

Forum Update

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President's Message

MRPA Board Sets Goals

Don Lewis, Tupelo Department of Parks and Recreation

The fall is a busy time of year for all of us. Since our last MRPA *Forum*, a delegation from Mississippi attended the NRPA Congress in Indianapolis, and the MRPA board has held its first quarterly meeting. This time of year is also one of our busiest programming seasons, and it is time to start planning for next year.

The MRPA board and committees used our quarterly meeting to lay out plans for our MRPA goals. I would like to share those plans with each of you over the next few issues of the Forum.

Goal I

Increase the participation in the annual MRPA Conference by establishing high quality and diversified education and training programs.

Assessment:

The increasing challenge of providing quality services with limited resources requires that park and recreation professionals are continually learning new skills and understanding the needs of their citizens. MRPA must work with the membership, educational organizations, State and National associations, and NRPA to deliver this service.

Objectives:

1. Establish a working committee that reviews the membership needs and develops educational programs at the District and State level.
2. Plan educational programs for the District and State one to two years in advance
3. Advertise and award conferences two to three years in advance
4. Expand participant registration, exhibitor attendance, and revenue at the annual conference.
5. Increase citizen and local, state, and national association membership.
6. Establish a Past Presidents Advisory Board.

As you can tell by reviewing Goal I there is a lot of work to be done and we can use your help. If you are interested please free to contact a board or committee member today. I hope everyone has a great Thanksgiving!

The Key to More Walking

The bench, an ages-old device to keep bums off the ground, stands tall in the minds of many who plan parks and communities. In Ramsey County, Minnesota, leaders are betting that a few such seats can improve health, ease of transportation, and foster neighborly interaction. The 1,000 Benches program, approved last week by the County Board, will provide money to communities that want to create "pathways to health." The goal is to space the benches in such a way to make walking routes from residential areas to parks, commercial districts, or transit lines.



New Report Links Decline in Bicycling and Walking to Nation's Obesity Epidemic

According to a recently released report by the Thunderhead Alliance, the dust settling on Americans' parked bikes is likely linked to our expanding waist lines. *Bicycling and Walking in the U.S.*, Thunderhead's first biennial Benchmarking Report, shows that bicycling and walking have been in decline in the U.S. since the 1960s. At the same time there has been a surge in adults and children who are obese. The report compares, for the first time ever, bicycling and walking levels, investment in bicycling and walking, and public health. The most striking findings reveal major disparities between cycling and walking levels, traffic fatalities, and federal funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects.

In the midst of the obesity epidemic a growing number of states and local governments are rejecting a half-century of transportation practice and demanding that streets accommodate all types of travel, not just automobiles. Many cities across Mississippi are rethinking their sidewalk policies, realizing that an increased number of sidewalks in neighborhoods will mean more people walking in those neighborhoods producing healthier and safer communities.

The concept of "complete streets" - with bike lanes, sidewalks and room for mass transit - has also attracted a diverse national alliance of supporters, including advocates for senior citizens and the disabled. These groups are potential partnership groups for the park and recreation departments across Mississippi. Fourteen states, six counties, 10 regional governments and 52 cities have complete streets policies, according to the National Complete Streets Coalition. Is your department or city counted in these numbers as being a proponent of a healthy living style?

Healthy Kids Partnership Idea

Forrest General Hospital in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, has partnered with several local restaurants for the Healthy Kids Program. Each participating restaurant offers a fun children's menu featuring a variety of healthy food choices. Forrest General provides young dinners at each participating restaurant with a specially designed menu featuring a coloring page on the front and a box of crayons to create their own masterpiece. Local artists designed the coloring pages.

Grant Opportunities

Children in Balance (CIB) - The Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman School for Nutrition Science and Policy is requesting applications from cities across the country to implement **The Balance Project** - a two-year, community-based research intervention targeting 1st-3rd graders and their families. CIB will provide selected communities with training, tools and funding (\$300,000 over two years) that will enable them to create an environment that surrounds children with healthier food options and opportunities for active living in their community. From the RFA process, CIB will select six communities that are similar in their level of community readiness to make social

change. Three will be randomized to receive the intervention and three will be randomized to serve as control communities. Letters of Intent are due by November 15, 2007. For the full announcement and application, please visit www.childreninbalance.org.

Active Lifestyle Programs for Kids Supported - The goal of the General Mills Champions for Healthy Kids Initiative is to encourage communities throughout the United States to improve the eating and physical activity patterns of young people, ages 2-18. The Initiative will award fifty grants of \$10,000 each to nonprofit organizations providing programs that demonstrate the greatest likelihood of sustainable impact on young people's nutrition and activity levels. Local organizations that work with children, including park districts, health departments, government agencies, Native American tribes, municipal organizations, churches, schools, YMCAs, Boys & Girls clubs, etc., are encouraged to apply. The application deadline is January 15, 2008. Visit <http://www.generalmills.com/corporate/commitment/champions.aspx> for program guidelines and online application information.

What is the Mississippi Tennis Association?

The Mississippi Tennis Association (MTA) is the state office for the United States Tennis Association (USTA), located in Jackson. There are over 11,000 card carrying members of the USTA. The MTA runs USTA programs across the state for both junior and adult tennis players.

