The mission of the Vermont Recreation and Parks Association is to provide training and resources to help Vermonters to “Create Community through People, Parks and Programs.”

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VRPA Newsletter
The VRPA Advocate is published three times a year by the Vermont Recreation and Parks Association. Contributions to the newsletter are welcome, including commentary on subjects of interest to Vermont’s recreation professionals and volunteers.

Mission

If you have any suggestions for future trainings, workshops, or special events please let us know! Email Jessica@vrpa.org with your suggestions. We hope to see you all soon!

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Happy New Year to all of our VRPA members!

I hope that you all had some quiet downtime as we concluded 2023, a year that was full of challenges and opportunities for us all! This message will be my final “President’s Perspective” article as your VRPA President. In fact, after the recent vote at the December quarterly meeting, my position will be replaced by a new VRPA governance structure, including a replacement of the President position for an Executive Committee “Chair” position. So not only is this my final “President’s Perspective,” it will be the final article written under that title in our newsletter ever!

2023 was quite the year for our VRPA! After several decades of holding our conference at the Lake Morey Inn, we switched things up and held our 80th annual Conference on Recreation at the Killington Grand. Based on your feedback, we’re going back to Killington for our 81st! The conference also became a trail symposium, bringing new speakers, new attendees and a new energy to the conference! The conference was a terrific success on many levels and we are optimistic about our future—we’re still holding strong after 80 years and counting!

On a personal note, it was a year of professional change for me, leaving Vermont State Parks after 12 years and joining new and old colleagues with Burlington Parks, Recreation and Waterfront as Marina Manager and Deputy Harbormaster. The Burlington Community Boathouse, where I work each day, is where my career in this profession began on May 15th, 1997. Though the Burlington Waterfront has changed a great deal from 1997 to present day (it’s only gotten better and better), the mission remains the same: Provide a world class recreational experience in one of the most beautiful places in the state of Vermont. The challenges we face on the waterfront and in the City of Burlington are the same that most of you face, but perhaps on a different scale. The enthusiasm I feel for what I do has never been higher. I love my job. I love where I work. I love the people I work with. And yes, I do miss my colleagues with Vermont State Parks who, by the way, are celebrating the state park system’s 100th anniversary this year! Congratulations Vermont State Parks on 100 years!

Whether you’ve worked in this profession for 1 month or for 50 years, I hope that 2024 is a great year for you both personally and professionally! Keep close to VRPA and take advantage of our many professional development and networking opportunities. I’ve gotten way more out of VRPA than I’ve ever put in over the last ten years, and I encourage you to get involved as we need good people like you to keep VRPA healthy and strong for the next generation of professionals! Best of luck in 2024!

With deep gratitude,

Rob Peterson CPRP
VRPA President
Happy Spring!

I hope you all have had a great start to 2024 and are looking forward to the spring, summer, and fall seasons!

There are so many exciting things happening at the VRPA this coming year, and I hope you take time to look through this newsletter to read through the articles highlighted in this annual newsletter. In this issue you will find highlights from a few of our past events, information on upcoming events, as well as many other interesting articles.

I read a quote recently by Abraham Maslow that resonated with me about the work that we do day to day in our profession: “In any given moment we have two options: to step forward into growth or step back into safety.” I thought about this and how it relates to us in a professional setting. So many of us feel stretched thin these days in our workloads, capacity, and time so the thought of changing something can seem daunting at times. Change can be hard, but we also need to remember that with change comes growth. We need to remember this when it comes to our departments as well as our own personal growth. It is easy to stay in the office and check more items off your to-do list when you are busy vs. get in the car and drive to a new course or workshop to try and learn something unknown to you, but I encourage you all to try to take these leaps this year. Challenge yourself to step out of your comfort zones to meet someone new, get a new certification, or try a new program or event in your community.

Take moments in the coming seasons to admire all you have accomplished as well. Visit your summer programs & events, walk through your facilities and parks, and write a list of new goals, talk to co-workers about their experiences, and be sure to connect with your community members to see what new programs or events they are hoping for in the future. The start of a new season is a great chance to take a breath and figure out the best path forward for you and your department.

The VRPA is here to support you in the ways needed – from finding new funding opportunities, advocating for your needs, and providing new trainings. Let us know what your continued challenges and needs are, and we will be sure to work hard to help you with those this year and beyond. We are excited to offer a full schedule of in-person meetings and trainings again this year, and would love to hear about any new opportunities your staff may be interested in. If you have never volunteered on a VRPA committee, this is your year! Serving on a committee at any capacity you are able not only helps the association, but builds your network and professional experience as well. This helps your department have insights and local connections, and supports new learning opportunities for professionals around the state. Reach out anytime to learn more!

Our 81st Annual VT Conference on Recreation & Trails Symposium is taking place September 25th & 26th at the Killington Grand hotel. We are so excited to see you all again this year in Killington with our returning conference partner – the Vermont Trails & Greenways Council! We look forward to seeing you all for some great education sessions and networking opportunities and hope you will join us! We have over 28 speakers lined up, and two days of learning & networking. Don’t miss the fun and the 81st celebration!

