

Forum Update

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2007 MRPA Convention Session Proposal

The 2007 MRPA Convention Program/Education Committee would like to invite you to submit a session proposal for the convention. We are also looking for speakers and administrators who can share knowledge, experience, or programs related to parks and recreation.

Our goal is provide an exciting and interesting conference that will meet the needs of our members. We need your help! If you are interested please email Don Lewis at dlewis@ci.tupelo.ms.us or call 662-841-6440. The 2007 MRPA Convention will be held in Tupelo, September 10-13.

Pepsi Pitch, Hit and Run Program

Hosting a free PHR competition will provide boys and girls ages 7-14 the opportunity to showcase their baseball skills and advance through four levels of competition, including the Team Championship level of competition, hosted at Major League ballparks, and the Pitch, Hit & Run National Finals hosted at the 2007 Major League Baseball (MLB) All-Star Game in San Francisco, CA.

Local competitions take place from March 1 – mid May. Please visit www.mlb.com/phr to sign up to host a competition and receive your Local Administrator Kit, which contains promotional posters, registration forms, award ribbons, a "Strike Zone" banner for pitching and other information required to conduct a Local competition.

You can also apply for the 2007 MLB/NRPA Double Play Grant, provided by MLB and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). The Double Play Grant will reward selected park and recreation agencies for hosting Pitch, Hit & Run in their communities. Download the grant application at www.nrpa.org/mlb.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call 770.641.7415 or 770.641.7519 or email a representative at j.hollopeter@lejsports.com / m.hilley@lejsports.com.

Matching Grants for Wildlife Habitat Restoration

The Five-Star Restoration Matching Grants Program, administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, provides matching grants in support of community-based wetland, riparian, and coastal habitat restoration projects throughout the U.S. and its territories. The focus is on projects that foster local natural resource stewardship through education, outreach, and training activities. Projects should involve diverse partnerships of organizations, including schools, universities, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, local businesses, etc., that contribute funding, land, technical assistance, workforce support, and/or other in-kind services. The application deadline is March 9, 2007. Visit <http://www.nfwf.org/programs/5star-rfp.cfm> for more information.

Hamburger Helper Announces Grant Program

Hamburger Helper, a General Mills food brand, is looking to lend a "helping hand" to neighborhoods across the United States with its "My Hometown Helper" grant program. Individuals from communities and organizations across America can visit the program's Web site



to submit a written essay describing how the “My Hometown Helper” grant would help improve their community project.

Examples of possible community projects include: lights or bleachers for baseball, soccer, or football fields; playground equipment for a park; new uniforms for Little League teams, etc. Applicants can request a onetime award of between \$500 and \$15,000 during any single month. All requests for funding must be sponsored by a municipal or civic organization or public school.

The program will award “helping hand” grants each month from online applications received through May 2007. Applications will be evaluated monthly. Funds will be awarded based on the merit of the project, including its impact on and support within the community. For more information on the “My Hometown Helper” program and complete guidelines, visit the program’s Web site at <http://www.myhometownhelper.com/LearnMore.aspx>. *The Deadline for Applications is May 31, 2007*

National Health and Livability Summit

With a generous grant from the National Recreation Foundation, NRPA will host our first ever National Health and Livability Summit in Atlanta, Georgia, April 17-19. With high-impact partners such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Society of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), this premier event will examine the vital contributions that park and recreation agencies make to increase the quality of life, health, and livability of the individuals they serve. Topics will discuss public/private partnerships, safety and preparedness, physical activity and nutrition, health disparities/at-risk populations, the built environment, and the science and trends of obesity and its growing trend in the U.S. For more information on registration, exhibit or sponsorship opportunities, visit www.nrpa.org/healthsummit. Or, contact education@nrpa.org, or 800.626.NRPA (6772).

Gum Tree Festival Planned

The Gumtree Festival is a juried fine arts and crafts festival in Tupelo. In 2007, the festival will be held on Saturday, May 12 from 9:30 until 5:30 and Sunday, May 13 from 10:30 until 5:00. The event will be held on the Old Courthouse Lawn in the Historic Downtown area. For detailed information, visit the website at www.gumtreemuseum.com.

It’s Basketball Season

Your department can provide the 8 to 13 year old boys and girls in your community with a fun basketball skills event! Join the United States Olympic Committee in hosting a FREE Jr. Olympic Skills Competition, the official youth skills competition of the U.S. Olympic Team! Sign up now at www.jrolympicsskills.com to host any/or all four (4) of the

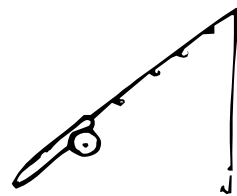
sporting events - *basketball, soccer, tennis and track & field*. You will receive a FREE administrative kit that includes athletic equipment!!

- FREE and easy to administer
- Great program for school PE Classes
- Boys and girls compete separately
- An administrative kit is provided to each Local Qualifying Event host complete with information/materials necessary to host a competition
- Host a basketball, soccer and/or tennis competition and receive a basketball, soccer balls and a tennis racquet with low compression tennis balls
- Facility requirements: a basketball hoop for basketball; a wall for tennis; an open field for soccer and track & field
- 3 levels of competition, including the National Finals at the U.S. Olympic Training Center
- Events begin January 15th, 2007

Visit www.jrolympicsskills.com to sign up today, download the official Jr. Olympic Skills handbook (thoroughly explains how to run the competitions), and to view a video from our 2006 National Finals at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Increasing Concerns About Children Losing Touch With Nature

Prompted by the galvanizing book *The Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*, by Richard Louv, NRPA members are asking how public parks and recreation can meaningfully participate in the response to concerns about kids becoming increasingly disconnected from nature. The Conservation Fund, a national land conservation organization, is working to convene a “National Forum on Children and Nature,” which is expected to be announced in the first half of 2007.



