January 2023

ORPS Newsletter

Welcome 2023

Greeting ORPS Members,

I hope this finds you well and in good spirits. Welcome to 2023! We ended 2022 with a successful conference in November in Broken Arrow. There are so many little "nuggets" of truth that were learned along the way in 2022. You might be scratching your head and saying, "Nuggets?! There were complete veins of gold everywhere, if we looked and listened." I could not agree with you more in that statement; yet the reality is I have to think about what are the nuggets I will use day to day. Here we are in a new year: with new resolutions, goals, and predicted outcomes staring at us as we tumble forward into 2023. What nuggets of truth and practice will you put forth this year to obtain your goals - personal or professional?

It has been interesting over the last year to watch our colleagues, friends, and family in our profession work through challenges and changes. We have seen some leave the profession, change positions, start back up in the profession, and some have passed on. The truth of the matter is that change is inevitable; how are we changing with it? Change is constant, but how are we adapting to it? I found one of my little nuggets of truth earlier this month. My first thought is we need to mentor the "next generation" for adaptation and change; then it hit me, sometimes we are looking in the wrong direction. How are we mentoring our current workforce as well?

"The mind is not a vessel that needs filling, but wood that needs igniting."
- Mestrius Plutarchus

There may colleagues around us who may be struggling with how to keep finding excitement in the day to day service to our community. How do we support those around us and bolster them as they work to serve? How do we ignite the fire of service and commitment to each other and to our communities? How does that look in your work group, agency, community, region, and/ or state? It is my belief that we can be those who generate a spark and fan the flames. What we do is critical: We are providers of joy and happiness.

Those who decide to use leisure as a means of mental development, who love good music, good books, good pictures, good plays, good company, good conversation - what are they?

They are the happiest people in the world.

- William Lyon Phelps

I say this daily: I am beyond proud of the people within our profession who consistently serve the populace with a smile and a servant's heart. We are a tough crowd with hearts of gold who share our nuggets of truth to the general populace through our service every day.

I appreciate you all!

Kind regards, Jerel Cowan ORPS Executive Director



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Special Populations Administration: Organizational Benefits of Clear Employee Expectations

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For those of us who have been in the workforce and been employed through multiple companies, there are comparisons that can be drawn between different successes and shortcomings. When assessing what aspects of organizations work and do not work, it is apparent that organizations with clear communication regarding the company's visions, goals, and employee expectations create successful environments. Organizations simply cannot thrive without clear goals and employee communication. Effective communication helps in concrete ways by maintaining direction through a mission statement/statement of goals and decreasing the risk of lawsuits through clear protocol. Clear communication with employees also helps in more subtle ways including the general confidence and ease with which employees feel they can operate, and clients feel they can trust the organization.

For new employees, and potential clients, the mission statement is the first opportunity given to relay long term goals and values of the company. It represents the essence of what is appropriate in the company and what can be expected of those associated with it, whether as employee or client. A clear and concise mission statement creates a concrete theme from which all other guidelines flow and for employers to cite in conjunction to questions or concerns within and outside the organization. One particularly good example of a well-honed mission statement comes from Special Olympics:

"The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community (2012, June 01)."

"The ultimate goal of Special Olympics is to help persons with intellectual disabilities participate as productive and respected members of society at large, by offering them a fair opportunity to develop and demonstrate their skills and talents through sports training and competition, and by increasing the public's awareness of their capabilities and needs (2012, June 01)."

These statements allow employers and employees to assess themselves while on the job, considering if their actions meet the organization's missions and goals. When an employee is given these guidelines, they may feel more confident about their ability to make decisions on their own, outside of supervision.

What solidifies an employee's confidence in their decisions are clear company protocols. These protocols can be both broad and specific but should aim to cover many situations as succinctly and accessibly as possible. An example would be the protocol for restraints of clients. An employee who does not know these protocols, or who works for a company without clear protocol, is faced with the anxiety of deciding on their own accord during an escalated situation. They are also faced with potential litigation if protocol was not met or established and resulted in client harm. Strong protocol protects from every angle- employer, employee, and client. In an organization who specializes in the health of others, safety is the priority and in situations of safety, there should be no hesitation or question about the proper procedure.

