decision makers to analyze the initial and ongoing costs of sports facilities when making budgetary choices for a community. In this session we will discuss the trends of synthetic turf vs. grass fields. We will go over a cost analysis of the two systems and impact on the return on investment.

- Compare cost of turf vs. grass.
- Interpret the data that best meets the needs and designs of municipalities.
- Analyze the data that will have the greatest impact on the overall community expectations.

Emergency Planning for Events in Public Spaces* (0.1 CEU)

Dion Delao, Texas A&M University

Jessica Martinez, Emergency Management Specialist, Texas A&M University

For large events in public spaces with many moving pieces, having the right people at the planning table is critical to ensure safety and a pleasant experience for all participants. This session, which looks at

event planning in public spaces from an emergency management angle, will give insight to who should be involved, what considerations should be made to mitigate or respond to hazards, and some valuable lessons learned.

- Identify key stakeholders in the planning processes
- Develop event plans to include contingency and emergency considerations
- Evaluate and improve existing processes

CAPRA Roadmap to New Standards (Session 1) (0.1 CEU)

Sydney Elliott, Youth & Business Supervisor, City of DeSoto

The path to CAPRA accreditation (or re-accreditation) isn't for the faint of heart—especially when it comes to the most complex and misunderstood standards. Join us as this session dives deep into the content areas that commonly trip up agencies: human resources, program planning, evaluation, and research. Learn how to transform these roadblocks into opportunities by exploring real-world examples, practical tools, and proven strategies from accredited agencies.

- Identify at least three CAPRA standards that are viewed as complex or challenging to document or meet
- Evaluate real world examples of documentation and approaches used by accredited agencies to address difficult standards
- Define and develop an action plan to address current gaps/weaknesses in the attendee's agency based on the challenging standards

Wednesday, February 11, 2026 4:15 pm - 5:15 pm

Social Media 2026 (0.1 CEU)

S. David Ramirez, Founder, Principal Consultant, SDMRamirez

Social media is more fragmented than ever. This rapid-fire workshop breaks down the latest platform updates, features, and cultural shifts. From hashtags and algorithms to BlueSky and decentralized apps—this is your 2026 survival guide for digital relevance in public spaces.

- Identify current trends, features, and audience behavior shifts across major social media platforms.
- Compare platform strengths and weaknesses in relation to parks and recreation goals.
- Select at least one tactic or platform update to apply in their department's next content cycle.

Unlocking Potential for Full-Time Engagement with Part-Time Staff (0.1 CEU)**

Chris Stevenson, Partner, The Empower Group

Discover strategies to boost engagement and ownership among part-time staff. Learn how to improve onboarding, build strong teams, and recognize contributions to foster pride, commitment, and long-term impact.

- Demonstrate effective communication strategies that convey expectations, provide feedback, and reinforce organizational values to part-time staff.
- Identify and recommend development opportunities that support part-time staff growth and strengthen team resilience.

- Design a recognition initiative that motivates part-time staff and aligns with organizational culture and available resources.

Lessons from Uber & Google: How to Innovate Like a Startup In Your City (0.1 CEU)

Birju Kadakia, CEO, Rec Technologies, Inc.

Courtney Sung, Head of Marketing, Rec Technologies, Inc.

What do Uber, Google, & your Parks & Rec department have in common? More than you might think! Just like these tech giants, your city has the power to revolutionize user experiences—from seamless interactions for residents to introducing AI thoughtfully. Our speakers have spent their careers building apps for billions of users and will share tactics you can leverage in your city to inspire innovation. Walk away with concrete steps to lead your team in reimagining recreation for the modern age.

- Implement Rapid Prototyping and Feedback Loops
- Leverage Data-Driven Decision Making
- Cultivate A Culture of Innovation and Agility

Physical Programs Programmed Fiscally (0.1 CEU)

Jason Brown, Assistant Director, City of Cleburne

An informative session designed to have a deeper understanding of the basics of offering fitness programming in your community. Participants will be given the opportunity to hear about professional organizations in the Fitness Industry. They will be able to connect themselves to the Fitness Industry to build a better knowledge base of programming and revenue generation.

- Recall three different professional organizations that can help with fitness programming.
- Create three different types of fitness programs to meet clients' and member's needs.
- Construct different revenue streams for your center.

Duck, Duck... Wait, Are They in a Row? (0.1 CEU)

Donnie Hayes, Parks and Recreation Director, Missouri City

In the fast-paced world of Parks and Recreation, marketing efforts can often feel like herding ducks – chaotic, unpredictable, and challenging to get aligned. This dynamic training session, "Duck, Duck...Wait, Are They in a Row?", is designed to equip Parks and Recreation professionals with the essential tools and strategies to streamline their marketing efforts, enhance community engagement, and ensure their message resonates effectively.

