



# WORKSHOPS

## Thursday Morning Conference Workshops

**1**

### **AI in Parks and Recreation: The Next Level**

Topic Track: Leadership/Management

Location: Grand Hall I, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Scott Crowe, Executive Director, Huntley Park District; Neelay Bhatt, Founder & CEO, Next Practice Partners, LLC

Join us for an engaging and dynamic session on the latest updates in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its transformative impact on the park and recreation industry. Building on the foundational concepts presented last year, this session will delve deeper into cutting-edge AI technologies and their innovative applications within our field. Discover how AI is not just a tool of the future but a present-day game changer, driving efficiency, enhancing user experiences, and unlocking new potential in park and recreation management. Be prepared to explore exciting new case studies, witness live demonstrations, and engage in forward-thinking discussions that will equip you with the knowledge to leverage AI for your organization's success.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Deeper Understanding of AI Applications: Gain insights into the latest AI technologies and their specific, advanced applications in the park and re
- Exploring Innovative AI Use Cases: Understand how cutting-edge AI applications are revolutionizing the park and recreation industry by exploring in
- Implementing Cutting-Edge AI Solutions: Learn practical strategies and best practices for successfully adopting and integrating the newest AI sol



# WORKSHOPS

3

## **Building Innovation: A LEGO® Serious Play® Workshop for Park District Professionals**

Topic Track: Leadership/Management

Location: Grand Hall J, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Marcy Fortnow, CEO, Engaging Play, LLC

Unlock your creative potential and spark new ideas with our interactive LEGO® Serious Play® workshop, designed specifically for park district professionals. In this hands-on session, we will explore innovation by using LEGO® bricks to visualize and brainstorm solutions tailored to your unique challenges and opportunities. Discover how play can drive serious insights and transformative thinking, empowering you to lead your park district towards a more innovative future. Whether you're looking to enhance park programming, improve community engagement, or streamline operations, this workshop will equip you with the creative tools and collaborative spirit needed to turn innovative concepts into reality. Come ready to build, share, and transform your approach to innovation in the park district industry!

### **Learning Objectives:**

- **Cultivate Creative Problem-Solving Skills:** Utilize LEGO® Serious Play® techniques to think creatively and develop innovative solutions.
- **Enhance Communication and Collaboration:** Engage in collaborative activities that promote open communication, ensuring that all voices are valued.
- **Apply Play-Based Methods for Professional Growth:** Understand how to incorporate LSP to foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.



# WORKSHOPS

**300**

**Effective Communication Principles Before, During, and After Critical Incidents**

Topic Track: HR/Risk Management

Location: Grand Hall L, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Christopher Covelli, Deputy Chief - Court Security Division & Public Information Officer, Lake County Sheriff Office

Effective communication during a critical incident is crucial for minimizing risk, ensuring everyone's safety, and facilitating a swift and successful recovery. By prioritizing clear, consistent, and targeted communication through various channels, communicators can navigate challenging situations effectively and maintain trust with their community.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Learn about the importance of building rapport with the community and media before a critical incident.
- How to effectively communicate during a critical incident.
- How to manage misinformation.



# WORKSHOPS

**400**

**Beam Me Up Recky! Travel through Time into Inclusive Mindset Succession Planning**

Topic Track: Recreation

Location: Grand Hall K, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Lydie Gutfeld, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, City of San Bernardino

Step into the future of parks and recreation leadership with our dynamic session, Beam Me Up Recky!, designed to equip professionals with the tools needed to lead with inclusivity and strategic foresight. This engaging session will take you on a journey through time, helping you develop an inclusive mindset for succession planning that embraces generational diversity and prepares your organization for future success. Transform your approach to leadership and programming, ensuring your parks and recreation organization is prepared for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. Embrace the future with confidence and inclusivity!

**Learning Objectives:**

- Foster better communication and understanding across generations in the workplace.
- Prepare for succession planning by recruiting and retaining younger generations.
- Reflect on the evolution of the parks and recreation profession and envision its future.



