

President's Message



Molly McClure, CPRP

Why Are Great Parks & Recreation Agencies Greater Than the Sum of All of the Parts?

TEAMS.

When it comes to procrastination, I shine. I have the privilege of writing this president's message, but it seems I always wait until the last minute to put my final thoughts on paper. There is so much to talk about. So I'm writing from the beach in North Carolina, inspiring indeed. But the beach, a cold adult beverage, family and my golf clubs are beckoning – so I'll get to the point.

My sister Katie and I enjoyed our 12-hour journey down here; the last couple of hours were spent on back roads – we love looking into the lives of others along the way. Doesn't it give you a chance to be reflective about what is important and put things into perspective for your own life and choices? I think it was this over-due article that sparked the question... why are there are so many incredible park and recreational facilities throughout our country? Why are great parks and recreation agencies greater than the sum of all of the parts? TEAMS. We have great professionals in our field who know how to put together great teams, focus on the importance of teamwork and develop their teams along the way. Lessons we all learned in our team sports experiences have become essential in our responsibility to create fun, functional, flexible places and experiences.

Our profession seems to attract passionate, creative, flexible, open-minded and hard working people who love what they do. Our culture demands that we continuously do it better and that we take pride in sharing our knowledge, experience and tricks of the trade. These qualities and the caring commitment to our teammates produce some amazing facilities, events and customer service. No wonder we love our jobs.

OPRA is an important part of our team – thank goodness we don't have to figure it out alone. Besides the great networking opportu-



nities and dedicated advocacy efforts, OPRA has many training opportunities available to take your team to the next level. Make sure to contact OPRA at www.opraonline.org or 800.238.1108.

I was first introduced to Ruby Newell-Legner at an OPRA conference and I soon learned why she is among the favorites. Her humorous comprehensive approach to hands-on, experiential training gave me many great ideas for our team. Recently, Ruby teamed up with OPRA and other state organizations to offer one-hour teleseminars to provide essential training. It is a cost-effective, convenient way to train your staff. Training takes place in the comfort of your office, with handouts and opportunities to interact and ask questions. Ruby always encourages groups to continue the discussion and provides worksheets to enhance your post-seminar outcome. The following is a little Ruby-teaser from one of her recent team-building sessions.

Key Communication Tactics for Successful Leaders:

- 1) Encourage brainstorming
- 2) Create effective communication channels
- 3) Clarify expectations for every staff member's role
- 4) Choose words carefully

- 5) Use listening skills to learn and promote respect
- 6) Interact with staff and provide frequent positive motivation

In an effort to advance our customer service delivery, we recently brought Ruby to the Anderson Park District to train our team. Before we finished for the day, Ruby told us a story about these flightless, fairy Australian penguins that always travel together. Before they march up the beach to their burrows, they gather, because if they don't stick together they literally can't survive the fox, their predator. She presented us with our penguin to remind us of the importance of our team. Our penguin is awarded from one staff member to another each day for their contribution to our team. The APD penguin "Frosty" has been making the rounds through all the departments for great deeds of teamwork; it has been fun to see all the new accessories Frosty has acquired in his months of travel. We are a work in progress, but Frosty has helped us to see the best in our teammates.

Well, I am on vacation, so it's time to "Walk the Talk," celebrate life and go outside and play...

Thanks for the opportunity you have given me to serve.