

Meet the Candidates

President Elect



Roosevelt Lyons

Deputy Director - Operations, Kansas City Parks and Recreation
Masters's Degree in Public Administration, UMKC

I pride myself on my nontraditional path to this wonderful business we call parks & recreation. My professional background includes stints in the Office of the Mayor, political organizing, youth programming, and personal training. While serving in the Mayor's office I earned my master's in public administration from UMKC. I knew I wanted a career in public administration where I could make a difference. Throughout my time in the Mayor's office I had the opportunity to work on several initiatives, including passing an ordinance that mandates the City have a youth advisory panel. I created a program for youth who were interested in careers in public service, culminating in a trip to Washington D.C. My introduction to parks

& recreation came when I helped develop a summer program for youth in cooperation with the parks department. Throughout the six years of that program we have served over 30,000 youth throughout the summer months, giving them something positive to do.

I fell in love with parks as a profession. My passion is building leadership capacity. I'm a proud introvert who believes that everyone is capable of leadership, if they are willing to learn. Throughout my time with KC Parks, I've served as manager of recreation and superintendent of recreation. Since January 2019, I've served as the department's youngest and first African American deputy director. Thanks for your consideration.



BJ Staab, CPRP

Director, Liberty Parks and Recreation
Bachelor of Science in Recreation and Sports Management,
Fort Hays State University, Kansas

My passion for parks and recreation began at the age of 16 working in the dirt, chalking fields, and mowing parks for my local recreation commission. While working fulltime as Facilities & Sports Director, I received my Bachelor of Science degree in Recreation Sports Management from Fort Hays State University. In 2002, I accepted a programming position for the City of Liberty Parks and Recreation Department. Over the last 17 years, I have been honored to serve as Liberty's Sports Complex

Manager, Assistant Director, and currently as the Director of the department. Throughout my career, I have found success in developing real, raw relationships with not only my staff but the community members we serve. Creating those relationships allows me to connect the community with their parks and/or recreation while improving their quality of life!

MPRA plays such a vital role in our professional career; it's an honor to be selected as a candidate for President Elect of MPRA. I believe this position fits my leadership skills which supports the MPRA members while promoting the benefits and opportunities for our citizens. I can bring those real life experiences and skills that have helped me throughout my career.

I am excited for the future of our MPRA and look forward to playing an integral role in it.

Meet the Candidates Director at Large



Amy Boyd, MS, CPRP

Aquatic Supervisor, Des Peres Parks and Recreation
Bachelor's Degree in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism,
University of Missouri - Columbia
Master's Degree in Recreation, Sport, and Tourism,
University of Illinois

I am very excited to be running for a Director at Large position for Missouri Park and Recreation Association. I started working in parks and recreation when I was 16 years old as a lifeguard. I quickly fell in love with making a positive impact in people's lives and decided to pursue a career in the parks and recreation field. I graduated from the University of Missouri with a Bachelor's degree in Parks, Recreation and Tourism- M...I...Z...! I also have a Master's degree from the University of Illinois in Recreation, Sport and Tourism.

After college I went on to pursue my career in parks and recreation with the Waukegan Park District in Waukegan, Illinois as their Fitness and Aquatic Specialist. Returning to Missouri in 2010 as the Aquatic Specialist with the City of Des Peres allowed me to be closer to home and the state I love. I have been with the City of Des Peres as their Aquatic Specialist and was promoted to the Aquatic Supervisor in 2016.

I hold the following certifications: Certified Parks and Recreation Professional, Certified Pool and Spa Operator, American Red Cross Lifeguard Instructor, Athletics and Fitness Association of America –Group Exercise Instructor as well as a Certified Program Planner through the LERN Network.

I have served the Missouri Park and Recreation Association as the Aquatic Section Secretary and President. Currently, I serve as the MPRA Conference Chair for 2020. Other roles that I have held with MPRA include leading the Region 4 Programming Support Group, volunteering for multiple MPRA events, and attending multiple conferences. I am active in the St. Louis Aquatic Professionals group and enjoy mentoring new professionals in the field. I have also served on the American Red Cross Hero's committee where I have had the pleasure to nominate and select local hometown heroes for courageous and lifesaving actions. I am very passionate about the field of parks and recreation and have truly enjoyed my involvement with MPRA over the years.