I would also like to thank all our new members that have joined VRPA, and an extra big thank you to those that have volunteered so much of their time on our various committees to help plan all these wonderful events for everyone. Thank you to all of our commercial members and vendors that joined us as new or returning members this year, to those that have sponsored and advertised with us, and to all those that have volunteered time to support our efforts. Your involvement and support is truly appreciated, thank you!

As I reflect personally on the past year and months ahead, it has been an ongoing balance like everyone else to juggle work, kids, and life in general. Everyone I talk to feels stretched thin these days, so don’t feel alone if that is how you feel as well. I am so thankful for the work you do, as I get to live it with my own kids through youth sports, summer camps, state parks, and all the other ways you as professionals make fun happen! Thank you all for helping keep our communities connected and growing!

Keep up the amazing work everyone and I look forward to seeing you all soon!

Sincerely,
Jessica Brodie
Executive Director
**WHAT INFLUENCED YOUR DECISION TO CHOOSE THE CAREER YOU DID?**

Ultimately the thing that drew me to the recreation field and what continues to keep me interested and motivated today is connecting with people and helping create meaningful experiences.

Working in restaurants, camps, and recreation centered organizations has taught me so much about what people want and need in their lives and I’m happy to be a small part in providing that for them. Recreation fuels me personally and professionally and I wouldn’t trade it for anything.

**CAREER POSITIONS HELD.**

For most positions in my career the word Program has started my title, usually followed with Coordinator or Manager so I’ve been a ‘Program-Coordinator-Manager’ most often.

At a recent NERF Games program, I introduced myself and said I’ll be reffing the games. A kid spoke up and said I think your title should be “Director of Battle Operations”.

I’m officially changing my title to Director of Coordinated Program Battle Operations Manager.

**WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR GREATEST CAREER ACCOMPLISHMENTS?**

When I started with Playworks Texas the program was just beginning in Houston, serving approximately one thousand students in five small charter schools. Before leaving the organization, we had expanded the program to include multiple school districts across the city as well as several other large districts, charter schools, and youth serving organizations across the state.

The expansion of direct services and training opportunities in my time with Playworks is certainly something I look back on as a proud and hard-fought accomplishment.

**WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR BIGGEST PROFESSIONAL CHALLENGES?**

You can’t please them all!

**PROFESSIONAL ADVICE FROM LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED...**

- “Don’t start chasing applause and acclaim. That way lies madness.” -Ron Swanson
- “The world meets nobody halfway. When you want something, you gotta take it.” -Lincoln Hawk from the 1987 CLASSIC ‘Over the Top.’
- Be playful, jump in and participate, make mistakes, show your true self. -Me

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS YOU VALUE MOST AS A MEMBER OF VRPA?**

I love the connection and camaraderie that being a member of VRPA provides! Being able to come together for meetings, conferences, and programs is fulfilling and a great opportunity to charge my professional battery.

**PERSONAL RECREATION INTERESTS.**

I’m a fan of disc golf, hiking, backyard sports (bocce, badminton, croquette, corn hole), picture taking, baking, movies, TV, being on the water, traveling, and being a dog dad.

**FAMILY.**

My core family includes my wife Kyra and our two fur babies-Pipsqueak (chihuahua) and Jasper (chocolate lab). My parents and siblings live in Michigan (look at your left hand-palm down-and the ring fingernail is where I grew up) and Kyra’s in Pennsylvania (outside of Philly where ya gotta get a hoagie at Wawa).
Around the State

national championships

Championships were won in the sports of tennis, pickleball, track & field, and the triathlon.
On November 4th, 2023, Burlington Parks, Recreation and Waterfront (BPRW), along with community partners Oakledge for Ali (OFA), celebrated the grand opening of the city’s first Universally Accessible Playground. This milestone marked the culmination of over a decade of collaborative efforts, including fundraising, grant-writing, and capital allocation. The playground’s design, led by the award-winning firm Groundview, was complemented by engineering support from VHB and construction oversight from EIV Technical Services and Engineers Construction Inc. The festivities included community organizations, remarks, a flash mob dance, and of course, plenty of cake. The Parks Foundation of Burlington also announced its new campaign, ‘Playgrounds 4All, Playgrounds 4ever’, aimed at ensuring inclusivity and accessibility in playgrounds for years to come.

Oakledge’s Universally Accessible Playground offers more than just play structures; it’s a destination within itself. With winding paths, connections to Burlington’s Greenway, and increased accessible parking, the playground seamlessly integrates with its natural surroundings. The topography was carefully modified to accommodate features like the Wide Family Slide, offering visitors breathtaking views of Lake Champlain. The landscape design includes mounds for seating and stormwater management, providing habitats for plants and wildlife. The playground’s inclusive design encourages visitors to engage with the play equipment or simply enjoy the serene environment. Additional features include an inclusive carousel, talk tubes, and musical instruments, with future modifications planned for enhanced accessibility.

BPRW extends its gratitude to the City of Burlington, state grants, and generous donors like Oakledge for Ali, whose support made this project possible. Looking ahead, BPRW aims to renovate the restrooms for improved accessibility, further enhancing the Oakledge experience.

