



2025 OPRA Conference & Trade Show Education Sessions By Date and Time

1

Monday, February 3, 2025 | 8:30am – 9:45am

Breaking Down Barriers: A Practical Approach to Park Accessibility

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Everyone strives to provide accessible and welcoming spaces for patrons and to ensure every visitor has access to the benefits of our parks and trails. Faced with tight budgets and the challenges of changing regulations, the task can feel daunting. This session will provide an update on the recent changes to accessibility regulations and a template for creating programs to assess, identify, and prioritize solutions for accessibility in your parks.

John Patrick Picard, John Patrick Picard Architect, Inc.; Sarah Buell, Stark County Park District; Billy Meisner, Stark County Park District; Jason Yost, Stark Parks

Rosewood | Inclusion/DEI

Building a Better Workplace: Culture Enhancement and Expectation Management

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Imagine how fulfilling careers and lives could be if expectations were better managed to cultivate positive workplace culture. By defining realistic outcomes and fostering a supportive environment, expectations can be aligned for ourselves and others, including boards, elected officials, coworkers, and volunteers. In this interactive session, explore strategies to enhance organizational culture with a focus on managing expectations making work life more fulfilling and efficient.

Kaye Borchers, Choice One Engineering; Janet Jackson, Organization Solutions, LLC

Cypress | Management

Building Community Resilience

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Many communities are experiencing acts of violence and crises that have had detrimental effects. Oftentimes, recreation centers serve as safe spaces and a place of refuge. Explore strategies to build community resilience including those for both staff and community members. Participants will have a clear understanding of the necessity to cultivate organizational policies, procedures, and practices that foster a culture of service and empowerment, and promote safety, healing, and self-care.

Kristen Riggins, Cincinnati Recreation Commission; Brandi Sanders, Cincinnati Recreation Commission

Aloeswood | Administration

Building for the Future

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

As Parks and Recreation professionals, understanding daily operations and facility usage is key to serving the community. Adjusting operations and preventative maintenance are also imperative. Even bigger, perhaps, is seeing the future and meeting the new needs of your community. We do this through intentionally focusing on the future while building capital and strategic plans and incorporating master plans. In this session, Jason will educate attendees on the methods of building forward.

Jason Chadock, Macedonia Parks and Recreation

Orange | Facilities/Operations



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Empower Yourself: Measure Your Economic Impact

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Discover the power of measuring your economic impact in this session designed to demystify Economic Impact Studies. Gain practical skills and insights through theory, examples, and interactive discussions. Discover how to quantify economic impact and leverage this knowledge. Join Bill and Ryan as they provide the tools to share stories of impact and have a little fun along the way.

Ryan Davis, City of Miamisburg Parks and Recreation; Bill Tschirhart, Five Rivers MetroParks

Guava (& Tamarind) | Fiscal Administration

Enhancing Sustainable Trail Development: Pre-Construction Vegetation Assessments

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

With the growing demand for trails putting added stress on the biological integrity of natural areas, Five Rivers MetroParks developed a straightforward survey approach to better assess the impacts trails have on plants and biodiversity. This methodology identifies plant species within trail impact zones, integrating unbiased protocols rooted in science and adaptive management strategies. This adaptable method empowers teams without advanced plant identification skills to effectively mitigate environmental impacts.

Grace Dietsch, Five Rivers MetroParks; Megan Rude, Five Rivers MetroParks

Sagewood | Trends

Ethical & Environmentally Conscious Events: An Imperfect Journey to Limiting Waste

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Is your organization driven by a desire to reduce event waste? Join Summit Metro Parks staff to learn about their imperfect journey toward enhanced event sustainability. Hear from the cross-departmental team whose passion fueled their efforts, even when the challenges seemed overwhelming. Discover how needs were identified, goals established, and obstacles were overcome, while understanding that progress matters more than perfection. Gain valuable insights and motivation to kick-start or enhance your waste reduction initiatives

Julie Haumschild, Summit Metro Parks Foundation; Julia Neal, Summit Metro Parks; Mark Smalley, Summit Metro Parks

Indigo Bay | Events

A Guide to Unlocking Creativity

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Brainstorms and ice breakers don't have to be cringy. This session will teach you how to lead thought-provoking brainstorming sessions that are actually fun and result in inspired staff and unexpected teambuilding.

