



President's Report

Michelle Park, CPRP

According to the American College Dictionary the word 'service', in the context of giving back to the profession, is defined as 1) an act of helpful activity, 2) the performance of any duties or work for another. When I think of the Academy members and the numerous projects that you are involved with that serve the profession of parks and recreation, it makes me proud to be part of such a dedicated organization. There are over 100 Academy members involved with various committees and task forces this year, completely engaged in activity and constantly striving for quality and improvement wherever possible. I want to share a quick story to give an example.

In recent days, I have been recalling the business meeting of this past year, and Academy business meetings for over the past 14 years during which Max Ramsey and team have been working on the Professional Consulting Project; the concept of which is to send Academy members into an agency, at their request, to provide 'pro bono' expertise on park and recreation operations. Recently this concept has been broadened to provide technical assistance via phone, email, or a personal visit, coordinated through an NRPA Technical Assistance Coordinator and using a referral system beginning with the Academy membership database. This technical assistance proposal had to be approved by the NRPA National Forum Meeting in Washington, DC for it to be included in the NRPA budget and approved by the Board of Trustees. I am happy to share the good news that the proposal was unanimously passed by the Forum and is now awaiting Board approval in May.

I was the lucky person to give Max the good news shortly after the Forum meeting. We spoke on the phone for a few minutes, said goodbye and hung up. About 5 minutes later, Max called back and said,

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"You know this has international potential too! We shouldn't just think about the United States. We should think more globally." I thought to myself now here's a guy who has been committed to getting this service started for over a decade, (this project is now a teenager) and when it finally looks like it's going to happen, he's already thinking about how to take it to the next level! I realized that this was a perfect example of what the Academy is all about...making contributions to support the profession, striving to make improvements, taking our profession to a higher level!

At that moment I cannot even begin to describe to you the pride I felt from being involved with such a dedicated group of people. My hope is that you feel this pride too. Proud to be part of a profession that changes lives. Proud to be part of a profession that preserves and protects our heritage and our land. Proud to be recognized by the founders of our country in that the right to pursue happiness was considered as importantly as life and liberty as described in our Constitution.

As I attended endless meetings throughout the NRPA Mid-Year Forum I witnessed many Academy members serving in a number of capacities, some representing the Academy, some representing their regions, states, branches...all representing their passion for our field. I believe it's

the passion that sets our profession apart from other professions. We see this passion in each other BUT we also see the passion in the hearts of the citizens who serve on our boards and commissions. When we take those passionate citizens to the Hill in DC or to the Statehouse in capitols across the country or to the City Council meetings at home, we are reinforced by people who love parks and recreation as much as those of us working in the field! We have got to effectively harness that passion and energy! It makes the world of difference when our citizens speak on behalf of parks and recreation. The recognition elected officials give to our citizens is phenomenal. If you have some good ideas about mobilizing citizen volunteers contact Linda Kotowski and get on that task force.

Speaking of passion, I had the pleasure to meet with Charlie Hartsoe while in DC and as always after seeing Charlie I was reminded about the rich heritage of our profession; next year is the 100-year anniversary of the founding of the National Recreation Association. Listening to Charlie talk about the individuals who led the profession 100 years ago, (of course, they were citizen volunteers who believed in the endless benefits of parks and recreation), and how they faced some of the same challenges we face today, primarily funding, I thought about how little we talk about the historical aspects of the profession. I believe we are missing out on some valuable experiences we should be drawing from when we justify the need for funding programs or protecting land from development, preserving heritage. Charlie's passion for making sure the history of our profession is preserved and protected is contagious. I returned home and referenced Jane Addams and the Hull House in Chicago in a piece I wrote about some of our early community centers and the programs and facilities they offered. We have a battle in Ohio with a private fitness club fighting against an initiative for a community center. Making a historical reference to almost 100 years ago makes a stronger impact when speaking with elected officials and reminding them that elected leaders before them made the right choices for stronger communities and better quality of life. Thank you, Charlie, for the reminder. I think

you have given me a new passion...the importance the archives are to the future of our profession!