NEW COLCHESTER RECREATION CENTER

Congratulations to the Town of Colchester Parks & Recreation on the groundbreaking for their new Recreation Center! The construction of the recreation center, a 29,427-square-foot multi-generational facility, responds to a community need that has been identified over the past 20 years through multiple surveys, community outreach, and engagement. This project will be paid entirely from the current and future proceeds generated from the existing 1% Local Option Tax (LOT), approved by voters in 2015 for financing of existing or future voter-approved capital projects.

This project was approved by voters on the Town Meeting Day ballot in March 2023 and is anticipated to be completed in Spring 2025.

For more information on the project visit Colchester Recreation Center.
On behalf of the Kingdom Trails Board of Directors, the Kingdom Trail Association (KT) is delighted to announce that the 5th annual KT Mini-Grant program has awarded $27,615 to 10 applicants around the Northeast Kingdom! KT was privileged to receive 16 applications in 2023 and $56,605.43 in total funding requested as our program grows yearly! Kingdom Trails is grateful for all applicants who applied this year, and for the positive impact they have had as we all work together to foster the health of our shared space and community. Kingdom Trails is also grateful to the 100+ landowners whose gift of access has allowed KT to contribute to our community and offer this program.

The KT Mini-Grant Selection Committee awarded funds to applicants who participated in a competitive application process. These applications met the criteria focused on community need, impact, sustainability, diversity and inclusion, public support, and a realistic, effective work plan and budget. The projects must highlight and advance valuable local endeavors that promote recreation, health and wellness, education and training, environmental stewardship, economic viability, heritage and culture, and the creative arts. We can’t wait for you to see the impact these projects have on our local community!

> For more information, scan the QR code or visit kingdomtrails.org/2023-kt-mini-grant-program-awards-10-area-projects

Questions?
Lukas Ray, Community Collaboration Director, Kingdom Trail Association
802.626.0737 (office) | 304.940.4885 (cell) | lukas@kingdomtrails.org | kingdomtrails.org
Dear VRPA Community,

As we embrace the changing seasons and continue to navigate the diverse landscape of recreation and parks management in Vermont, I am compelled to share the invaluable experiences I’ve had at our recent VRPA quarterly meeting. These gatherings represent more than just routine events; they are pivotal moments that fortify our professional networks, foster learning, and advance our collective impact within our communities.

At our last quarterly meeting, I learned about a volunteer trail manual in Williston, discovered how the Community Sailing Center accesses rooms from Champlain College during the summer, learned about United Way’s volunteer platform, and made a good connection from Vermont State Parks for our campground manager. Through these interactions, we’ve expanded relationships that promises to improve our services and expand our reach.

Beyond the professional insights gained, the meeting was fun! The moments shared over a delicious lunch(!) and the engaging conversations during breaks and lunchtime were more than just casual exchanges—they were opportunities to reconnect with colleagues, share experiences, and explore new ideas. What makes these meetings truly invaluable is their role in nurturing both seasoned professionals and those new to our vibrant field. By sharing our expertise and experiences, we create a fertile ground for growth and learning, providing a welcoming environment for recent entrants into our profession and empowering our emerging leaders.

Our state association plays an active role in advocating for us statewide. VRPA acts as a beacon, championing our collective causes and ensuring our voices are heard. Moreover, the high-caliber annual conference we organize stands as a testament to the commitment to delivering top-tier educational experiences that fuel our professional development.

As we collectively move forward, let’s prioritize our engagement with VRPA meetings. These gatherings are not merely checkboxes on our calendars—they are opportunities for growth, collaboration, and empowerment. They are the conduits through which we fortify our bonds, exchange knowledge, and shape the future of recreation and parks management in Vermont.

In unity and progress,
Cindi Wight
COMMUNITY THREAT ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT: LEVEL 1

OVERVIEW
The Vermont Violence Prevention Project (VVP) is an initiative coordinated by the University of Vermont Division of Safety and Compliance and made possible by funding from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships, opportunity number DHS-23-TFP-132-0001. We are excited to offer Community Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management (BTAM) training. This full day, in-person training will be facilitated by Ontic, a team of industry-leading security experts with decades of experience assessing and managing threat cases. This Level 1 training will provide fundamental information to community partners on targeted violence and how prevention of these tragedies is possible. Level 1 training will be a prerequisite for attending the Level 2 training.

WHAT IS COVERED?
This training is the 1st in a two-part series and will cover how to build and operate a community threat assessment program. In addition, the training will provide detailed instruction on specific procedures to use when investigating concerning or threatening behavior, including how to screen cases, gather information, analyze the information, make an assessment, and implement an intervention plan when needed. The training includes multiple group exercises where participants can practice using these procedures.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?
This training is appropriate and relevant for various community partners, such as: colleges and universities, houses of worship, government agencies, public & private organizations, hospitals and health care facilities, law enforcement, and public safety professionals working in the state of Vermont.

