



The Welcome Issue

January 2024, Issue 1

Inside This Issue

Welcome from the President ... p. 1
Welcome from the Newsletter ... p. 1
General ORPS News and Kudos! ... p.2
News, Notes, and Up-and-Comings ... p. 2
2024 Trends Kickoff ... p. 3
Tell Your Story in Future Newsletters p. 4

Welcome from the President

Welcome to the first edition of the Oklahoma Parks and Recreation Society Newsletter in 2024! As we embark on another exciting year, we are thrilled to share with you the incredible developments and initiatives that will shape the future of our organization.

Get ready to explore a year filled with innovation, collaboration, and a renewed commitment to enhancing the quality of life for all Oklahomans through the power of parks and recreation. In 2024, we are setting our sights high, with a vision to create lasting impacts on our communities and build a stronger, more connected network of park and recreation professionals across the state.

As we navigate the exciting year ahead, we will be rolling out new programs, resources, and events designed to empower our members and elevate the impact of parks and recreation in our communities. From innovative green initiatives to groundbreaking community engagement strategies, there's no limit to what we can achieve when we work together.

Join us on this journey as we embrace the challenges and opportunities that 2024 has in store. Together, we will continue to make Oklahoma a better place to live, work, and play. Thank you for being an integral part of the Oklahoma Parks and Recreation Society, and we can't wait to share this remarkable year with you!

Mitchell Richardson
ORPS President

Welcome from the Newsletter

Welcome, all, to 2024! I am excited and honored to ring in the New Year with all of you as the new content editor and writer for the ORPS Newsletter.

Helming the Newsletter this year, I hope to continue the excellence of Newsletters past. I have many goals this year, but two are: (1) continue providing added value to **all members**, and (2) use this Newsletter to **communicate** upcoming events, opportunities, and staff and community shout-outs. In short, **Tell Your Stories!**

I'll absolutely need your help in meeting this second goal! Throughout 2024, the Newsletter will release the third week of each month, (January through October), so **please email me** with staff you want to highlight, upcoming community events, building developments, or stories from the field. I will do my best to include all – for **how** and **when** to email me, check out **page 4**.

In an attempt to tackle my first goal, we'll stay with the Conference theme of "Telling Our Story." Each month I will highlight an aspect or two related to the benefits of our field (including: Wellbeing, the Economy, and more), "Telling the Story" of Parks and Recreation.

I think, as Chris Nunes (with The Woodlands Township) eloquently stated at Conference, we should know who is in our community and work to tailor our message(s) to each member in it, be they patron, government official, resident, or visitor. Each has a different perception of the importance of our field so we should know what their interests are and deliver a specific message for them, so they know how important we are!

We will try to tackle all that and more this year!

Kevin Fink, kfink1@uco.edu

General ORPS News

ORPS Board of Directors

- **President 2024** – Mitchell Richardson, Norman
- **President-Elect** – Josh Holman, Norman
- **Past-President** – Ryan McClure, Yukon
- **Vice President, 2024** – Bryan Kelley, Yukon
- **Vice President, 2025** – Josh Quigley, Owasso
- **Vice President, 2026** – Kerri Foster, Shawnee
- **Secretary** – Marina Wells
- **Trustee, 2024** – Eric Newell, Ponca City
- **Trustee, 2025** – Matt Her, Edmond
- **Trustee, 2026** – Thomas Buckley, Yukon

Kudos! Maintenance Rodeo and Other 2023 Award Winners

- **Maintenance Rodeo Winners:**
City of Norman (pictured to the below)
- **Young Professional Award:**
Nick Rice, Yukon
- **Facility or Project Award:**
Broken Arrow, Indian Springs Sports Complex
- **Program or Special Event Award:**
Midwest City & Choctaw
- **Marketing Award:**
Ardmore
- **Presidential Citation:**
Joe Medlin & Jeff Edwards



News and Notes and Up-and-Comings

Southwest Parks and Recreation Training Institute (SWPRTI)

- Join your colleagues from Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, Kansas, and more at the **SWPRTI** at Sequoyah State Park (Wagoner, OK), February 4th – 7th, 2024.
- For more information and the Program, click [here](#).

Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Grants

- RTP Grants are due March 31st, 2024.
- For more information about the application and/or contact information, click [here](#).

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2023 – 2027

- For those interested in **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants** (typically due in September), the [SCORP](#) was recently published and released for our viewing. LWCF grants should be, in many cases, aligned with needs found in the SCORP.

Association of Aquatic Professionals (AOAP)

- **Swim Lessons** and **Life Jacket Grants** are available through AOAP. You can apply for one or both grants with four cutoff dates to apply throughout the year (the next is April 1st, 2024).
- For more information about the application and/or contact information, [click here](#).

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Community Challenge Grants

- [AARP Community Challenge Grants](#) are quick response grants that open in January with project completion by December of the same year.
- The grants “[help] communities become great places to live for residents of all ages.”
- Grant ideas, nationwide, are summarized in this [infographic](#).
- For **Oklahoma** winners in 2023 (and to see more projects that can be funded) look [here](#)!

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Grant Opportunities

- Consider the [NRPA Grant and Fundraising Opportunities](#) page for other funding opportunities.

2024 Trends Kickoff

The Annual Trend Forecast from NRPA

Each year Richard Dolesh (a Vice President with NRPA) researches and writes about Trends and predictions for the field of Parks and Recreation. This year was no different and I encourage you to read the article, hyperlinked below (and free!), for more depth and detail! **But**, pickleball, technology, climate change, and employee health and wellbeing are focuses for the coming year with Parks and Recreation.