The National Recreation and Park Association hopes to bring hundreds of local and regional park and recreation agencies into this national advocacy effort. It has begun pilot programs such as “Let’s Go Fishing,” in cooperation with the Recreational Boating and Fishing

Foundation, and the soon to be launched “Teens Outside” adventure recreation program, in partnership with the Outdoor Industries Foundation.

For details, please contact NRPA’s Richard Dolesh at rdolesh@nrpa.org or Kathy Spangler at kspangler@nrpa.org.

Global Gear Drive Ships Equipment to Children in Iraq

When the International Alliance for Youth Sports (IAYS) – the global arm of the National Alliance for Youth Sports – received an e-mail from a U.S. soldier stationed in Iraq requesting sporting equipment, the staff wasted no time in gathering a shipment together and sending it overseas.

U.S. Army Captain William Perrich – who is stationed in Iraq along with his team to aid citizens in ways that include organizing food and clothing drives, visiting schools and distributing school supplies, and organizing sporting events in neighborhoods – wrote to the Global Gear Drive requesting equipment

“I was hoping to find an organization that would be interested in sponsoring a neighborhood soccer (football) league,” Perrich wrote. “We have several here, but the fields they play on are not in the best condition. They need nets, balls, jerseys or uniforms – cleats would be nice – and more than anything, they need someone who cares.”

In response, the Global Gear Drive sent three boxes full of jerseys, soccer balls, shin guards and cleats.

“Every time we are able to help children in countries that truly need assistance, it reinforces our goal to bring sports to children everywhere around the world,” said Fred Engh, founder and CEO of the IAYS. “We are proud to have done something to aid the innocent victims of the Iraq war.”

Strategic Planning Committee Reviews MRPA Goals

Members of the MRPA Strategic Planning Committee, in preparation of a planning retreat being planned for the spring, have begun a thorough review of the plan approved recently. The first task of the committee was to review the goals that were established during the first Strategic Planning review. Several of the priorities have changed within the past twelve months.

The number one goal from the previous plan was to “promote the hiring of qualified park and recreation staff.” That goal moved to the number six position during the review and was replaced at number one by “increasing membership involvement.”

Some of the ways the committee have suggested to accomplish this new goal would be to: update the current directory, form working committees such as program/education committee, get the Districts more active with setting goals and objectives each year, increase recognition of people and accomplishments, invite members to participate in MRPA tasks, rotate each committee’s members at least every 2 years, increase educational opportunities, come up with a pamphlet for what each person and agency will get for their membership and increase participation in district and state events.

The previous number two goal: “Promote, support, educate and create recreation opportunities throughout Mississippi” was replaced by “Implement an association

Strategic Governance system.”

Some of the ways the committee wants to accomplish this goal include; using an education format to inform the membership, especially during the annual conference, set more realistic timelines for task accomplishment, and to educate the members about the strategic governance system and the benefits it can provide to MRPA.

“Promoting, supporting, educating about and creating recreation opportunities throughout Mississippi” is the new goal number three. Ways the committee plans to accomplish this goal include; establishing a benefits package for a strong recreational program, continued educational efforts and a closer working relationship with the Mississippi Municipal League, reviewing the benefits of MRPA and then promoting those benefits, creating partnerships with other entities, utilizing national programs in towns that don’t have recreation departments, keeping elected officials informed of ongoing issues on a regular basis, and continuing the development of the statewide MRPA athletic program.

“Establishing secure and diversified streams of revenue for the association” came in number fourth place. Ideas the committee are exploring to accomplish this goal include; developing a strong convention committee to better utilize opportunities created by the convention, increase sponsorship opportunities, get more agency members involved in the state athletic tournament series, recruit and retain more corporate sponsors, and to host more regional and national certification programs.

“Expanding educational opportunities” continues to hold the number five position in the six goals. The committee proposes that MRPA form a working education/program committee, establish an annual education schedule for districts and the convention at least two years in advance, provide more educational opportunities within districts through partnerships, provide more educational opportunities during the year for employees that may not be able to attend the state conference, provide leadership training for members.

Finally, goal number six is “Promote the hiring of qualified park and recreation staff.” The committee proposes that, in order to accomplish this goal, MRPA needs to; create a benefits package that explains the need for elected officials to hire qualified professionals, work through MML to spread the need for hiring professionals, to complete a hiring package that will be sent to city administrations when there is a park and recreation opening and to encourage professional certification for existing staff.

As you can see, the Strategic Planning Committee has been extremely busy during the first few days of the new year. If you would like to join the committee, now is the time. Call the MRPA office at (601) 582-3361 or drop us an email to info@aboutmrpa.org and let your interest be known. Additionally, if you’d be interested in working on one or more of these goals, let us know. As mentioned earlier, one of the goals is to increase membership involvement. This is a great opportunity for you to join those who want to make our association and our profession better.

To join the Strategic Planning Committee call the MRPA office at (601) 582-3361 or send an email to: info@aboutmrpa.org