APRIL 16, 2024
9AM-4PM | SOUTH ROYALTON, VT
REGISTRATION

During the eclipse, select Vermont State Parks will be open with parking and portable restrooms. However, regular facilities will be closed as it falls outside the usual park season. These parks include:

- Bomoseen
- Boulder Beach
- Brattleboro
- Crystal Lake
- DAR
- Elmore
- Emerald Lake
- Mt. Philo
- Grand Isle
- Knight Point
- Lake Shaftsbury
- Lake St. Catherine
- Little River
- Niquette Bay
- Silver Lake

Spread the word: Safe eclipse viewing AWAY from trails

- Close trails in Vermont and redirect visitors to open and welcoming venues.
- Promote Vermont’s eclipse website as alternative viewing spots.
- Use kiosk signage to communicate trail closures.
- Discuss the option of load closed to through traffic with town road crews near trailheads.
- Share Trail Finder’s consolidated resources urging visitors to avoid trails and find optimal viewing areas.
- Explore Green Mountain Club’s website for additional eclipse resources to share.
- Access Vermont’s comprehensive eclipse website for safety tips, updates, and more.
- Discover activities statewide via Vermont Public’s list.
- Visit VTGCO’s Solar Eclipse page for additional tips and resources.

Around the State

Town clerks are distributing eclipse glasses, lodging is fully booked along the eclipse path, and schools are dismissing students early to ease traffic. As the April 8 solar eclipse approaches, town managers must guide visitors to prime viewing spots while discouraging use of trails and dirt roads during mud season.

Even if your area isn’t in the eclipse path, you may still see increased outdoor activity. Help visitors find suitable locations and remind them that trails are closed.

FPR, GMC, and Trail Finder have resources to assist. Please share these with local officials, parks staff, road crews, and conservation groups.

vermontgc.org/solar-eclipse-2024
Vermont State Parks celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2024. The system started when Frances Humphreys deeded 150 acres on and around Mt. Philo for use as a public recreation area. Today there are 56 parks covering 9,615 square miles, and including more than 2,200 campsites, 180 miles of trails, dozens of beaches, picnic areas and other recreational areas. More than 1 million visitors visit Vermont State Parks (VSP) annually during the summer-long operating season to enjoy majestic forests, pristine lakes, and awe-inspiring mountain views. Vermonters take refuge in their park system to reconnect with nature, enjoy family and loved ones, and to disconnect from the hectic work around them. Visitors from around the county—and world—enjoy Vermont’s parks and add to the $3 billion Vermont tourism industry.

To help coordinate and celebrate 100 years VSP has partnered with local advertising agency HMC Advertising, based out of Richmond. The birthday celebration will start slowly during the first of the year with a campaign to create awareness of Vermont State Parks, encourage visits to Vermont State Parks and support funding to Vermont State Parks through its partner non-profit organization Vermont Parks Forever. The celebration will begin in earnest later in the summer once the parks are open and staffed and buzzing with visitors. The campaign will focus on Vermonters as well as out-of-state visitors, specifically in the surrounding New England States with the key message that Vermont State Parks are for everyone. A general theme of the campaign will be “Sharing 100 years of your stories” through which VSP will be collecting and sharing stories of its visitors over the course of the year.

“We want to celebrate 100 years of what the state parks have always offered. A special place to explore nature and make new memories. Using shared emotions and experiences as insights, we focus on singular experiences that newcomers and returning visitors have all come to understand,” said Director Nate McKeen.

In addition to the marketing campaign, many park interpretive programs will highlight aspects of the 100th anniversary at various parks around the state. A special line of 100th anniversary park merchandise will also be available through vtstateparks.com and at many park locations throughout the 2024 operating season.
VRPA Annual Meeting 2024
We are switching things up a bit in 2024! We are hosting our annual meeting virtually to allow more departments the ability to attend as travel has been challenging for our smaller departments this year.

Following the CEU session we will be presenting two options of our FY24-25 VRPA budget. We encourage all members to attend this important discussion to learn about the fiscal challenges VRPA currently faces after several years of increased costs and reduced revenues.

Annual Awards
Our Annual Awards this year will be presented at our Fall VT Conference on Recreation in conjunction with the Theresa S. Brungardt Awards. Nomination forms for all the awards will be shared separately.
Experience is everything.

NESTMA members advance professionalism in sports turf management and athletic field safety through education, research, and advocacy.

Be a part of NESTMA.

NESTMA.org

Your One Stop Recreation Solution!

- Play Structures
- Climbing Systems
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- Outdoor Fitness
- Dog Park Equipment
- Shade and Shelters
- Site Furnishings
- Bleachers
- Safety Surfacing
- Installation Services

Mark Gallagher | 800.861.1209 | mark@nercgroup.com
P.O. Box 1503 Westboro, MA
Join us at the 80th VT Conference on Recreation, where parks and recreation professionals from across Vermont will gather! This year, we're excited to partner with the Vermont Trails & Greenways Council (VTGC) to host a Trails Symposium alongside our traditional conference. The addition of the Trails Symposium brings an outdoor recreation perspective to our event, enriching the experience for attendees. With over 27 educational sessions, networking opportunities, an awards luncheon, and an exhibit hall, this two-day event is a must-attend for professionals and service providers in the parks and recreation field!