Stephanie Sercu, Miamisburg Parks & Recreation

Crown Palm Hut | Marketing

The Journey of Connecting Marginalized Communities to Nature through Outreach

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

For almost 50 years, Cleveland Metroparks Mobile Outreach Unit has connected marginalized communities to nature. This journey of breaking down barriers to engage these communities in innovative ways has been critical to their success in making connections. This session will cover the establishment, programming, partnerships, and the future of the Mobile Outreach unit.

Angelec Hillsman, Cleveland Metroparks

Mangrove | Parks



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Launching Your Team to Success through Onboarding

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Craft a winning onboarding program! Learn proven methods to integrate new hires (seasonal and full-time) for a smooth transition, boost engagement, and empower the team for success.

Marisa Hoff, The Empower Group

Portia (& Wisteria) | Human Resources

Making Aquatics Fun Again: Turning a Minion into a Mini Me!

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

In the "Good Old Days", there were no rescue tubes. High dives, long breath-holding, and more than a few chicken fights were in every pool. Now, the battle is with the lifeguard shortage and cranky patrons while juggling the hundreds of duties of an Aquatics Director. Wouldn't it be nice to not face all these challenges alone? Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and start making a Mini Me workforce.

Jim Clark, Macedonia Parks and Recreation

Leopardwood | Aquatics

Utilizing Natural Area Parks to Promote & Perform Conservation Research

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Natural area parks can provide important opportunities to foster conservation research. Summit Metro Parks will discuss three ways they fulfill this role by entertaining numerous research opportunities annually through special use permits, by utilizing seasonal and internship help to provide research experiences, and by leveraging partnerships to provide targeted research. Examples and results of research from both the students' and park agency's perspective will be offered.

Robert Curtis, Summit Metro Parks; Charlotte Gintert, Summit Metro Parks; Sarah Culliton, Hiram College/Summit Metro Parks

ZebraWood | Natural Resources



2025 OPRA Conference & Trade Show Education Sessions By Date and Time

Monday, February 3, 2025 | 2:30pm – 3:45pm

Alternative Revenue - How to Generate It and Get More!

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

With shrinking budgets and organizations being asked to do more, how do you fund these priorities? There are items considered “low hanging fruit,” but what about the others? Investigate the deeper opportunities for alternative revenue with two finance professionals and get the inside story!

Bill Tschirhart, Five Rivers MetroParks; Andy Collins, Great Parks of Hamilton County

Guava (& Tamarind) | Fiscal Administration

Building Strong Community-Driven Events

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Events have the power to create lasting memories and help sustain strong communities. To accomplish that, the concept of combining strong event planning with community building will be explored in this session. Participants will be guided through a step-by-step strategy for creating events that resonate with their specific community. Stories will be shared as examples to illustrate how community relationships can inspire event ideas and bring them to life. The culminating section will cover the key elements every successful event should have.

Jeri Lewis, City of Middletown

Indigo Bay | Events

Effective Field Rotation: Bridging Programmers and Grounds Crews

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Discover how to effectively coordinate programmers and grounds crews to maximize field usage and maintain top condition of your fields. Learn best practices for scheduling, balancing usage demands, and implementing maintenance strategies. This session will provide insights on fostering teamwork and communication to ensure fields remain playable and safe. Explore techniques to optimize field rotation and ensure long-term sustainability and performance of your athletic fields.

Ryan DeMay, FieldSource; Jake Diefenthaler, FieldSource

Orange | Facilities/Operations

Exceeding Expectations with Effective Community Engagement

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Do you struggle to get community participation in planning processes? Are you effectively reaching the diverse communities you serve? Do you wish you could respond more promptly to resident inquiries and improve satisfaction? From day-to-day operations and program satisfaction surveys to master planning and ballot initiatives, this session provides research, inspiration, examples, and tools to engage your community more effectively.

Ryan Hegreiness, BerryDunn

Aloeswood | Administration



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Grow Awareness. Grow Engagement. Grow Stronger.

