RETHINK.
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Schedule at a Glance I Education Details I Career Pathways

The document outlines the schedule and sessions for the 2026 mParks Conference & Trade Show, detailing various educational offerings, networking events, keynote presentations, and identifying relevance for career stages.

Tuesday, March 3

	101 / 102	103 / 104	Ballroom 7	Ballroom 8	201	202	203	204	205	Governor's Room	Ballroom 1-6
9:00 - 11:30 am											
10:00 - 11:30 am			**IGNITE WORKSHOP:** Communicating with Confidence at the Capitol								**SPARK SESSION:** Reignite Your Presence: Amplify Your Influence, Impact, and SWAG
1:00 - 3:00 pm	**POWER SESSION:** Big Goals, Clear Minds Learning Lab			**POWER SESSION:** Story First: Narratives That Inspire Support							
3:00 - 4:00 pm	**WELCOME RECEPTION** *Riverside Concourse*									SINCLAIR RECREATION	
4:00 - 6:00 pm	**OPENING SESSION** *Ballrooms 1-6*									landscape structures	
6:00 - 7:30pm	**DINNER ON YOUR OWN**										
7:30 - 8:45 pm	**STUDENT SHOWCASE** *Ballrooms 1-6*									mParks | PAST PRESIDENTS	
9:00 - 11:00 pm	**TRIVIA** *Ballrooms 1-6*									VORTEX	

RALPH C. WILSON, JR. FOUNDATION

MIDSTATES RECREATION

2026 mParks Conference Trade Show
March 3-6, 2026 | Lansing, MI

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Wednesday, March 4

	101 / 102	103 / 104	Ballroom 7	Ballroom 8	201	202	203	204	205	Governor's Room	OFFSITE
7:00 - 8:00 am											**Gentle Morning Yoga Flow:** Reset & Reignite *DoubleTree*
8:30 - 9:30 am	Engaging the Community - How to Balance Resident Recreation and Tourism Demands	The Burnout-Resistant Leader: How Sleep, Stress, and Movement Shape Your Capacity to Serve Your Community	Leading with Purpose: Building Strong Leadership Skills and Engaging Teams	Stop Begging for Coaches: Build Systems That Work	Adventure Intelligence - A Different Kind of A.I.	Project Play Summit	Navigating Leadership Transitions with Grace and Humor	Understanding Neurodiversity in the Workplace	Building Bridges: Partnering with Families for Disability Inclusion	Destination Re-Brand: Navigating Your Agency's Identity Journey	**OFF-SITE:** Trail Maintenance Best Practices ROMTEC
9:45 - 10:45 am	Recreation Plans - From the Basics to Joint Regional Plans	Belonging - Is it a Big Deal?	**DIRECTORS' FORUM** Budget Clarity in 60 Minutes: A Director's Guide to Government Budgeting	From Friction to Flow	Lifeguard Recruitment and Retention Roundtable	**URBAN CONSERVATION:** From Factory Floor to Riverfront Revitalization: Transforming Chevy in the Hole into a State Park Anchor	From Burnout to Balance: My Journey to Sustainable Well-Being in a 24/7 World	Accessibility Action Plan: Including Autistic & Sensory-Sensitive Visitors	Culture Shaping for Leaders	Adaptive Recreation and Your Programs	
11:00 - 11:45 am	**REGIONAL NETWORKING:** REGION 3: NWRPA	**REGIONAL NETWORKING:** REGION 2: NERPA	**REGIONAL NETWORKING:** REGION 4: SMRPA		**REGIONAL NETWORKING:** REGION 5: WAM		**REGIONAL NETWORKING:** REGION 1: Knuckles Knorth		**REGIONAL NETWORKING:** REGION 6: WMRPA		
11:45 am -1:30 pm	**DELEGATE LUNCH** *Ballrooms 1-6*									MACPRO	
1:45 - 2:45 pm	You have a recreation grant. Now What?	Navigating the Daily Grind - Effective Ways to Make Every Moment in Your Day Matter	**DIRECTORS' FORUM:** The Vision Integration Loop: Building Systems for a Thriving Culture How the 7A's Empower Teams and Sustain Trust	Experimenting with Evaluation	Empowering Ability: How Project SEARCH Builds Workforce Readiness in Michigan Park Systems	**URBAN CONSERVATION:** For Detroit by Detroiters - Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park	Started from the Bottom (Now We're Here): Growing Your Parks & Rec Marketing	Micromanage or Empower: Why is this a question?	Taking An Inclusive Lens: Making Community Events Accessible to People with Disabilities	Emergency Action Plans - Not Just for Aquatics	**OFF-SITE:** Michigan State University Student Recreation & Wellness Center ROMTEC
3:00 - 4:00 pm	Stewardship of DNR Grant Assisted Sites	Strategic Planning for Growth - Position Yourself and Your Team for Success		No One Cares About Your Data	Perfect Pace: Running a Successful 5K	**URBAN CONSERVATION:** 9Line: Connecting Communities across Oakland County	Lighting Projects Made Simple	Dive In: Creating Engaging Aquatic Experiences	No More Suspensions! Rethinking Behavioral Challenges Inclusively	Creating a Cohesive and Connected Team...No Glue Required	
4:00 - 6:00 pm	**MACPRO Meeting** 5:45 - 7:00 pm	**TRADE SHOW GRAND OPENING + FOUNDATION SILENT AUCTION** *Exhibit Hall A*									
6:00 - 8:00 pm	**DINNER ON YOUR OWN**										
8:00 - 11:00 pm	**BAND SHOWCASE** *Grewal Hall*									musco lighting We Make It Happen.	

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RCX sports

MIDSTATES RECREATION

2026 mParks Conference Trade Show
March 3-6, 2026 | Lansing, MI

RETHINK. REINVENT. REIGNITE.

Thursday, March 5

	101 / 102	103 / 104	Ballroom 7	Ballroom 8	201	202	203	204	205	Governor's Room	
8:30 -9:30 am	**MORNING BUZZ: TRADE SHOW HOUR + FOUNDATION SILENT AUCTION** *Exhibit Hall A*										
9:45 - 10:45 am	Run the World (Girls): Women Leading in Parks & Rec	Panic-Proof Planning - We Don't Just Wing It, We P.L.AN. It	**PARK MAINTENANCE:** Round Table Discussion - Beach Operations	Michigan Trails 2050: A Blueprint for Connection	Igniting Innovation: From Ideas to Action	Create a Marketing Plan that Works for You	Beyond the Myths: Redefining Inclusive Play for Every Body	Athletics Roundtable: Managing Rec, Club/Travel, and Official Retention	Customer Service is Much More Than Handling Complaints	Make it Stick! Tools and Strategies to Make Your Training Impactful	
11:00 am - 12:00 pm	Accessibility and Inclusivity in Parks	Leading by Design	**PARK MAINTENANCE:** Trail Maintenance Fundamentals: Safe, Sustainable, Year-round	One Person Show	Supporting the Front Line: Leadership Practices for Stronger Teams	Text-to-911 and what3words	Development of Play: How the Playground Supports Play Skill Acquisition	Finding your True North for Organizational Communication and Culture	Effective Swimming Pool Operations	Avoiding the Co-Counselor Clash	**mParks Past Presidents Meeting** *Ballrooms 1-6*
12:00pm-2:00pm	**TRADE SHOW LUNCH + FOUNDATION SILENT AUCTION** *Exhibit Hall A*										
2:00 -3:00 pm	The Parks & Rec AI Toolkit: From Prompt to Productivity	EQ for Grown-Ups: Lessons from Children's Stories	**PARK MAINTENANCE:** Inclusive Play Matters: Evidence-Based Design Best Practices for Play and Recreation Destinations	Resources and Opportunities to Expand your Youth Athletics Programs	Success in Action: Parks and Recreation Stories of Innovation and Collaboration	Building Creative Bridges: How a Township-Nonprofit Partnership Expanded Arts Access	Inclusive Support to Youth with Invisible Disabilities	Spotlight on Belonging: Celebrating Progress and Shaping the Future	Mapping your Message: Building a Cohesive Content Ecosystem	Campground and Lodging Roundtable	
3:15 - 4:15 pm	Rethinking Intelligence: How AI is redefining Leadership Capacity	The Human Touch: Building Trust Through Authentic Community Voices	**PARK MAINTENANCE:** Playground Inspection & Maintenance: Preserve, Promote, Protect		Building Dreams Together: Preparing a Recreational Project RFQ for Your Dream Team	Big Town, One Person Show	Playing it Safe - Protecting Outdoor Spaces	Listen, Learn, Affirm: Authentically Supporting Gender Transition	Building Inclusive Workplaces		
5:30 - 6:30 pm	**AWARDS RECEPTION** *Riverside Concourse*										
6:30pm-9:00pm	**AWARDS BANQUET** *Ballrooms 1-6*										
9:00 - 11:00 pm	**AWARDS AFTERGLOW + 25TH ANNUAL CONNECT 4 TOURNAMENT** *Riverside Concourse*										

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Friday, March 6

8:30 - 11:00 am	**CLOSING SESSION** **KEYNOTE: The truth is in the Trigger: Building the capacity to Rethink, Reinvent, & Reignite** *Princess Castleberry - CEO, Castleberry Global* *Ballrooms 1-6*

TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026

9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

IGNITE WORKSHOP: Communicating with Confidence at the Capitol

Ballroom 7 (0.1 CEUS)

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Define advocacy as building relationships, being a trusted resource, and sharing information to influence decision-making.
- Describe the significance of advocacy in raising awareness, aiding decision-making, and achieving desired outcomes in legislative matters.
- List the key components of effective advocacy, including individual styles, storytelling, data utilization, and various opportunities for engagement.

The 2026 mParks Advocacy Ignite Workshop brings park and recreation directors, superintendents, and department heads to the heart of Lansing for direct, impactful engagement with state legislators. The morning begins with practical guidance on communicating effectively with lawmakers - building confidence, clarity, and message alignment - before transitioning into meaningful conversations with your legislators about park funding, community priorities, and the future of recreation in Michigan.

Join Dykema representatives for a dynamic exploration of state-level engagement in Lansing. In just 60 minutes, delve into the political landscape of Lansing, with insights into the current status and upcoming issues facing the legislature. Next, we'll take a deep dive into mParks priorities, providing a comprehensive policy overview and talking points. Finally, discover the art of advocacy and why it's vital, focusing on building relationships, educating, and becoming a trusted resource. Learn what effective advocacy looks like in action, and join this conversation to learn essential information, skills, and preparation before taking your meeting with legislators and leaders at the Capitol. Make your voice heard and be a catalyst for change in your community.

According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Established Career**

Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Communication, Innovation & Change Management, Leadership Readiness**

10:00 – 11:30 AM

SPARK SESSION: Reignite Your Presence: Amplify Your Influence, Impact, and SWAG

Ballrooms 1-6 (0.1 CEUS)

Mimi Brown - Principal and Lead Trainer, AMP Up Success

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Define the SWAG Factor (Style, Warmth, Authenticity, and Gravitas) and describe how it influences presence, perception, and leadership in parks and recreation settings.
- Identify personal strengths that contribute to authentic presence and outline ways to confidently project SWAG in professional interactions.
- Write a brief personal story that highlights unique value and give examples of how storytelling can be used to positively influence people and communities.

You possess the power to influence and inspire the people around you—whether you realize it or not. We are all projecting "it" to the world, intentionally or not. It's that unspoken element people notice before you even speak. It's what others say about you when you're not in the room. It shapes how you're perceived, the opportunities you receive, and the impact you make. What is it? **It's your SWAG factor.**

Every park and recreation professional has it—yet few fully embrace or utilize it. Your SWAG (Style, Warmth, Authenticity, and Gravitas) is the secret ingredient that fuels your ability to connect, communicate, and create meaningful change. Through the art of storytelling, Mimi Brown will help you uncover how to use your presence to influence and inspire the people—and the communities—you serve.

In this high-energy, interactive, and practical session, Mimi will pull back the curtain on how to strengthen and project a powerful, authentic, and memorable presence. You'll learn how to share your story with confidence, highlight your unique value, and positively influence others, helping you rethink how you present yourself, reinvent your leadership approach, and reignite your impact across Michigan's parks, recreation, and community spaces.

According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career**

Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Communication, Innovation & Change Management, Leadership Readiness**

11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

Lunch on Your Own

Enjoy lunch on your own. Take this time to explore nearby favorites, catch up with colleagues, or simply recharge.

- Click here or visit the mParks Conference & Trade Show App for a list of nearby restaurants.

1:00 – 3:00 PM

POWER SESSION: Story First: Narratives That Inspire Support for Your Parks and Trails

Ballroom 8 (0.2 CEUS)

Matt Powell - Director of Communications & Place Branding, Destination by Design

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe how strategic, story-centered communication can transform ideas into shared community priorities.
- Identify elements of clear messaging, compelling branding, and authentic engagement demonstrated in the case studies.
- Summarize how effective communication practices can build trust, spark excitement, and accelerate project momentum and community pride.