# WORKSHOPS

**500**

**TIME MANAGEMENT for People Who Don't Have Time to Take a Time Management Course: Real Secrets to Getting Things Done**

Topic Track: Therapeutic Recreation

Location: Grand Hall GH, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Michael Brandwein

This nationally acclaimed, creatively presented, no-nonsense session demonstrates six groups of outstanding tools that has received rave reviews by professionals for their flexibility, practicality, and ease of use. Boost your productivity right away while reducing unnecessary stress. You don't have to use all of the techniques every day – just when you need them. They can be applied quickly and tailored to your individual needs and work habits.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Identify special techniques to defeat procrastination, reduce interruptions, increase productivity and efficiency.
- Explain how to get more accomplished and never have a day when you got “nothing done”.
- Organize what needs to be done in a new and better way that replaces the usual “to do” list with something simple that helps you produce high quality work more efficiently.



# WORKSHOPS

**600**

**Field Trip: Sustainability by Design**

Topic Track: Facilities

Location: Offsite,

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Maureen McCarthy, Superintendent of Recreation, Park District of Oak Park; Chris Lindgren, Superintendent of Parks and Planning, Park District of Oak Park; Jan Arnold, Executive Director, Park District of Oak Park

Join us as we visit two cutting-edge centers owned and operated by the Park District of Oak Park. Nestled in the heart of Oak Park, the Community Recreation Center (CRC) was opened in 2023 (thanks to a capital campaign) as a welcome and open space for all Oak Park residents to enjoy. From a free walking track to teen after school programming, and inclusive locker rooms to the building's net-zero footprint, the CRC was built with the community and its collective wellbeing in mind. The Carroll Community Center is a recently renovated 90-year-old facility that has met criteria for Passive House Design designation, and its the second verified Net Zero facility in Oak Park. The Carroll Center is home to many preschool and afterschool programs during the school year.

Tour the facilities and learn how your district can utilize sustainable design when renovating or building new facilities. In addition to talking about the sustainability features, we will highlight the programming and uses of the buildings.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Understand how to reimagine an existing facility through a sustainability lens.
- Learn how to design a new facility using a sustainability lens.
- Tour 2 different facilities to gather ideas on how to plan for sustainability features.



# WORKSHOPS

**900**

**Built on People: The Impact on Going from Personal Brand to Community Brand Mindset**

Topic Track: Marketing/Communications

Location: Grand Suite 3, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Zach Colman, CEO, Creative

According to a study by the University of California, people who build their brands around a sense of community are likelier to feel a sense of belonging and connection. 90% of brands tend to fail after three years due to struggles with personal well-being. This presentation examines what causes people to quit, how to build confidence, feel connected, transfer emotions, and contribute toward their brand's growth.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Learn how to relieve burnout through self-worth and brand management.
- Understand how to align with oneself and become a better leader through brand values.
- Discover how to build your brand's voice through self-discovery and communication.



# WORKSHOPS

**1000**

**From Awareness to Action: Promoting Disability Inclusion**

Topic Track: Diversity

Location: Grand Suite 5, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Samyuktha Neeraja, MPH, CAE, American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology

During this two hour workshop, learn how to promote and ensure disability inclusion in the workplace. The workshop will start with a presentation on disability awareness and common disability-related microaggressions in the workplace. The second part of the workshop will discuss how to make parks & recreation facilities more accessible for people with disabilities. Through guided discussions and interactive activities, participants will be able to understand different types of disabilities, learn how to recognize and combat ableism, and gain practical tips on designing inclusive facilities, ensuring accessibility for all. There will be time throughout the workshop for participants to ask questions and share resources.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Demonstrate an understanding about the various types of disabilities and the diverse experiences associated with living with a disability.
- Describe examples of disability-related microaggressions & ableism, and be able to employ effective strategies to dismantle them.
- Identify 2-3 practical measures to enhance accessibility in parks and recreational facilities for individuals with disabilities.