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Every parks and recreation organization has its own special something: an indescribable feeling of community or a commitment to people and nature that's worth celebrating. Without the right branding, your system's messaging can easily go unheard making your goals fall short. A dynamic brand strategy increases community engagement, results in more funding, and helps you grow. Learn from experts who've helped districts across the country, including Metroparks Toledo, build sustainable brands and drive engagement through effective communications.

David Woodward, Everwild; Mary-Charles Woodward, Everwild

Crown Palm Hut | Marketing

The Making of a Community-Based Aquatics Center

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

The process of developing a community-based aquatics center should result in a design that uniquely reflects the needs and goals of the community. Through a precedent study, this session will explore the steps taken from the idea inception through the design and construction phases of the project.

Ted Haug, Legat Architects; Chris Trotta, levelHEADS Architects; Sean Ward, City of Mayfield Heights; Matt Freeby, Water Technology Inc.

Leopardwood | Aquatics

Manage Conflict Like a Boss!

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Manage conflict like a boss, even if you're not! Build the UAEs of a winning culture. Use them to celebrate success and manage conflict within your team. Gain an understanding of how communicating a clear picture of expectations and unacceptable, acceptable, and exceptional behaviors can help you turn conflict into collaboration no matter your position on the team. Learn to use the Rule of 3 and non-negotiables to get through the unavoidable tough stuff of teams.

Julie Jones, SSB Performance

Cypress | Management

OPRA Retirement Academy

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

This presentation will educate members on all aspects of their retirement. OPERS benefits and elections at retirement, tools available to supplement pensions while working, and other considerations like social security, severance payout plans, plus more will be covered. This session is made for individual members, as well as, those in leadership looking for ways to educate their employees.

Alex Solove, Equitable Advisors

Portia (& Wisteria) | Human Resources

Park District Meeting and Advocacy Update

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Networking and discussion on issues of interest for Ohio park districts. Explore solutions to challenges that park districts face as it relates to actions taken by state legislators.

Woody Woodward, Ohio Parks and Recreation Association

Mangrove | Parks



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Urban Gardening: Embracing Nature from Concrete to Canopy

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Discover how Summit Metro Parks and Let's Grow Akron have created an immersive garden classroom at Summit Lake Nature Center that supports healthy lifestyles for all people from all walks of life. Our nature center community garden provides an inclusive space for everyone to learn how to start their own garden in a bed, their back yard, or a bucket on their balcony. Learn the first steps toward introducing inclusive gardening into your parks

Reyna Askew, Summit Metro Parks; Dave Daly, Summit Metro Parks

Sagewood | Trends

Wetlands Building Community

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Wetlands are among the most diverse habitats in the world. We invite you to celebrate and even add these natural resources in your community and in your programming. MAD Scientist Associates and parks and rec staff from the City of Powell team up to share how a four-acre wetland at a city park has become a cornerstone of community and curiosity.

Jenny Adkins, MAD Scientist Associates; Melissa Hindman, City of Powell

ZebraWood | Natural Resources

"Words Matter": Getting on the Same Page with Disability Inclusion

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Join this session with a focus on practicing inclusive language and understanding the different types of program design that helps to foster a disability-inclusive culture. Let's start by analyzing the term "Inclusion," using person first language, and replacing "words to lose" with "words to live by," producing language that is more empowering and positive focused. Next, we'll break down the different models on how your programs can be offered: Specialized, Adaptive, Integrated, or Authentic Inclusion. What are the core elements, benefits, and challenges to each model? Wrap it up with a discussion on the word "Special" and its impact on how people with disabilities are supported to be valued members of our community.

Lisa Drennan, MERGE Diverse Abilities Inclusion Consulting

Rosewood | Inclusion/DEI



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Monday, February 3, 2025 | 4:00pm – 5:15pm

AI in Parks and Recreation: Productivity and Pitfalls

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

In this session, dive into the real-world applications of artificial intelligence within parks and recreation. From enhancing operational efficiency to sparking creative marketing strategies, discover how AI can revolutionize your department and boost productivity. Explore case studies showcasing successful AI integrations, share practical and affordable tools you can implement immediately, provide tips for talking to your IT team about using AI, and discuss the legal and ethical considerations to ensure responsible AI usage. Join Bill and Ryan to transform your operations with the power of AI while staying ahead of potential pitfalls.