**Killington Grand Resort, Killington, VT**

**September 25-26**
We are excited to welcome attendees and exhibitors back to the Killington Grand Hotel for the 2024 VRPA Conference to celebrate the 81st Vermont Conference on Recreation! We will be continuing our partnership with the Vermont Trails & Greenways Council (VTGC) again this year to host the Trails Symposium in tandem with our conference! The Combination of this central location and continued partnership will help maintain our historic attendance and attract new attendees to a state of the art facility. We believe that our second year in this location with this continued partnership will grow this event in 2024 and help you connect with more professionals from around the state as well as help our vendors grow your businesses in the State of Vermont.

Our Keynote speaker this year will be Kelly Brush from the Kelly Brush Foundation! We are super excited for her to join us to talk about all things recreation and how we may be able to think about things in a more accessible way. Kelly Brush was born and raised in Charlotte, VT. She attended the Green Mountain Valley School in Waitsfield for high school before enrolling at Middlebury College. During her time at Middlebury, Kelly was an accomplished ski racer and a member of the alpine ski team. In February 2006, while racing for Middlebury, Kelly fell, striking a lift tower, sustaining a spinal cord injury (SCI) and leaving her paralyzed from the chest down. Determined not to let her SCI define her, Kelly went on to graduate from Middlebury in 2008, and completed graduate school at the MGH Institute of Health Professions in 2013, becoming a Nurse Practitioner. Kelly also started the Kelly Brush Foundation shortly after her injury to empower others with SCI to lead active and engaged lives through sport and recreation. More information on Kelly is highlighted on our website here!

Without you, we would not be able to sustain the valuable work of VRPA. Your involvement and partnership is an essential part of that reality! Our annual conference is one of the most financially important events all year for VRPA, and we are grateful for your involvement and support of our organization all year. Please accept our invitation to join us and participate in this year’s conference!

Registration for exhibitors is now open! We encourage exhibitors to register early to save $50 prior to May 31st. We also can only fit 35 vendors this year, so be sure to secure your space! Registration for attendees will open later this Spring. We will be updating our website regularly with more updates and information so be sure to check back often.

We have an amazing conference committee team this year that is working hard to make this year’s conference stand out. Some of your favorite highlights will still be featured, including dinner & breakfast with exhibitors, Fireworks by Northstar Fireworks, Evening Social, Silent Auction, and some amazing education sessions from speakers around the country.

Please renew your membership, register early, and book your room. Thank you for your continued support & involvement. See you in September for great networking & learning at the Killington Grand Hotel!

Sincerely from all of us at VRPA,
Colin Drury
Conference Exhibitor sub-committee Chair
Lee Barrett
Conference Committee Chair
Jessica Brodie
VRPA Executive Director
The VRPA will be honoring professionals and organization across the state this fall at our 81st Annual VT Conference on Recreation & Trails Symposium.

The Awards ceremony will take place during lunch on Thursday, September 26th.

Nominations are now being accepted for the following awards to be handed out in person at the conference this September. Please consider taking time to nominate a fellow professional, yourself, or partnering organization that is deserving of one of these awards.

**FACILITY OF MERIT AWARDS:**
- Myers Memorial Pool – City of Winooski Community Services
- Sherman Manning Aquatic Facility – Town of Hartford Parks & Recreation

**UNSUNG HERO AWARD**
This award recognizes professionals who have demonstrated consistent or outstanding service in their community and whose commitment has been in furthering the field of parks, recreation, and/or cultural and community services through excellence, service, and execution of their talents and skills.
- Zoe Richards – Burlington Wildways

**YOUNG PROFESSIONAL AWARD**
The Young Professional Award is presented annually to someone working in the field of parks and recreation within Vermont who is a current member of VRPA.
- Isaac Bashaw – St. Albans Recreation Department

**Theresa S. Brungardt Award Winners**

The Theresa S. Brungardt Award is an annual honor celebrating the legacy of Theresa S. Brungardt, a pioneering leader in Vermont’s parks and recreation. Recognized as Vermont’s first Director of Recreation in 1943, Brungardt’s tireless efforts helped establish numerous community recreation departments. Her national recognition includes being elected the first female president of the American Recreation Society in 1952, and she was later inducted into the NRPA Hall of Fame in 1997. Each year, the award may be presented across various categories, depending on the number and quality of nominations received.

**PROFESSIONAL**
Full-time leader, supervisor, administrator, manager, educator, planner, researcher, designer, or consultant who has made outstanding contributions to the recreation and/or park field.
- Melissa Cate – Burlington Parks, Recreation, & Waterfront

**FRIEND OF RECREATION**
A layman, board member, community or state leader, public official, or volunteer who has made outstanding contributions to the recreation and/or park field.
- Bill "Downtown" Brown – Hartford, VT

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION**
A commercial, professional, private, governmental, or nonprofit organization or agency that has made outstanding contributions to the recreation and/or park field.
- Come Alive Outside

**2024 Annual Awards and Theresa S. Brungardt Awards**
The VRPA will be honoring professionals and organization across the state this fall at our 81st Annual VT Conference on Recreation & Trails Symposium.

The Awards ceremony will take place during lunch on Thursday, September 26th.

Nominations are now being accepted for the following awards to be handed out in person at the conference this September. Please consider taking time to nominate a fellow professional, yourself, or partnering organization that is deserving of one of these awards.

