

Forum Update

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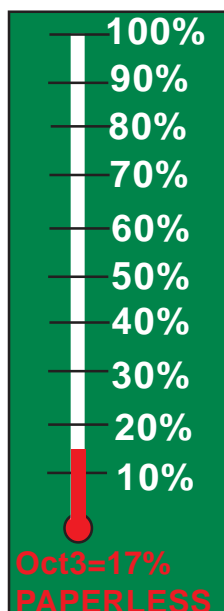
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President's Message MRPA Conference Big Success

Don Lewis, Tupelo Department of Parks & Recreation



This year's conference in Vicksburg was successful! I would like to thank the MRPA Conference Committee, the MRPA Awards committee, and the Vicksburg Parks & Recreation for all of their hard work.

The conference was well attended with over 200 professionals, students, and exhibitors. Most of the classes that were offered at the conference were full and a wide variety of subjects were offered. Thank you to all of the presenters that helped with the education sessions. Plans are already underway for next year's conference to be hosted at Percy Quinn State Park in McComb.

The awards committee received 22 nominations this year. Many Departments took advantage of the three categories based on population. The Awards Committee did an outstanding job with the presentations and they are ready to start accepting nominations for next year. Congratulations to all of this year's winners!

The MRPA Board met on Thursday of the conference and has set its first planning meeting of the year. The Board and all committees will meet Thursday, November 6th & 7th at Percy Quinn State Park. Watch your email for more information.

In closing, I would again like to thank everyone for their help in making this a great event for MRPA. Thank you to all the volunteers that help all year long. MRPA belongs to the membership and with your help we can meet everyone's needs.

Hershey Track & Field Winners

The Hershey Track and Field Games came to an end for six Mississippi athletes on Sunday, August 3, 2008. These individuals enjoyed four free days of fun in Hershey, Pennsylvania, because they participated in the Hershey Track & Field Games. This year, the Hershey's Track & Field Games brought 560 youth athletes to the North American Final Meet to compete in variety of track and field events, including running, jumping and throwing competitions. For the third year in a row the youth athletes had the chance to meet and watch exhibition races by Olympic legends Carl



Lewis, Bruce Jenner and Rafer Johnson, as well as Team USA stars Derrick Brew, Joanna Hayes, Rob Myers, Virginia Powell, Rob Myers, Moushaumi Robinson, Andrew Rock, Jason Smoots, Jenelle Deatherage, Treniere Clement, Jenny Adams, Chris Lukezic, Lindsey Gallo, Sam Burley, Morgan Uceny and Steve Sherer. The day after arrival, each athlete toured the Hershey Chocolate Factory and spent the remainder of the day at the Hershey Park Amusement Complex. Jylin, Julina, Ty, Lindsey, Tanisha and Diaz

On Saturday the athletes participated in the opening ceremony at the Milton Hershey School Track. At 9:00 a.m. the track and field events began and our Mississippi athletes performed very well. The following is the results of this year's 31st Annual Hershey North American Track & Field Games final meet:

9-10 year olds

Jylin Whitlock of Jackson placed 6th in the 50 Meter Dash
Julina Johnson of Pascagoula placed 7th in the 50 Meter Dash
Ty Horne of Hattiesburg placed 1st in the 100 meter Dash

11-12 year olds

Lindsay Raybourn of Long Beach placed 6th in the 800 Meter Run
Tanisha Winder of Jackson placed 3rd in the Standing long Jump (This was her second trip to the National final.)

13-14 year olds

Diaz Easterling of Gulfport placed 6th in the 100 Meter Dash.

After the track meet, each athlete attended the Friendship Banquet at Founder Hall, Milton Hershey School. At the banquet, Rafer Johnson, Bruce Jenner and Carl Lewis spoke of the importance of education and always trying to be the best you can be.

After the banquet, the athletes attended a dance, play basketball and some table games. On Sunday each individual returned to their homes with many favorable memories and souvenirs of their four-day events.