Bill Tschirhart, Five Rivers MetroParks; Ryan Hegreness, BerryDunn

Sagewood | Trends

Aquatic Programming for Success: The Ebbs and Flows

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

This seminar will teach you to utilize your most expensive piece of fitness equipment - your pool! Learn to maximize the return on investment and take programming that is all wet and have it gleam with excellence. Take your dying aquatics program and resuscitate it with alternative programming, instructor training, leadership, and motivational tools to create a profitable aquatic exercise program. Leave with great strategic marketing tools and programming protocols to turn your pool into a profit center!

Autumn Hammer, SCW Fitness Education; Jackie Carroll, SCW Fitness Education

Leopardwood | Aquatics

Building a Team

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Today, more than ever, having a strong team is critical to excelling in service. Building an environment is important, however, getting the right people on that team is the key. That's achieved by having a strong hiring process and not taking shortcuts. Maintaining a staff and providing training and proper resources is imperative. This training will cover how to hire, train, and motivate staff for continued success and create a positive culture.

Jason Chadock, Macedonia Parks and Recreation

Portia (& Wisteria) | Human Resources

Carbon Capture and Storage: The Key to Mitigating Climate Change

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

In 2023, Five Rivers MetroParks conducted a comprehensive study on soil carbon sequestration across diverse ecosystems, including prairies, forests, and wetlands. This research aimed to assess their capacity to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and enhance long-term carbon storage. The findings from this study are pivotal for prioritizing restoration efforts, shaping land conservation strategies, and fostering public understanding and engagement in conservation practices.

Grace Dietsch, Five Rivers MetroParks

Zebrawood | Natural Resources



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Coaching or Criticism: Using Feedback to Move Forward

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Am I being coached or criticized? Is it feed-back or feed-forward? No matter how it is delivered, success depends on learning to share critical information and the ability to use information shared to improve performance. Get a picture of how feedback is typically managed and learn to adjust the approach to make every situation work for the individual and the organization.

Julie Jones, SSB Performance, LLC

Orange | Leadership

Connecting Community Needs with Strategic Master Planning

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Is your Parks and Recreation Master Plan fulfilling the needs of your community? Strategies for developing and implementing a resilient master plan will be discussed in this session. A case study of how the City of Dublin approached its recent plan update, the processes through which the plan was developed, and how the strategies are being implemented will be offered to help support your next master planning efforts.

Matthew Earman, City of Dublin; Leon Younger, PROS Consulting, Inc.

Aloeswood | Administration

Creating a Sustainability Movement in Ohio's State Parks

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Improving sustainability in Ohio's state parks is crucial because of the large environmental footprint that recreational use can leave upon the land. Because ODNR takes the responsibility of protecting natural resources seriously, the agency is preparing for the future with the ConServe Ohio sustainability initiative. This session shares Ohio State Parks' story of implementing a sustainability plan across 76 state parks, facilitating organizational change, and expanding efforts as technology and resources become available.

Heather Bokman, ODNR Division of Parks & Watercraft

Mangrove | Parks

Developing an IPM Turf Management Program for Parks

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

IPM is a responsible approach to Turfgrass Management using best practices, scouting, monitoring and record keeping. For those looking to increase the playability and safety of their sports fields, soil stability, or just looking to start at the ground level, this session will provide you with the steps needed to develop a turf management program for your agency.

Brian McGuire, Reynoldsburg Parks and Recreation

Orange | Facilities/Operations

Disability Inclusion Includes ALL Staff: Getting Your Team on Board

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Struggling to get your staff on board with inclusion? Inclusion takes organizational commitment. Learn strategies to build a culture where every position ensures all belong. Common hurdles and best practices to engage your entire team in disability inclusion will be discussed. Discover how to effectively support CTRSs or Inclusion Specialists, promote independence and confidence among front-line staff, and enhance your program's capacity for success.