- Define and refine target audiences.
- Develop a cohesive marketing plan.
- Leverage partnerships and collaborations.

Thriving in Leadership: A Neurodivergent Playbook (0.1 CEU)

Kelsey Stuart, Athletics Supervisor, City of Denton

In today's diverse workplace, inclusive leadership is essential to fostering a culture where everyone can thrive. Participants will gain insights into three key areas: supporting employees who are neurodiverse, empowering themselves as leaders, and effectively advocating for inclusivity within their organizations. Whether you are neurodivergent or neurotypical, this session provides the tools and perspectives needed to lead with authenticity and purpose while championing inclusion.

- Identify strategies to support and empower neurodiverse employees in the workplace, fostering an inclusive and equitable environment.
- Develop self-advocacy skills and leadership techniques as a neurodivergent professional to enhance personal growth and career advancement.
- Learn effective methods to advocate for organizational change that promotes inclusion at all levels of leadership.

DIY GPT: Building a Custom AI Assistant 2 (0.1 CEU)

Adina McCollough, Recreation Manager and Community Health Coordinator, Recreation, Parks & Community Health

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer just for tech experts — it's a practical tool that park and recreation professionals can use to streamline operations and improve service delivery. In this session, you'll learn how to create a custom AI assistant using OpenAI's GPT technology to handle tasks like automating FAQs, assisting with event scheduling, and enhancing customer engagement. Designed specifically for planners, supervisors and event organizers, this hands-on session will walk you through step-by-step instructions to build and deploy your own AI assistant, even with minimal technical experience. You'll leave equipped with practical tools, actionable ideas, and a clear understanding of how AI can save time and resources while elevating your department's productivity.

- Understand the benefits of AI and GPT technology in park and recreation operations.
- Create and customize a GPT assistant using OpenAI's user-friendly tools.
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Transforming Challenges into Opportunities: Senior Center Advisory Board (0.1 CEU)

Dylon Hernandez, City of Coppell

Our senior center advisory board was once marked by miscommunication, limited engagement, and unclear direction. However, through a collaborative and solution-focused approach, we successfully turned these challenges into opportunities for growth and progress.

- Identify your key members.
- Identify what needs you have in your facility.
- Increase engagement within your Board.

Raising the Bar: CAPRA Accreditation and Cultivating Future Leaders (Session 2) (0.1 CEU)

Jen Basham, Director of Parks and Recreation, City of Burleson

Explore how CAPRA accreditation elevates agency standards and how a future ambassador program can build a culture of excellence, succession, and civic pride. Learn how to align operations with CAPRA best practices while developing a new generation of advocates and leaders within your agency.

- Understand the core benefits and requirements of CAPRA accreditation.
- Identify key strategies and timelines for preparing for accreditation
- Conceptualize a future ambassador program that aligns with CAPRA principles.

Thursday, February 12, 2026 8:30 am - 9:30 am

The Power of a Mistake (0.1 CEU)

Donnie Hayes, Parks and Recreation Director, Missouri City

In the dynamic field of Parks and Recreation, leadership often involves navigating complex challenges and making critical decisions. While success is celebrated, mistakes are an inevitable part of the journey. This transformative training session, "The Power of a Mistake," is designed to empower Parks and Recreation professionals to embrace mistakes as opportunities for growth, innovation, and enhanced leadership.

- Formulate ways to reframe failure.
- Analyze mistakes.
- Learn how to turn mistakes into innovation.

Event Builder: An Interactive Game (0.1 CEU)

S. David Ramirez, Founder & Principal Consultant, SDMRamirez

Get ready to build—and rebuild—a parks and recreation event on the fly. In this interactive session, participants will play the Event Builder Game, a fast-paced group challenge where teams draw cards to plan events under real-world constraints like budget, weather, and surprise changes. Designed to simulate the highs and lows of real planning, this session sparks creativity, collaboration, and flexible thinking. Walk away with fresh ideas and tools you can bring back to your team.

- Construct an inclusive event concept using creative prompts and real-world limitations.
- Adapt programming plans in response to shifting conditions, access needs, or staffing changes.
- Justify their team's event decisions based on community values, feasibility, and impact.

Beachfront Property (0.1 CEU)

Craig Bouck, Architectural Principal, Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture

Bill Weaver, Aquatic Engineer, Water Technology, Inc.

A great pool isn't just about the water—it's about what surrounds it. This session explores how decks, lounges, party rooms, and other adjacent spaces can enhance safety, comfort, and revenue. Learn how smart design improves user experience, supports programming, and adds flexibility. Like beachfront property, poolside spaces offer high value when accessibility, aesthetics, and operations align with community needs.