I would like to thank all the volunteers at the local levels that made the 2008 program a huge success. A special thank you to the support of all MRPA members and hope to see all MRPA agencies represented in the 2009 event.

If you are interested in starting this program in your community, please contact Larry Davis, State Director at 228-831-0153.

Congratulations MRPA Award Winners

Many thanks to MRPA members who took the time to submit award nominations to this year's MRPA Awards for Excellence in Parks and Recreation, sponsored by Musco Lighting. The Awards Committee accepted twenty-two nominations, breaking all previous records for submissions.

Maria Hazlitt was recognized as the 2008 Student Scholarship recipient. As such, Maria received a \$500 check to help offset her college expenses. She is a senior in Therapeutic Recreation at the University of Southern Mississippi.

The Claiborne County parks Commission's Fitness Complex was the recipient of the Hayward "Bo" Phillips Design Award of Merit in Class I. The fitness facility project began in the spring of 2006. Construction for the project was provided in a matching grant from the Department of Wildlife Fisheries and Parks through the Recreational Trails Program. More than fifty people enjoy the trail on a daily basis. The trail is coupled by an indoor facility that offers strength training and opportunities for cardiovascular exercise.

The Class II Hayward "Bo" Phillips Design Award of Merit went to the City of Clinton Parks and Recreation for their Traceway Park Renovation project. Traceway Park is Clinton's major park for league play, local, district, regional, national and college tournaments. The purpose of the renovation project was to update the park's appearance and to make it more user friendly.

The City of Tupelo Parks and Recreation Department received the Class III Hayward "Bo" Phillips Design Award of Merit recipient for their Veterans Memorial Park project. Phase I of this \$500,000 project has been completed and was opened to the public on Memorial day this year. A joint effort between the department and several veterans organizations, along with strong community support has provided the community with a fitting memorial to all veterans who have served in the armed forces.

The Class II Arts and Humanities Award of Merit went to the City of Clinton Parks and Recreation Department for their Blankets for Veterans program. A group of senior citizens decided to produce 30 lap robes for patients at the G.V. Sonny Montgomery VA Medical Center in Jackson. The lap robes were completed and delivered on Veteran's Day in November.

The Class I Special Event Award of Merit went to the City of Pontotoc Parks and Recreation Department for their Santa on the Square program. More than 700 children received something from Santa and had the opportunity to submit their wish lists. Downtown merchants and other local businesses contributed stockings and stocking stuffers. Event organizers say it was such a success that they plan to make it a tradition.

The Class II Special Event Award of Merit went to the City of Madison's Parks and Recreation Department for their Mother/Daughter High Tea Party. The Mississippi High Tea Authority was instrumental in educating attendees about the social skills of high tea. More than 200 mothers and daughters took a break together, enjoyed high tea, and made some memorable moments.

The Columbus-Lowndes Recreation Authority received the Class III Special Event Award of Merit for their Catfish and Karting Festival. Historic Propst Park was the site of the first annual Columbus Catfish and Karting Festival. Thousands of spectators enjoyed catfish with all the trimmings while they also enjoyed a Go-Kart Road Race. Other activities included live bands, face painting, inflatables, souvenirs and arts/crafts vendors. Proceeds from the event will be used to build a spray park in Propst Park. The event was also featured in the National Kart News publication.

The Therapeutic Agency or Special Event Award went to the City of Pascagoula for their Adventure Island and Soccer Complex. The IG Levy Memorial park is home to the Adventure Island Playground which was originally built in 1980 for children with disabilities. In 2006 several funding partners came together to rebuild Adventure Island. The \$480,000 playground for children ages 0 - 12 years of age was re-designed to be ADA compliant and to make the entire facility completely accessible. The soccer complex accessibility project installed lighting on two of the nine fields and made three parking lots accessible. Two pavilions were also installed to allow people with disabilities to watch games from a good vantage point.

The Recreation Therapist of the Year Award went to Chandra Fontenot. Chandra graduated from the University of Southern Mississippi in 2007. She is employed by the City of Clinton Parks and Recreation Department where she is the Special Services Director. In that position she oversees therapeutic programs with participants ranging from youth to seniors. She has also developed many programs within her area since she has been employed by Clinton. Chandra provided an educational session for this year's conference program.