Lisa Drennan, MERGE Diverse Abilities Inclusion Consulting

Rosewood | Inclusion/DEI



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How to Plan and Manage Your Capital Projects

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Balancing the day-to-day requirements of operating and managing a department while taking on larger, more costly, and often complex capital projects, create challenges that can impact cost schedules. Attendees will learn how to organize, plan and advance capital projects, and review various management options. This session will include a review of the design process, construction delivery options, and strategies to approach managing a new project without disrupting current activities.

James Russell, Pizzuti Solutions LLC; Dave Wharton, New Albany Plain-Local Joint Parks District; Ashley Senn, Pizzuti Solutions LLC

Guava (& Tamarind) | Fiscal Administration

It's Not Just Us: How Can Programming and Marketing Work Together?

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Please include session description and title in your signed contract.

Stephanie Sercu, Miamisburg Parks & Recreation; Ryan Davis, Miamisburg Parks and Recreation; Jen Brandt, Miamisburg Parks and Recreation

Crown Palm Hut | Marketing

Taking the Stress out of the Fest: A Case Study (or Two) to Help You Make Lasting Memories

Sponsored By Equitable Advisors

Amanda and Melissa will guide you through a rollercoaster journey of learning from their top hits and epic fails in the world of event planning. Dive into the thrilling case studies of the City of Marysville's Friday Nights Uptown and the City of Powell's Powell Festival. They'll spill the tea on event logistics, sponsorships, liquor permits, and the drama behind entertainment contracts and volunteer management. Let's make events epic again!

*Amanda Morris, City of Marysville *As of 9-1-24: City of Hilliard; Melissa Hindman, City of Powell*

Indigo Bay | Events



Tuesday, February 4, 2025 | 8:30am – 9:45am

Building a Positive Parks Culture Through Turmoil and Growth

Sponsored By Coaches' Tool Chest

Gahanna has faced many challenges in the past decade: failed levies, leadership turnover, budget cuts, and COVID. During these times, the culture within the Parks Division suffered. Building and maintaining a positive culture in a Parks environment is difficult. Find out how a culture of growth, accountability, and teamwork was achieved by showcasing how they went from nearly being absorbed into the Service Department to now flourishing with triple the full-time workforce and millions of dollars in projects.

Zac Guthrie, City of Gahanna; Kody Rubright, City of Gahanna; Shunnye Dunlap, City of Gahanna

Cypress | Leadership

Building a Strategic Board

Sponsored By Coaches' Tool Chest

Does your Board have clarity in their purpose to best serve your department? Do your Board members leave meetings and know exactly how they can be an asset to you and your department before returning to the next scheduled Board meeting? This engaging presentation will share lessons learned, along with practical tools to encourage action of your Board members through the design of clear and detailed Board strategic plan.

Annie Frisoli, Creating Community, LLC

Orange | Leadership

Earn the Dawn - Effective Strategies to Enhance Your Life

Sponsored By Coaches' Tool Chest

Have you ever felt like you're stuck in your comfort zone, unable to push yourself to fully embrace the vibrant life you desire? The invisible barriers that keep you from breaking through and achieving your fullest potential can be daunting. This session is designed to help face these fears head-on and equip you with practical strategies to enhance your life.

Tom Speaks, The Impact Group

Indigo Bay | Leadership

Lifelong Lessons in Leadership

Sponsored By Coaches' Tool Chest

Forget force, ignite potential! This session unveils the secrets to inspiring your team to achieve greatness. Learn key leadership strategies and gain practical tools to empower them. Walk away energized and equipped to become the leader you were meant to be.

Chris Stevenson, The Empower Group

Portia (& Wisteria) | Leadership

Paradoxical Leadership: Unleash Your Inner Parks & Recreation Mastermind

Sponsored By Coaches' Tool Chest

Unleash your inner paradox master! In this session, you will discover the key strengths and weaknesses of your strategic style. We'll ditch the "either/or" and embrace "both/and" thinking to keep your teams thriving, all while balancing organizational tradition and staying relevant to your stakeholders. Learn how to navigate challenges using five specific examples from the Centerville-Washington Park District. Get ready for an insightful dive into the paradox mindset.