The flagship program for juniors is USTA Junior Team Tennis. Team Tennis is just what it says, juniors play on a team comprised of players of their same age and ability and they compete locally in a league. Winners advance to the State Championships held each summer in Jackson. Those winning teams at State qualify to play at Sectionals held in August and possibly advance to Nationals. Junior Team Tennis is played across the state at both private and public facilities. Some areas run the program three times a year, while others just run it during the summer. Contact Russell Dendy, Junior Program Director at 601-981-4421 or russelld@mstennis.com if you are interested in getting a program started in your community.

Adults have many options for league play through the USTA. In early spring, USTA League for Adult and Seniors is played across the state. Winners at the local level come to Jackson each June to play in the State Championships. Following USTA League, is USTA League Mixed Doubles in the summer. This is a great opportunity to play against members of the opposite sex. Advancement to State, Sectionals and Nationals is also part of this program. BMW Combo Doubles is played during the fall. In 2007, the USTA realized that more formats were needed to meet all of the league players tennis desires. Alternative Leagues is a new focus and the early success of these leagues has proven that our players love to play organized tennis. For more information, contact Lindsey Sartain, Director of Adult Leagues at 601-981-4421 or lindseys@mstennis.com. Visit our website at www.mstennis.com to find all that is available to your facility.

Metamorphic

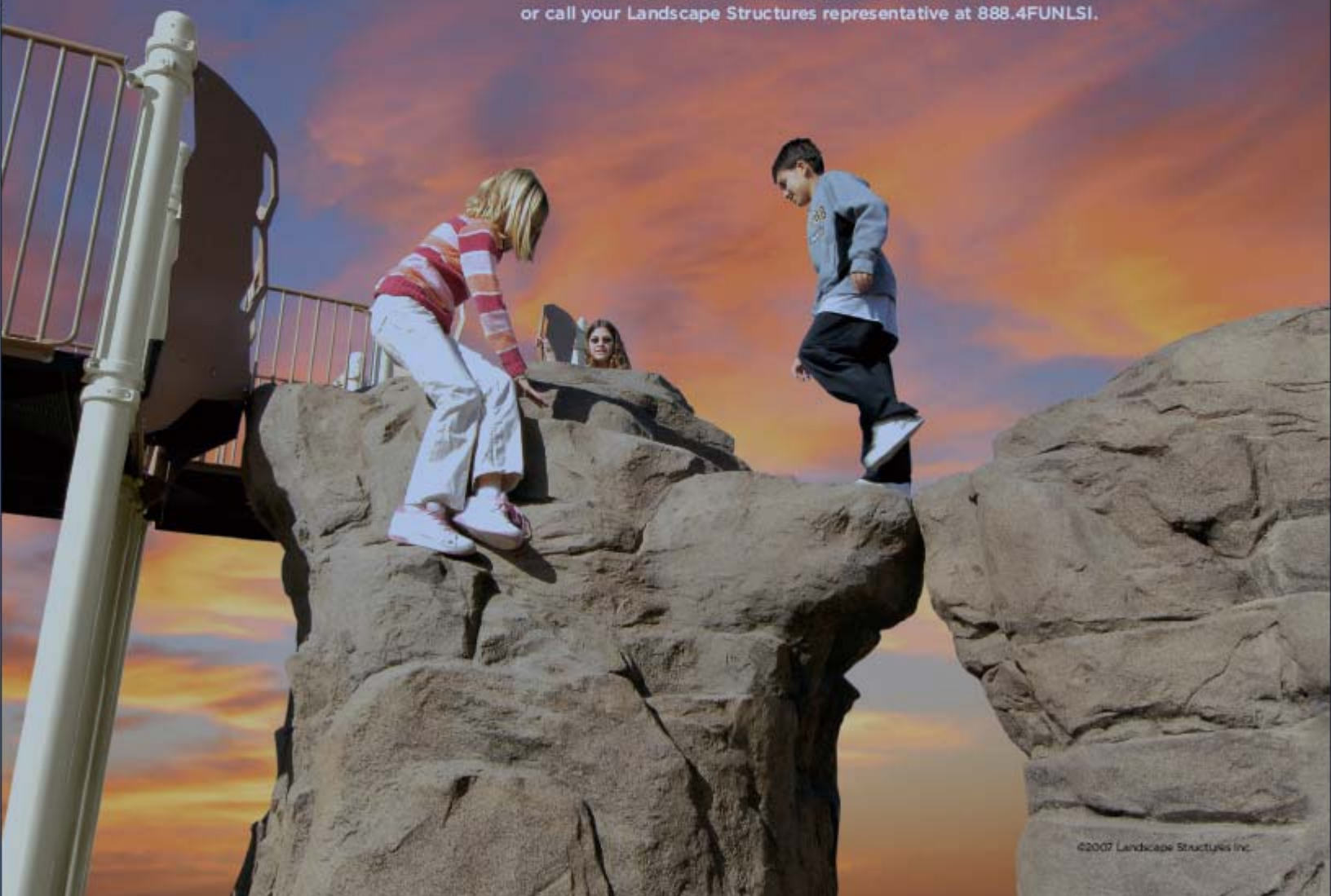
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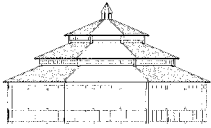
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