If elected, I look forward to the opportunity to serve you as a Director at Large for the Missouri Park and Recreation Association. I feel that my experience in the different areas within MPRA will allow me to help others in the field. I'd like to give back to this organization because its members have given me so much and truly helped me grow as a professional in the parks and recreation field. Thank you for the opportunity and I look forward to serving!



Dennis Dovel, CPRP

Director of Parks, Recreation, Building, and Grounds,
Blue Springs Parks and Recreation
Bachelor of Science in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism,
University of Missouri - Columbia

I graduated in 1988 from the University of Missouri – Columbia with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Parks, Recreation and Tourism. I have worked in the field of parks and recreation for 31 years. Working the first three years of my career with the YMCA and then in 1991 starting with Liberty Parks and Recreation as Program Coordinator responsible for fitness and sports leagues. After spending two years in Liberty I took a position with Jackson County Parks and Recreation as Superintendent of Recreation overseeing the athletic programs and facilities. In 2000 I returned to Liberty Parks and Recreation as Sports Complex Manager of Fountain Bluff Sports Complex. The first two years were spent as the project manager of the facility during construction. Once construction was complete, I oversaw all aspects of the operation including, marketing, programming, and maintenance along with all sports programming for the city.

In July 2008, I was appointed the Director of Liberty Parks and Recreation. I spent three years in that position before being named Director of Parks, Recreation, Building and Grounds for the City of Blue Springs in January 2012, where I currently work. Since being in Blue Springs, I have led a revitalization of the department with the development of the Blue Springs Fieldhouse, the department's first parks master plan document, first time passage the Parks ½-cent Sales Tax and revitalization of an aging park system with new facilities and amenities. I am a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional, I have completed the NRPA's Director School and have worked with several local boards and school districts to achieve community success.

Meet the Candidates Director at Large



Kim Hedgpeth

**Superintendent of Recreation, Florissant Parks & Recreation
Bachelor of Science in Recreation and Leisure Studies,
Missouri State University**

Parks and recreation has been in my blood for a long time. Over the years I have worked for the Springfield-Greene County Park Board, the cities of Wentzville, Hazelwood, Maryland Heights, and most recently as Superintendent of Recreation for the City of Florissant. Recently, I took a three year hiatus from parks and rec and pursued a different passion. While it was nice to try something new, I realized very quickly that my passion lay within the parks and recreation profession. After battling cancer, some pretty major health issues, and a bit of a loss of direction, I am back home in the field that I love.

During my years with MPRA I have served on the board several times, held the position of Region Director, led many committees and projects, and have loved every minute of it. I graduated from Missouri State University with a degree in Recreation and joined MPRA as a student. I have been committed to serving the profession and the association every step of the way. I especially loved my time while working on the “Did You Know” campaign with other leaders of this movement. My involvement included leading several educational sessions on the topic throughout the Midwest.

I would be very honored to serve you and our association again as a Director at Large. I feel that my experience in the field and my long-time commitment to the Association make me a very qualified candidate for the position. Thank you in advance for your consideration.



Brian Nowotny, CPRP

**Deputy Director for Parks Operations,
Jackson County Parks + Recreation
Bachelor's of Landscape Architecture, Texas Tech University**

Being a parks and recreation professional has got to be one of the most rewarding careers anyone can choose. Every day we all have a chance to change people's lives for the better; what an amazing opportunity! During my twenty-five year career, I have had the privilege of working with countless amazing staff members and volunteers, including time spent on the MPRA Board, serving previously as Secretary/Treasurer, and as past Region 1 Director.

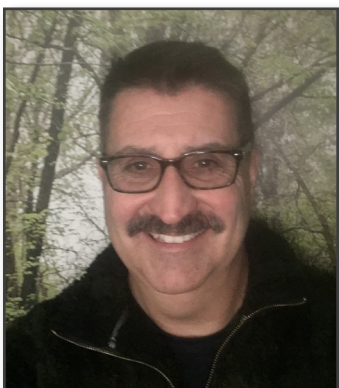
Since 2016, I have worked for Jackson County Parks + Rec as Deputy Director for Park Operations. Prior to joining Jackson County, I was Director of Parks and Recreation in Platte County, serving in that position for sixteen years. I am originally from Dallas, Texas and received my Bachelor of Landscape Architecture Degree from Texas Tech University.

I am proud to have held my certification as a Parks and Recreation Professional since 1992. I also am passionate about volunteering in my community and serving in areas that address homelessness, youth advocacy, and through organizations that work to conserve and improve our natural areas including the Conservation Federation of Missouri and the Heartland Conservation Alliance.