- Identify how adjacent deck spaces contribute to the overall
- Explain how complementary aquatic accessory spaces can enhance the comfort, usability, and overall enjoyment of swimmers
- Evaluate the key design considerations for indoor and outdoor spaces that optimize deck spaces for a variety of aquatic facilities

How Bentonville, Arkansas Became the Mountain Bike Capital of the World? (0.1 CEU)

Erin Rushing, Founder/CEO, OZTB Consulting

From 5 miles of single-track trail to 500+ miles of purpose-built mountain bike trails in less than 10 years, transforming small town Bentonville Arkansas into the Mountain Bike Capital of the world was no small task. This presentation will provide the history of the regional trail development, the challenges of

building trails so quick, the economic benefits of the trails, and the long-term plan for the future of trails in the region.

- Learn how a small non-profit organization developed the trails so quickly, effectively, and sustainable including the systems put in place to assure their long-term viability and interest.
- Discover how using GIS mapping software has made us strategic stewards of trail development by tracking the usership of trails, managing the skill level of trails and making informed decisions on where future trails should (or should not) be developed.
- Understand what we learned along the way, including how to handle the NIMBY's, private property constraints, liability, safety, and including the changes we've had to make to our existing trails.

Beyond Recruitment: Creating a Culture Staff Want to Stay — and Recruit For* (0.1 CEU)

Whitney Seaton, Recreation Facilities Supervisor, City of Pflugerville Parks & Recreation

Hiring matters — but the culture you create is what keeps people, builds loyalty, and grows your team. This session explores how intentional leadership, honest conversations, and staff development meet both organizational goals and staff expectations, creating an environment where employees thrive — and bring others with them.

- Identify two key leadership actions that build intentional workplace culture.
- Recognize strategies for giving honest, supportive feedback that strengthens trust.
- Outline one personal action step to improve their workplace culture through leadership behaviors.

Training & Coaching Staff for Inclusive Summer Camps* (0.1 CEU)

Elena Christopher, City of Austin

This session offers P&R professionals a practical guide to prepare and support summer camp staff for inclusive & adaptive day camps. We'll explore therapeutic recreation principles for designing a pre-camp training model for staff, covering topics from disability awareness to proactive behavior management. We'll also explore effective ongoing coaching strategies for the summer. Learn how to engage summer camp staff through hands-on learning techniques to better create an inclusive camp culture!

- Design a staff training schedule that prepares summer staff to support inclusion in day camps.
- Identify at least two ongoing coaching strategies for summer camp staff.
- Create a brief staff training activity that promotes disability awareness and inclusive behaviors.

Fun Doesn't Mean Flaky: Building Accountability Without Killing the Vibe* (0.1 CEU)

Dr. Jordan Daniel, Angelo State University

Will Doss, "Boss", McKinney PARD

Without accountability, even the most well-intentioned recreation programs can quickly unravel. Missed deadlines, unclear roles, inconsistent policies, and a breakdown in communication can create frustration for both staff and participants. In these environments, burnout increases, safety can be compromised, and the overall quality of programming declines. Most importantly, the absence of accountability erodes trust—among coworkers, supervisors, and the communities we serve.

- Identify at least three negative impacts of poor accountability in recreation settings.
- Describe two strategies for fostering a culture of accountability within recreation teams.
- Develop a personalized action step to strengthen accountability in their own recreation environment.

Knowing your "Golden Girls": Personality-Based Programming for Older Adults* (0.1 CEU)

Barbara Smith, Recreation Coordinator, City of Anna

What do Dorothy's wit, Blanche's flair, Rose's heart, and Sophia's wisdom have in common? They offer more than just laughs — they bring to life a range of personalities that reflect the experiences of aging and offer inspiration for programming that is both meaningful and inclusive. Explore how these beloved characters from "The Golden Girls" can serve as creative models to design senior center activities that are personalized, purposeful, and fun.

- Recall the four personality types that serve as the topic of discussion.
- Identify areas of programming that might reach different personality types.
- Create a plan to identify and potentially fill a gap in programming specifically to at least one underserved "personality" among their centers/participants.

Thursday, February 12, 2026 10:15 am - 11:15 am

Leading My Organization, But Why Do I Feel Alone?* (0.1 CEU)

Chase Ellis, Director Parks and Recreation, Town of Trophy Club

Imagine leading with confidence—no more self-doubt or isolation. But for many Parks and Recreation leaders, the reality includes political pressure, high expectations, and imposter syndrome. This session tackles Director Isolation and Imposter Syndrome, offering tools to set boundaries, build trust, and lead authentically. Whether you're a new or seasoned leader, walk away empowered to overcome doubt and foster a strong, connected team culture.

- Recognize the Impact of Director Isolation
- Apply Boundary-Setting and Assertive Communication
- Develop Practical Strategies to Cultivate Positive Culture

S'more Than Training: Building Camp Counselor Habits* (0.1 CEU)

Calie Willis, Chief of Strategic Relationships, City of Coppel

Make your staff training s'more than just rules! In this interactive session, you'll identify key camp counselor training needs and learn how to design engaging sessions that build real habits. Discover how to balance knowledge, skill, and desire—so your staff leave ready to create safe, fun, unforgettable summers.