# WORKSHOPS

## Thursday Afternoon Conference Workshops

**2**

### **Leadership Through Laughter: The Power of Listening & Collaborating**

Topic Track: Leadership/Management

Location: Grand Hall I, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Ethan Blumenthal, Founder & CEO, Knuckleball Comedy LLC

Join us for a dynamic workshop led by professional speaker and comedian, Ethan Blumenthal, founder and CEO of Knuckleball Comedy. This engaging session combines keynote insights with interactive activities designed to enhance leadership skills through humor, active listening, and collaboration. Attendees will be on their feet laughing and participating in fun, engaging exercises that foster a sense of camaraderie and creativity. They will leave not only with valuable leadership takeaways, but also with the joy of having had a great time learning. Discover how to create an environment where ideas flourish, fostering a culture of open communication and teamwork. Embrace the power of laughter and collaboration to transform your leadership style.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- **Enhanced Listening Skills:** Attendees will learn techniques to become better listeners, fostering a more inclusive and effective leadership style.
- **Improved Team Collaboration:** Participants will understand how to create a supportive environment where team members feel safe to share and build on id
- **Utilizing Humor in Leadership:** Attendees will discover how to incorporate humor into their leadership approach, boosting team morale and communication



# WORKSHOPS

**200**

**Field Trip: Get Growing with Public-Private Partnerships**

Topic Track: Parks/Natural Resources

Location: Offsite

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Mary Eysenbach, Director of Conservatories, Chicago Park District; Jen Van Valkenburg, President, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance; Rafael Rosa, Executive Director, Lincoln Park Conservancy

The Chicago Park District builds relationships with private sector institutions to ensure support for the ongoing success of our facilities. We work with environmental organizations, cultural arts organizations, and sports institutions to deliver quality service for our taxpayers. Public-private partnerships take on many forms, from simple one-year contracts to multiple year agreements. Areas of involvement include programming, operations, and fundraising. In this workshop, you'll learn how to identify potential partners, chose the right partnership model, and work with your partners to weather challenges together.

This workshop will take place at Garfield Park Conservatory. It will include presentations from two non-profit conservatories' partners: Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance and the Lincoln Park Conservancy, as well as the Director of Conservatories for the Chicago Park District. The discussion will focus on what each organization brings to the table and how all groups work together to deliver a positive visitor experience. The workshop will include a tour of beautiful Garfield Park Conservatory to witness partnership in action and is limited to 40 participants.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Learn two different models of partnership under which Chicago Park District conservatories operate.
- Identify potential partners outside “friends of the park” groups, such as health organizations, economic development, arts groups, etc.
- Discover ways to work together with partners to solve unanticipated challenges or conflicts.



# WORKSHOPS

**301**

## **Eliminating Annual Performance Reviews: Embracing Continuous Feedback, Agile Goals, and Shifting Priorities**

Topic Track: HR/Risk Management

Location: Grand Hall GH, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Kristin Strunk, President & Principle, Regent Leadership Group, LLC

I'll bet you love performance management season. Doing your self evaluation, providing feedback to employees, and completing endless forms. I'll bet you wouldn't expect an HR professional to tell you to ditch the performance management approach you have been using your whole career. There is another way to do it. It's less painful and less time consuming. It helps support remote employees, can be used with seasonal staff, and encourages your team instead of demotivating them. The process of using continuous feedback, agile goals, and shifting priorities helps you and your team not only perform better but enjoy what you are doing even more. We are going to come out of this workshop with actionable steps to take to remove the quagmire that is the annual performance management process.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Understanding how we got here and why we need to change.
- How to meet the needs of all of your different stakeholders and develop your team at the same time.
- How do you do it even if your organization won't change.