Kristen Marks, Centerville-Washington Park District

Guava (& Tamarind) | Leadership



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Thriving as an Introvert in an Extroverted Industry

Sponsored By Coaches' Tool Chest

Public meetings, politicians, presentations, community engagement, conferences, meetings, and social activities-let's face it, there's a lot to overcome for an introvert in municipal parks and recreation! Our profession needs the perceptive, sensitive, analytical, and introspective characteristics of the introvert. In fact, research demonstrates that introverts can be better decision-makers and more effective leaders. How does the introvert thrive in a field filled with outgoing personalities and the responsibilities of countless events, meetings, and presentations? We will discuss strategies for quiet leaders to navigate these waters and find their voice.

Ryan Hegreness, BerryDunn

Sagewood (& Zebrawood) | Leadership

Trust: The Ultimate Currency of Success

Sponsored By Coaches' Tool Chest

Unlock the power of trust in this dynamic session. Discover what makes great teams excel and how trust fuels career, relationship, and community impact. Engage in interactive exercises and real-world case studies to master trust-building strategies. Whether a seasoned pro or an aspiring leader, this session will ignite your passion and equip you with actionable tools for success. Don't miss out on this transformative journey in trust!

Ryan Davis, Miamisburg Parks and Recreation

Aloeswood (& Leopardwood) | Leadership



Tuesday, February 4, 2025 | 1:00pm – 2:30pm & 2:45pm – 4:15pm

Lasso: Hidden Broccoli

Really, who likes broccoli anyway? You know it's good for you but sometimes, you need to hide broccoli with cheese to eat it – and then you love it! The show Ted Lasso has so many leadership lessons that are like cheese-covered broccoli that you may have missed them while you were laughing (or crying)! You don't have to be a Ted Lasso fan to BELIEVE! In this session, you will learn curious leadership skills, how relationships build high-performers, and why leaders must be comfortable with being uncomfortable. The philosophies from the book "Trust and Inspire" pairs perfectly with the Lasso way. This session will leave you knowing what you can change about yourself and your organization to BELIEVE in the possibility of what's next.

Addie Weaver, Washington Township RecPlex; Bill Tschirhart, Five Rivers MetroParks

Cypress | Leadership Series

Moving from Disability to Inclusion: Accessibility and Inclusion for All

In his presentation, Michael Hingson, who is blind and a survivor of the September 11 World Trade Center attack, will demonstrate that Diversity is not enough and why it's time for real Inclusion on the job and in our lives. Mike uses stories and lessons from his own life growing up as a blind person, successfully working in professional sales, management, and leadership positions, living as an entrepreneur, and surviving the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, to teach his audiences how a few simple attitude adjustments can open our minds and hearts as well as including persons with disabilities when filling jobs. Attendees will take away ideas about how to gain loyal and hard-working employees as well as how to make the existing workforce more welcoming to those who are different than they are. Mike reminds us that we are all walking down the same road of life and that if we work together, we can create a smoother path for everyone.

Michael Hingsdon, The Michael Hingsdon Group, Inc.

Indigo Guava | Leadership Series

My Life is a Sitcom

"I have no idea what I'm doing, but I know I'm doing it well." Join us once again for an engaging session that explores the parallels between the workplace and your favorite sitcoms. From The Office to Parks and Recreation, you'll find valuable lessons about teamwork, leadership, communication, and navigating office politics. And remembering what public service is all about: making people's lives a tiny bit better.

Melissa Hindman, City of Powell; Amanda Gehres, Reynoldsburg Parks and Recreation

Indigo Bay | Leadership Series

The Power of Authentic Leadership

Join Toni in a thought-provoking conversation where attendees will explore the challenges of authentic leadership and its impact on building meaningful connections within teams. Many leaders avoid sharing their personal viewpoints and experiences, opting to hide their authentic selves. This session aims to delve into the essential elements of authentic leadership, including the power of personal storytelling, contextualizing leadership viewpoints through personal experiences, and fostering genuine relationships by encouraging others to share their stories. Learn how authenticity can positively influence relationships and empower individuals to bring their authentic selves to every interaction.

Toni Murphy, Astound Broadband

Portia (& Wisteria) | Leadership Series



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The Value of a Value

Ever wondered if your organization's values are more than just words on a breakroom poster? In this lively session, we'll dive into the real worth of organizational values and yes, they are more than just free coffee and casual Fridays. Join in on this session to discover the profound impact that a value-driven approach can have on your organization's performance, reputation, and team members.