As always, when I return home from the experience in DC, I am reminded about how important it is to have made the trip, scheduled the visits, recruited a few new citizens to join our efforts and fight for the same issues each year. This was my twentieth NRPA Mid-Year meeting. It gets old after a while, but every year I go, I return rejuvenated by many influences such as the beauty of our nation's Capital. However, I am mostly rejuvenated from spending time with colleagues whose love for our field is so strong. My lessons to share afterwards are:

- NEVER underestimate the value of participating in the legislative process at all levels;
- NEVER undervalue the role of our citizens;
- NEVER forget that our profession exists because people need happiness in their life; and lastly,
- NEVER forget how much you gain when you give service.

Thank you for giving me the chance to serve the Academy. Keep up the great work everyone! Remember, we are improving lives everyday! Take a moment each day and celebrate that wonderful feeling and make sure to share the passion with those around you! Someday they could be part of a future generation of Academy members giving service to our profession!



NRPA Congress in San Antonio, Texas
October 19 – 22, 2005

Best Student Paper Award

Sponsored by the American Academy of Park and Recreation Administration

For several years, the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration has sponsored a Best Student Paper Award. The call for submission of papers has been extended.

Awards: One best paper award of \$500 plus expenses of up to \$500 for the author to travel to the Academy's annual meeting to receive the award and present excerpts from the paper. The winner must attend the NRPA conference and present a synopsis of the paper. Certificate of Merit awards to the two next best student papers submitted.

Eligibility: A student paper may be either a master's thesis or a major professional paper written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree; or to a senior undergraduate thesis or major professional paper written in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a baccalaureate degree. Papers written by students who were pursuing a doctoral degree at the time the paper was written are not eligible.

The paper should make a contribution to the scholarly literature and have clear implications for the improved practice of park and recreation administration. For entry in the 2005 competition, papers must have been completed in the 2004 or 2003 calendar years.

Criteria: Papers will be judged on the following criteria:

1. Relationship to park and recreation administration.
2. Quality of the development of the methodology/procedures.
3. Creativity of the paper's approach to the topic.
4. Usefulness and applicability
5. Overall quality of the presentation.

Procedure for Submission: Each college or university Recreation and Parks/Leisure Studies

program can submit no more than one undergraduate and one Master's level paper. A faculty member must submit the paper on behalf of the student or students involved. Three paper copies of each paper should be submitted to:

Dr. Geoffrey Godbey
Best Paper Award Committee Chair
Recreation, Park and Tourism Management
College of Health and Human Development
124 Mateer Building
Penn State University
University Park, PA 16801
PHONE 814-863-8985
FAX 814-863-4257

Deadline: All papers must be postmarked no later than June 1, 2005. None will be returned.



Academy Task Force Reports

Academy Journal Subscription Task Force Report

Submitted by Chuck Wilt, Chair

Task Force Members: Jim Garges, Bill Beckner, Dr. Lynn Jamieson, Jim Donahue, Bill Scalzo, Dr. Nick Digrino, Mark McHenry, Ray Ochromowicz, Phil Rea and Jim Niskanen

The task force held a conference call meeting on February 11 and verified that the Academy Journal subscription rate is \$175 for each agency or organization and \$45 for individuals. Subscriptions are billed on a calendar year basis. For each agency subscription the Academy receives \$70. The task

force divided up the list of non-subscriber, accredited universities and each task force members was assigned up to 10 universities for personal contact with the Department Chair of the accredited university. Contact will be made by e-mail, then by phone and we would also ask the department chair to make personal contact with the librarian at their respective universities. The task force will make their contacts and report results by March 18. If any Academy member wishes to join our efforts, please contact Chuck Wilt at cwilt@columbus.in.gov.