It would truly be my honor to serve the members of MPRA again as a Board Member At Large. Our association is stronger when we all are involved.

Meet the Candidates

Director at Large



Steve Webb, CPRP

Recreation Services Administrator, Family Centers, Aquatics and Health & Wellness, Springfield-Greene County Park Board
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Management, Evangel University

The challenges facing parks and recreation departments and professionals seem to grow exponentially and get more intricate every year. Tighter budgets, political divides, aging populations, increases in poverty and vandalism, and generational differences unlike any we've seen before all present significant challenges and opportunities to advance our field and impact the communities around us. My personal belief is that it's not by chance or coincidence that any of us are in the roles we occupy. Each of us have been called to contribute to the economic vitality of our community by enhancing the quality of life for the people that live in, work in, or just come to visit our corner of the world. We do this daily by providing beautiful parks and state-of-the-art facilities, fun recreational programs and special events, and even just by the countless one-to-one interactions and relationships we forge with the patrons we serve and the peers we work alongside.

As a long-standing MPRA member with over 25 years of private and public-sector leadership experience, having previously served in other volunteer MPRA positions, I'll keep contributing my thoughts and ideas, professional skills, and important lessons learned to help tackle some of those challenges and keep our organization moving forward, while we all enjoy the ride.



Sue Yerkes

Director, Grandview Parks & Recreation
Master's Degree in Parks, Recreation, Tourism & Sport Management, NCSU

Graduated from NCSU with a Masters in Parks, Recreation, Tourism & Sport Management. Served as an Athletic Director and Athletic Coordinator for six years; Parks and Recreation Director in North Carolina for 10 years before accepting the Director position in Grandview, MO. I have been a CAPRA visitor for seven years, three of those years as the visiting chair. I also won a hula hoop competition when I was eight in my home town Merrill, WI.

Meet the Candidates Northwest (Region 1) Director



David Killpack, CPRP, AFO

Assistant Director, Harrisonville Parks and Recreation
Bachelor of Arts in Recreation, Graceland University

As Assistant Director of Parks & Recreation for the City of Harrisonville since March 2014, I have been involved in a number of projects for the city and some collaborative endeavors around the Kansas City Metro. Over the course of my 20-years career in the parks and recreation field, I've been lucky to be part of tax renewal processes, community center builds, park enhancements, and program innovations.

I am pleased for the opportunity to serve the MPRA community as Northwest Region Director. In addition to working with other local directors, I've served as president of the South Suburban Swim League and am a member of the Kansas City Metro Aquatics Council. I love the parks and recreation field and my career has benefited from my involvement with MPRA over the years. If elected, my goal would be to continue the forward-thinking events, education, and resources that MPRA has provided for its members over the years as we all face new challenges to keep parks and recreation at the center of our communities. Thank you for the opportunity and I look forward to serving!



Nathan Musteen, CPRP, ISA Certified Arborist

Director, Raymore Parks & Recreation
Bachelor of Science, Oklahoma State University

I have been the Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Raymore for five years. Prior to that, I served as the Recreation Coordinator for 10 years, building a strong department full of diverse programs, events, and athletics. I've also worked for the Corp of Engineers as a Park Ranger on Beaver Lake in Rogers, Arkansas and was the first parks director hired by the City of Peculiar. I am a graduate of the Lyle B. Beaver Leadership Development Institute as well as the NRPA Park Maintenance School and Directors School.

During my tenure as director, the citizens of Raymore have invested over 6.5 million dollars into their parks, facilities, and programs. With our goal of becoming an all-inclusive community, our Raymore Parks and Recreation Department continues to lead by example, creating amenities for everyone to enjoy. Through our state and national associations, I have had the privilege to develop close relationships with some of our industry's best professionals and departments. It's these relationships and experiences that have set my focus on advancing our profession and bringing a national recognition to my city and our region. If elected, I will continue that effort in not only representing our profession with integrity and honor, but advocating for the experiences that only parks and recreation can provide.

Meet the Candidates Northwest (Region 1) Director Elect



Jeff Atkins

Assistant Director, St. Joseph Parks, Recreation, and Civic Facilities

As Assistant Director, I oversee the activities of the Remington Nature Center, Joyce Raye Patterson 50+ Activity Center, St. Joseph Civic Arena, Missouri Theatre, and maintenance division of the department. I have 34 years experience in the field of parks and recreation and look forward to coming to work each and every morning. Previously, I have held the positions of Maintenance Electrician, Field Supervisor, and Superintendent of Parks for the department.

