

Forum Update

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Hershey Update from Larry Davis

Belated Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a very safe and happy holiday season. By now, some of you are already in the planning process for your local meets. I have not received the 2007 rulebooks, but I will get them to you as soon as possible. The State Final will be **Saturday, June 9, 2007** in Gulfport at Gulfport High Track on Victory Road. Deadline for turning in results from your local/district meet will be **Wednesday, May 30, 2007**, which should include only the winners of each event. If you have any problems with this request, please contact me.

Be sure to remember that there will be no travel expenses provided to anyone for the state meet. Also, there has been a reduction in the number of T-shirts that will be provided to each state, which means that there will only be enough for the athletes who compete.

The National Meet will be held in August in Hershey, Pennsylvania on August 2-5, 2007. All expenses will be paid for the participants who are selected. If you have any questions concerning any of the above mentioned, please feel free to contact Larry Davis at ldavis@ci.gulfport.ms.us / 228-868-5889. I'm looking forward to working with you this year.

Annual Therapeutic Recreation Workshop

Mississippi State Hospital Therapeutic Recreation Department will be hosting the Annual Therapeutic Recreation Workshop. It will be held on Friday, March 30 at the MSH Camground facility Challenge ROPES Course. The title of the workshop is "Experiencing the Benefits of a Low Initiative Challenge ROPES Program as a Valid Treatment Intervention in Therapeutic Recreation."

For more information and to get on the mailing list, please call Art Bressler at 601-351-8000 ext. 4241 or e-mail at bressar@msh.state.ms.us.

District One Field Maintenance Workshop

District One is hosting their annual Field Maintenance Workshop on March 7 at the Oxford Park Commission's Activity Center. Call (662) 232-2390 if you have not received your registration form or if you have questions. The registration fee is \$30 for professionals and \$10 for students. CEU's are included in that registration fee. Topics to be covered include Seed, Spring or Sod, Grass Types, Why Overseed, the ABC's of Field Maintenance and an overview of the Field Maintenance Program at Olive Branch.

R-E-C-R-E-A-T-I-O-N Customer Service Tips

By: Silvana Clark

R: Resourceful: How can you stretch your entertainment budget? Invite local cheerleaders practicing for a competition to entertain at your community event. Ask Toastmaster groups to visit for a storytelling session for day campers. Ask a local high school for the decorations after their prom. You'll get great themed items.

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E: Exceed: Exceed customer expectations. Do that tiny bit of extra service that leaves people with the feeling of, “Wait till I tell my friends what happened at that family carnival!” A park maintenance employee carried Barney band-aids for kids who had a minor scrape. Parents wrote letters of praise because a band-aid exceeded their expectations!

C: Creativity: People come to your programs for a unique experience. Be creative in signage, programs and even in naming your paddleboats. Instead of assigning a family to “Canoe #4”, tell them to get into “Shamu’s Toy”. Offer “Insomniac Tours” of your community at midnight. Be known for innovative ideas that attract customers.

R: Research: Take time to research trends and statistics related to recreation. Do you know the crafting industry is a 14 billion dollar business? Are you offering programs designed for tweens...those delightful 9-13 year olds? Is a major corporation moving to your corporation and bringing an influx of high paying jobs? By doing research, you’ll be able to offer relevant programs to your customers.

E: Examine: Step back and examine some of your programs. Are you doing things the same way because it’s comfortable? Could you add new classes, cross-train staff or find new vendors? Are you spending hours trying to fill a class that was popular years ago? Maybe it’s time to move past macramé and start a few scrap booking classes.

A: Anticipate: Plan ahead for possible “snags.” Do you need extra staff on a busy weekend? Is rain predicted the night of your outdoor luau? Anticipating problems saves you headaches later on.

T: Training: Ongoing training is essential to keep staff motivated. Use role playing and small group discussions at staff meetings. Invite a customer to share their personal experiences, so staff has insight into customer’s opinions. Provide practical advice on calming an upset customer.

I: Innovative: Take a risk and try new things. Encourage staff to give input about registration or ordering supplies. Their new ideas might provide better customer service. Give a free ice cream cone to every 25th customer signing up for soccer. Hold raffles for gag gifts. Have staff dress in costumes for various events. Offer half price admission to people wearing pink or white at the Valentine’s Party.

O: Organized: If organization isn’t one of your strengths...get help fast! Participants immediately notice when a program is organized. Make checklists, have supplies on hand and have a back-up plan.

N: Names: What sounds more appealing... “Parent Child Hike” or “Wiggles and Giggles on the Trail”? Advertise your programs with fun titles. One Department offered a class in “Mulch Madness.” Another department asked teens to volunteer for “No Ivy League”...a chance to rip out English Ivy overtaking the park!

For more information, contact Silvana at silvanac@msn.com 615-662-7432 or www.silvanaclark.com.