There is a balance to strike by putting an employee at ease through protocol. If an employee feels micromanaged, they will feel demotivated and productivity will suffer (Van Buren & Safferstone, 2009). When creating protocols, employers who focus attention too heavily on details can severely limit the freedom and perceived ability of the employee, detracting from the organization's goals (Van Buren & Safferstone, 2009). When working with special populations, especially if new to the area, comfort of employees is paramount as clients may be particularly attuned to the discomfort of others. If the overall goal is to highly regard those who are too often disregarded, then discomfort in any area of the experience must be avoided.

As a special populations administrative team, whether just beginning or reorganizing, setting a high precedent of success from the onset will determine the direction of the organization. As discussed, the way to set these expectations is to have clear guidelines that cannot be easily misinterpreted and that can be confidently applied without ongoing supervision. By solidifying a mission and goal statement, creating specific and accessible protocol, and having overall interest in insuring employees' confidence and understanding, companies will clearly benefit from higher productivity, shared goals, and cohesion of employees.

References

Introduction Article 1: Mission, Goal and Founding Principles. (2012, June 01). Retrieved February 08, 2016, from http://resources.specialolympics.org/Topics/General_Rules/Article_01.aspx

Van Buren, M. E., & Safferstone, T. (2009). The Quick Wins Paradox. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved February 6, 2016, from www.foundationforeuropeanleadership.org/assets/downloads/infoitems/304.pdf

2023 Board of Directors ORPS

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Question for the Membership:

Does anyone with our membership have knowledge of and experience with "natural" stone staircases in parks in OK? If you do please drop Jeff Edwards a message at:

jedwards@riverparks.org

What is Trending for 2023?

What is the projected trend in parks and recreation for 2023? We all know and understand that what is trending in one part of the country many not be trending here currently but could be coming our way sooner than later.

- -Electrification of Parks and Recreation: essentially moving towards electric based tools rather than fossil fuel-based tools and equipment.
- -ATV Wheelchairs or track-chairs are become more visible and viable option for people with disabilities
- Creating anchor institutions within the Parks and Recreation field. This is meaning that all parks and recreation facilities are anchor points of wellness for our citizenry. Changing how we are viewed and how we are valued.
- Pickleball: not in the context of growth in the context of noise complaints
- Marijuana and Alcohol in Parks: with twenty-one states that allow recreational cannabis and ten states that allow medicinal use. State Question 820 (legalization of marijuana for people over the age of 21) will be put to a vote of the OK citizenry in March of 2023. How will this play out in our parks and recreation areas? Milwaukee County (Wisconsin) Parks and Recreation has established five permanent and two traveling beer gardens in its parks, which produced an eye-popping \$2.6 million in revenue in 2021 alone. Will recreational use of pot in parks be far behind? (DEC 2022 NRPA magazine)

December 12, 2022

Lionel Bentley

Lionel Bentley was loved by everyone who knew him, and he loved everyone he ever met. He created a special vibe with people and always made them laugh, even uptight senior ladies when he crashed their luncheon table at an ORPS conference. We are lucky in life if we meet just one person like Lionel. Who can forget the conference socials where he almost always wore a costume or funny hat. The grass skirt he wore in the exhibit hall at his sod booth will live in infamy. Lionel loved to make people laugh!

He was a member of numerous organizations and served as president of most of them. Lionel always won some type of award for his great service in whatever group he joined. Lionel served ORPS as president from 1980 – 1981.

Friends purchased a personalized memorial park bench which was dedicated this past summer honoring the longtime ORPS member at Norman's Westwood Golf Course. The bench was placed just outside the clubhouse for any and all visitors to enjoy.

Lionel started at Norman P&R in 1972 as assistant park superintendent. He was an active member and great supporter of ORPS for 50 years. He supported the society throughout his career as he moved from the professional side to a commercial member after opening his own sod business. Lionel left the Norman department as parks and recreation director to open Bentley Turf in 1983.

He departed this life way too soon on March 12th, 2022, leaving us with a huge hole in our hearts. We will never have another friend as special and unique as Lionel Bentley. Consider yourself lucky if you had the opportunity to meet him.

Written by Jan Scott



The Golden Group:

Sue Wood, Rick Davis, and Jan Scott in front of the bench honoring Lionel Bentley.