- Analyze their summer staff training needs to identify the specific camper-facing habits staff must demonstrate.
- Design camp staff training sessions that intentionally build knowledge, skill, and motivation.
- Evaluate their existing camp staff training for effectiveness in building consistent counselor habits.

Navigating the Waters: Planning, Design, & Maintaining Trails in Floodplain (0.1 CEU)

Drew Carman, Director of Park Planning & Design, RVI Planning + Landscape Architecture

Tim Speyer, District Park Manager, Travis County Parks

Odette Tan, P.E., Engineer Sr, Travis County Transportation & Natural Resources

Building trails in floodplains isn't for the faint of heart — but the rewards are worth it. Trails offer incredible recreational value but come with unique planning, design, and operational challenges. This session takes you through the full journey: finding funding, working with ~~with~~ landowners, designing for floods and resiliency, and maintaining trails after the waters recede. Learn from seasoned practitioners about strategies & design choices that can help your trail project be a success!

- Compare the unique regulatory, engineering, and permitting challenges associated with trail development in flood-prone environments
- Apply strategies for balancing public access, recreational use, and environmental resilience when designing trails in sensitive areas.
- Choose the critical consultant roles and team members needed for a successful floodplain trail project.

From 'I do' to 'We do': Engagement that Fosters Partnerships and Implementation (0.1 CEU)

Cindy Mendoza, Principal | Director of Park + Recreation, MIG, Inc.

Saul Vazquez-Mejia, Senior Associate, MIG, Inc.

Beyond identifying unique community needs, how can park planning and design projects engage residents, stakeholders, businesses, and underserved groups as true partners in shaping and investing in public parks and recreation systems? This session identifies engagement strategies, technologies, and tools that have been successfully applied across Texas and the nation to build support for implementation.

- List 4-5 new tools or engagement methods from the models presented that may work in your community.
- Identify one way that your agency has successfully “engaged” residents to become involved in implementing a plan, project, or program.
- Evaluate the pros and cons of various engagement strategies to rank the ones that would generate the greatest return on investment for your community.

The Steph Curry Effect: A shift in Youth Sports Programming (0.1 CEU)

Willette Middleton, Recreation Operations Supervisor, City of West University Place

The Steph Curry Effect examines a noticeable shift in youth sports programming. This phenomenon has reshaped not only how youth sports are played at the highest level, but also how they're being offered and played at the grassroots level. It's important for recreation practitioners to explore ways to transcend this new wave of implementation in youth sports.

- Discuss how commercialization of youth sports has affected municipal recreation sports programming.
- Express the importance and benefit of youth sports in a recreation.
- Propose two effective practices to aid in promoting and implementing youth sports programs.

Beneath the Surface: Smart Renovation & Maintenance Strategies for Splash Pads (0.1 CEU)

Jesse Benavidez, Aquatics Renovation & Service Specialist, Kraftsman Commercial Playgrounds & Water Parks

Splash parks and water features are community favorites, but they require smart upkeep and planning. This session explores common failures, signs of system fatigue, and cost-effective renovation strategies.

Learn how to protect your investment, plan upgrades, and keep systems running clean, safe, and efficient—whether you're managing daily operations or long-term improvements.

- Identify the lifecycle needs of splash pads and small pools. Furthermore, learners will be able to recognize early signs of system fatigue, aging components, and what typically fails first in small aquatic facilities.
- Will have cost-effective renovation strategies that maximize ROI - including practical, budget-conscious approaches to planning renovations - when to repair, when to replace, and how to communicate the value to stakeholders.
- Create maintenance plans that reduce downtime and extend equipment life. This includes how to create or evaluate a seasonal service plan (startup/shutdown) to improve reliability and reduce emergency repairs.

What is a Waiver worth? And other Risk Management Concepts* (0.1 CEU)

Jason Brown, Assistant Director, City of Cleburne

Informative session designed to explore the dangers of duty. The audience will hear and participate in a discussion about the legalese that looms just out of view. Terms like duty, negligence, scope of practice, and malpractice will be explored with an eye of Fitness, but relevance to other areas of Recreation.

- Compare new terms discussed during the session.
- Develop a baseline SOP for fitness programming and apply the same knowledge to general and aquatic programs.
- Analyze previously documented situations to learn a better practice for your facility.

A Culture of Leadership* (0.1 CEU)

Jason Chadock, CEO/Parks and Recreation Director, The Chadock Group/City of Macedonia

Leadership has never been more important in the workforce than it is today. Leadership transcends development and empowerment, which increases morale, productivity, and improves efficiency. Through this session, you will get an overview of a transformational journey and what it takes to break through adversity. We will share strategies and resources that help develop a strong culture and allow all employees to have a voice in the future and work towards a common cause.