This session shows how strategic, story-centered communication can transform ideas into shared community priorities. Through a variety of case studies, participants will see how clear messaging, compelling branding, and authentic engagement help build trust, spark excitement, and accelerate project momentum and community pride.

According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career**

Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Communication**

POWER SESSION: The Big Goals, Clear Minds: Inside the High-Performing Brains of Parks and Recreation Professionals

Room 101/102 (0.2 CEUS)

Dr. Molly McQueary - Speaker and Sport & Performance Psychology Coach,

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe how the brain responds to stress and discuss how stress responses influence clarity, communication, and trust in leadership situations.
- Identify personal patterns and behaviors under pressure and outline how those patterns affect decision-making and team dynamics.
- List mental agility and trust-building tools introduced in the session and give examples of how to apply them immediately in parks and recreation leadership roles.

Parks and recreation leaders make decisions that impact teams, communities, and public spaces—often under pressure and with competing demands. In this interactive Learning Lab, Dr. Molly McQueary combines neuroscience, storytelling, and performance psychology to help participants understand how their brain responds to stress and how those responses influence clarity, communication, and trust. Using practical models and relatable examples from the parks and recreation environment, participants will identify their own patterns under pressure and learn mental agility skills that support better decision-making and more effective leadership. The session also explores trust as a key driver of high performance and healthy team dynamics, offering tools leaders can use immediately in their work.

According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career**

Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Communication, Innovation & Change Management, Leadership Readiness**

3:00 – 4:00 PM

Welcome Reception

Riverside Concourse

Let's celebrate the start of something extraordinary! Join us as we welcome attendees to the 2026 mParks Conference & Trade Show with an hour of connection, conversation, and community. Enjoy a hosted bar, light snacks, and the opportunity to meet colleagues old and new as we set the tone for an inspiring week ahead.

SINCLAIR RECREATION

4:00 – 6:00 PM

Opening Session

Ballroom 1-6

Whether you've already participated in inspiring sessions or are just arriving, we're thrilled to bring everyone together for the first time in one room. Hear from Conference Committee Chair, Mary Patay, PhD., CPRE, as she officially welcomes you and invites you to embrace this year's inspiring theme - Rethink. Reinvent. Reignite.

The Opening Session of the 2026 mParks Conference & Trade Show sets the stage for an unforgettable day of inspiration, recognition, and reflection. The session will highlight the mParks Facility, Landscape, and Design Awards, as well as the Local & State Elected Official Award.

This year, we will also honor 50 years of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF)—a legacy of conservation, partnership, and investment that has transformed Michigan's parks, trails, and public spaces for generations. With an interactive panel, we'll celebrate the visionaries, projects, and partnerships that have shaped our state's outdoor heritage through a series of panel discussions.

landscape structures

6:00 – 7:30 PM

Dinner on Your Own

Enjoy dinner on your own. Take this time to explore nearby favorites, catch up with colleagues, or simply recharge.

- Click here or visit the mParks Conference & Trade Show App for a list of nearby restaurants.

7:30 – 8:45 PM

Student Showcase

Ballroom 1-6

Meet the future of parks and recreation at the 2026 Student Showcase. Experience dynamic student presentations inspired by the theme Rethink. Reinvent. Reignite. Inspiring Parks. Empowering People. Connect with emerging professionals, enjoy light refreshments, and jump into a fun round of networking bingo designed to spark conversation. Come be inspired and help ignite the next generation of leaders.

mParks | PAST PRESIDENTS

9:00 – 11:00 PM

Trivia

Ballroom 1-6

Bring your team spirit and quick thinking to Trivia Night, hosted by the mParks Student Focus Area. Test your knowledge, enjoy some friendly competition, and help support the mParks Foundation. Registration is required—play begins promptly at 9:00 pm. Come ready to compete, connect, and contribute to a great cause.

Throughout the night: Reconnect. Reimagine. Reignite relationships with your regional group peers at this high-energy evening of networking and fun! Enjoy games and a cash bar (plus a few complimentary drink tickets). This social is your chance to strengthen professional connections while having a great time celebrating what makes each region unique.

VORTEX

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 2026	
7:00 – 8:00 AM	
Gentle Morning Yoga Flow: Reset & Reignite *DoubleTree by Hilton – Michigan II* **Heather Lear** - Fitness & Program Coordinator, Trenton Parks & Recreation **Samantha Sawnick** - Program & Marketing Manager, Trenton Parks & Recreation	Start the conference with intention and calm energy. In this all-levels session, participants will move through a series of gentle yoga stretches and grounding poses designed to reset the body and mind. Led by experienced instructors, the flow will emphasize deep breathing, mindful movement, and relaxation to help attendees begin the day focused and refreshed. Participants are encouraged to bring a yoga mat, water, and comfortable clothing to enjoy this rejuvenating experience that embodies the conference theme fully: Rethink. Reinvent. Reignite.
8:30 – 9:30 AM	
Adventure Intelligence - A Different Kind of A.I. *Room 201 (0.1 CEUS)* **Todd Poquette** - Director of Adventure, 906 Adventure Team **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Define or refine the "WHY" that anchors your department or organization, providing a clear sense of purpose and direction for communication and decision-making. • Identify your team's Mission, Values, and Purpose (MVP) to guide behavior and eliminate unnecessary hierarchy, ensuring every voice contributes to shared goals. • Summarize how leadership should be a collective responsibility rather than a title, emphasizing accountability, authenticity, and alignment across all levels of the organization.	This thought-provoking session introduces the concept of Adventure Intelligence - a different kind of A.I. - grounded in the belief that true fulfillment comes from embracing challenge, connecting with nature, and building physical, mental, and emotional resilience. As society becomes increasingly reliant on innovation and comfort, participants are invited to reflect on what may be lost in the process. This session will also share how the 906 Adventure Team has successfully applied the Adventure Intelligence philosophy to engage and inspire employees, volunteers, and participants from across the country. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Leadership and Supervision**
Building Bridges: Partnering With Families For Disability Inclusion *Room 205 (0.1 CEUS)* **Lisa Drennan** - Inclusion Consultant, MERGE Diverse Abilities Inclusion Consulting **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify three strategies to improve intake processes that encourage family disclosure. • Recall two techniques for navigating challenging conversations with families. • Describe three ways to incorporate inclusive messaging that builds trust with families of children with disabilities.	True inclusion starts with trust between professionals and families. This session will help participants create welcoming spaces by fostering stronger relationships with the families of children with disabilities. Attendees will learn how to communicate with empathy, improve intake processes, and navigate difficult conversations. Through family testimonials and practical strategies, the session will highlight ways to reduce non-disclosure, support staff, and foster collaboration. Participants will leave empowered with the tools to ensure that every child is seen, valued, and supported in recreational settings. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Communication, Accessibility Practices, Community Engagement**

Destination Re-Brand: Navigating Your Agency's Identity Journey *Governor's Room (0.1 CEUS)* **Greg Morris, CPRP, CFEA** - Assistant Director, Northville Parks and Recreation **Bridget Renwick, CPM, CPRP** - Recreation Superintendent, Northville Parks and Recreation **Derek Smith, CPRP** - Director, Northville Parks and Recreation **Matt Powell** - Director of Communications & Place Branding, Destination by Design **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • At the conclusion of the educational program, participants will be able to describe why intentional branding is essential for parks and recreation agencies and how it shapes community perception and engagement. • identify key steps and considerations to focus on during the rebranding process, including planning, collaboration, and stakeholder communication. • give examples of how a new brand can be implemented across materials, facilities, and communication channels to create a consistent and engaging community identity.	A strong brand defines how a community experiences your agency's story. This session will walk participants through the complete rebranding process, drawing from Northville Parks & Recreation's recent transformation. Attendees will learn how to align staff and stakeholders around a shared vision, engage the public throughout the process, and bring a new brand to life through consistent storytelling and design. Presenters will share lessons learned, practical steps, and tools for agencies ready to refresh or reinvent their identity with purpose and clarity According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Public Relations & Stakeholder Engagement, Visionary & Strategic Leadership**
Engaging the Community - How to Balance Resident Recreation and Tourism Demands *Room 101/102 (0.1 CEUS)* **Katy Tigchelaar** - Vice President of Operations, West Michigan Sports Commission **Laura Cleypool** - Director, Grand Rapids Park & Recreation **Meghan Ziehmer** - Executive Director, Lansing Sports Commission **Brett Kaschinske, CPRP** - Director, Lansing Parks & Recreation Department **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify and describe challenges and opportunities in balancing resident recreation needs with tourism demands, and give examples of effective community engagement practices. • Outline and discuss practical strategies for managing shared community spaces, including how to predict potential conflicts and summarize approaches that promote collaboration between residents and visitors. • Define and outline principles of inclusive destination planning and list ways to engage stakeholders and align recreation and tourism goals.	As destinations grow, communities must meet the needs of both residents and visitors. This session explores practical strategies for managing shared spaces, engaging locals, and aligning recreation and tourism goals. Learn how collaboration and communication can create vibrant, inclusive destinations that serve everyone. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Communication, Professionalism & Ethics**

Leading with Purpose: Building Strong Leadership Skills and Engaging Teams *Ballroom 7 (0.1 CEUS)* **Dave Herpy** - Author & Chief Encouragement Officer, Note-ivation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify core leadership principles that foster purposeful leadership at all levels of an organization. • Apply practical strategies to motivate and engage staff, enhancing workplace culture and team performance. • Demonstrate effective communication and conflict resolution techniques to build stronger, more collaborative teams.	Purpose-driven leadership will define the next generation of successful organizations. In this session, participants will explore practical tools from the book Leading with Purpose to strengthen communication, engagement, and collaboration within their teams. Attendees will examine strategies for motivating staff, resolving conflict, and aligning vision with action. Through discussion and interactive reflection, this session will empower professionals at all levels to lead with clarity, authenticity, and impact—creating workplace cultures where people feel inspired to contribute their best. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Communication, Leadership Readiness**
Navigating Leadership Transitions with Grace and Humor *Room 203 (0.1 CEUS)* **Sally Pelto-Wheeler** - Owner, Collaborative Training Network **Tim Church** - Director, Howell Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Discuss successful leadership transition tips with your peers. • Identify strategies within the Four P's of Leadership Coaching (Pausing, Practice, Play & Possibilities) to prepare yourself for navigating your next career move. • Describe the importance of understanding oneself when leading & guiding others.	No Poker Face? No problem! Okay....maybe there are problems, but nothing we can't figure out together! Participants are invited to reflect on what works and what works a little better as they prepare to make a leadership transition. Using the Four P's of Leadership Coaching – 1. Pausing to notice, 2. Everything is a Practice, 3. Play with new behavior, 4. Imagine the Possibilities – Tim and Sally use storytelling and group reflection to create an engaging conversation about your next leadership move. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Public Relations & Stakeholder Engagement**
Project Play Summit *Room 202 (0.1 CEUS)* **Nancy Winzer** - Project Play Consultant, Ralph C Wilson Jr Foundation **Pat Sharrow** - Director of Project Play, Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Outline what resources Project Play can bring to communities. • leave with a clearer understanding of the current challenges in youth sports participation, and the steps Project Play is taking — such as free trainings, grant support, equipment libraries, and grants — to strengthen access and sustainability across the region. • leave with tools and information and resources to support youth sports.	Collaboration is the key to stronger youth sports. This session will bring together recreation leaders from the seven counties served by Project Play Southeast Michigan—Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw, St. Clair, Monroe, and Livingston—for a shared discussion on local resources and opportunities. Participants will learn about Project Play's ongoing initiatives, including free trainings, grants, and tools that help departments expand access and equity in youth sports. Attendees will leave with actionable ideas, new connections, and inspiration to strengthen community recreation through strategic partnerships. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Leadership Readiness, Professionalism & Ethics**