Academy Research Task Force Report

Submitted by Dr. Karla Henderson

The APRA "Research Institute" Committee joined forces in 2003 with NRPA and other groups to address research needs of the field. This group is referred to as the Forum Research Task Force (FRTF). The following individuals are currently serving on the committee:

- Karla Henderson, Chair
- Michael Blazey, SPRE President (03-04)
- Peter Witt, AAPRA President (03-04) and Editor of JPRA
- Jim Donahue, NRPA President (03-04)
- Nelson Cooper, SPRE Representative
- Candy Ashton-Shaeffer, NTRS Representative
- Bob Rossman, AAPRA Representative
- John Hultsman, AAPRA Representative and former editor of JPRA
- Vern Hartenburg, AAPRA Representative
- Phil Rea, NRPA Board of Trustees
- Kathleen Perales, ACE Representative
- Jean Hellburg, APRA Representative
- Janice Prochask, NRPA Board of Trustees
- Sharon Hubler, NRPA Board of Trustees
- Veda Ward, NRPA Forum
- John Thorton, NRPA Executive (ex-officio)
- Doug Vaira, NRPA staff (ex-officio)
- Sue Sadowski, NRPA staff (ex-officio)
- Gary Fenton, NRPA staff (ex-officio)
- Lori Daniels, NRPA president (04-05) (ex-officio)

The two major goals of FRTF are:

1. Identify and document the specific data collection and analysis needs of greatest importance to NRPA members, as well as gaps between likely data collection and analysis needs and existing applied research data and findings.
2. Develop specifications for the creation of a public parks and recreation data base, beginning with the NRPA membership, including identification of relevant research resources available to assist NRPA, and the most efficient and cost-effective mechanism for acquiring and/or accessing research data and resources.

Since NRPA in October 2004, the FRTF has had three conference calls. Assisted by NRPA, e-communities were set up to collect information from NRPA members regarding research needs and resources. FRTF has largely come to the conclusion that a good deal of P&R research exists, but it is not in a readily usable form. A draft report was presented to the FRTF on February 18 at NRPA Mid-year that prioritizes areas of research where data need to be compiled. By March 1, 2005 a final report was to have been presented to NRPA with recommendations for areas of research dissemination and possible strategies for getting these resources available to members and online through the NRPA website.



Academy Externship Program

The Academy Extern Nomination information and application is on the Academy website at <http://www.rpts.tamu.edu/AAPRA/Externship/ExternApplication.pdf> and <http://www.rpts.tamu.edu/AAPRA/Externship/ExternshipApplications.pdf>. Please note that there are four extern positions this year, two specifically for ethnic minority candidates. The Diversity Task Force and the Extern Committee are to be commended for their efforts. Thank you, Joe, Richard and Alice!

Agency Service Consultant Project

Under the determined leadership of Max Ramsey, **the Agency Service Consultant Project** has taken a new direction with great support from NRPA staff and most recently the NRPA National Forum. A broader proposal was presented after meeting with NRPA staff to support the hiring of a new position at NRPA, a Technical Assistance Coordinator, who would utilize a searchable database of experts by topic area, referring a request to several experts by name, email and phone number, make follow up contact, document information, develop a tracking mechanism to provide stats about the number of times a topic is requested, the advice/answer provided, and offer as a premium service, a pro bono onsite visit to the requesting agency or organization.

By utilizing the Academy's membership survey of qualifications and willingness to serve as the initial pool of expert volunteers NRPA can select high quality individuals and/or teams to evaluate requestor's problems and suggest steps and solutions without bias, to solve them. As this program evolves, experts from sources other than the Academy membership will be added to the pool. In that way NRPA can provide a quality technical assistance role to its members utilizing volunteer expertise.

Citizen Involvement Task Force

The Citizen Involvement Task Force, chaired by Linda Kotowski, has reviewed background information and strategies from NRPA and is currently discussing the concept of developing some best practice papers giving examples of successful citizen advocacy efforts utilized at the local level. Look for more to come from this task force.