- Define managing vs leading and how leading creates more productive teams.
- Build empowerment and drive employees' ideas to build operations.
- Create a unified vision for culture and operations and how this drives guest satisfaction.

Kickstarting Sport Tourism: Tools and Templates for Small Texas Communities (0.1 CEU)

Alex Sullins, Clinical Assistant Professor, Texas A&M University

Learn how to launch or grow a sport tourism program in Texas towns under 40,000. This session offers a practical toolkit, real-world case studies, and ready-to-use templates to help small communities drive economic impact and community pride through sport tourism.

- Assess their community's readiness for sport tourism by identifying local assets, potential partners, and niche opportunities.
- Gain practical tools and templates—including event planning checklists, funding strategies, and marketing resources—to launch or grow a sport tourism program.

- Understand how to build strategic partnerships and a sustainable plan that aligns with their community's size, goals, and available resources.

Irrigation Efficiency and Conducting a Water Audit (0.1 CEU)

Weston Floyd, Research Specialist II, Texas A&M University

In this session, we will discuss the importance of proper irrigation monitoring and how to conduct a water audit of your facility. We will cover the significance of scouting, nozzle selection, and methods to enhance existing systems. Additionally, we will instruct participants on conducting a thorough water audit, including calculations to determine run times and overall system efficiency.

- Properly conduct a water audit.
- Calculate precipitation rate, run time, and run time multiplier to help analyze their existing systems.
- Gain the ability to learn proper monthly and yearly maintenance on irrigation systems for upkeep.

Thursday, February 12, 2026 11:30 am - 12:30 pm

Trauma Informed Management in Parks and Recreation* (0.1 CEU)

Sheri Willis, Clinical Therapist, Consultant

Calie Willis, Chief of Strategic Relationships, City of Coppel

Trauma-informed management is a leadership approach that recognizes the impact of trauma on employees, creating a safe and supportive work environment. Presented from the perspective of an experienced parks and recreation manager and a mental health professional, this workshop will provide you with unique, practical and usable practices to meet the unique needs of your team.

- Identify key principals of trauma-informed management
- Recognize types of trauma experiences
- Create trauma-informed management practices to implement in your work role

Meetings that Matter: Transforming Team Time into Results* (0.1 CEU)

Chris Stevenson, Partner, The Empower Group

Let's face it—most meetings could use a makeover. This interactive session will equip parks and recreation professionals with practical tools to lead meetings that are clear, purposeful, and action-driven. Learn how to boost engagement, cut down on wasted time, and turn any meeting—from daily check-ins to full-day planning—into a powerful leadership tool.

- Differentiate between effective and ineffective meeting structures based on purpose, time management, and participant engagement.
- Design a meeting agenda that aligns with organizational goals and encourages actionable outcomes.
- Implement facilitation strategies that promote inclusive participation and accountability during meetings.

Developing a Department-Wide Sponsorship Program (0.1 CEU)

Cara Harting, Recreation Events Supervisor, City of McKinney

Cynthia Hanby, Business Development Supervisor, City of McKinney

Participants will learn some valuable tools on how to develop a customized and unified sponsorship program across departments by identifying assets, and creating customized and potential multi-year deals, thereby eliminating the confusion of multiple departments reaching out to the same sponsors.

Intend for this session to be interactive.

- Identify sponsorable assets.
- Understand how to develop a team and unified approach within the city.
- Develop a list of programs, facilities, events that can potentially be bundled together in a sponsorship package.

Joyful Learning: The Power of Play* (0.1 CEU)

Kelsie Crabb, Community Center Leader, City of San Antonio

Christopher Villarreal, Community Center Leader, City of San Antonio

You're too old to play like that! Or are you? In this session, we will explore the power of play and its role in enhancing learning, development, and community engagement. Discover what science says regarding play and its benefits across cognitive, emotional, and physical domains. Learn how to integrate various types of play into your programs. Get ready to transform the way you think about playing around and learn how using play can lead to more engaging experiences for your community.

- Differentiate the types of play and needs for meaningful play.
- Recognize what constitutes play access.
- Assess how to incorporate play into their programming in a meaningful way.

Creating Space, Engaging the Community & Building Partnerships for Downtown (0.1 CEU)

Kristina Alvarez, Main Street Manager, City of Elgin, Texas

Explore how to engage your community in planning a transformative park that creates a vibrant downtown hub attracting families, teens, and all ages. Review how parks support local businesses, drive economic growth, and honor your community's history, acknowledging past injustices. Learn how to attract visitors and create a unique downtown experience while expanding tools for private sector investment.

- Identify and engage key stakeholders in the planning process for a downtown public park.
- Identify opportunities for community engagement in third spaces.
- Think about community stakeholders and identify their needs.