Stop Begging for Coaches: Build Systems That Work *Ballroom 8 (0.1 CEUS)* **Kent Hunt** - Program Manager, National Recreation and Parks Association **Brian McFadden** - Program Manager, National Recreation and Parks Association **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Outline the NRPA Youth Sports Framework to assess current coach recruitment and retention systems, identifying specific gaps and opportunities within their own agency's structure. • Reproduce evidence-based strategies, including streamlined recruitment processes, tiered training models, youth feedback mechanisms, and strategic partnership development—to build a more resilient coaching corps. • Recall stakeholder communication and engagement strategies that position coach development as essential infrastructure, securing buy-in from staff, leadership, volunteers, and community partners to sustain long-term systems change.	The youth sports landscape is changing—and coach shortages are a growing concern. This session will introduce the NRPA Youth Sports Framework, a strategic approach designed to strengthen coaching systems and enhance community engagement. Participants will explore recruitment and retention strategies, training methods that build confidence, and policies that make coaching accessible. Through interactive discussion, attendees will learn how to develop sustainable systems that attract quality coaches, support volunteers, and elevate youth experiences both on and off the field. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Professionalism & Ethics**
The Burnout-Resistant Leader: How Sleep, Stress, and Movement Shape Your Capacity to Serve Your Community *Room 103/104 (0.1 CEUS)* **Dr. Molly McQueary** - Speaker and Sport & Performance Psychology Coach **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Describe how burnout develops over time and summarize the science behind its effects on focus, emotional stability, and leadership effectiveness. • Identify early signs of burnout and outline factors that restore or drain energy in public service roles. • List science-backed strategies for building sustainable routines and give examples of how to apply them to support well-being while leading effectively.	Burnout in parks and recreation doesn't appear all at once—it builds up over time as demands increase and recovery opportunities decrease. This session examines the science behind burnout and how daily habits related to sleep, stress, and physical activity impact focus, emotional stability, and leadership effectiveness. Designed for the realities of public service work, this session provides a practical framework to help leaders recognize early signs of burnout, understand what restores or drains their energy, and build routines that support sustainable performance. Participants will leave with simple, science-backed strategies to protect their well-being while continuing to lead and serve their communities well. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Leadership Readiness**
Understanding Neurodiversity in the Workplace *Room 204 (0.1 CEUS)* **Meredith Tekin** – President, International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Define and describe the variety of neurotypes within neurodiversity. • Discuss current processes or assumptions that affect neurodiversity inclusion. • Reproduce some inclusive practices as applicable into current workflows/spaces.	What is neurodiversity, and why is it important toa ddress the needs of this underserved and underrecognized portion of the workforce? Statistically, every business in every industry employs neurodivergent individuals, but many are under-employed or not managed effectively. It's critical for organizational success and team effectiveness to incorporate inclusive practices - as many as 1 in 5 people are neurodivergent. This session will discuss the data, impacts, and practices behind attracting and retaining talent that is neurodiverse. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices; Professionalism & Ethics**

8:30 – 10:45 AM	
OFF-SITE TOUR: Trail Maintenance Best Practices *Offsite Tour - Meet at Registration Desk (0.2 CEUS)* **Tim Novak** - Trails Section Chief, Michigan DNR **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Define the scoping process for planning a trail. • Identify areas of significance when inspecting trails. • Describe industry best practices for accessibility based on intended trail use and type.	Explore successful trail projects from across the region and learn how thoughtful planning and design lead to safer, more sustainable pathways. This tour features multiple trail types and environments with discussion focused on practical applications and lessons learned. **Featured Topics Include:** • Bank stabilization and water crossings • Urban and suburban pathway design • Railing and boardwalk construction • Crossing major roadways and line-of-sight considerations According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Innovation & Change Management, Operational Knowledge**
9:45 – 10:45 AM	
Accessibility Action Plan: Including Autistic & Sensory-Sensitive Visitors *Room 204 (0.1 CEUS)* **Meredith Tekin** - President, International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify what autism and sensory needs are and their prevalence. • Describe the importance of enhancing inclusivity and accessibility, as well as the impact these practices will have on every person who visits their parks and recreation spaces. • Discuss how they can implement these inclusive practices and apply the framework to their own organizations.	Creating inclusive environments starts with understanding sensory needs. This session will help participants design programs and facilities that welcome individuals with autism and sensory sensitivities. Attendees will explore data, practical strategies, and real-world examples to support accessibility initiatives that go beyond compliance. Presenters will highlight how inclusive design benefits everyone and share tools to help staff implement meaningful change. Participants will leave with an actionable plan to ensure that every park and recreation space becomes a welcoming and inclusive environment for all visitors. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Professionalism & Ethics**

Adaptive Recreation and Your Programs *Governor's Room (0.1 CEUS)* **Mason Kaiser** - Recreation Services Coordinator, Ypsilanti Township **Becca Lynn, CTRS** - Adaptive Recreation Specialist, Sterling Heights Parks & Recreation **Becca Riley, CTRS** - Therapeutic Recreation Specialist, Canton Leisure Services **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Outline how to administer an adaptive recreation program from start to finish. Including all materials needed and cost saving measures. • List the benefits of having an adaptive rec program with fellow professionals, along with understanding how easy it can be to host an event. • summarize how small changes to mainstream programs can easily change them into inclusive and adaptive events and programs.	Discover how easy it is to integrate adaptive recreation programs into your existing catalog. This session will explore both the programming and administrative aspects of developing inclusive recreation opportunities. Plus, don't miss a live demonstration showcasing adaptive activities in action! According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Professionalism & Ethics**
Belonging - Is it a Big Deal? *Room 103/104 (0.1 CEUS)* **Sally Pelto-Wheeler** - Owner, Collaborative Training Network **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Recall core elements of belonging and how they relate to being a successful park professional (book recommendations too!). • Identify patterns of non-belonging and practice skills to belong to self and others. • Describe the importance of understanding oneself when leading & guiding others.	Learn about the foundations of belonging and why the parks profession is such a special space to cultivate and sustain belonging. As a development coach, she offers professionals practices to leverage their strengths and build stronger teams. The patterns and actions related to non-belonging have destructive impacts on individuals, groups, and communities. In this session, experience and practice skills of belonging and walk away with book recommendations and a curated Belong playlist. If it can be felt, it can be healed. Please be open and willing to feel and be with discomfort if attending this session. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Innovation & Change Management, Leadership Readiness, Leadership and Supervision**
URBAN CONSERVATION: From Factory Floor to Riverfront Revitalization: Transforming Chevy in the Hole into a State Park Anchor *Room 202 (0.1 CEUS)* **Christina Kelly** - Director of Community Impact, Genesee County Land Bank Authority **Scot Lautzenheiser-** Community Design Area Lead, Wade Trim **Ryan Londrigan -** Brownfield Redevelopment Unit Supervisor, EGLE-RRD **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify strategies for successful brownfield redevelopment through cross-sector partnerships with federal, state, philanthropic, and local agencies. • Summarize a long-term vision framework that allows large-scale park projects to advance incrementally as funding and opportunities emerge. • Outline phased development principles to complex sites while maintaining flexibility in design and implementation.	Once a 60-acre former General Motors manufacturing complex, Chevy in the Hole was a highly contaminated brownfield along the Flint River. Today, it stands as a cornerstone of the new Genesee County State Park—the first state park in Genesee County—demonstrating how long-term vision, strategic partnerships, and phased implementation can turn legacy industrial sites into vibrant public green space. This panel explores how a phased approach transformed a contaminated brownfield into a regional park asset and ecological restoration success story. Panelists will share lessons learned from navigating complex environmental remediation, aligning local and state priorities, securing funding over time, and maintaining community trust throughout the process. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Leadership and Supervision**

Culture Shaping for Leaders *Room 205 (0.1 CEUS)* **Ken Harkenrider** - PCA Trainer, Positive Coaching Alliance **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Describe how to utilize PCA's Positive Youth Culture Index to measure the cultural competency of their department. • Identify what consitutes a positive organizational culture and the levers within their grasp to control that in their department • Give examples of how to work more collectively with colleagues to help understand their individual and unique roles in shaping a positive organizational culture.	Organizational and Athletic department leadership can create positive experiences for all athletes across their programs by fostering a culture of equity and accessibility. This interactive workshop provides tools to shape and maintain a positive sports culture and introduces the Positive Youth Sports Culture Index – PCA's comprehensive tool for shaping and evaluating culture. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Innovation & Change Management, Leadership Readiness**
DIRECTORS' FORUM: Budget Clarity in 60 Minutes: A Director's Guide to Government Budgeting *Ballroom 7 (0.1 CEUS)* **Rodney Taylor** - Senior Governmental Consultant, Maner Costerisan **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Define key governmental budgeting terminology used in park and recreation agencies. • Summarize common governmental budgeting practices and how they apply to local park and recreation operations. • Describe how to read key financial statements and indicators, including the balance sheet, statement of cash flows, and basic financial comparisons.	Park and recreation directors are often expected to lead budget discussions and make informed financial decisions, yet they usually lack formal training in governmental finance. This session provides practical clarity by addressing key terminology, standard governmental budgeting practices, and a simple dashboard of financial ratios that illustrate short-term liquidity and long-term debt capacity. The session will also include guidance on reading key financial statements, including the blanace sheet, statement of cash flows, and basic financial comparisons, helping directors lead with confidence and credibility. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Fiscal Management and Grant Development, Innovation & Change Management, Leadership and Supervision**
From Burnout to Balance: My Journey to Sustainable Well-Being in a 24/7 World *Room 203 (0.1 CEUS)* **Fran Dean-Bishop** - CEO, Aerobodies **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Define early warning signs of burnout and chronic stress in yourself and others. • Summarize science-backed habits and routines that foster daily renewal, energy, and focus. • Discuss or write an action plan to bring more balance and well-being to your workplace and home life.	In a fast-paced, always-on culture, maintaining well-being takes intention and courage. This session will explore how professionals can recognize burnout, restore balance, and build habits that promote sustainable success. Through personal stories and evidence-based practices, participants will learn tools to strengthen resilience, energy, and focus—both individually and across teams. Attendees will leave with practical strategies to cultivate a supportive workplace culture where everyone can thrive, recharge, and perform at their best. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Innovation & Change Management, Leadership Readiness**

From Friction to Flow *Ballroom 8 (0.1 CEUS)* **Bobbi Nance** - President, Recreation Results LLC **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Describe the subtle differences between customer service and customer experience, and the additional benefits of aiming for a great experience • Identify common pain points that exist for customers, even when providing great customer service • Integrate opportunities to take your services to the next level without breaking the bank	Even the best teams encounter friction that disrupts customer experiences. This session will help participants identify hidden barriers and transform them into opportunities for improvement. Attendees will walk through the customer journey to uncover pain points, streamline processes, and create memorable, loyalty-building moments. With a focus on practical, low-cost solutions, this session will provide a roadmap for turning ordinary interactions into exceptional experiences that strengthen community trust and satisfaction. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Leadership and Supervision**
Lifeguard Recruitment and Retention Roundtable *Room 201 (0.1 CEUS)* **Shane Wampler** - Recreation Supervisor, Omaha Parks & Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Summarize the City of Omaha's recruitment and retention efforts for seasonal aquatics staff. • Give examples of possible recruitment and retention strategies based on round table discussion. • Describe current challenges related to recruiting and retaining lifeguards in aquatic programs.	Recruiting and retaining lifeguards remains a significant challenge nationwide. This interactive roundtable will provide participants with a space to share experiences, discuss solutions, and learn from successful case studies, including the City of Omaha's recruitment and retention initiatives. Attendees will explore creative incentives, training models, and workplace strategies to strengthen staff commitment and reduce turnover. By collaborating with peers, participants will leave with new ideas to attract, develop, and retain strong aquatic teams year after year. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Leadership and Supervision**
Recreation Plans – From the Basics to Joint Regional Plans *Room 101/102 (0.1 CEUS)* **Charamy Cleary** - Grant Coordinator, Michigan DNR **Merrie Carlock** - Grant Coordinator, Michigan DNR **Weston Hillier** - Grant Coordinator, Michigan DNR **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Describe the process and content required to complete a 5-Year Plan that meets DNR guidelines. • Discuss how to complete a joint community plan. • Recall methods, techniques and tools to increase public participation and community buy-in for local and regional plans.	A 5-Year Recreation Plan is not just an eligibility requirement for recreation grants, but also guidance on how to invest and maintain recreational assets to meet a community's needs into the future. This session will cover: the basic process and requirements for developing a plan to meet DNR requirements; lessons learned on completing a recreation plan; tools and techniques for public participation and helpful hints. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Fiscal Management and Grant Development, Innovation & Change Management**

11:00 – 11:45 AM

Fuel Up: Illuminating Regional Connections

Region 1: Room 203
Region 2: Room 103/104
Region 3: Room 101/102
Region 4: Ballroom 7
Region 5: Room 201
Region 6: Room 205

Fuel Up is a new, interactive regional networking experience designed to spark meaningful connections and conversation. Join peers from your region for a facilitated discussion on shared challenges, training needs, career support, and what it takes to sustain the parks and recreation profession. Through guided questions and live polling, your voice will help shape future mParks programming and expanded regional engagement—starting now.

Fuel Up is available to ALL conference attendees and aligns with the mParks Strategic Plan, which prioritizes meaningful connection, leadership development, and stronger engagement statewide. This experience was intentionally designed in direct response to attendee feedback calling for more purposeful opportunities to connect by region.

Today's session is about listening first - understanding what's hardest about your work right now, what learning would be most helpful, and what would better support parks and recreation careers. We'll be using live polling throughout the session to ensure every voice is heard, which is central to the UNITE Pillar of mParks.