Pugsley Award biography

Robert Toalson (1923 -) received the local level Pugsley Medal in 1987. He was born and raised in Dodge City, Kansas. He attended the University of Kansas on a NROTC scholarship, graduating with a

degree in political science and was commissioned in the United States Marine Corps. He served as a platoon leader and an executive officer for a Marine Detachment Afloat. The marine's motto, "look sharp, feel sharp, be sharp," was a mantra he frequently espoused in his professional life.



Robert Toalson
Cornelius Amory Pugsley Local Medal Award,
1987

Toalson received a master's degree in park and recreation administration from Indiana University and became a National Recreation Association intern with the Philadelphia Recreation Commission under its legendary director, Robert Crawford. He was appointed assistant director and then director of the Oak Park Illinois Recreation Department. While in Oak Park, a bond referendum was passed which provided for three new recreation centers and the remodeling of four others. Toalson initiated the Lighted School House for recreation programs and the department served as a host agency for the National Recreation Association internship program. Under his administration the agency won the National Gold Medal for excellence. Toalson was recognized with the Oak Park Outstanding Citizen Award in 1965.

In 1970, Toalson became the general manager of the Champaign Park District. He remained in this position until his retirement in 2001. In that 31 year period, Toalson's name was inseparable from that of the Champaign Park District. He oversaw a period of remarkable growth. The land area of the city doubled during that period, and the number of parks doubled to 59. The district's staff increased from 28 to 65 full-time positions and 300 seasonal employees, while the budget increased from \$1 million to \$9 million. He initiated a host of innovative programs and established an array of partnerships to get things done.

He strongly supported the NRPA internship program in Champaign. Indeed, in addition to his own professional success, Toalson was known for his nurturing and mentoring of young professionals who later rose to senior positions in other agencies. One of the finest adventure playground programs in the United States was launched by the Champaign Park District, also was among the first agencies to hire full-time staff to coordinate and stimulate volunteerism in park systems. Toalson was honored as Champaign's outstanding citizen by the Chamber of Commerce in 1999. The Champaign city manager with whom Toalson worked closely stated: "This is a government with few resources really, but Bob has shown tremendous flexibility and creativity in going out of his way to work with different individuals and businesses and governmental entities. The bigger districts and higher salaries were always there for him. But it reflects on his personality and commitment as a community builder that he decided to stay here. We're all better for it."

Unusual among practicing professionals, Toalson also periodically published articles in *Parks and Recreation*, and *Illinois Park and Recreation*. Most notably, he co-authored with Lynn Rodney the second edition of a widely used textbook, Administration of Recreation, Park and Leisure Services.

The Champaign Park District won the prestigious Gold Medal award recognizing it as the outstanding system of its size in the country in 1979, 1990 and 1998. With his earlier leadership at Oak Park

District when it won this award, in the language of one of his passions, college basketball, this made him the John Wooden of parks and recreation since no other individual had ever led an agency to win this award on four occasions.

Toalson was president of three organizations; The National Recreation and Park Association; The Illinois Park and Recreation Association, and the American Academy of Park and Recreation Administration. He was one of the visionaries who founded this Academy in 1980. As well as being one of its early presidents; he was the organization's executive secretary/treasurer from 1985 to 1997.

When people describe Toalson, the words character, honesty, ethical, integrity and grace are invariably prominent. He was a quiet man who stood behind his word and got the job done. If he said "I will do it", you could consider it done, and done professionally. The example set by his actions, together with the gentle smile and words of encouragement, brought out the best in all those around him. He was consummately positive toward everything. He rarely said, "No" or "probably not." The closest he came to a negative response was "that is a possibility."

People admired Toalson not only for his many accomplishments, but also for the example he set. He drove the worst car in the park district fleet. At the end of special events, he was there putting up tent stakes, picking up garbage, cleaning up the mess. As director, he did not have to do these things, but he viewed himself not only as director, but also as the park district's most dependable volunteer. One of the reporters who regularly covered the park district said, "There are far too many people in public service who are neither public oriented nor servants. You have set a great example of how it should be done."

Sources

Bill McKinney and Rebecca Kinsland contributed to the development of this profile.