**Nominations are due by August 16, 2024**

**Theresa S. Brungardt Award Categories**
- Friend of Recreation
- Community Organization
- Professional

**VRPA Annual Award Categories**
- Facility of Merit
- Unsung Hero
- Young Professional
The group that came to be known as “The Plymouth 12” spent a day and overnight in their cars on the nearest high ground under the leadership of Park Managers Chris Brader and Tiffany Soukup on high ground as flood waters rushed through Camp Plymouth and cut them off completely from all resources or rescue. In a memorable show of confidence in that care and leadership, every visitor at Camp Plymouth opted out of rescue the next morning in favor of waiting for vehicle passage to be restored later.

Regional Maintenance staff out of Killington hand-carried a generator over steep washed-out roads to reestablish drinking water supplies for stranded campers at Coolidge State Park. Resilient Repairs were executed immediately by a mobilized and committed maintenance staff. Waterlines were re-buried in Groton, roads re-opened, water and sewage systems checked, and all but a few areas and facilities were re-opened for visitors shortly after the rains stopped falling. Even a heavily damaged road to the iconic Owl’s Head overlook was designed, bid, contracted, and reconstructed for foliage season. Committed Plymouth visitors have rebooked. Local townspeople either phoned in tips or dropped off wayward rental boats, campers and day visitors returned and despite losing one of the most popular day-use areas for the season and another seeing a significant period of closure as the Waterbury reservoir slowly returned to its normal level, visitation to Vermont State Parks STAYED STRONG.

Unfortunately, we know this will happen again, the individual acts will be celebrated, and the systemic factors such as training, procedures, and organizational support for the staff in the field will be evaluated and incorporated into our preparations for the next event. Facilities will be adjusted, hardened, moved, or designed for ease of repair and cleanup as we look to account for a changing climate for the staff we hire and for the visitors that want to use their parks.

"...THE INDIVIDUAL ACTS WILL BE CELEBRATED..."
As summer approached Barre City everything was on target to get our communities back out to socialize, enjoy the recreation professionals we were all ready to do our part challenging comebacks from COVID but this past summer and more. Over the past year or two we have faced some specialty programs, reinstalling tennis nets, preparing our recreation professionals. Throughout late winter and spring in the spring we are busy lining up summer camps and service programs, reinstalling tennis nets, preparing our waterfronts, sprucing up our picnic shelters, recruiting staff and more. Over the past year or two we have faced some challenging comebacks from COVID but this past summer was expected to be one of our best ones to date. As recreation professionals we were all ready to do our part to get our communities back out to socialize, enjoy the outdoors and our programs.

As summer approached Barre City everything was on target and ready to go in anticipation of a fun filled summer. The outdoor areas were ready, the swimming pool received a fresh coat of paint and camp registrations were ongoing. The swimming pool staff was hired and season passes were indicating a promising summer. School was out a little later this year so most programs with the exception of the swimming pool were set to begin after the July 4 holiday. Registrations were strong, the pool off to a strong start and the tennis and pickleball courts were in use. The playgrounds were filled with children and families, enjoying the outdoors and just having fun.

July was off to a sunny start but as days passed the rain began to fall. We were beginning to wonder if it would it ever stop. Ironically, the City of Barre appeared to be in the path of some of the heaviest anticipated rainfall. The City of Barre sustained severe flooding with the aftermath of hurricane Irene in 2011. Since that time structural components were put in place to help contain debris at one of our neighborhood playgrounds. One of our neighborhood playgrounds was fortunate to have the fence in tact but woven through it was mud and debris. One of our neighborhood playgrounds was fortunate to have the fence in tact but woven through it was mud and debris. The EMS activated their emergency response teams and soon our Civic Center’s Auditorium, high on a hill, would be the evacuation headquarters. The American Red Cross trailers were opened up and the entire Auditorium was now an active evacuation shelter. Our public safety building and dispatch areas flooded as was a portion of City Hall. The Police and Fire relocated their vehicles and personnel to the Civic Center.

Trying to navigate travel even to the shelter was challenging for those in need. If you lived in Barre City you could not make it to Montpelier nor could you go from Montpelier to Barre City. The entire downtown was not accessible as were many of the roads in, out or within the City. The interstate was closed at one point and cars were forced to park with the majority spending the night in their cars. As the rain began to slow down a few areas were cleared up, enough to allow travel for needed supplies. After weaning through many different streets on Wednesday morning I was finally able to reach the Auditorium. Every Department Head would be assigned a major role with the flood and mine was to head up volunteer efforts, maintain a data base and serve as coordinator at the Civic Center with the groups coming in for the multi – agency resource center. The Red Cross, Salvation Army and several groups from out of state who volunteer to help clean up with floods were soon on site. Food, water, tools and all kinds of resources were soon arriving. The B.O.R. arena was now converted to a shelter for animals and a building in between the shelter next door at the AUD. We were so fortunate to have a large enough complex to house those who were displaced as well as a shelter for the animals and a building in between to support the major operations of emergency personnel and operations. I would represent the City, meeting each morning discussing the coordination of all the groups as we updated each other on plan for the day, progress, needs, etc. On the recreation side we would now have to cancel the scheduled camps and it was best to close the pool for the week. Our resources to maintain the pool as well as safe and acceptable travel to the pool led us to close for the safety of all. We would lose a week of the pool as well as scheduled swim lessons. All of our play areas received debris or were saturated to where they would not be usable. A portion of the transportation (bike path) on the south end was uplifted with major damage.