Within the MPRA organization, I am currently in my second term of President of the Parks Resource Section and have served on the MPRA Region 1 Maintenance Rodeo Committee, since its inception.

I hold the Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) designation from the National Recreation and Park Association, Certified Pool Operator (CPO) designation from the National Swimming Pool Foundation and am a 2014 Graduate of the Missouri Park and Recreation Associations' Lyle B. Beaver Leadership Development Institute. I also proudly served for 23 years as a United States Navy Seabee in Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Fifteen, retiring in 2010.



Justin Merkey

Director, Gladstone Parks and Recreation
Master of Business Administration,
State University of New York at Albany
Bachelor of Science in Leisure, Oklahoma State University

I have more than 21 years of experience in the field of parks and recreation. I am currently fortunate to serve as the Director of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts for the City of Gladstone. This includes the oversight of an annual operating budget of \$5 million and supervising 22 amazing full-time staff. I began my career in Therapeutic Recreation, working with emotionally disturbed youth at Parsons Child and Family Center in Albany, New York. In 2006, I made the decision to pursue employment in municipal recreation and relocate to Missouri after accepting the position of Community Center Administrator for the City of Gladstone. I had the privilege of assisting in construction oversight of the new center, developing all policies and procedures, interviewing/hiring staff, and managing the building after it was open for eight successful years. In 2014, I was promoted to the Director of Parks and Recreation. Since 2014, I have overseen more than \$8 million in improvements to parks, city facilities, and art installations. The field of parks and recreation has been one of personal fulfillment and I would enjoy the opportunity of giving back to the field.

Meet the Candidates Northeast (Region 2) Director Elect



Anna Cheng

**Sr. Student Support Specialist/ Internship Coordinator,
University of Missouri - Columbia
Master of Science in Natural Resources with Parks, Recreation,
and Tourism Emphasis, University of Missouri - Columbia**

Being a foreigner, I had the opportunity to travel a lot and that allows me to see leisure and recreation all around the states and the world. It pushed me to go to places where I was able to work with parks and recreation from a small town like Naknek, AK, to a growing city like Hardeeville, SC, to now serving a large population like Mizzou. I held the position as Internship Coordinator, supporting students on career development and assisting them in finding their passion by hosting career events, meetings, and trips where network and relationships can be built.

I begin attending MPRA workshops and conferences as a student. In 2018, I was fortunate to present my master's project of Flyer and Technology Advertising in Parks and Recreation at the conference. Now transitioning to a young professional, I continue to build connections with professionals and share my personal experience with students to help them get involved with MPRA.

Being a young professional myself, I understand the struggles that students face and the disconnection that professionals feel with the coming generations. Utilizing my advantage as an educator, I hope I can contribute to minimizing the gap by being the liaison for students and professionals and continue passing on the support that I was given. Moreover, I hope, by taking this role I can inspire more young professionals to step outside of their comfort zone and not be afraid of being somebody. Thank you for this opportunity.



Joey Wilmes, CPRP

**Recreation Supervisor, Columbia Parks and Recreation
Bachelor of Science in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism,
University of Missouri**

Parks and recreation has always been a major part of my life. Whether it was playing in the local park, riding bikes on a trail with friends, or playing in a recreational sports league growing up, parks and recreation has had a lasting impact.

Since graduating from the University of Missouri - Columbia in 2007 I have worked seven years as Facility Attendant, one year as a Recreation Specialist and the last four years as Recreation Supervisor, all with Columbia Parks and Recreation. In my

12 years with the department, I have taken on as much responsibility as possible while I continue to grow and learn. I have had great mentors and have worked across multiple divisions within the department helping positively impact our community.

I have been involved with MPRA for the last four years attending quarterly region meetings, annual conferences, and volunteering for Region 2 fundraising events. I am excited for the opportunity to take on a larger role and help make an impact with MPRA as 2020 Region 2 Director Elect.

Meet the Candidates Southwest (Region 3) Director Elect



Heidi Johnson

Director, Lamar Parks and Recreation

I am honored to be asked to serve as a candidate for Southwest Region President Elect! After working in collegiate athletics for almost 20 years, I was hired as the Director of Parks and Recreation for the City of Lamar in 2017. I am proud to be able to serve the citizens of my hometown in parks and recreation and want to advocate for the needs of smaller departments in primarily rural areas. Joining MPRA was a priority to me when I started the job because I knew I would need the network of seasoned professionals to help me along. I am excited to hit the third anniversary in my position, so I can begin working on my CPRP certification.

