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# The Access Issue

March 2024, Issue 3

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## What's in this Newsletter?

Welcome, all, to the third issue of the 2024 ORPS Newsletters! In this issue, we focus on the importance of *access* in Parks and Recreation. Recreation and Parks professionals create impactful experiences so let's examine areas that may affect these impacts.

Join me in welcoming guest contributors Madison Price, Dr. Mike Bradley, and Thomas Buckley. Thomas Buckley joins us from Yukon, OK where he manages the Dale Robertson Senior Center. Madison Price is a graduate student pursuing a Master of Science in Recreation and Park Administration at Eastern Kentucky University. Dr. Mike Bradley is Department Chair and Associate Professor with the Department of Agriculture & Tourism at Arkansas Tech University.

In this issue Thomas will discuss the impact that our field had on him and his community. Madison and Dr. Bradley examine of the importance of access, equity, and inclusion in Parks and Recreation.

**Add it to your calendar:** ORPS 2024 Conference will be November 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> in Norman. The theme this year is "Together We Thrive!" If interested, [Submit a Session](#).

**New this issue:** I am scrolling through the ORPS Facebook notifications for events and postings to announce. I'll try to add as many as I find in the **News, Notes, and Up-and-Comings** each month. **Email me with events** and/or **tag ORPS on Facebook!**

As always – thanks for lending an ear!

Kevin Fink, [kfink1@uco.edu](mailto:kfink1@uco.edu)

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| <b>Put It On<br/>Your<br/>Calendar!</b> | <b>ORPS 2024 Conference</b><br>November 6 <sup>th</sup> and 7 <sup>th</sup><br>Norman, OK |
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[CLICK HERE](#)  
to Submit a Session for ORPS 2024

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## Access and Parks and Recreation

In future Newsletters, we'll continue to explore the impacts of Parks and Recreation and the benefits it can provide employers, community members and families (emotionally, physically, socially), the environment, and more (Edginton et al., 2008).

Before that we might consider **access** (or lack of) to our efforts. For example, Thomas's story below shows the impact of a Senior Center. For years Jackson (2000) and others looked at *constraints*, what can affect our leisure interests and/or create "intervening" barriers in pursuit of our interests. Traditional investigation of barriers has examined pricing, proximity to, time available, family/size, age, gender, and others (Jackson, 2000; Shaw et al., 1991). **Findings don't always agree.**

In addition to those above, considering **access** as a multi-layered demographic approach (e.g., African American, male, young adult, rural, college-educated; see Powers et al., 2020) may be fruitful. Various aspects of who we are and where we live can affect participation, use, or proximity in an additive way. Powers et al. (2020) believe this is a promising approach to expanding access and programming, policy, and knowing our community.

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## Prioritizing Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

**Authors:** Madison Price & Dr. Michael Bradley

The field of recreation, including outdoor and therapeutic activities, has expanded, particularly during the global pandemic. However, challenges related to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) persist and must be addressed for sustainable growth. Key areas include:

**(1) Access and Representation:** JEDI initiatives aim to ensure equitable access to recreation opportunities for all, combating exclusion based on socio-demographic factors.

**(2) Community Well-being and Mental Health:** Recreational spaces impact community welfare and individual mental well-being. Incorporating JEDI principles is crucial to avoid amplifying socioeconomic inequalities.

**(3) Innovation and Adaptability:** Diversity is seen as essential for innovation. A diverse workforce with varied backgrounds and perspectives can better respond to evolving consumer demands and societal values.

**(4) Professional Development and Identity:** JEDI programs influence the professional identity crisis in outdoor recreation. Inclusive professional cultures strengthen industry identity, making it a more attractive career choice.

**(5) Ecological and Ethical Considerations:** Recreation's connection to the natural environment requires ethical stewardship. JEDI values align with ecological responsibility, promoting ethical and sustainable practices.

In conclusion, prioritizing JEDI in the recreation profession is crucial for ethical development. Neglecting these efforts poses risks to societal progress and perpetuates systemic inequalities, emphasizing the need for recognition and prioritization of JEDI concepts.

For the [full article](#), and more, please click [here](#).

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## Resources: Book Club

**Author:** Kevin Fink

During the past few Springs, UCO's Community Recreation students (full disclosure, my class) have conducted a class **Book Club**. Students are assigned one or more chapters to read and facilitate a discussion (i.e., writing questions that we discuss) with classmates who also read for that week. In my experience, this has led to deep discussions about life, Parks and Recreation as a field, and more.

In past years, we read *Play: How It Shapes the Brain Opens the Imagination and Invigorates the Soul* by Stuart Brown. After the ORPS 2022 Conference and Jody Baker's recommendation, I read *Designing Experiences* by J.R. Rossman and M.D. Duerden. With a growing interest in the idea of creating **intentional experiences**, my Community Rec class this Spring is reading *The Power of Moments: Why Certain Experiences Have Extraordinary Impact* by the Heaths.

It is a broader tackling of the *Experience Economy* (Pine & Gilmore, 2019) and Rossman and Duerden's book, but The Heaths provide interesting ideas on intentionally designing experiences relatable to many fields.