Building A Team (0.1 CEU)

Jason Chadock, CEO/Parks and Recreation Director, The Chadock Group/City of Macedonia

Today, more than ever, having a strong team is so critical to excelling in service. Building an environment is important; however getting the right people on that team is the key. Maintaining a staff and providing training and proper resources is imperative. Additionally, having a strong hiring process and not taking shortcuts is needed. This training will cover how to hire, train, and motivate staff for continued success and creating a positive culture.

- Recognize the need for a philosophy and values to guide a team.
- Keys to leadership and identifying the role each element plays in building a team.
- Creating buy-in through training, hiring practices, and decision-making.

Seeding the Future: A Volunteer-Powered Approach to Native Plants

Ananna Williams, Director of Community and Environmental Resilience, NRPA

Lisa Oliver, Superintendent for Community Relations and Engagement, Corpus Christi Parks and Recreation Department

Tonya L. Whatley, Parks Operation Supervisor, Corpus Christi Parks and Recreation Department

NRPA's Heart Your Park program supports local parks departments in Texas. This program is funded in part by Citgo. Land stewards and other volunteers have played a key role in environmental programs, with a particular focus on park-based local solutions. We are excited to share inclusive practices (including a hands-on seed ball demo) from Corpus Christi Parks and Recreation. Let's explore how we can engage diverse stewards in preserving, protecting, and restoring parks and green spaces.

- Illustrate the importance of engaging diverse community members and local land stewards in authentic partnership around park-based impacts of climate change
- Compose seed balls designed to easily spread native seeds, take one home (if in Texas), and recognize the indigenous roots of these native planting practices
- Analyze the use of native plants in addressing the issue of invasive species

Port Aransas Reimagined: Community Spaces Post Harvey (0.1 CEU)

Kenneth Yarbrough, Community Coordinator, City of Port Aransas

"On August 25, 2017, Hurricane Harvey made landfall and forever changed our coastal community. What followed was devastation... but also determination. In the wake of destruction, something beautiful began to grow—resilience, hope, and an incredible spirit of community."

From the floodwaters to flourishing parks, from ruined playgrounds to ribbon-cutting ceremonies. We'll reflect on what we lost, celebrate what we've rebuilt, and look ahead to what we're still creating."

- Learn that no matter how bad it gets...it always gets better
- Identify departments and agencies that will assist after a major event
- Discuss the courage and stamina needed in the face of disaster

Game Changers: How Adaptive Sports Are Building Strong Communities* (0.1 CEU)

Nicole Entrup, CTRS, Adaptive Sports Specialist, Wounded Warrior Project

Discover the transformative power of adaptive sports, not just for individuals with disabilities, but for the community at large. In this session, you will learn how adaptive sports foster inclusivity, enhanced community engagement, and promote physical and mental well-being. Learn how programming can align with your goals, boost participation, and create lasting connections. Leave with practical strategies and resources to enhance your programs and build stronger, more inclusive communities.

- Distinguish 1 form of adaptations associated within a given adaptive sport
- Recall 3 resources in the Texas region for adaptive sport programming
- Identify 1 area of opportunity within their own organization

Thursday, February 12, 2026 1:45 pm - 2:45 pm

Project WILD: Sometimes learning really is fun and games!* (0.1 CEU)

Melinda Wright, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department

Nicki Sohn, Project WILD Facilitator

Join us to learn more about the Project WILD conservation education curriculum that can help add new games, activities, and lessons to your youth programs. As a program, Project WILD teaches kids "how to think, not what to think" about wildlife, and many of these lessons involve large group games, exploring urban outdoor areas, and connecting with nature. Perfect for summer camps, afterschool programs, and more - let us help you add to your curriculum.

- Practice playing Project WILD activities so they have increased comfort in using them.
- Restate the benefits of nature play and outdoor time in both kids and adults.
- Schedule or plan additional WILD training for their teams to further incorporate activities into their programs.

Activating Youth Choice, Amplifying Youth Voice* (0.1 CEU)

Jonathon Haynes, Recreation Programs Supervisor, Austin, Parks & Recreation Department

Stephanie Martinez, Recreation Programs Specialist, Austin Parks and Recreation Department

Creating opportunities for youth choice is an intentional practice measured by level of access as well as the types of choice that are available to youth in an Out of School Time Program. Ultimately, a quality OST program is one that is empowering, engaging and centered around the creation of opportunities for youth to share ownership in a place they feel they belong. Join us to explore possibilities for increased Youth Choice and Voice opportunities in your OST programs.