Region 1 – Includes Knuckles Knorth Regional Group
Alcona · Alger · Alpena · Antrim · Arenac · Baraga · Benzie · Charlevoix · Cheboygan · Chippewa · Clare · Crawford · Delta · Dickinson · Emmet · Gladwin · Gogebic · Grand Traverse · Houghton · Huron · Iosco · Iron · Isabella · Kalkaska · Keweenaw · Lake · Leelanau · Luce · Mackinac · Manistee · Marquette · Mason · Mecosta · Menominee · Midland · Missaukee · Montmorency · Ogemaw · Ontonagon · Osceola · Oscoda · Presque Isle · Roscommon · Saginaw · Sanilac · Schoolcraft · Tuscola · Wexford

Region 2 - Includes NERPA Regional Group
Macomb · St. Clair

Region 3 - Includes NWPRA Regional Group
Genesee · Lapeer · Oakland · Shiawassee

Region 4 – Includes SMRPA Regional Group
Branch · Clinton · Eaton · Hillsdale · Ingham · Ionia · Jackson · Lenawee · Livingston · Montcalm · Washtenaw

Region 5 – Includes WAM Regional Group
Monroe · Wayne

Region 6 - Includes WMRPA Regional Group
Allegan · Barry · Berrien · Calhoun · Cass · Kalamazoo · Kent · Muskegon · Newaygo · Oceana · Ottawa · St. Joseph · Van Buren

11:45 AM – 1:30 PM

Delegate Lunch: Connection, Equity & Community Impact

Ballrooms 1-6

Join fellow conference delegates for a seated lunch that blends storytelling, celebration, and recognition-rooted in the mParks strategic plan and our commitment to community impact, equity, and connection through parks and public spaces. In partnership with Wayne State University Press, the storytelling highlights features voices connected to We Run 313 and Black Summers: Growing Up in the Urban Outdoors, inviting delegates to Rethink. Reinvent. Reignite. how movement, place, and storytelling strengthen communities.

The program also includes recognition of the Play is Essential Grant Awards, the Innovative Park Resources and Programming Awards, and the Commitment to Excellence Award, honoring leadership, creativity, and excellence across Michigan's parks and recreation field.

Lunch is included with Full Delegate and Wednesday Delegate passes; additional meal tickets are available for purchase.

MACPRO
Michigan Association of County Parks and Recreation Officials

1:45 – 4:00 PM	
OFF-SITE TOUR: Michigan State University Student Recreation & Wellness Center *Offsite Tour - Meet at Registration Desk (0.2 CEUS)*	Get an inside look at MSU's new 293,000-square-foot Student Recreation and Wellness Center, a state-of-the-art facility designed to support student health, wellness, and recreation now and into the future. Highlights include gymnasiums, a turf arena, indoor track, climbing wall, fitness and strength studios, sports simulators, gender-inclusive locker rooms, and a 50-meter recreational pool. The tour also showcases the project's sustainable design strategies and its role in advancing MSU's long-term campus wellness goals. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Innovation & Change Management, Operational Knowledge**
DIRECTORS' FORUM: The Vision Integration Loop: Building Systems for Thriving Culture *Ballroom 7 (0.2 CEUS)* **Jason Chadock** - CEO, The Chadock Group, LLC **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Define the Vision Integration Loop and outline its seven steps for translating organizational vision into consistent daily behaviors. • Describe the 3P's of Culture and discuss how managing up supports clarity, trust, and shared leadership across an organization. • Identify systems and practices that outlast individual leaders and give examples of ways to help employees feel heard, valued, and empowered to lead from their seat.	Unlock a new era of organizational freedom by equipping your team with systems that outlast any single leader. This high-impact workshop explores the Vision Integration Loop - a proven 7-step process that turns big-picture vision into daily behaviors at every level of your organization. Learn to leverage the 3P's of Culture, master the art of managing up, and create an environment where every employee feels heard, valued, and inspired to lead from their seat. Through dynamic stories, generational insights, and practical experiences, you'll discover how to foster a culture where clairty, trust, and empowerment drive sustained results. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Innovation & Change Management, Leadership and Supervision**
1:45 – 2:45 PM	
Emergency Action Plans - Not Just for Aquatics *Governor's Room (0.1 CEUS)* **Stacey McNamara, AFO, CPO, CPRE** - Community Center Programmer, Lansing Parks & Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Define what an emergency action plan is. • List the types of emergencies parks & recreation professionals should be prepared. • Write and practice an emergency action plan for each of their facilities and/or programs.	Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) are vital across all parks and recreation operations—not just pools. This session will teach participants how to develop and implement comprehensive EAPs for any facility or program. Attendees will learn what makes an effective plan, how to train staff for readiness, and why consistent practice is critical for success. Real-world examples will illustrate how EAPs protect both guests and employees, empowering professionals to respond confidently and effectively in any situation. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Innovation & Change Management**

Empowering Ability: How Project SEARCH Builds Workforce Readiness in Michigan Park Systems *Room 201 (0.1 CEUS)* **Nicole Ferguson** - Chief Park Naturalist, Genesee County Parks & Recreation **Courtney Prout** - Park Naturalist, Genesee County Parks & Recreation **Emily Stetson** - Parks Program Manager, Genesee County Parks & Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify the benefits of the Project SEARCH program for both participants and host businesses (Parks), including workforce development, inclusion, and community engagement outcomes. • Identify the key steps and partnerships required to implement a Project SEARCH program within their own community or organization and have contact information to be able to reach out for additiontal exploration. • Advocate for inclusive employment practices by sharing evidence-based outcomes and success stories from this session.	Project SEARCH is transforming workforce inclusion by helping young adults with cognitive disabilities gain hands-on job experience. This session will introduce the Project SEARCH model and highlight its successful integration within Michigan park systems. Participants will hear from professionals involved in the program and learn how to bring it to their communities. Attendees will learn how this partnership fosters confidence, independence, and meaningful employment opportunities, while also enhancing workplace diversity and community impact. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Innovation & Change Management**
Experimenting with Evaluation *Ballroom 8 (0.1 CEUS)* **Bobbi Nance** - President, Recreation Results LLC **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify common pitfalls that lead to stale or uninformative evaluation results and how to avoid them. • Apply creative methods for gathering fresh insights about programs and participants. • Write evaluation results that are clear, compelling stories that communicate impact to stakeholders.	Evaluation doesn't have to be boring or repetitive. This session will encourage participants to take a creative, investigative approach to measuring impact. Attendees will learn how to design practical feedback tools, conduct small-scale trials, and gain new insights into programs and participants. Presenters will share practical techniques for enhancing evaluation processes and telling more compelling stories about community outcomes. Whether you love or dread data, this session will leave you inspired to reimagine evaluation as an engaging, ongoing experiment in growth. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Strategic & Analytical Thinking, Communication, Leadership Readiness**
URBAN CONSERVATION: For Detroit By Detroiters - Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park *Room 202 (0.1 CEUS)* **Rachel Frierson** - Chief Operating Officer, Detroit Riverfront Conservancy **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Outline equitable investment in public space through public/private partnerships. • Develop strategies to enhance cross-sector collaboration. • Establish community engagement practices rooted in resident voices to withstand adversity in the planning and design development.	The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy will share the inspiring story behind the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park—an $80 million, community-driven investment redefining Detroit's riverfront. Participants will learn how collaboration across public, private, and nonprofit sectors turned a bold vision into a nationally recognized urban park. This session will explore how community engagement, perseverance, and innovation fueled the project success and how lessons learned can be applied to future large-scale public spaces. Attendees will leave inspired by Detroit's model for inclusive urban transformation. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Innovation & Change Management, Public Relations & Stakeholder Engagement, Visionary & Strategic Leadership**

Micromanage or Empower: Why is this a question? *Room 204 (0.1 CEUS)* **Becka Jenzen** - Recreation Coordinator, Clinton Township Recreation **Jes Alger** - Recreation Clerk, Royal Oak Parks & Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify how to set clear expectations for seasonal and part-time staff. • Reproduce accountability plans for seasonal and part-time staff. • Identify how seasonal and part-time staff can to take ownership of their role	Supervising seasonal or high-turnover staff can be challenging—but micromanagement isn't the answer. This session will help leaders set clear expectations, foster accountability, and empower employees to take ownership of their work. Through practical examples and real-life scenarios, participants will learn how to balance structure with trust, coach staff effectively, and encourage initiative. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies to build autonomy, increase engagement, and spend less time managing—and more time leading. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Leadership and Supervision**
Navigating the Daily Grind - Effective Ways to Make Every Moment in Your Day Matter *Room 103/104 (0.1 CEUS)* **Linda Walter** - Retired, mParks Past President **Traci Sincock** - Executive Director, Northville Historical Society, mParks Past President **Paul Sincock –** Retired Member **Carla Scruggs** - Retired Member **Marilyn Troshak** - Retired, mParks Past President **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify intentional and unintentional ways a team culture is built. • Describe various strategies for working through the politics of a public service workplace. • List ways to improve effectiveness with better meetings, best practices, and communication strategies.	Success is built in the everyday moments. This session will help participants turn daily routines into opportunities for excellence through intentional communication, organization, and teamwork. Attendees will explore strategies for goal-setting, productive meetings, and navigating internal politics—all while strengthening team culture and efficiency. Designed as an interactive discussion, this session will draw on audience insights and experiences to build practical solutions. Participants will leave inspired to bring focus and purpose to every moment of their professional day. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Communication, Innovation & Change Management**
Started from the Bottom (Now We're Here): Growing Your Parks & Rec Marketing *Room 203 (0.1 CEUS)* **Marissa Russo** - Marketing & Communications Manager, City of Sterling Heights **Meagan Tehako** - Marketing & Events Manager, West Bloomfield Parks **Alyssa Firth** - Marketing Coordinator, Troy Recreation **Bridget Renwick, CPM, CPRP** - Recreation Superintendent, Northville Parks & Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify key stages in developing a parks and recreation marketing program—from operating as a one-person team to building a strategic, multi-layered communications plan. • Discuss practical methods to gain organizational buy-in and advocate for marketing resources, staffing, and long-term branding support. • Give examples of successful "Then & Now" marketing evolutions that demonstrate how small-scale efforts can transform into impactful, community-wide campaigns.	Every excellent marketing department starts small. This session will bring together professionals who have built successful marketing programs from limited resources and big ideas. Participants will hear real stories of growth—from "one-person shows" to full-fledged teams—and learn how to create structure, build brand consistency, and earn leadership buy-in. Through candid conversation, the panel will share practical advice on evolving from reactive promotion to proactive strategy. Attendees will leave empowered with tools to grow their marketing capacity at any scale. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Fiscal Management and Grant Development, Leadership and Supervision, Strategic & Analytical Thinking**

Taking An Inclusive Lens: Making Community Events Accessible to People with Disabilities *Room 205 (0.1 CEUS)* **Lisa Drennan** - Inclusion Consultant, MERGE Diverse Abilities Inclusion Consulting **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • State and Eliminate Barriers: Recognize and implement steps to eliminate or reduce unintended barriers that may arise from inaccessible features of your event, ensuring a more inclusive environment for all participants. • Identify Accessibility Laws: Identify key accessibility laws, particularly the ADA, as they relate to community events, and learn how to apply these principles in your planning process. • Describe Accessibility Coordinator Responsibilities: Describe key tasks an accessibility coordinator would undertake before, during, and after an event to enhance inclusion, and learn methods for locating and coordinating resources to achieve full accessi	Truly inclusive events go beyond basic compliance—they welcome everyone. This session will help participants understand the ADA's role in community event planning while exploring creative ways to remove barriers and promote inclusion and belonging. Attendees will learn to identify accessibility gaps, implement inclusive design practices, and ensure that festivals, concerts, and markets are enjoyable for all. Through practical examples and actionable tools, participants will leave ready to create events that celebrate community diversity and inclusion at every level. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Professionalism & Ethics, Strategic & Analytical Thinking**
You have a recreation grant. Now What? *Room 101/102 (0.1 CEUS)* **Jon Mayes** - Program Manager, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, Michigan DNR **Samantha Davis** - Grant Coordinator, Michigan DNR **Riley Millard** - Grant Coordinator, Michigan DNR **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Outline the steps they must follow to implement a grant. • Identify ways to run an efficient project through the grant process and procedures. • State post-completion requirements.	Learn the process and requirements for implementing your Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, Land and Water Conservation Fund and Recreation Passport grants. Topics include project agreements, requirements for acquisition and development projects, reimbursement, post completion requirements and helpful hints to common pitfalls. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Fiscal Management and Grant Development**
3:00 – 4:00 PM	
URBAN CONSERVATION: 9Line: Connecting Communities across Oakland County *Room 202 (0.1 CEUS)* **Simon Rivers** - Supervisor of Planning, Oakland County Parks & Recreation **Rachel Bush** – Planner, OHM Advisors **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Describe the unique collaboration that led to the ambitious 9Line plan. • Identify benefits to investing in community recreational amenities. • Discuss opportunities and barriers to developing regional projects.	Join us for an exclusive look at Oakland County's 9Line. This ambitious plan for non-motorized facilities connects ten vibrant and distinct communities, weaving together a tapestry of cultural institutions and outdoor recreation opportunities. We will take a closer look at the 9Line's background and history, project elements, exisiting conditions, and opportunities and barriers. As we prepare to publicly launch the 9Line, learn about the recreational, economic development, health, and equity benefits of this signature regional amenity. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following:

Creating a Cohesive and Connected Team... No Glue Required *Governor's Room (0.1 CEUS)* **Jed Buck** - Principal, Roz and Jed Training & Consulting **Roz Buck** - Principal, Roz and Jed Training & Consulting **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Describe how staff cohesion and connection prior to camp can predict positive outcomes for the overall camp community experience. • Identify key teamwork messages to convey during staff training and discuss the value of connection in working and living as a team. • List team-building games and activities introduced in the session and give examples of how to implement them in summer staff training to strengthen a cohesive and connected team.	If your staff, across every level, is cohesive and connected before camp begins, will that make a positive difference in this summer's experience for every member of your camp community? When you think about the critical messages that you want to convey to your staff as part of their training, is Teamwork one of them? Attendees will participate in a variety of team-building games and activities. We will discuss the value of connection and the benefits of working and living as a team at camp. You will take away an assortment of fun, interactive, and thought-provoking activities to implement into summer staff training as you create and strengthen your cohesive and connected team. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Leadership and Supervision**
Dive In: Creating Engaging Aquatic Experiences *Room 204 (0.1 CEUS)* **Becky Burnard** - Aquatic Coordinator, Livonia Parks & Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • List different types of aquatic special events. • Summarize different ways to engage the community. • Describe how to properly run an event.	Dive into the dynamic world of aquatic events in this engaging session designed for professionals, planners, and enthusiasts passionate about water-based experiences. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Visionary & Strategic Leadership, Innovation & Change Management, Public Relations & Stakeholder Engagement**
Lighting Projects Made Simple *Room 203 (0.1 CEUS)* **Will McIntosh** - Territory Sales Associate, Musco Sports Lighting **Shane Holler** - Sales Representative, Musco Sports Lighting **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Define best practices to evaluate existing facilities and identify opportunities for improvement, upgrades, or new project planning. • Identify the evolution of sports lighting technologies to better anticipate future trends and opportunities for parks and recreation spaces. • Discuss the three core components of a sports lighting project and how they work together to deliver safe, sustainable, and high-performing facilities.	Upgrading or installing lighting doesn't have to be complicated. This session will simplify the planning process for LED sports and facility lighting systems, helping participants understand how to enhance safety, visibility, and overall experience. Experts from Musco Sports Lighting will guide attendees through key planning considerations, including project scoping and control systems, as well as warranties and long-term maintenance. Participants will leave with the tools to confidently plan and manage lighting projects that deliver value and performance for years to come. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Strategic & Analytical Thinking**

No More Suspensions! Rethinking Behavioral Challenges Inclusively *Room 205 (0.1 CEUS)* **Lisa Drennan** - Inclusion Consultant, MERGE Diverse Abilities Inclusion Consulting **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify at least 3 preventative steps that can be taken/implemented in your programs policies and procedures that would increase the opportunity for a child who has traditionally struggled with "behavior issues" to be successful at your program • Describe Intake Process Improvements: how to restructure your intake process for participants needing inclusion support, yielding a more positive start to the family and program relationship. • Give examples of Support Techniques: at least three positive supporting techniques to use before, during, or after a challenging event, resulting in more positive engagement and resolution of challenging behaviors.	Challenging behaviors don't have to lead to exclusion. This session will help professionals adopt inclusive strategies that support children with diverse abilities while reducing or eliminating suspensions. Participants will learn how to collaborate with families, improve intake processes, and distinguish between meltdowns and tantrums to respond effectively. Through hands-on discussion and evidence-based tools, attendees will leave equipped to create recreation environments that are safe, supportive, and truly inclusive for all participants and staff. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Policy Development & Advocacy, Visionary & Strategic Leadership**
No One Cares About Your Data *Ballroom 8 (0.1 CEUS)* **Bobbi Nance** - President, Recreation Results LLC **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Define the attributes of data presentation that motivate people to act on it. • List three questions that will help you position your data efforts more effectively • Give examples of how to combine and apply these two concepts to real-life situations, such as reports and presentations, survey data, and performance measures	Having data is one thing—using it effectively is another. This session will help participants turn numbers into narratives that drive decision-making and action. Attendees will learn how to evaluate what data truly matters, simplify data collection processes, and communicate results in a meaningful way. Using three guiding questions, the session will provide a framework for transforming dusty reports into valuable insights that inform programs, policies, and storytelling. Participants will leave ready to make their data engaging, relevant, and impactful. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Strategic & Analytical Thinking, Communication, Leadership and Supervision**
Perfect Pace: Running a Successful 5K *Room 201 (0.1 CEUS)* **Riley Hayes** - Recreation Program Coordinator, Oakland County Parks & Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Outline a checklist and timeline for race needs leading up to the race and on race day • Give examples of race technology tools to enhance your race website and host easy registration for participants • Describe best practices to engage participants and obtain repeat customers	Whether hosting your first 5K or improving an existing race, this session will provide a step-by-step guide for success. Participants will learn how to utilize online tools such as RunSignUp and RaceDay Check-In, manage logistics with detailed timelines, and create memorable experiences for participants. The session will cover marketing, volunteer coordination, and participant engagement, offering practical advice for agencies of all sizes. Attendees will leave prepared to organize efficient, enjoyable races that strengthen community connections and boost visibility. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Operational Knowledge, Community Engagement, Leadership Readiness**

Stewardship of DNR Grant Assisted Sites *Room 101/102 (0.1 CEUS)* **Erin Campbell** - Compliance and Stewardship Specialist, Michigan DNR **Marcus Kirkpatrick** - Director, Delta Township Parks & Recreation **Lee Miller, CPRP** - Recreation Administrator, Delta Township Parks & Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Define compliance and stewardship requirements DNR grant-assisted sites. • Identify specific ways to manage, track and report on compliance requirements. • Outline compliance and stewardship requirements to others in their organization.	Learn about the long-term obligations associated with DNR grant-assisted sites and gain clarity on how to effectively manage, track, and report post-completion project requirements. This session also covers key stewardship responsibilities for encumbered parks and trails, providing practical guidance to ensure ongoing compliance and sustainable resource management. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Fiscal Management and Grant Development, Innovation & Change Management**
Strategic Planning for Growth - Position Yourself and Your Team for Success *Room 103/104 (0.1 CEUS)* **Linda Walter** - Retired, mParks Past President **Ann Conklin** - Retired, mParks Past President, Hall of Fame Class of 2021 **Sue Wells** - Retired, mParks Past President, Hall of Fame Class of 2025 **Ron Reincke** - Adjunct Lecturer, Eastern Michigan University, Hall of Fame Class of 2013 **Vic Chiasson** – Retired, mParks Past President, Hall of Fame Class of 2023 **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Discuss several ways to help develop members of your team and position your team for a growth mindset. • Identify Strategic and Master Plan processes - goals and pitfalls and how to position your department for a millage campaign. • Outline a path for several stages of their career - one that focuses on lifelong learning and growth.	Strategic growth begins with preparation and a clear vision. This session will guide participants through multiple pathways for advancing both personal and organizational success. Topics will include professional development, team leadership, strategic and master plan implementation, and preparing for millage or funding campaigns. Through panel discussion and open dialogue, attendees will learn from seasoned leaders how to set achievable goals, avoid common pitfalls, and position themselves and their departments for long-term success. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Innovation & Change Management, Leadership Readiness, Leadership and Supervision**

4:00 – 6:00 PM

Trade Show Grand Opening + mParks Foundation Silent Auction

Trade Show

Kick off the 2026 mParks Trade Show at the Grand Opening, where innovation, inspiration, and impact come together. Connect with exhibitors showcasing the latest products, services, and solutions shaping the future of parks and recreation. Discover new ideas, gather practical tools, and enjoy complimentary food and refreshments as you explore the show floor.

While you're there, don't miss the mParks Foundation Silent Auction, one of the Foundation's most important fundraising efforts of the year. Bid on unique items, experiences, and services while supporting programs that expand access to parks, recreation, and outdoor opportunities for communities across Michigan. Every bid helps strengthen the profession and create healthier, more connected communities statewide.

5:45 – 7:00 PM

MACPRO Annual Meeting
Room 101/102

Calling all county park and recreation professionals! Be part of the MACPRO Annual Meeting, your chance to connect, collaborate, and champion county-level parks and recreation across Michigan. As the Michigan Association of County Park and Recreation Officials, MACPRO brings together professionals dedicated to advancing county-sponsored lands, facilities, and programs through networking, education, advocacy, and shared problem-solving.

Held during the mParks Conference & Trade Show, this meeting offers a unique forum to exchange insights with colleagues who understand your challenges and opportunities, strengthen regional partnerships, and help shape the future of county parks and recreation statewide. Don't miss your chance to join the conversation, expand your professional network, and make an impact, see you there!

MACPRO
Michigan Association of County Park and Recreation Officials

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Dinner on Your Own
Enjoy dinner on your own. Take this time to explore nearby favorites, catch up with colleagues, or simply recharge.

- Click here or visit the mParks Conference & Trade Show App for a list of nearby restaurants.

8:00 – 11:00 PM

Band Showcase
Grewal Hall – A shuttle will be available to and from all mParks Conference & Trade Show Hotels to the venue

Experience the rhythm of Lansing at the Band Showcase, a lively evening social hosted at Grewal Hall, the city's newest and most exciting music venue. Enjoy an unforgettable night featuring live performances from talented bands that you can book for your future events.

Sip on drinks, savor hors d'oeuvres, and connect with colleagues in a dynamic setting that celebrates creativity, culture, and community. Whether you're scouting your next performer or simply soaking up the energy, this event is your invitation to reignite your senses and celebrate the power of music to bring people together.

musco Lighting
We Make It Happen.

Thursday, March 5

8:30 – 9:30 AM

Morning Buzz: Trade Show Hour + mParks Foundation Silent Auction
Trade Show

Start your day with great ideas and great coffee! Connect with exhibitors, enjoy fresh pastries, and explore the latest tools and trends shaping parks and recreation. While you're there, browse and bid in the mParks Foundation Silent Auction, where your participation supports programs that expand access to parks, recreation, and outdoor experiences across Michigan. The perfect way to fuel your morning and make an impact.

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9:45 – 10:45 AM

Athletics Roundtable: Managing Rec, Club/Travel, and Official Retention
Room 204 (0.1 CEUS)

Steve Fellhauer, CPRP, CYSA - Recreation Supervisor - Sport Programs, Novi Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Kenny Grybel, CPRP, CYSA - Director of Recreation, Brighton Community Ed
Dan Sullivan - Recreation Superintendent, Oxford Township Parks & Recreation

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify strategies for program development, community engagement, and enhancing the athlete experience in athletic programs.
- Discuss ways innovation and leadership can drive growth and success in athletics.
- Give examples of practical approaches and best practices from industry leaders to elevate athletic programs.

Through shared experiences and facilitated disucssion, this session will share practical strategies for balancing recreation sports with growning influence of club and travel programs, while keeping access, equity, and community needs at the center. The session will also focus on official recruitment and retention, exploring sustainable approaches to attracting and supporting officials, coaches, staff, and volunteers. Participants will discuss common challenges, including rising expectations from families, facility and scheduling pressures, cost barriers, burnout, training needs, and managing sideline behavior. Leave with actionable ideas, peer-tested solutions, and new connections to strengthen your programs and elevate the athlete experience on and off the field.

According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career**

Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Operational Knowledge, Professionalism & Ethics**

Beyond the Myths: Redefining Inclusive Play for Every Body
Room 203 (0.1 CEUS)

Natalie Mackay - Founder/CEO, Unlimited Play
Shannon Columb - Project Manager, Unlimited Play

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify scalable design strategies that work across budgets and project sizes.
- Describe how to communicate the value of inclusive play to clients, funders, and communities.
- Discuss the top 5 myths that hold back inclusive playground design

Inclusive play is not one-size-fits-all — and it doesn't have to be expensive to make an impact. This session will challenge common misconceptions about inclusive play design and demonstrate what true inclusion looks like in action. Through real project examples and case studies, presenters will debunk five persistent myths about inclusive playgrounds and showcase successful designs that work across different scales and budgets. Attendees will leave inspired with practical design ideas and a deeper understanding of what it means to create play for everyone.