The Recreation Professional of the Year Award went to Don Lewis. Don became the Sports Director for the City of Tupelo Parks and Recreation Department in 1997. He became the director of the department in 2001. He oversees the care and management of a staff of 30, 18 parks, and more than 600 acres of green space. Don is a CPRP, a member of the National Recreation and Park Association and is United States Soccer Federation Certified. He has a unique ability to create private-public partnerships, giving his city with a population of just 37,000 the opportunity to accomplish more than other cities of that size. As Tupelo's Park and Recreation Director and the President of the Mississippi Recreation and Park Association, Don displays professionalism in every aspect of his work, in which he takes great pride.

Congratulations again to all of the winners. Musco Sports Lighting has announced its intentions to continue its support of the MRPA Awards Program. We hope to make this event even more special in the future. Every department in the state is encouraged to consider submitting a nomination for one of your programs, projects, or people. The award nomination form can be found on the website by visiting www.aboutmrpa.org. Although the deadline for submission has not yet been established for next year's award program, nominations can be accepted at any time throughout the year. Don't wait. If you have something deserving of recognition, make the nomination today.

USA Football Grants Available

The National Recreation and Park Association has partnered with USA Football to provide financial support to youth football programs being operated by Park and Recreation agencies and by independent youth organizations that play on public fields throughout the United States.

Support is available for new or existing tackle or flag programs that are being operated in Fall 2008, Winter 2008-09, or Spring 2009.

Grants are expected to be awarded in the range of \$1,000-\$5,000 and are for football-related expenses such as equipment, registration/scholarships, uniforms, field fees, insurance, field items, field maintenance, staff/referee fees, safety/first aid and more.

Financial need and contribution to community will be considered. **Hurry, the application deadline is Friday, October 31, 2008. For more information visit www.nrpa.org.**

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New Federal Pool Drain Requirements

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has issued a mandate that all public pools be in compliance with legal requirements to prevent entrapment threats in pool drains by December 19, 2008. The Consumer Product Safety Commission, in June, issued a new interpretation of the law redefining what constitutes an unblockable drain. This is a serious concern to the park and recreation community, as the proposed requirements will likely require significant financial and other resources for parks and could likely cause access problems for your customers.

The National Recreation and Park Association will be submitting comments to CPSC in representation of park and recreation concerns.

MRPA Members on Paperless Membership

"It makes things a lot easier and guarantees that I stay updated." Chandra Fontenot, Special Services Coordinator, Clinton Parks & Recreation 7/22/08

"It just makes things easier and faster!! Contact can now be made with just the click of a button. We no longer have to wait for the 'Pony Express' to bring the mail." Debbie Henry, Senior Service Assistant, Brandon Parks & Recreation 8/27/08

NRPA Scores Huge Victory with Passage of Amendments to No Child Left Inside Act

On September 18, 2008, the House of Representatives approved two important amendments in passing the No Child Left Inside Act that will directly benefit park and recreation agencies once the bill is passed into law by both chambers of Congress. The amendments, one offered by Rep. Peter Welch (D-VT) to include municipalities as eligible entities for grants, and one offered by Rep. Joe Courtney (D-CT), to require eligible grant entities to outline how they will partner with local park and recreation agencies to carry out the intent of the legislation, soundly place parks and recreation into the heart of this landmark bill.

The NCLI Act is intended to provide new resources for states to provide environmental education opportunities to students, provide funds for teacher training, and encourage teachers and schools get kids outdoors with hands-on field experiences to enhance learning and develop environmental literacy.

This bill will not be taken up by the Senate during this session of Congress. Next year, during the 111th Congress, we anticipate seeing movement on this bill with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, where NCLI will likely be reworked somewhat. Nonetheless, this was a very important step forward in placing parks and recreation front and center in the national effort to provide safe, healthy opportunities to kids to learn about the environment and spend time outdoors.