# WORKSHOPS

**501**

**PURPOSEFUL PLAY: Quick, Cool, Original No-Prop Games that Teach Young People (and Staff!) Skills for Life & Leadership**

Topic Track: Therapeutic Recreation

Location: Grand Hall J, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Michael Brandwein

We come to play, and when we leave we've learned! In this active session, national award-winning staff trainer and bestselling youth development author Michael leads us in some of his best original and creative presentation of games that go "beyond fun" to focus on building essential skills and can be used with all ages, indoors and out.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Each activity is mission-directed: Participants will be having too much fun to know they are practicing essential social-emotional and life skills like communication, making friends, positivity, resilience, leadership, respect, collaboration, and more.
- While learning the games, Michael demonstrates outstanding game leadership techniques that can be used with any activity we lead, including clear communication, grabbing and keeping attention, maximizing participation, and more.

**1001**

**Building and Supporting Staff Resilience**

Topic Track: Diversity

Location: Grand Hall K, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Linda Henderson-Smith, Founder and Principal, ATC Consulting LLC

Burnout is high, turnover is high and staff morale is plummeting - some due to the world we live in and some due to the work environment and expectations that staff are dealing with everyday. This session will discuss what causes burnout and other staff workplace experiences, some individual techniques for addressing your own resilience and some organizational and leadership techniques to create an environment to build and support staff resilience.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Define staff concerns and workplace experiences.
- Explain the impact of workplace experiences on staff.
- Describe individual and organizational techniques to support staff resilience.



# WORKSHOPS

**1002**

**Parks, Pools, and Open Spaces for All: Designing for a Neurodiverse Community**

Topic Track: Diversity

Location: Grand Hall L, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Terry Berkbuegler, Sr. Vice President, Confluence, Inc.; Jen Gerber, Vice President, Strategic Partnerships & Operations, Water Technology, Inc.; Katie Hench, CEO / Co-Founder, InfiniTeach Autism Innovation; Aliyah Rich, Content Developer, InfiniTeach Autism Innovation; Mo Convery, Landscape Architect, Confluence, Inc.

Workshop participants will discuss and apply creative strategies to design parks, aquatics, and open spaces that support neurodiverse communities. The case will be made for “why” this matters, and “how” designers and operators can successfully balance the unique perspectives of neurodivergent individuals to incorporate a spectrum of vibrant, engaging, and multi-sensory experiences.

The panel includes a senior park design professional, an industry-leading aquatics design expert, an autism and neurodiversity professional, and an Autistic adult and neurodiversity professional, who will lend first-hand experience to the workshop.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Understand the unique profiles of neurodivergent users.
- Learn how neurodivergent people experience parks and open spaces and how to evaluate existing facilities.
- Learn how to implement strategies to improve the design of inclusive parks and recreational facilities.



# WORKSHOPS

**1100**

**Empowered Boundaries: The Authority of the Resource**

Topic Track: Forest Preserve and Conservation

Location: Grand Suite 3, East Tower, Gold/Ballroom Level

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Speaker(s): Robert Carter, Certified Interpretive Trainer, National Association for Interpretation

Who has the most contact with the people on your sites? You might be surprised to learn that it is not always recreation or education team members. Our maintenance, land management, law enforcement, and concessions team members are often the first and sometimes the only personal interaction visitors have with our agencies. This makes it vital to ensure they can speak to the authority of the resource and share mission-based information, while ensuring rules and regulations are met. This workshop builds on the work of the National Park Service and the National Association for Interpretation to provide best practices for providing high-quality experiences with and in the resources we provide. During this workshop, participants will participate in a series of interactive activities designed to develop communication skills and visitor engagement strategies. We will then learn how to turn daily visitor interactions into positive reflections of our agency.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Participants will identify how various roles in an organization support an agency's mission.
- Participants will learn techniques for effective communication, including active listening, questioning techniques, and non-verbal communication.
- Participants will develop strategies for connecting with diverse audiences and adapting to meet visitors' needs.