This summer, my students and I would like to invite you to participate in an **asynchronous Book Club** facilitated by UCO undergraduate Outdoor and Community Recreation students.

Each subsequent Newsletter, starting in May, I will pose questions written by Community Rec students for two chapters of the *Power of Moments* book that you can answer on your own... or, if there's interest, we can start a small group email chain or Zoom and discuss how to create **moments** in our respective areas of Parks and Recreation, together.

Join us this summer for *The Power of Moments Book Club*, by the Heath Brothers. **Grab a copy** at your local Library or retailer, online, or on Audible or Overdrive or other audiobook apps.

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## Stories from the Field

**Authors:** Thomas Buckley

My name is Thomas Buckley (my friends call me T) and I am the Manager of the Dale Robertson Senior Center in Yukon, Ok. I am new to Parks and Rec and new to working for The City of Yukon, having just taken over this position in April of 2023. Previous to accepting this position I was the Assistant Store Manager of a high-volume retail Large Home Improvement warehouse store. It was a huge work-culture and lifestyle change for me and to be honest, a couple of weeks into my new position I was questioning if I would be able to do this position any justice. Three weeks into my new adventure, I was in my office and one of our senior ladies came in and asked if she could talk to me. She had tears in her eyes as she sat down. She told me she had moved here a little over a year ago to be with her daughter, son-in-law and two grandchildren. Very quickly she realized it wasn't going to be like she had imagined. Her daughter is a nurse, and her husband is an architect, and they were very busy. She wasn't able to take care of the grandchildren, so they were in daycare. She was all alone. Feelings of depression and loneliness crept in and took hold of her thoughts and emotions. Every day worsened until she got to the point of deep desperation and eventually suicidal thoughts.

In her own words, she "was driving by a building and saw a bunch of old people walking into it" and decided to see what it was. Finding it was the Senior Center she was cheerfully greeted by the staff and immediately sat at a table for lunch and talked with the people around her. She came back every day that week and quickly made friends with everyone around her.

Our motto here at the DRC is "This Is A Place Of Life!", and this lady sat in my office with tears streaming down her face telling me that coming to the Center literally saved her life. It gave her a daily family and friends she could live life with.

I realized that day, that I was exactly where I needed to be. I realized that Parks and Rec is not really in the business of programs and activities... it is in the business of changing people's lives. I realized that my life would forever be changed also.

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## Tell Your Story in Future Newsletters

If you would like to **write a short Newsletter Story** (~100 – 400 words), have any **Announcements** or a Kudos / recognition (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](mailto:kfink1@uco.edu)) with content by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the following month of each current Newsletter.
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## References and Resource Links

- Edginton, C.R., Lankford, S.V., Dieser, R.B., & Kowalski, C.L. (2018). *Recreation and leisure programming: A 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective*. Sagamore-Venture.
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- Jackson, E. L. (2000). Will research on leisure constraints still be relevant in the twenty-first century?. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 32(1), 62 – 68. Click [here](#) for access.
- Pine, B.J., & Gilmore, J.H. (2019). *The experience economy: Competing for customer time, attention, and money*. Harvard Business Review.
- Powers, S. L., Lee, K. J., Pitas, N. A., Graefe, A. R., & Mowen, A. J. (2020). Understanding access and use of municipal parks and recreation through an intersectionality perspective. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 51(4), 377 – 396. Click [here](#) for access.
- Shaw, S. M., Bonen, A., & McCabe, J. F. (1991). Do more constraints mean less leisure? Examining the relationship between constraints and participation. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 23(4), 286 – 300.
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## News and Notes and Up-and-Comings

### Oklahoma Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Grants

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

### 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Southeast Environment and Recreation Research (SERR) Conference

- March 24<sup>th</sup> – March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024 in Helen, GA.
- SERR provides presentations and workshops for various topics “for researchers and managers within the park, recreation, and environmental management fields...”
- For more information click [here](#). And here is a link to last year’s program, [here](#).

### 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 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024).
- For more information about the application and/or contact information, [click here](#).

### Choctaw Midwest City (CMC) Youth League

- The 7-week Youth League begins on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024: T-Ball, Softball, and Baseball.
- Check it out [here](#).

### “Doggy Easter Egg Hunt 2024” @ Mustang Dog Park

- Saturday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024 @ 1030AM.
- Please note different start times for different sized dogs.
- Check out Facebook for more information.

### Saturday’s Farmers Market at Scissortail Park – Opening Day

- April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024, from 9AM – 1PM.

### City of Enid “Spring Skate Jam”

- Saturday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1PM – 4PM.
- Food trucks, live music, and skating.
- Check out Facebook for more information.

### “Spring 2024 Marketplace” – Moore Parks and Recreation, City of Moore, & Moore Central Park & The Station

- Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup> from 9AM – 3PM.
- More than 50 vendors selling local products with food trucks available as well.

### 2024 National Outdoor Recreation Conference (NORC)

- May 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024 in South Lake Tahoe / Stateline, NV.
- NORC provides a conference for “recreation resource planners, land managers, policy makers, tourism and destination stewardship partners, researchers, consultants, innovators, and leaders in outdoor recreation.”
- For more information about focus areas for this conference, 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.

### National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Grant Opportunities

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