Pitch, Hit and Run Competitions

Will your recreation district provide the opportunity of a lifetime for the youth ballplayers in your community? 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 their website at 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 contact PHR by phone or email. Contact Jamie Hollopeter/ Matt Hilley, PHR National Headquarters, c/o LEJ Sports Group, 4015 Wetherburn Way, Norcross, GA 30092 770.641.7415 / 770.641.7519, 770.641.7596 fax j.hollopeter@lejsports.com / m.hilley@lejsports.com www.mlb.com/phr

National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation

The Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program of the National Park Service (NPS) has opened a new Mississippi office in Ocean Springs. The office will provide technical assistance to communities working to conserve rivers and open space, and to establish trails and greenways.

The purpose of the Rivers and Trails Program is to empower local communities to achieve locally defined goals for natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation. In keeping with the NPS mission, “network” projects are encouraged – those that create physical connections in and between parks and communities and that contribute to local, regional and state networks of parks, rivers, trails, greenways and open spaces. The Rivers and Trails Program is particularly interested in projects that incorporate health and fitness goals as part of outdoor recreation planning.

The local RTCA contact would enjoy the opportunity to discuss project proposal ideas. Contact Liz Smith-Incer, 228/ 875-9057 x120, liz_smith-incer@nps.gov

Master Urban Forestry Training

The Master Urban Forestry Training program of the Mississippi Urban Forest Council will be offered two more times this spring. The program will be available in Hattiesburg on March 27 and in the Jackson area on April 17.

The training program offers training on tree management in city settings and neighborhoods. Master Urban Foresters receive 25 classroom hours of free instruction and learn how to: Choose the right tree for the right place, Identify trees, Assess hazard trees, Replant with storm resistant varieties. As part of Mississippi's hurricane recovery program, classes and workshops will be offered in all areas of the state. The course is offered in partnership with The Mississippi Forestry Commission, the U.S. Forest Service and Harrison County Beautification.

Course graduates are asked to "give back" to their communities by committing to provide 25 hours of community service. Assistance may be to public or private groups or to individuals.

Trees enhance property values, improve the look and feel of commercial areas, and even help reduce crime! Come learn how to plant the right trees for your community.

The program consists of two indoor classes from (9 AM-5 PM each day) and field studies, which can be completed on participant's schedule. Classes are free. Training Manual is free with \$25 Mississippi Urban Forestry Council membership.

For more information contact Donna Vaughn Yowell Executive Director of the Mississippi Urban Forest Council
164 Trace Cove Drive, Madison, Mississippi 39110
Phone: 601.856.1660 Cell Phone: 601.672.0755
MS Urban Forest Council Web Info: <http://www.msurbanforest.com>.

Dizzy Dean High School World Series

The 2007 Dizzy Dean High School World Series will be hosted in the Gold Triangle of Mississippi (Starkville, West Point and Columbus) on July 12 - 16, 2007. The finals will be played at Mississippi State University. All players on a team must attend the same high school. The tournament format will be a round robin.

For more information contact Richard Ellis, National Director, Dizzy Dean Baseball at (662) 227-3450 or Stacy Hester at (662) 574-2974.

Partnership for Play Legislation Announced At Mid-Year Forum

NRPA, along with the YMCA and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), held a special launch event for a new initiative called the Partnership for Play Every Day, which will support efforts to encourage children to devote 60 minutes per day to play and exercise. More information is available at www.playeveryday.org.

During the launch event, Dr. Bill Haskell of the Stanford University School of Medicine presented a science-based report focused on the national crisis of childhood obesity and the need to do something about the sedentary culture in America. The report also calls for development of a Community Play Index that would identify local barriers that limit or prevent children from being able to play. Dr. Haskell: "We need to create a 'Generation Play.' If we don't get behind this kind of change, we are going to have Generation XXL: extra, extra large."

He added that one out of five children aged 2 to 16 is obese, and the percentage will grow unless greater opportunities for physical activity are available.

At the same event, Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) announced that he is co-sponsoring landmark legislation with Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) called the Promoting Lifelong Active Communities Every Day Act. The bill focuses on increasing quality play opportunities, acquisition of spaces for play, and raising voices in support of opportunities for play.

Sen. Harkin stressed that, although he believes that no child should be left behind in terms of intellectual achievement, they also shouldn't be left behind in terms of physical achievement. "Why are physical education and art teachers the first to be cut from school budgets? Aren't these things important to a child's development?"

For more information on the Promoting Lifelong Active Communities Every Day Act, visit www.nrpa.org/forum

Claiborne County Parks Office Destroyed by Fire

The Claiborne County Parks and Recreation Department headquarters burned on Saturday, February 17, 2007. The facility was totally destroyed. No injuries were reported.

Save the Dates! **MRPA Annual Conference** **September 10-13** **Tupelo, MS**

The 2007 MRPA Annual Conference and Trade Show will be held in Tupelo, MS on September 10 - 13, 2007. Educational programs are now being developed by conference host Don Lewis. The theme for this year's meeting will be *Laugh, Live and Learn Together*.

If you have a program idea you'd like to share with your fellow professionals across the state or if you've heard a good speaker lately, please give Don a call within the next week or so. You can reach him at (662) 841-6440 or by email at dlewis@ci.tupelo.ms.us.