

Forum Update

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Presidents Message

Don Lewis, Director Tupelo Parks & Recreation

The Tupelo Sports Council hosted its annual Circle of Champions Awards Banquet February 26th. Our guest speaker this year was Leah O'Brien Amico, three time Olympic Gold medal winner in softball. Leah did a great job and her message was a reminder that it takes a lot of people with varied responsibilities to make a program or even a department work successfully. When citizens, young and old, participate in our programs they seldom are aware of what it takes to put a program/event together. There are so many people involved, parents, maintenance staff, volunteers, sponsors, and professional programmers. Almost everyone that participates in a program is there to have fun, learn, exercise, and grow. They are not concerned how it happened they just want to play or learn. This is why we must develop and rely on a support system.

People must have a support system through out life in what ever they do. The same is true for MRPA. It is important that all of our volunteers manage their areas of responsibility in order to offer programs of value to our members. Our membership participates in District, State, and National programs and sometimes they forget the amount of work it takes to make things happen. Think about what our state conference would be like if we did start planning over a year out. Just like each of members at the local level rely on their Circle of Champions, volunteers, officials, coaches, parents, sponsors, and administrators so does MRPA. I want to thank each of you that give of your time and knowledge and encourage more people to get involved with MRPA at all levels. As the saying goes... "it takes a village..."



Operation TLC²: Making Communities Safe

With the current economic conditions, park and recreation agencies will more heavily rely on volunteer manpower. The National Recreation and Park Association, responding to an increased demand to address growing concern regarding the prevalence of predators in public spaces, developed Operation TLC²: *Making Communities Safe* to arm agencies with the best tools possible to combat this problem.

Don't become a statistic! In Mississippi, of potential volunteers who were submitted for a background screen through NRPA's preferred provider Southeastern Security Consultants, Inc:

- **7.83% had criminal records**
- **Of the criminal hits discovered, 45% were felonies, the most serious of crimes**

*Make sure you enlist only qualified volunteers in your community programs; join ranks with Tupelo, Long Beach, Olive Branch and Gulfport: **become a Charter Agency today!***

No Child Left Inside --

Get kids outside more often and watch the stimulus work

By Janet Milkman

We could improve children's health, reduce crime and build a smarter workforce simply by fully funding parks and recreation at every level of government. Sound crazy? Maybe. But sometimes we miss a simple solution when it is staring us in the face. We all know that children's chronic health issues — obesity, ADHD, heart issues, diabetes — are growing, so much so that Robert Wood Johnson researchers report that the United States has the potential of raising the first generation of children to have a shorter lifespan than their parents.

No wonder. Obesity in children increased from about 4 percent in the 1960s to close to 20 percent in 2004. ADHD diagnoses increased by 33 percent between 1997 and 2002. Kids (and adults) are spending less and less time outdoors. In one of my favorite cartoons, Calvin says to Hobbes, "Look! A trickle of water running through some dirt! I'd say our afternoon just got booked solid." Researchers call this "unstructured nature play." And it is becoming more and more a piece of history. Most of us Baby Boomers grew up playing outside. I'd leave the house in the morning with my brother and sisters and tell my mother, "I'll be somewhere around the circle or I might be in the woods." In the woods there were beech trees to climb and boulders that had names — Clam Rock, Ship Rock, Bed Rock. We'd come back for meals and my mother would never worry. But my kids don't have that — fewer and fewer do — a trend Richard Louv identifies in his book, "Last Child in the Woods," as "nature deficit disorder."
(continued on next page....)

MISSISSIPPI RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION DISTRICT ONE



PlaygroundWorkshop

Tupelo Department of Parks & Recreation
655 Rutherford Road
WEDNESDAY, April 8 2009



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.
9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
10:45 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.
11:45 a.m. – 12:30p.m.
12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.
1:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Registration/Coffee/Donuts (Sponsored by Mid South Recreation)
The Story Behind Playground Product Development
IPEMA and it's Certification Program
Lunch on Site (Sponsored by Mid South Recreation)
Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act
The Recipe for a Robust Product Development Process

PARTICIPANTS \$25.00 / STUDENTS \$10.00
CEU's INCLUDED in FEE

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Amount Enclosed: _____ PO# _____ Pay at Door

Make checks payable to MRPA District 1. Mail to: Don Lewis, PO Box 3608, Tupelo, MS 38803
Please PRE- REGISTER BY April 3, 2009. For more information contact Don Lewis or Alex Farned (662) 841-6440

A few statistics bear this out:

- Children today spend less time playing outdoors than any previous generation.
- Children spend more of their diminishing free time in structured activities: children's discretionary time (i.e., time not spent in school, child care, etc.) declined 12 percent (7.4 hours a week) from 1981 to 1997 and an additional 4 percent (2 hours) from 1997 to 2002/3;
- Families have less leisure time and are spending more of it indoors. Since 1988, per capita visits to U.S. national parks have declined by about 20 percent.
- Americans spend 170 minutes a day watching TV and movies, nine times as much as they do on physical activities. Children between the ages of 8 and 18 spend an average of 6.5 hours a day with electronic media!

Mr. Louv maintains that this is not just an issue of environmental concern — that we're raising a generation of kids who won't value nature or vote for nature — but it also is a concern for children's emotional, intellectual and physical well-being. Research now shows a positive correlation between contact with nature and children's development in all of these areas.

Dr. Stephen R. Kellert of Yale University writes, "Play in nature, particularly during the critical period of middle childhood, appears to be an especially important time for developing the capacities for creativity, problem-solving, and emotional and intellectual development." Other research has found that the greener a child's everyday environment, the more manageable are their symptoms of attention-deficit disorder, and that access to green spaces for play, and even a view of green settings, enhances peace, self-control and self-discipline within inner city youth, particularly in girls.

Direct experience in nature is diminishing. This trend coincides with huge increases in obesity, and diagnoses of ADHD and childhood depression. Perhaps the most useful "economic stimulus" plan with the greatest impact on health care, the economy and the environment, would be one that invests in places like Frick Park and Nine Mile Run, the Allegheny National Forest and Presque Isle State Park.

Last year, the House passed the No Child Left Inside Act and the Senate will be considering the bill this session. In the meantime, imagine a world with healthier, happier, more productive kids. Take a child outside to play in nature and see what happens.

Janet Milkman is the president of EARTHNEXT, a Pennsylvania-based nonprofit working to connect children and youth to nature (jmilkman@earthnext.org).

Register Now to Host a 2009 Major League Baseball Pitch, Hit and Run Local Competition

NRPA and Major League Baseball have teamed up to provide park and recreation agencies the opportunity to host free MLB Pitch, Hit & Run local competitions in March, April or May. This program provides children ages 7-14 the opportunity to learn and display the three key fundamentals of baseball-pitching, hitting and running. Visit the NRPA website for online registration information and to receive a free kit to help you organize the event.

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FNC Park Opening

The Oxford Park Commission began its 2009 Spring Soccer Season at its new location, FNC Park. OPC opened the park, FNC Park, March 2, 2009 with 850 soccer participants playing on 15 new soccer fields. The opening of the FNC Park location includes 15 soccer fields, eight (8) baseball fields, three (3) softball fields, walking track and a BMX track. OPC will have a grand opening of the new park later in the spring.



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