- Recall the pyramid of youth needs and tell how program leaders support meeting those needs
- Identify 2 types of youth choice and discuss how it relates to youth voice
- Assess opportunities for youth choice and youth voice in their agency's programs

Stretch, Stumble, and Grow: Cultivating a Growth Mindset in Parks and Recreation* (0.1 CEU)

Brent Wolfe, Executive Director, ATRA

What do you do when you're stuck, overwhelmed, or afraid to try something new? For professionals in parks & recreation, those moments are part of the job. This session will explore the difference between fixed and growth mindsets, and why that difference matters more than ever in today's fast-changing work environment. You'll walk away with practical techniques to push past internal limits, foster resilience, and create a mindset that supports both personal development and professional success.

- Differentiate between fixed and growth mindsets and recognize how they show up in workplace behaviors.
- Identify five techniques for developing a growth mindset, including embracing discomfort and reframing failure.
- Apply mindset strategies to real-life challenges in personal and professional settings.

Fitness Programming (With or Without the Fitness Floor) (0.1 CEU)

Jason Brown, Assistant Director, City of Cleburne

The session is designed to inform the participants about how to program fitness for their community. There will be a discussion about stationary equipment, how to stage them, and how much space is

needed. No Fitness Floor/Room, no problem. We will also discuss ancillary, mobile equipment that your team can use for an effective full-body program for all demographics.

- List the machines most used for the major muscle groups.
- Arrange machines based on travel patterns and ease of use, all with an eye on safety and risk mitigation.
- Formulate alternative exercises when machines are not available or other equipment is requested.

What is Employee Engagement and Why Does it Matter (0.1 CEU)

Robert Dodd, Director, Corpus Christi Parks & Recreation Department

Lisa Oliver, Superintendent - Community Relations & Engagement, Corpus Christi Parks & Recreation Department

Roberta Rodriguez, Senior Management Analyst, Corpus Christi Parks & Recreation Department

The session will encompass an overview of the process involved in establishing and implementing an Employee Engagement Committee, including strategies and the advantages of creating such a team within your organization. Additionally, a real-world example from our department will be shared, highlighting the initiation process and the outcomes achieved to date.

- Define Employee Engagement Committee
- Identify an opportunity to implement an Employee Engagement Committee
- Create a list of potential activities or methods to create an Employee Engagement Committee

Optimizing Athletic Field Efficiency: Strategies and Case Study (0.1 CEU)

Kevin Carter, Assistant Director of Parks & Recreation, City of Pearland

Carry Capers, Director of Parks & Recreation, City of Pearland

This session will share the rethinking of athletic field use policies and procedures to focus on sustainable strategies for improving cost recovery. Discovering alternate ways of staffing structure and funding will help with considerations of strategic planning. Balancing athletic field use fairly between local users and tournament requests will help share the benefits of all users of site improvements and access.

- Relate common challenges faced by Park & Recreation agencies and traditional approaches to Athletic divisions.
- Recognize challenges with athletic facility usage within their community.
- Propose further needs for future topics related to athletic field use challenges

From Stage Fright to Spotlight: How Theater Transforms Kids—and Your Parks Department* (0.1 CEU)

Kenneth Yarbrough, Community Coordinator, City of Port Aransas

In just five weeks, we watched our young performers bloom with confidence and creativity. They weren't just acting—they were making props, sewing simple costume pieces, and solving problems together. This kind of project shows how much can be done with heart, vision, and a supportive team, even on a tight timeline."

- Discover the benefits of Theater. A home for the those without a place to call home.
- It doesn't take a fortune. Finding the resources to make a show happen
- It doesn't take months. In just a few short weeks or even days you can produce a show.

Leadership on the Blackstone: Turning Up the Heat on Your Recreation Skills* (0.1 CEU)

Shane Boyer, Recreation Manager, City of Kerrville Parks and Recreation Department

This dynamic, lecture-style session uses the metaphor of cooking on a Blackstone griddle to illustrate the core leadership skills young recreation professionals need. Just like managing multiple foods at once, leaders must balance priorities, adjust to heat (pressure), and know when to flip, pause, or serve. Participants will explore leadership theories and styles in a fun, relatable way, while engaging through group discussion and interactive assessments.

- Identify and describe three core leadership styles commonly used in recreational settings.
- Apply the Blackstone griddle metaphor to explain how timing, multitasking, and heat (pressure) relate to leadership challenges.
- Analyze a leadership scenario to determine the most effective communication or delegation strategy.

Recreation Programming and Special Events Branch Highlights (0.1 CEU)

Leah Anderson, Assistant Director, City of Temple PARD

Rudy Flores, Deputy Director of Recreation, City of Lufkin PARD

Led by the branch chair and chair-elect, this session highlights the TRAPS RPSE branch and how it can best serve you in your career.

- Articulate at least three professional or personal benefits of joining the RPSE branch.
- Identify at least two ways to get involved with the RPSE branch at the local, regional, or national level.
- Create a personal action plan for engaging with someone attending the session within the next month.