As the waters receded, the damage was now clear as ever. One of our newly renovated ballparks lost the entire outfeld fencing and the field was covered with a heavy amount of mud and debris. One of our neighborhood playgrounds was fortunate to have the fence in tact but woven through it was a mass of branches, twigs, mud and a lot of debris that had raged down the river. The entire playground was covered with heavy mud and debris. Basketball and other activities scheduled for the Auditorium would now be cancelled for weeks due to the Civic Center now serving as the evacuation center and later set up as a FEMA site. As we enter November FEMA is still on site meeting with those who were affected by the flood.

After a week of closure we were excited to open the pool back up. It was a warm and sunny day and we decided the community needed some fun and a change of pace so we offered a day of swimming free of charge. We also scheduled FEMA, the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Health Department and Capstone to set up informational tables to help anyone needing flood assistance. Through their generous support Ben & Jerry’s was on hand to provide everyone with ice cream. It was nice to offer the community a fun event where for a few hours they could forget about all the challenges. The kids especially struggled through the flood and needed an outlet. Free pool passes were distributed to those youngsters, especially who lived in the North end of the City, one of the hardest hit areas. It has been a few months since the flood and we continue to work on our neighborhood playgrounds. We are grateful for a dedication of time, labor and equipment that was provided by the Governor’s office for a few of our parks. Governor Scott and his team were on hand to help clear debris, rake, add new mulch, etc.

The flood recovery work continues, as does my role meeting 2 – 3 times a week as I am on the Long Term Flood Recovery Team (LTFR). We are making progress in the City thanks to hundreds of volunteers who came from the City and well beyond to help us recover.
BARRE PARKS & RECREATIONAL FACILITIES
Johnny Crossley, Recreation Director
City of Barre, Vermont

Though many in our area experienced hardship as a result of the flooding we were relatively fortunate with our Recreational facilities. League play on our fields was completely disrupted following the flooding. Less games played, less revenue from our “facility reservations.” Our fields never quite recovered. It was a game of “keep up” for the maintenance crew when our fields were playable. It quickly became evident that there was a field shortage in the area. I fielded several calls in my office from the public, after July, asking about the condition of our fields.

Town of Barre: The Town of Barre Recreation Department experienced minor impacts to our Recreational Facilities following the July floods. Our main Recreation Area complex at 46 Websterville Road shouldered the burden of saturated playing fields for the remainder of Summer into Autumn. Several leagues were forced to cancel games due to standing water on the field. Varsity Fall Sports had to seek alternative field use for several practices and games in the month of September. Fortunately, none of our fields experienced “wash out” or damage from the highly saturated ground. We as a Department are quickly seeing how climate change COULD affect our main Rec Area. The current drainage system cannot handle a wet summer. It was last updated in the late 80s/early 90s. Due to excess water this Summer our Seasonal Maintenance Crew had to clear the drainage system with a pump on several occasions. Each occasion was marked by pools of water, or “duck ponds” as we began calling them, appearing in low land areas or near drainage. Solution moving forward: Rain Gardens, tree planting, and future considerations to update drainage system.

An embankment along our South Barre Bike Path, which connects South Barre with Barre City, completely washed out taking with it a 12-20-foot-long section of the bike path down below into the Stevens Branch of the Winooski River. An outside engineer was brought in to assess this path and several other FEMA related projects. The path is closed for the foreseeable future. The path is awaiting FEMA funding to proceed. Timetable uncertain.

Our Town Forest experienced significant trail erosion on one section of trail departing from the 44 Brook Street parking area. Corridor Manager Millstone Trails Association was quick to respond. Lajeunesse Construction were contracted by MTA to make trail repairs, with approval from Town Recreation Director. Trail repairs were finalized and opened to the public by Mid-September. In addition, a Town Forest service road, which accesses an active pump station in the Forest, experienced significant wash out preventing vehicle access. Department of Public Works responded within days of the July flood. Service road fully repaired. Cost unknown - separate department information.
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MORE INFO

VRPA

Maintenance Workshop
TUESDAY
SEPTEMBER 24
Rutland Community Center

REGISTRATION
The VRPA in conjunction with St. Johnsbury Academy are excited to offer our in-person State Track & Field Meet again this coming summer! Stay tuned for more details and the registration packet!

AGES 7-14

Please complete the commitment form by June 14th, 2024.

Complete the commitment form today!