Annie Frisoli, Creating Community, LLC

Orange | Leadership Series



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Wednesday, February 5, 2025 | 8:30am – 9:45am

Challenges Unique to the Urban Core - Let's Talk About It!

Parks are for all! But are we all equipped to deal with the challenges of an urban park? Learn about challenges and solutions for providing a welcoming, safe, and green environment.

Lisa King, Summit Metro Parks; Victoria Putnam, Summit Metro Parks; Josh Perdok, Summit Metro Parks

Indigo Bay | Urban Recreation

Going Beyond Compliance: Indigenous Engagement, Site Stewardship

Indigenous cultural sites often fall within the boundaries of park systems. Many parks do not have the staff, time, or resources to put toward site stewardship or engagement with Indigenous communities. Summit Metro Parks' efforts to highlight Indigenous culture and heritage and to build relationships with Indigenous communities will be discussed in this session. The overall goal is to conserve these important sites and create authentic, meaningful educational opportunities relating to Ohio's Indigenous legacy.

Megan Shaeffer, Summit Metro Parks; LaDonna BlueEye, Summit Metro Parks

Portia (& Wisteria) | Parks

How to Bring Pride to the Parks

Learn how to successfully and safely bring pride programming to your parks while hearing all about Cleveland Metroparks recent LGBTQ+ programming. With over 50 programs to draw from, we will understand the foundation of building a robust pride series and how to adjust for each unique park system.

Kelsey Rogers, Cleveland Metroparks

Guava (& Tamarind) | Inclusion/DEI

Interdepartmental Relationships - Can't We All Just Get Along?

Unlike the private sector, government agencies have SO many departments working together for the greater good. We will examine ways to build relationships among VERY different personalities. Police, Fire, Public Works, Communications, Finance and even *gasp* City/County/State officials. We will also work on streamlining cumbersome communication and tasks for a better approach to events, programs, and more!

Cara Prell, City of Johns Creek

Mangrove | Management

Partnering for Success

There is strength in numbers. Learn how Medina County Park District is leveraging relationships and local dollars to expand its reach and secure additional funding. From libraries and sports leagues to historical societies and strategic non-profits, examples will be provided that will have attendees leaving with ideas and the inspiration to reach beyond their organizations to build better communities.

Nathan Eppink, Medina County Park District

Aloeswood (& Leopardwood) | Administration



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A Tool Box Approach to Your Career

Embrace a versatile career tool box by valuing experiences, understanding people, and adapting to change. Continuously learn and grow, leveraging each experience to enhance skills and resilience. Embrace collaboration, effective communication, and seize opportunities for innovation. Make a meaningful impact, enrich lives, and contribute to communities. With an open mind, commitment to learning, and dedication to making a difference, navigate challenges confidently. Thrive in today's professional landscape, positioning yourself as a valuable asset to any organization.

Shane McAviney, Mayfield Village Parks and Recreation

Cypress | Fundamentals

Volunteers at the Heart: Engagement Strategies

This program emphasizes the role volunteers play in achieving organizational goals and aims to provide practical strategies for enhancing volunteer satisfaction and impact. By providing tips and suggestions, this session will equip organizations with the knowledge and tools necessary to foster a vibrant and committed volunteer community. Participants will learn to place volunteers at the heart of their mission ensuring sustained success and meaningful impact.

Mary Beth Sills, The Wilds

Sagewood (& Zebrawood) | Volunteers

Who, What, When, Where, and Why? Creating the Programs Your Community Wants

We'll take you through the basics of developing a recreation program from start to finish. Starting with determining what it is your community wants (and needs) you to do. Erin, Katy, and Alison will walk you through identifying resources and strategies to deliver the program and how to evaluate your outcomes. Participants will practice creating a variety of program plans based on their position and their own agency's goals. This session will include time to brainstorm and workshop new ideas with each other, as well as learn about current program trends.

Erin Harris, City of Beavercreek; Katy Lucas, Centerville-Washington Park District; Alison Pifer, Little Miami Watershed Network

Orange | Programming



Wednesday, February 5, 2025 | 10:15am – 11:30am

Does One Size Fit All In Volunteer Management?