According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career**

Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Fiscal Management and Grant Development, Professionalism & Ethics**

Great Lakes recreation

Create a Marketing Plan that Works for You *Room 202 (0.1 CEUS)* **Alyssa Firth** - Marketing Coordinator, Troy Recreation Department **Allyson Leach, CPRP** - Assistant Director, Troy Recreation Department **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify the value proposition that the participants department or specific service brings to the community. • Outline current marketing strategies and define the value each adds to the program, service, or department. • Outline a framework that will ultimately build future marketing plans.	Marketing success is not one-size-fits-all. This session will help participants design marketing plans tailored to their unique audiences, resources, and organizational goals. Presenters will share a step-by-step framework for identifying what works—and what doesn't—for your community. Through practical strategies and real examples, attendees will learn how to build a sustainable marketing roadmap that keeps teams consistent, aligned, and intentional year-round. By exploring insights from both programming and marketing perspectives, participants will leave ready to communicate more effectively and efficiently. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Fiscal Management and Grant Development, Innovation & Change Management, Leadership and Supervision**
Customer Service Is Much More Than Handling Complaints *Room 205 (0.1 CEUS)* **Linda Walter** - Retired, mParks Past President **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify ways to reduce customer issues by examining common complaints, conducting regular policy review, refining communication channels, and other strategies. • Describe training efforts that will empower front line staff, streamline customer complaint resolution, create common terminology, and ensure clear policy understanding. • List ways to handle customer issues effectively at every level of the organization.	Exceptional customer service starts long before a complaint arises. This session will explore how proactive systems, consistent training, and clear communication can create seamless guest experiences. Participants will learn how to design customer service frameworks that empower staff, prevent frustration, and resolve conflicts with confidence. The discussion will cover creating shared terminology, regularly reviewing policies, and developing strategies for handling challenging situations. Attendees will leave with actionable steps to transform everyday interactions into opportunities for connection, trust, and satisfaction. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Communication**
Igniting Innovation: From Ideas to Action *Room 201 (0.1 CEUS)* **Ron Olson** - Retired, mParks Past President **Scott Pratt, CPRP** - Chief of Community & Employee Engagement – MDNR Parks and Recreation, Parks and Recreation, Michigan **Maia Turek** - Engagement & Innovation Specialist – MDNR Parks & Recreation, Parks & Recreation, Michigan **Shane Morse** - Rose Lake District Supervisor, Michigan DNR **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Summarize how to cultivate an environment that encourages creative problem-solving at all levels. Give examples of importance of empowering staff to take ownership of new ideas. • Recall tools for overcoming resistance and building momentum for innovation. • Give examples of collaboration between state, county, and local agencies that produce measurable results.	Innovation in parks and recreation begins with a spark—and thrives through leadership and collaboration. This dynamic panel will showcase real-world examples of ideas that became transformative projects, from conception to completion. Each panelist will share lessons on overcoming barriers, building partnerships, and fostering a culture that encourages experimentation and creativity. This moderated discussion will reveal actionable ways agencies can sustain innovation, empower staff, and strengthen community impact. Attendees will leave with renewed energy and practical inspiration to start saying "yes" to new ideas. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Leadership and Supervision** Spicer group

Make it Stick! Tools and Strategies to Make Your Training Impactful *Governor's Room (0.1 CEUS)* **Jed Buck** - Principal, Roz and Jed Training & Consulting **Roz Buck** - Principal, Roz and Jed Training & Consulting **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify common factors that contribute to low staff involvement in training sessions and describe how experiential learning can increase engagement. • List experiential exercises that can be used as openers, energizers, and reinforcers in training sessions. • Outline ways to select and apply experiential learning activities and give examples of how they can maximize the effectiveness of staff training.	Do you find your staff is not involved in training sessions? Do you want to engage them in the materials? Experiential learning helps make any training more fun and impactful. This session will provide a variety of exercises that can be used as openers, energizers, reinforcers, and powerful learning tools to maximize the effectiveness of any training session. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Innovation & Change Management**
Michigan Trails 2050: A Blueprint for Connection *Ballroom 8 (0.1 CEUS)* **Andrea LaFontaine** - Executive Director, Michigan Trails & Greenways Alliance **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • summarize the four pillars (Health & Wellness, Stewardship & Conservation, Economic Development, Access & Opportunity) of the MI Trails 2050 vision, including how each relates to statewide and regional trail planning in Michigan. • outline a framework for engaging multiple stakeholders (local government, community organizations, under-served populations, trail users) to integrate trail planning into existing municipal/regional master plans. • describe how community feedback from six regional summits shaped statewide priorities, and learn how those insights translate into actionable strategies for local trail planning and investment.	Michigan's trail network is evolving—and the future is bright. This session will introduce participants to Michigan Trails 2050, a long-term, community-driven vision for expanding and connecting the state's trail systems. Built on input from six regional summits and hundreds of stakeholders, the plan focuses on health, conservation, access, and economic development. Attendees will learn how local governments and organizations can align with this vision, pursue funding opportunities, and collaborate to strengthen Michigan's reputation as the "Trails State." According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Innovation & Change Management, Mentorship & Professional Networking**
Panic-Proof Planning - We Don't Just Wing It, We P.L.A.N. It *Room 103/104 (0.1 CEUS)* **Jason Chadock** - CEO, The Chadock Group, LLC **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Define managing vs leading and how leading creates more productive teams. • Build empowerment and drive employees' ideas to build operations. • Create a unified vision for culture and operations and how this drives guest satisfaction.	When pressure rises, most teams default to heroics and guesswork. This session gives leaders a panic-proof way to plan using three simple Thought Leadership Frameworks you can implement immediately. You'll learn The P.L.A.N. Canvas to Picture the destination, Listen & Link stakeholders, Architect the systems, and Normalize the cadence; The Panic-Proof Pathway to move any initiative from Trigger → Prepare → Plan → People → Process → Pulse → Perform → Post-Game; and The Stakeholder Merge Map to merge Staff, Board, and Community input into one shared plan. Expect a fast, story-driven hour with micro-exercises so you leave with a one-page plan, an execution cadence, and a buy-in method your team will use. Half of Being Smart is Looking Smart—these visuals show your team how to think and how to move, so plans prevent panic and culture sustains performance. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Innovation & Change Management, Leadership and Supervision**

PARK MAINTENANCE: Round Table Discussion - Beach Operations *Ballroom 7 (0.1 CEUS)* **Kyle Karczewski, CPRP** - Director, Muskegon Parks & Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Describe operational and safety challenges commonly faced in managing public beaches. • Identify current practices related to safety, operational calendars, public communication, fencing schedules, facility openings, and lifeguard coordination. • Discuss opportunities for shraed standards and partnerships and summarize how collaboration can improve consistency and safety across Michigan's beaches.	Beach operations bring unique challenges that demand collaboration. This open roundtable will provide parks professionals managing beaches with an opportunity to share their safety practices, operational calendars, and public communication strategies. Participants will discuss topics such as fencing schedules, facility openings, and lifeguard coordination to help align statewide practices and ensure consistency. The discussion will also explore opportunities for shared standards and partnerships to improve consistency and safety across Michigan's beaches. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Communication, Operational Knowledge, Public Relations & Stakeholder Engagement**
Run the World (Girls): Women Leading in Parks & Rec *Room 101/102 (0.1 CEUS)* **Krashawn Martin, CPRP** - Director, Wyoming Parks & Recreation **Kelly Hyer, CPRP** - Executive Director, West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation **Mary Patay, PhD, CPRE** - Director, Mackinac Island Recreation **Val Romeo, CTRS** - Director, Kentwood Parks & Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Describe key challenges and strategies shared by women leaders in parks and recreation related to leadership development, advocacy, and confidence-building. • Identify at least two actionable steps they can take within the next year to advance their own leadership journey or advocate for themselves and others in the workplace. • Discuss ways to foster mentorship, support peers, and contribute to a culture that uplifts women in the parks and recreation profession.	Leadership in parks and recreation will continue to be shaped by strong, visionary women. This inspiring panel will feature female leaders from across Michigan who will share their personal journeys, lessons learned, and advice for navigating leadership challenges. Participants will engage in open conversation about confidence, mentorship, and creating pathways for others to succeed. The session will empower attendees to lead authentically, advocate for themselves, and support one another in advancing the profession with courage and collaboration. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Leadership and Supervision, Mentorship & Professional Networking, Mentorship & Succession Planning**
11:00 – 12:00 pm	
Accessibility and Inclusivity in Parks *Room 101/102 (0.1 CEUS)* **Tim Novak** - Trails Section Chief, Michigan DNR **Michelle O'Kelly** - Philanthropy Specialist, Michigan DNR **Griselda Trevino-Tule** - Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Coordinator, Michigan DNR **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify trends in the industry that are marking parks and green spaces more accessible and inclusive. • Describe the improvements being made to Michigan State Parks that improve accessibility and inclusivity, while giving examples of ways that local parks and trails can make simple improvements that improve accessibility and inclusivity. • List significant changes to the International Code Council's standard for Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities that are applicable to parks and recreation facilities.	Accessibility and inclusivity are core priorities in public recreation. In this session, staff from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources will showcase recent and upcoming initiatives designed to make Michigan's parks and trails more welcoming for everyone. Participants will gain insight into project examples, design standards, and community-driven improvements that enhance universal access to services. The discussion will highlight lessons learned, plans, and how other agencies can implement inclusive practices to create spaces that reflect and serve the diversity of their communities. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Fiscal Management and Grant Development, Innovation & Change Management**

Avoiding the Co-Counselor Clash *Governor's Room (0.1 CEUS)* **Jed Buck** - Principal, Roz and Jed Training & Consulting **Roz Buck** - Principal, Roz and Jed Training & Consulting **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • List reasons that counselor teams don't always work well together • Recall strategies to proactively address clashes among small groups of counselors • Describe several high impactful and memorable activities for co-counselors that can be implemented during staff orientation and serve as ongoing reference points throughout the summer.	Conflict among co-counselors can derail even the most well-planned camp season. This lively and interactive session will help camp leaders build strong, supportive counselor teams before the first camper arrives. Participants will learn practical techniques and engaging orientation activities designed to strengthen relationships and prevent mid-season tension. By exploring real-world scenarios and communication-building exercises, attendees will leave with new tools to help staff navigate differences, collaborate effectively, and deliver a cohesive and positive experience for campers throughout the summer. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Communication, Leadership Readiness, Leadership and Supervision**
Development of Play: How the Playground Supports Play Skill Acquisition *Room 203 (0.1 CEUS)* **Ariel Mansholt, OTD, OTR/L, CPSI** - Inclusive Play Specialist & Occupational Therapist, Landscape Structures Inc. **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify the appropriate stages of play and how common diagnoses impacts play skills • Define how Occupational Therapists play a role in play skill development • Identify specific playground features and how they speak to the needs of a variety of common pediatric medical diagnoses	Outdoor play spaces can overwhelm some children, limiting valuable opportunities for growth and connection. This session will guide participants through understanding how playground design impacts play skill development, especially for children with diverse abilities. Attendees will learn how specific diagnoses affect play and gain strategies to design inclusive spaces that support participation for all. Presenters will share practical insights, terminology, and evidence-based approaches, enabling professionals to feel confident advocating for designs that foster learning, inclusion, and joy through play. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Innovation & Change Management, Professionalism & Ethics**
Effective Swimming Pool Operations *Room 205 (0.1 CEUS)* **Bill Babcock** - Sales, Aquatic Source **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify problems before they become emergencies. • Identify and prevent issues in their pump rooms. • Identify protential risks at their aquatic facilities, describe safe water chemistry management procedures, outline preventative equipment maintenance programs, discuss methods to prevent waterborne illnesses and extend equipment life cycles, and summarize new technologies that improve efficiency in aquatic facility management.	Smooth pool operations depend on preparation, training, and proactive maintenance. This session will focus on the key components of effective aquatic facility management, including preventive maintenance, standard operating procedures, and emergency planning. Participants will learn how to establish documentation systems that ensure safety, compliance, and operational efficiency. By exploring best practices and in-service training approaches, attendees will gain practical insights to improve staff readiness, protect guests, and maintain the longevity of their aquatic facilities. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Strategic & Analytical Thinking**