In my short time with the city of Lamar, I have fought to keep our pool open, headed up a major repair project, and successfully passed Parks & Stormwater Sales Tax.

I previously worked in media relations at my alma mater, University of Missouri, as well as University of Minnesota, University of Florida, and Pittsburg State University. I am actively involved in Lamar Community Theatre, Lamar Rotary, and am on the board for the Barton County Community Foundation and the Lamar Drug Free Coalition. I am a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Lockwood, where I teach 2-3 year-old Sunday School, sing in the choir, and play bells. I have three pug children, who love my change in career, because they get a lot of playtime at the Lamar City Park!



Elliot Wilburn, CPSI, CYSA

Assistant Director of Parks & Recreation, City of Lebanon

I started my career with the Lebanon parks department in 2003 preparing ball fields for the summer and have since worked my way to my current position. My experience in the park and recreation field ranges from everyday maintenance to planning events, running sports leagues, and assisting in the development of major park projects. I currently serve on two community boards, the L-LIFE Food Pantry Board and the Lebanon Area Veterans Board.

Since joining MPRA I have attended several regional and annual conference and have volunteered on the conference committee the past few years. It would be an honor to be elected to this position within the MPRA.

Meet the Candidates Southeast (Region 4) Director Elect



Mike Lueck, CPRE

Director of Parks and Recreation Services, City of Wentzville
Bachelor's Degree in Education, University of Missouri - Columbia
Master's Degree in Sports Management, Western Illinois University

It is surreal to think that I have been fortunate enough to be working in the parks and recreation industry for more than 27 years now. My career has given me the opportunity to grow and serve in the communities of St. Peters, O'Fallon, Hutchinson (KS), and now Wentzville. During my tenure in each of these organizations, I have had the unique opportunity to experience the peak growth periods in these organizations and I have had the great pleasure of working with some extraordinarily talented professionals.

I earned a bachelor's degree in education at the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1992 and I also hold a master's degree in sports management from Western Illinois University. I became a Certified Park and Recreation Professional in 1998 and in 2017, I became a Certified Park and Recreation Executive.

Over the years, I have served in a number of roles in both the Missouri Park and Recreation Association and the Kansas Recreation and Parks Association. I had the good fortune of being part of the group that founded the MPRA Facility Design and Maintenance School and I am a graduate of the NRPA Colorado Revenue School. I have also been an active member of the Kansas Association of Airports and the Sports Turf Manager's Association. These experiences have taught me a great deal and allowed me to grow professionally but, more importantly, they have built friendships that I cherish to this day.

As a longtime member of both MPRA and NRPA, I am a strong believer that being actively involved in our professional organizations, especially at the state and local levels, is an important obligation of every professional in the field. It is important to remember that everything we do continues to advance and raise the bar of service delivery for all professionals throughout the state. It is only by working together that we all can effectively advance Missouri's park and recreation profession into the next decade and beyond. Thank you for the opportunity and I would be honored to serve as Director of Region 4.



Tracey Whitaker, CPRP

Recreation Specialist,
Maryland Heights Parks and Recreation Department
Bachelor of Science, Missouri State University

I have worked in the parks and recreation field for more two decades in both part time and full time capacities. Within that time, I have had the opportunity to learn from many great recreational mentors within our community of parks and recreation. As I look back at my career and experiences with St. Charles County, Olivette, Brentwood, and Maryland Heights, each one of those departments has helped shape me into the professional that I am today.

I became involved with MPRA as a college senior and quickly joined the Young Professionals Section upon graduating. Years later, I was elected to serve as the MPRA Treasurer for a two-year term. This gave me a unique experience, as I was able to engage and work with fellow professionals across the state in achieving a common goal benefiting MPRA and our field. In addition to those roles, I volunteered to lead the Programmers Support Group when it originally formed, and I am the current President of Metro Day Camp, which trains 200 counselors from nine municipalities around St. Louis each summer. I feel that it is important as a professional to continue to educate ourselves in our job specific areas so that we can continue to offer fresh, new, and innovative ideas to our communities.

I would be honored to serve as the Region 4 Director. If elected, I would bring new and creative ideas to our region as well as utilize the talents and resources within our state and I look forward to serving.