Volunteer managers will put their heads together to share what works to recruit, retain, and recognize volunteers through the demographic lens of youth volunteers, working volunteers, and retirees. Three seasoned volunteer managers from various park districts around Ohio with more than 40 years of combined experience will facilitate this interactive discussion. Utilizing polls, small group breakout sessions, and group discussions, this is an opportunity to network, elevate your volunteer program, share your success strategies, and pick up new ideas.

Parker Spencer, Stark Parks; Saundra McBrearty, Preservation Parks of Delaware County; Lisa Meranti, Summit Metro Parks

Sagewood (& Zebrawood) | Volunteers

Engaging Urban Youth in Nature through STEAM

Join Cleveland Metroparks Naturalist, Nicole Hindman, to learn strategies to recruit and engage urban families in camps and after-school nature education programs. The Euclid Beach STEM Adventure Camp project includes three years of community engagement through nature-based STEAM activities including kayaking, fishing, upcycled crafts, creek walking, robotic bug building, and s'more making. The goal is to continue momentum in this grassroots-style programming and actively increase attendance and engagement in urban and underserved communities.

Nicole Hindman, Cleveland Metroparks

Orange | Programming

Everyone is Invited: Inclusion and the Modification Process

Public recreation departments are required to serve everyone. Learn how to start and implement a modification process with ADA requirement do's and don'ts. Share what the challenges of serving people with disabilities looks like and hear the successes of why it's all worth it. You'll leave feeling more confident in serving your whole community while feeling more educated on how to make it happen. Tools and resources will be shared so you can start NOW!

Addie Weaver, Washington Township RecPlex; Anna Breidenbach, City of Kettering

Guava (& Tamarind) | Inclusion/DEI

Listen Up - Your Community is Talking

Surveys are not the only way to hear what a community has to say. In this session, take a deep dive into learning ways to listen to the community and let them know they are being heard. Whether it's focus groups, community meet-ups, social media, interactive voting on an issue, or just going to community events, there are endless ways to understand what a community wants. And don't forget the second part. Once you act on a need, let them know about it.

Jacob Hensel, Centerville-Washington Park District

Aloeswood (& Leopardwood) | Administration

Middle Management & Mid-Career: Staying Relevant and Loving Life

Let's face it, finding and keeping our "why" can be challenging in light of ever-changing politics, staff, and personal life changes. Work on staying relevant and adding value, as well as, managing change and expectations all while maintaining work/life balance!

Cara Prell, City of Johns Creek

Mangrove | Management



2025 OPRA Conference & Trade Show Education Sessions By Date and Time

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Roadmap for Success

Every agency has their own definition of what success means to them. Well, at least we all should by the very fact that no two recreational agencies are created 100% alike. Our road map to success should be fitting to the communities in which we serve. Join this interactive session that will provide valuable insight in building their roadmap to success and how to position an agency when creativity and opportunity meet. The session will provide practical strategies on how to promote innovative recreational opportunities in urban communities, provide holistic and inclusive programming for those who fall by the wayside, and connect resources to communities in need.

Manney Clarke, Columbus Recreation and Parks; Antonio Combs, Columbus Recreation and Parks

Indigo Bay | Urban Recreation

What...This Old Thing? Restoring, Reusing, and Repurposing Urban Landscapes

Summit Metro Parks has been restoring impacted and urbanized landscapes for over 100 years. Farms have been restored to prairies, golf courses changed back into forests, and ditches turned back into streams. This presentation will provide an overview of projects from simple hand-and-shovel to multimillion dollar grant funded restorations. Lessons learned from past projects and highlights of new projects in the pipeline will also be discussed.

Michael Johnson, Summit Metro Parks

Portia (& Wisteria) | Parks

Who's Taking Care of YOU?

Parks and recreation professionals give and give and give- often at the expense of their own health. They are in a field that knows all of the benefits of exercise, but don't always practice what they preach. Take some time for YOU during OPRA. Learn why just 30 minutes of movement a day can be the biggest ROI. You're worth

Jen Brandt, Miamisburg Parks and Recreation

Cypress | Fundamentals