Finding Your True North for Organizational Communication and Culture *Room 204 (0.1 CEUS)* **Todd Poquette** - Director of Adventure, 906 Adventure Team **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Define or refine the "WHY" that anchors your department or organization, providing a clear sense of purpose and direction for communication and decision-making. • Identify your team's Mission, Values, and Purpose (MVP) to guide behavior and eliminate unnecessary hierarchy, ensuring every voice contributes to shared goals. • Summarize how leadership should be a collective responsibility rather than a title, emphasizing accountability, authenticity, and alignment across all levels of the organization.	A compass is a trusted tool that always points north, providing a steady reference for navigating unfamiliar terrain and challenging conditions. In much the same way, an organization's "true north" serves as a guiding force for effective communication and leadership. This session explores how clear, consistent, and purpose-driven communication builds trust, strengthens culture, and aligns with shared direction. Participants will be challenged to reflect on how staying grounded in their true north - especially amid external pressures - can promote meaningful dialogue, reinforce organizational values, and enhance connection across teams. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Communication, Innovation & Change Management**
Leading by Design *Room 103/104 (0.1 CEUS)* **William Beachy** - CEO, Beachy Group, LLC **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Demonstrate increased self-awareness by identifying personal leadership strengths, growth areas, and their impact on team dynamics. • Apply communication and collaboration practices that strengthen trust, engagement, and shared effectiveness within teams. • Implement leadership strategies aligned with personal strengths to improve decision-making, influence, and organizational impact.	Every leader has unique strengths waiting to be leveraged for greater impact. In this CliftonStrengths-based workshop, directors and supervisors will explore how to identify and apply their natural talents to enhance team performance and community outcomes. Participants will learn how to build complementary teams, improve communication, and align strengths with organizational goals. Through interactive discussions and real-world exercises, attendees will gain tools to cultivate a strengths-based culture that drives engagement, productivity, and purpose-driven leadership across their organizations. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Communication, Innovation & Change Management**
One Person Show *Ballroom 8 (0.1 CEUS)* **Mary Patay, PhD, CPRE** - Director, Mackinac Island Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • identify resources that will help them be successful in their job. • list talking points to encourage participation (help) with their department. • summarize points of discussion to use with other leadership personnel in different departments and fields to help make their own department more successful.	As the sole employee in a parks and recreation department, managing programming, budgeting, maintenance, and more can be challenging. In this session, the presenter will share practical tips, strategies, and lessons learned from years of balancing these diverse responsibilities, offering insights to help others successfully navigate similar roles. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Fiscal Management and Grant Development**

Supporting the Front Line: Leadership Practices for Stronger Teams *Room 201 (0.1 CEUS)* **Sam Jenkins** - Culture & Community Strategist, Empowering Communities **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify leadership practices that promote psychological safety, inclusion, and staff well-being. • Predict early signs of burnout and apply strategies to support front-line staff before turnover occurs. • Reproduce practical tools to strengthen team culture, trust, and communication across all levels of staff.	Front-line staff are the backbone of parks and recreation operations. This session will explore how leaders can strengthen teams by fostering trust, communication, and psychological safety. Participants will learn actionable techniques to recognize burnout early, build inclusive cultures, and create environments where every staff member feels valued. Using real-world examples, the session will provide simple yet powerful strategies for boosting morale and retention—ensuring that teams are supported, engaged, and equipped to deliver exceptional service to their communities. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Communication, Leadership Readiness**
Text-to-911 and what3words *Room 202 (0.1 CEUS)* **Jaime Seling** - NG911 Coordinator, Peninsula Fiber Network **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Define what what3words is, and how it can help park/trail users in an emergency situation. • Be able to give examples of when to use text-to-911, and how it's different than calling 911. • Reproduce how to send a text-to-911, and how to give their exact location to first responders.	Emergency communication technology continues to evolve, improving response times and accessibility. This session will introduce participants to the statewide Text-to-911 service and the what3words geolocation tool. Attendees will learn how these technologies connect callers and dispatchers more efficiently, especially in areas without clear addresses. Presenters will explain how to educate the public about these tools and how to use them to enhance safety in parks, trails, and recreation facilities. Participants will leave with the knowledge to integrate these resources into their emergency protocols. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Communication, Professionalism & Ethics**
PARK MAINTENANCE: **Trail Maintenance Fundamentals: Safe, Sustainable, Year-round** *Ballroom 7 (0.1 CEUS)* **Mike Boyd** - Assistant Park Supervisor, Oakland County Parks **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify core principles of sustainable trail maintenance. • Discuss seasonal maintenance needs and challenges. • Utilize safety, inspection, and prioritization strategies year-round.	Attend this session if you are responsible for - or aspire to be responsible for - any type of public path or trail. Participants will be introduced to core principles of sustainable trail maintenance, learn to recognize seasonal needs and challenges, apply effective safety inspection strategies, and understand how seasonal changes in trail use impact maintenance planning. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Strategic & Analytical Thinking**

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

mParks Past President Meeting
Ballroom 1-6

mParks Past Presidents will convene to discuss matters essential to the continued success of the Association. Participants will exchange ideas on strategic planning, committee development, and collaborative opportunities that support mParks' mission and future direction. The meeting will also include updates on emerging trends and initiatives within the field, as well as a discussion on how past presidents can remain engaged as mentors and contributors. This is a valuable opportunity to connect, reflect, and guide the Association's ongoing growth and leadership legacy.

mParks | PAST PRESIDENTS

12:00 – 2:00 PM

Trade Show Lunch + mParks Foundation Silent Auction

Trade Show

Fuel your afternoon with good food and great ideas! Enjoy a boxed lunch while exploring the Trade Show, connecting with exhibitors, and strengthening relationships with peers. Be sure to place your final bids in the mParks Foundation Silent Auction; this is your last chance to support programs that expand access to parks, recreation, and outdoor experiences across Michigan.

Lunch is included with Full Delegate and Thursday Delegate passes; additional meal tickets are available for purchase.

2:00 – 3:00 PM

Building Creative Bridges: How a Township–Nonprofit Partnership Expanded Arts Access

Room 202 (0.1 CEUS)

Laura Mortier, CPRP - Recreation and Performing Arts Manager, Canton Parks, Recreation& Community Services
Jonathan LaFever, CPRP - Director, Canton Parks, Recreation & Community Services
Kevin Ryan - Community Program Director, Partnership for the Arts

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify the key components of the service agreement between Canton Township and the Partnership for the Arts.
- List the benefits and limitations of partnering with a nonprofit organization versus operating solely as a governmental agency.
- Discuss real-world success stories from Canton's arts programming and give examples of how similar collaborations can be replicated in other communities.

Partnerships can transform community impact. This session will explore how Canton Township and the Partnership for the Arts developed an innovative service agreement to expand access to inclusive arts programming. Attendees will follow a step-by-step process for building a successful collaboration between a municipality and a nonprofit organization, including leveraging ARPA funds and aligning missions for shared success. Presenters will highlight key lessons, community outcomes, and strategies for replicating this model to advance equitable and sustainable arts access in any community.

According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career**

Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Innovation & Change Management**

Campground and Lodging Roundtable

Governor's Room (0.1 CEUS)

Nick Smith - Coordinator of Visitor and Business Services, Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission
Jeff Abel - Superintendent, Mecosta County Park Commission

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe the requirements of operating a campground or lodging facility in the State of Michigan.
- Discuss questions and scenarios with experienced campground and lodging professionals related to attendees' operations or future plans.
- Identify interest from attendees if a Campground and Lodging Focus Group should be created through mParks, and what the educational priorities of that group should be.

Join the inaugural Campground and Lodging Roundtable, where panelists will share brief overviews of the operations they manage and the state guidelines that shape their work. This session will also help gauge interest in forming an mParks Campground and Lodging Focus Group. The discussion will be led by Nick Smith, along with other knowledgeable panelists.

According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career**

Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Strategic & Analytical Thinking, Leadership and Supervision, Mentorship & Professional Networking**

EQ for Grown-Ups: Lessons from Children's Stories *Room 103/104 (0.1 CEUS)* **Lindsay Post** - Owner/Creator, MoveMaker Media **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify three key emotional intelligence skills (such as self-awareness, empathy, and self-regulation) illustrated within a children's story. • Describe how the "5M" method (Mini-Message, Munchies, Movement, Music, Mind-Bender) can be applied in daily work to reduce stress and strengthen team connection. • Summarize practical strategies for fostering resilience and communication in parks and recreation settings by integrating story-based reflection activities.	What if the stories that once inspired us as children still hold lessons for leading and thriving as adults? In this engaging MoveMaker Book Club session, participants will revisit classic children's stories to explore emotional intelligence, resilience, and teamwork. Using the interactive "5M" method—Mini-Message, Munchies, Movement, Music, and Mind-Bender—attendees will discover practical ways to strengthen empathy, communication, and self-awareness. The session will blend playfulness with professional growth, helping participants leave equipped to navigate stress, build connection, and lead with authenticity. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Communication, Leadership Readiness, Leadership and Supervision**
PARK MAINTENANCE: Inclusive Play Matters: Evidence-Based Design Best Practices for Play and Recreation Destinations *Ballroom 7 (0.1 CEUS CPRP/CPRE/CPSI)* **Richard Sinclair** - Vice President, Sinclair Recreation **Ron Blake** - Regional Sales Manager, GameTime **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Define playground terminology to clarify the differences between accessible design, universal design, inclusion, and the 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design. • List at least 3 evidence-based design best practices that thoughtfully meet the physical, social-emotional, sensory, cognitive, and communicative needs of all children, including those with disabilities in playground settings. • Identify key steps to successfully advocate for inclusive play and recreation destinations.	Thoughtfully break down physical and social barriers to create a welcoming atmosphere and ensure parks intentionally support the developmental benefits of inclusive, intergenerational play! Research findings and new data offer unique insights to demonstrate the positive impact of designing outdoor destinations to address the diverse needs of the whole child, the whole environment, and the whole community! According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Accessibility Practices, Professionalism & Ethics**
Inclusive Support to Youth with Invisible Disabilities *Room 203 (0.1 CEUS)* **Tamiko Garrett** - Founder/Executive Director, Parents for Transition **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Define and give examples of what invisible disabilities are. • Discuss how to provide inclusive support to youth impacted by invisible disabilities. • Identify invisible disabilities and gain tools to remove barriers.	Invisible disabilities can create hidden barriers for youth in recreation programs. This workshop will help professionals recognize, understand, and support children whose needs may not be immediately visible. Participants will learn about invisible disabilities, explore common misconceptions, and develop strategies to promote inclusion and belonging. Through real-world insights and empathy-building activities, attendees will gain confidence in creating programs that embrace neurodiversity and empower all youth to succeed. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Innovation & Change Management, Professionalism & Ethics**

Mapping Your Message: Building a Cohesive Content Ecosystem *Room 205 (0.1 CEUS)* **Christy Brunsell** - Marketing & Communications Manager, Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify 3-5 content "buckets" that align their departmental mission, vision, and goals with day-to-day operations • Reproduce a step-by-step framework to map out a content calendar that connects "buckets," timing, and distribution channels • Outline an individualized action plan to implement a cohesive content mapping and planning process within their own department	Managing multiple communication channels can easily overwhelm even the best teams. This session will help participants organize their messaging and maintain consistency across various channels, including social media, print, email, and beyond. Attendees will learn to identify key "content buckets" that align with their department's mission, plan effectively, and communicate with purpose. Designed for professionals at all levels, this workshop will provide actionable tools to streamline workflows, enhance collaboration, and ensure that every message reinforces the agency's story with clarity and impact. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Communication, Innovation & Change Management, Leadership Readiness**
Resources and opportunities to expand your youth athletics programs *Ballroom 8 (0.1 CEUS)* **Meghan Scharer** - Manager, MLS GO, RCX Sports **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify key components of the MLS GO program model and describe how it supports accesible, community-based youth soccer. • Describe the purpose and eligibility criteria of the MLS GO & NRPA Fund and list the steps agencies can take to pursue funding. • Summarize how RCX Sports partners with professional leagues and give examples of how Michigan park agencies can become involved with Michigan-based professional teams or clubs even if they are not located in close geographic proximity.	Discover how your community can unlock new funding and expand access to youth sports. Join RCX Sports for an inside look at MLS GO, the official recreational soccer program, and the MLS GO & NRPA Fund, a new grant supporting park agencies running - or looking to run - youth soccer. You'll also hear how RCX partners with the NBA, NFL, NHL, and MLB to deliver accessible, community-based programs nationwide. Learn how your agency can get involved, access resources, and bring more play opportunities to kids in your community. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Professionalism & Ethics**

Spotlight on Belonging: Celebrating Progress and Shaping the Future *Room 204 (0.1 CEUS)* **Zach Zuchowicz, MPH, CDP, CWP** - DEI and Community Engagement Coordinator, Oakland County Parks **Sam Jenkins** - Founder, Empowering Communities **Amos DeRosier, CPRP** - Recreation Operations Coordinator, West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation **Meghan Veiga, CTRS, CYSA** - Recreation Coordinator, Royal Oak Parks & Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify the current challenges and opportunities in fostering belonging within Michigan's diverse communities and identify groups within the participants' own communities who could benefit from intentionally inclusive programming. • Give examples of actionable strategies or program modifications that enhance a sense of belonging for underrepresented groups in local parks and recreation settings, incorporating best practices and community feedback. • Discuss the effectiveness of existing policies and professional practices in promoting belonging, and recommend improvements based on data and peer collaboration during the session.	Belonging will remain at the heart of thriving parks and recreation communities. This interactive roundtable will invite mParks members to share successes, challenges, and next steps in creating inclusive programs and workplaces. Participants will explore the concept of belonging through multiple lenses, including adaptive recreation, aging and active adults, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and community engagement. Attendees will leave with fresh strategies, collaborative ideas, and renewed motivation to advance equity and inclusion in their own agencies. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Professionalism & Ethics**
Success in Action: Parks and Recreation Stories of Innovation and Collaboration *Room 201 (0.1 CEUS)* **Linda Walter** - Retired, mParks Past President **Darrin Duistermars –** Director, Holland Charter Township Recreation **Marissa Russo** - Marketing & Communications Manager, Sterling Heights Parks & Recreation **Rachel Roon** - Fairgrounds and Parks Program Manager, Emmet County Parks **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify effective strategies for building creative partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and stakeholders to support and strengthen parks and recreation initiatives. • Apply practical approaches for navigating board or commission approval processes by using strategic communication and informed advocacy techniques shared by experienced practitioners. • Develop actionable plans for leveraging collaboration and community engagement to turn challenges into successful projects that create meaningful, lasting impacts in their communities.	Join a dynamic panel of parks and recreation professionals as they share real-world success stories from programs and projects that made a lasting impact in their communities. From creative partnerships with local organizations and businesses to navigating the board or commission approval process, these leaders will offer valuable insights into what it takes to turn great ideas into reality. Learn how collaboration, strategic communication, and community engagement helped transform challenges into achievements—and walk away inspired with practical strategies you can apply in your own organization. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Communication, Innovation & Change Management, Leadership Readiness**