Thursday, February 12, 2026 3:45 pm - 4:45 pm

Treemendous Parks! (0.1 CEU)

Jason Alfaro, Gulf Region Market Leader, Tree Mann Solutions

In this session, we will discuss how important trees play a role in our parks infrastructure. We always walk past them, lay underneath their shade and always look for that shaded parking spot. Trees are pretty, trees are heavy, trees are pretty big and heavy and they can create hazards if we do t plan and maintain them. How do we maintain them, incorporate them into our landscape/design, and budget for them? Let's discuss trees and how they can be an asset, resource, and liability.

- Recall 2 ways in which trees benefit the environment.
- Identify 1 area of opportunity for tree programming or 1 area/way to reduce tree hazards.
- Create ideas that can be implemented at their organization.

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

*Scott Caron, Senior Associate, Ballard*King & Associates*

*Darin Barr, President, Ballard*King and 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 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.

- Identify common issues and challenges faced by facilities, including maintenance, capacity limitations, and shifting user expectations.
- Explore strategies for upgrading and modernizing aging facilities to improve efficiency, accessibility, and sustainability.
- Develop a proactive long-term plan to maintain the relevance and functionality of older recreation centers within their communities

From Lanyards to Lessons: Putting Your Conference Takeaways to Work* (0.1 CEU)

Timothy Ward, Recreation Program Supervisor, City of Pflugerville

Have you ever left a professional conference with feelings of excitement and renewed energy only for it to quickly fade once you return home? How often do you actually translate your conference takeaways into actionable steps that can be integrated into your regular workplace environment? In this session, we will explore the strategies and resources made available through Learning Forward that will equip you with helpful tools to make the most of your conference learnings.

- Identify the five steps to turn a new conference learning into an actionable plan.
- Prioritize new learnings and identify the top idea to move forward.
- Create an individualized action plan that can be applied within their own organization.

United for Impact: Statewide Partnerships as a Catalyst for Para Athletes* (0.1 CEU)

Jennifer Weatherford, Director of Operations and Military Programs, Texas Regional Para Sport

Adaptive sports are a pathway to inclusion, empowerment, and lifelong wellness. In this session, participants will explore how strategic collaboration can break down barriers and expand access to adaptive sports in community recreation settings. Learn how coordinated efforts can support para-athletes from grassroots to elite levels. Through real-world insights and interactive discussions, attendees will be equipped to take an active role in advancing adaptive sports within their own communities.

- Recognize at least 2 barriers for collaboration for adaptive sports
- Identify at least 2 strategies for effective collaboration that could be applied within their community
- Name at least 1 resource to help the expansion of adaptive sports programs

The Power of Stories* (0.1 CEU)

Michael Kirschman, Director, City of Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation

"If you want someone to remember your message - in a presentation, an article, or report - tell them a story." Rachel Gillett. Stories open windows to new ways of thinking, help you connect to an audience, and, most importantly, reveal meanings. It is through these

meanings that a presentation truly becomes memorable. If you present to officials or the public and want to be more effective, this session will provide you with a powerful technique for ensuring your presentations are unforgettable.

- Recognize the impact of Universal Concepts
- Identify 4 key ingredients that help a story become memorable
- Conclude, via real life examples, research, and video, how remarkable stories connect emotionally

Building Inclusive Communities: A Municipal Approach to Adaptive Recreation* (0.1 CEU)

Shelby Carradine CTRS, CTRS- Adaptive Recreation Coordinator, City of Carrollton

Nolan Griffin, CTRS- Recreation Specialist, Adaptive Recreation, City of Houston Parks and Recreation

Join recreational therapy professionals from the City of Houston and the City of Carrollton Adaptive Recreation Programs as they share their successful approaches to developing and implementing comprehensive adaptive recreation programs within municipal settings. This interactive session will provide attendees with practical strategies for creating inclusive recreational opportunities while navigating the complexities of municipal operations.

- Analyze the essential components of municipal adaptive recreation programming, including facility accessibility requirements, partnership development, and resource allocation strategies.
- Construct a basic framework for implementing adaptive recreation programs within their municipal setting.
- Evaluate potential opportunities for adaptive recreation program development within their current workplace setting.

Raising the Bar: Earning NCOA Accreditation* (0.1 CEU)

Jamie Jaco-Cooper, Senior Center Manager, Flower Mound Senior Center

Learn how the Flower Mound Senior Center earned National Accreditation through the National Council on Aging. This session will walk attendees through the multi-year process, including preparing the application, meeting standards of excellence, and lessons learned along the way. Hear how accreditation elevated programs, strengthened operations, and fostered a culture of continuous improvement.

- Understand how the National Institute of Senior Centers' 9 Standards of Excellence can improve senior operations.
- Identify internal resources, external resources, and structures important to completing a self-assessment process.

- Examine ways to elevate programs, strengthen operations, and foster a culture of continuous improvement.