Pickleball stays trendy for many and those of all ages. Food for thought, though; Dolesh writes that some communities have run into troubles of both human- (e.g., noise) and animal-kind (e.g., possible displacement). Impacts of **climate change** may affect this and other programs as well, Dolesh argues, as possible weather extremes in our communities may require programming at different times (e.g., morning or night activities) or seasons than we typically do now.

Technology is another trend for 2024. It may help us know more about our community's use and involvement with our services by using location-based information through apps on our phones. Keeping personal information private, including our locations, is a concern, but Dolesh highlights Civic at Placer.ai that provides (at a cost) anonymous location data. The argument is that this data may assist planners in programming or maintaining and/or building facilities because decisionmakers will know how each are utilized. Knowing what people do and where they do it might show how well providers are communicating with their patrons as well. Roth (2019) argues that people not knowing about opportunities can be a big reason for low participation and/or non-use.

Other Trends are noted, but a last one to remark upon is focusing on **employees' physical and psychological health**. Parks and Recreation can assist in keeping employees engaged and well while at work (and beyond); a benefit recognized by employers (e.g., less turnover, sick days used, last of productivity).

References

Dolesh, R.J. (2023, December 21). *Top trends in parks and recreation in 2024*. NRPA.

<https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2024/january/top-trends-in-parks-and-recreation-for-2024/>

Roth, K. (2019, May). Building awareness and use of parks and programming. *Parks and Recreation Magazine*, 54(5), 12-15.

Aquatic Trends from *Recreation Management Magazine*

Recreation Management Magazine teamed with a non-affiliated research group to examine Aquatic Trends for 2024. The 600+ who participated included individuals with Parks and Recreation, Schools (e.g., colleges), Homeowner's Associations, Health and Fitness organizations, Camps, and others.

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, one Trend was the continuation of rising **operational costs**. The author notes, for all types of organizations surveyed, the average operational cost in 2022 was around \$430,000, which rose to an average of just under \$470,000. Respondents expected costs to continue to rise to over \$500,000 in the coming year. Of course, the averages varied by type of organization, but costs rose from 2022 to 2023 **for all**.

Among other Trends noted, the research group asked about **planned future amenities** and found that shade structures, climbing walls and obstacle courses, and cabanas were in the Top-10 for all types of organizations. Again, **planned amenities** differed by organizational type. Check out the link for more info!

Current programming Trends included swim education, leisure and lap swims, water aerobics, special events, and swim meets.

Aquatic Trends from *Recreation Management Magazine* (cont'd)

Programming also included focusing opportunities for individuals with physical and/or developmental disabilities. And some programs were quite unique! Water yoga, dive-in movies, water polo, water programs for dogs, and ninja-style courses. Programming for individuals with physical and/or developmental disabilities, movies, and water yoga were in the Top-10 for **future program efforts**.

The research group reports that fewer facilities are reporting lifeguard shortages as compared to 2022 (though higher education and Y facilities still reported hiring issues) though staffing is still a **top concern** for all organizational types. Participants in this survey noted that increased pay, variable schedules, and free facility use helped with hiring as well as the idea of free certification(s), and bonuses (when hired and/or when reaching a certain timeframe milestone).

References

Tipping, E. (2024, January 11). *Aquatics by the numbers / The aquatic trends report 2024*. Recreation management. <https://recmanagement.com/articles/154200/aquatics-numbers-aquatic-trends-report-2024>

And From a Neighboring Field, ACSM's 2024 Trends

Looking at Trends this time of year happens in a lot of related fields and may be useful for us in Parks and Recreation. For many years, researchers with The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) surveyed professionals (e.g., fitness managers, exercise leaders, trainers, students, etc.) looking toward what is currently happening in the field, what will likely last, and what is likely a flash in the pan.

The ACSM Top-10 includes **programming** for: employees (#2), older adults (#3), youth (e.g., sports leagues; #9), those interested in losing weight (#4), and for those who may be suffering from depression, anxiety, isolation (#8); additionally in the Top-10 were **personalized** and **digital tools** including: using apps (#7) and wearable sensors (#1) which can provide instantaneous (or nearly so) data for programming (#18). Other Trends, just outside of the Top-10 related to Yoga (#15) and Outdoor Exercise and Recreation (#12).

For more information, click the hyperlink found in the Reference below (the article is currently freely accessible). You will be able to review previous years' Trends to make your own determinations about **long-lasting Trends** versus **Fads** (and predicted Trends that may have been Fads). And, this year's 2024 Fitness Trends write-up includes a look at Trends in other countries.

Reference

Newsome, A.M., Reed, R., Sansone, J., Batrakoulis, A., McAvoy, C., & W. Parrott, M. (2024). 2024 ACSM worldwide fitness trends: Future directions of the health and fitness industry. *ACSM's Health & Fitness Journal*, 28(1), 14 – 26. https://journals.lww.com/acsm-healthfitness/fulltext/2024/01000/2024_acsm_worldwide_fitness_trends_future.7.aspx

Tell Your Story in Future Newsletters

If you would like to **write a Story**, have any **Announcements** (e.g., new hires, grant funding awards, staff shout-outs), reading a great field-related **book**, or want to share upcoming **Experiences / Programs / Services to Promote / Share About Your Community**, email me at:

- Kevin Fink (kfink1@uco.edu) with content **by the 5th of the following month** of each current Newsletter.
- And if you think about, include **ORPS Newsletter** as part of the Subject Line to ensure I don't miss it!