@vermontrecandparks  802-952-0030  vrpa.org
The 80th Annual Vermont Conference on Recreation was held on September 26th to 27th, 2023 at a new location for the first time in over a decade at the Killington Grand Hotel & Resort. The conference also featured a new partner, the Vermont Trails & Greenways Council, to offer a Trails Symposium track in conjunction with the annual conference on recreation. The 80th celebration was a huge success and we saw more attendees than we have since before Covid, which was a huge milestone for this event. We were thrilled to see again 141 attendees, and 36 Exhibitors! The new location featured a more accessible floor plan, newer technology, and access to many recreational opportunities just out the door. Lake Morey Resort was always very kind to us, but a spike in food and beverage costs statewide prompted us to spend time seeking price quotes in the late fall of 2022 to compare pricing around the state. We found Killington to be more suitable for the needs of our conference this year to incorporate trails sessions and demos and feel it was a great success moving to the new venue. All of the staff at Killington were so accommodating to our conference needs, and we are very thankful for their ongoing support. We were also very fortunate this year to still attract talented speakers from all over the country, including the states of N. Carolina, Utah, Tennessee, California, Massachusetts, and several other states. Attendees also came from all over Vermont, including many small communities and rural towns. Perhaps one of the highlights of the conference was keynote speaker Mima Valerio (“The Mimirator”), an accomplished author, influencer, and runner. Mima gave a compelling, heartfelt, and inspirational keynote about how Parks & Recreation is for every body! The exhibit hall at Killington was alive with action as well! Thank you to all the attendees for supporting our sponsors and exhibitors by visiting and engaging with them in the Vendor Hall. All of our exhibitors provided products to sample, information for guests, and great company. They also participated in several drawings for every body! “Silent Auction!”

The Vermont Conference on Recreation is an event that continues to grow, evolve and change, meeting the needs of contemporary recreation professionals while honoring and respecting the conference’s origins, history and roots. Planning is well underway for the 2024 conference and we look forward to seeing all of you there again this fall! If you’d like to participate in the planning process or help at the conference itself, the planning committee can always use more volunteers. Contact Jessica Brodie, VRPA Executive Director at jessica@vrpa.org if you are interested.

Sincerely,
2024 Conference Committee Members & Jessica Brodie, VRPA Executive Director

RECAP

80th Annual
VT CONFERENCE ON
RECREATION & TRAILS
SYMPOSIUM
growing stronger together

By Jessica Brodie
In 2026, we’re bringing the NRPA Annual Conference to Philadelphia, PA. On September 29 – October 1, 2026 Philly will see its second NRPA Annual Conference. Long overdue from our last conference in Philly in 1970. We can’t wait to gather in this impressive city. Philadelphia Parks & Recreation protects over 10,200 acres of public land and waterways, and manages hundreds of recreation, environmental, and cultural centers. It’s always an inspiring time at the largest gathering of the park and recreation community in the country, but this one is going to be special!

Pictured we have NRPA folks, Lauren Morisato, Bret Gaither, Ruth Wheeler, Autumn Saxton-Ross, and Kevin Roth, as well as Tim Herd, CEO Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society; Nikki Tourscher, Director, Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society; Patrick Morgan, First Deputy Commissioner of Philadelphia Parks and Recreation; Ken Lehr, President of the Board of PRPS; and Sudha Suryadevara, with the Philadelphia Visitors Center Corporation. Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS) Philadelphia Visitor Center Corporation.

2027
We’ll be taking the largest gathering in the country of park and recreation professionals to Salt Lake City in 2027! On September 28th, 2027, thousands from the park and recreation community will meet up in Utah, a true hub for outdoor recreation. We were there just 14 years ago but the city has since seen significant hospitality growth, making it equally exciting to returning and new guests.

> Click here to learn more about Salt Lake City Parks & Recreation

2028
For the first time ever we are taking the NRPA Annual Conference to Columbus, OH! We were so impressed with Columbus are are quite excited to lace up our shoes and walk the Scioto Mile with you all. Mark your calendars for September 26th to 28th, 2028. You won’t want to miss this one! The unique shops, Districts, restaurants, convention center and convenient hotel package will provide a wonderful destination for the conference and all our participants.

> Click here to learn more about Columbus City & Parks Department
Brett Leonard, Executive Committee Member of the VT Recreation and Parks Association, attended the State House in March for the passing of the Resolution designating Friday, July 19th as Parks & Recreation Professionals Day for another year.
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✔ Group Swimming Policies

More Information

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APPLICATION & ANNUAL RENEWAL

Membership renewals are due May 1, 2024 - Click here to renew online!

As a VRPA member, you will receive:
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• VRPA Directors' Forum: Monthly calls with the VRPA Board of Directors.
• Professional Assistance: In person & online.
• Discounted Fees: Conferences, workshops & event registration fees & advertising rates.
• Professional Assistance: In person & online.
• VRPA website: Access the VRPA website at vrpa.org.

MEMBERSHIP INVOLVEMENT

Would you like to become more involved with VRPA? Listed below are the various VRPA committees. Please check if you are interested and someone will contact you. Thank you for your interest!

☐ Membership
☐ Newsletter
☐ Performance Showcase
☐ Summerama
☐ Executive Committee
☐ Track & Field
☐ Awards
☐ Maintenance Workshop
☐ State Conference
☐ Other ways you might help: ________________________________

If there is a VRPA member who influenced your decision to join? If yes, who? ________________________________

Are you a member of NRPA? ☐ No ☐ Yes

Total amount due $________________

Now memberships received in the months of Nov, Dec and Jan are half price. New memberships received in the last three months of our fiscal year (Feb, March and April) are full price and include the following year membership also.

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