The Parks & Rec AI Toolkit: From Prompt to Productivity *Room 101/102 (0.1 CEUS)* **Sam Lunt** - Assistant Recreation Director, Rochester Avon Recreation Authority **Katie Dion** - Communications Officer, Rochester Avon Recreation Authority **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify and list at least five distinct AI platforms, ranging from foundational LLMs (Large Language Models) to specialized generative tools, that are currently applicable to the parks and recreation industry. • Describe specific AI use cases for at least three different departmental functions, such as HR, marketing, finance, or facilities management. • Outline a basic framework for selecting the appropriate AI tool based on a specific administrative or programming task within their agency	The AI revolution has arrived, and it's more than just a trend - it's a multi-tool for the modern Parks and Rec professional. This session explores the vast ecosystem of AI platforms, categorizing tools from "simple starters" to "advanced integrators." We will map out a 360-degree view of your agency - including Rec Programming, Marketing, Finance/Data, Faciliites, and HR - to show exactly which AI tools fit where. Come see live examples of how these technologies can handle the heavy lifting, leaving you more time to focus on what matters most: you community. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Innovation & Change Management**
3:15 – 4:15 PM	
Big Town, One Person Show *Room 202 (0.1 CEUS)* **Mason Kaiser** - Recreation Services Coordinator, Ypsilanti Township **Josh Pyles** - Director, Big Rapids Parks & Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify new programming practices that could be passed on to the their supervisors or subordinates. • Name a new variety of community partners outside of simple volunteer groups. • Outline some potentially new time management and work life balance practices.	Operating a large municipal park system as a one-person department presents unique challenges—and opportunities. This session will explore the realities of balancing multiple roles, managing expectations, and maintaining service quality with limited resources. Speakers will share lessons learned from years of experience running expansive park systems with small teams, highlighting practical tools for time management, collaboration, and advocacy. Attendees will gain new ideas to strengthen operations, streamline workflows, and build community partnerships that make "doing it all" both sustainable and efficient. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Fiscal Management and Grant Development, Innovation & Change Management, Leadership and Supervision**
Building Dreams Together: Preparing a Recreational Project RFQ for Your Dream Team *Room 201 (0.1 CEUS)* **Frank Parisi** - President/Managing Principal, Williams Architects **Leon Younger** - President, PROS Consulting, Inc. **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Set the Stage for Successful Collaboration and Project Outcomes • Craft a Comprehensive and Clear RFQ Document. • Evaluate Qualifications and Proposals with Confidence.	The right project team can define the success of any park, recreation, or sports facility. This session will guide participants through creating a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) that clearly communicates goals, identifies key expertise, and attracts top-tier partners. Attendees will learn how to evaluate proposals, structure selection criteria, and assemble a cohesive, skilled team that brings vision to life. Presenters will share real-world examples, tools, and templates to help ensure that future projects begin with collaboration, clarity, and confidence. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Leadership Readiness, Leadership and Supervision, Operational Knowledge**

Building Inclusive Workplaces *Room 205 (0.1 CEUS)* **Michelle Koppin, AFO, CPRP** - Assistant Superintendent, Livonia Parks & Recreation **Karley Westra** - Recreation Specialist, Livonia Parks & Recreation **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Describe the benefits of hiring people with disabilities, including how inclusion strengthens organizational culture, staff morale, respect, belonging, and community engagement. • Identify and address common misconceptions and barriers related to employing people with disabilities. • Describe effective workplace accommodation practices that support employees with disabilities in a variety of job settings. • Identify and utilize partnerships with vocational rehabilitation programs, workforce agencies, and advocacy groups to enhance inclu	Discover the value and impact of hiring people with disabilities in creating a more inclusive and effective workplace. This session explores the benefits of inclusive hiring, addresses common misconceptions and barriers, and highlights strategies for providing accommodations that empower employees with disabilities to succeed. Participants will also learn how to build strong partnerships with vocational rehabilitation programs and workforce development agencies to expand inclusive hiring practices and ensure long-term organizational success. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Policy Development & Advocacy, Accessibility Practices, Public Relations & Stakeholder Engagement**
Listen, Learn, Affirm: Authentically Supporting Gender Transition *Room 204 (0.1 CEUS)* **Zach Zuchowicz, MPH, CDP, CWP** - DEI and Community Engagement Coordinator, Oakland County Parks **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Describe key concepts related to gender identity, transition experiences, and inclusive language. • List practical strategies for providing respectful, informed, and authentic support to transgender and gender-diverse individuals. • Describe how to reflect on and evaluate personal biases and allyship practices to support ongoing learning and inclusive advocacy.	Understanding and allyship will continue to be essential in building inclusive communities. This session will provide a compassionate space to deepen awareness of gender transition experiences and how to offer authentic, informed support. Participants will learn to listen without judgment, use inclusive language, and respond with empathy and understanding. Through real stories and expert insight, attendees will gain practical tools for supporting transgender and gender-diverse individuals in both professional and personal contexts, thereby strengthening their capacity to lead with kindness, confidence, and respect. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Innovation & Change Management**
PARK MAINTENANCE: **Playground Inspection & Maintenance: Preserve, Promote, Protect** *Ballroom 7 (0.1 CEUS CPRP/CPRE/CPSI)* **Richard Sinclair** - Vice President, Sinclair Recreation **Ron Blake** - Regional Sales Manager, GameTime **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Summarize safety considerations when conducting a visual inspection of playground equipment, surfacing, and the general area. • Identify at least 5 potential hazards that can occur during playground inspections and effective corrective actions. • Identify two resources for developing inspection protocols based on industry standards and best practices.	Sustainable maintenance programs are essential to positive outdoor play experiences for children at their school and community playgrounds. This session is designed to create awareness, maximize the value of playground investments, and create safer outdoor play destinations that promote healthy risk-taking and fun! Routine maintenance and visual inspections are key to preserving play and recreation environments, and properly identifying and addressing potentially hazardous conditions supports safer opportunities to engage in the lifelong benefits of play. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Early Career, Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Operational Knowledge**

Playing it Safe - Protecting Outdoor Spaces *Room 203 (0.1 CEUS)* **Robert Miller** - President, Imperial Professional Consulting **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Identify changes to ASTM standards affecting outdoor spaces for public gathering • Summarize proper deployment and identify potential mistakes in product use. • Discuss product failures and lessons learned for recent and current events.	Maintaining outdoor spaces safely requires ongoing learning and vigilance. This session will provide updates on standards and best practices for perimeter protection around playgrounds and gathering areas. Participants will examine lessons learned from recent failures, explore proper deployment of safety products, and review essential criteria for effective implementation. Through practical examples and expert insight, attendees will leave better equipped to identify risks, enhance public safety, and ensure that protective systems are doing their job—keeping parks and play spaces secure and welcoming for all. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Operational Knowledge, Strategic & Analytical Thinking, Professionalism & Ethics**
Rethinking Intelligence: How AI is redefining Leadership Capacity *Room 101/102 (0.1 CEUS)* **Princess Castleberry** - CEO, Castleberry Global **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Recognize how AI is reshaping the leadership landscape - and why capacity is the new currency • Distinguish the leading AI platforms and their real-world applications for leaders. • Apply practical AI strategies to streamline decisions, solve problems faster, and enahnce communication + Use prompting techniques to unlock smarter, sharper insights	Leaders are under pressure to deliver more, faster—and AI is rewriting the rules of what's possible. The question is: will you leverage it to expand your capacity, or let it overwhelm you? In this engaging breakout, Princess Castleberry cuts through the noise and shows leaders how to rethink intelligence in the age of AI. You'll see how today's most powerful tools can sharpen decision-making, uncover hidden insights, and free you to focus on the human side of leadership—trust, clarity, and performance. Through real-world scenarios and a hands-on exercise in crafting AI prompts, participants will experience firsthand how AI can reduce overload, spark innovation, and help leaders reignite their capacity to lead under pressure. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Innovation & Change Management, Leadership and Supervision**
The Human Touch: Building Trust Through Authentic Community Voices *Room 103/104 (0.1 CEUS)* **Marissa Russo** - Marketing & Communications Manager, City of Sterling Heights **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Describe three types of authentic community voices (e.g., ambassadors, residents, staff) that can be used in storytelling. • Give examples of at least two strategies for incorporating community members into marketing campaigns. • Summarize the benefits of people-powered storytelling in building trust and engagement with their community.	Communities connect most deeply with people—not logos. This session will demonstrate to participants how to utilize authentic storytelling to enhance trust and engagement with their audiences. Attendees will explore how to highlight staff, volunteers, and residents as ambassadors for their agencies through testimonials, social media takeovers, and community storytelling initiatives. By focusing on authentic voices and lived experiences, participants will learn to humanize their brand, expand reach, and inspire genuine community pride and connection. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Public Relations & Stakeholder Engagement**

5:30 – 6:30 PM

Awards Reception

Riverside Concourse

Kick off an unforgettable evening by gathering with colleagues and friends at the Awards Reception. This elegant pre-banquet reception offers time to connect, celebrate, and set the stage for a night honoring excellence across Michigan's parks and recreation community. Enjoy conversation, anticipation, and a shared sense of pride as we come together before the awards program begins.

6:30 – 9:00 PM

Awards Banquet

Ballrooms 1-6

Celebrate excellence, innovation, and leadership at the mParks Annual Awards Banquet. This signature evening honors outstanding professionals, agencies, and advocates who have reimagined possibilities and made a lasting impact on parks and recreation across Michigan. Join us for dinner and a meaningful awards presentation that highlights the passion, dedication, and vision driving the profession forward.

Grand Hotel
MACKINAC ISLAND
MICHIGAN

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING

Awards Afterglow

Riverside Concourse

Keep the celebration going at Awards Afterglow, the informal post-banquet gathering where the energy stays high and the connections keep flowing. Relax, reflect, and reconnect with peers while enjoying music, conversation, and the annual Connect 4 Tournament hosted by SMRPA. It's the perfect way to close out the evening—celebrating another incredible year and the people who continue to reignite passion across the parks and recreation community.

Great Lakes recreation Spicer group VORTEX

Friday, March 6, 2026	
8:30 – 11:00 AM	
Closing Session **KEYNOTE: The truth is in the Trigger: Building the capacity to Rethink, Reinvent, & Reignite** *Ballroom 1-6 (0.1 CEUS)* **Princess Castleberry** - CEO, Castleberry Global **At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:** • Rethink their leadership triggers - recognizing the subtle behavioral shifts that indicate early misalignment or disengagement. • Reinvent their resilience - flattening their Cue to Chaos Curve through intentional self-regulation and capacity building. • Reignite team performance - leading with strategies that sustain trust, clarity, and momentum through uncertainty.	As the 2026 mParks Conference & Trade Show concludes, gather for a final celebration of achievement and inspiration. Enjoy breakfast as we present the Marketing Awards, and leave with renewed purpose to rethink, reinvent, and reignite your impact in your community. Leaders are in a capacity crisis. Too many intelligent, committed professionals are burning out, struggling to manage hybrid teams, and are unprepared to resolve conflict in healthy ways. We escalate from Cue to Chaos far too quickly. In this energizing closing keynote, global speaker and leadership strategist Princess Castleberry reveals how to flatten your Cue to Chaos Curve, enabling you to build the capacity needed to meet mParks' call to Rethink. Reinvent. Reignite. Grounded in her signature approach, The Truth Is in the Trigger™, Princess shows leaders how to spot the cues that signal strain, address them before they escalate, and lead with clarity, credibility, and calm—no matter the pressure. According to the mParks Professional Development & Career Pathway, this is a great session for: **Middle Career, Established Career** Attendees can expect to build skills in the following: **Innovation & Change Management, Leadership and Supervision** Penchura