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VIRGINIA RECREATION
& PARK SOCIETY

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MISSION

The mission of the Virginia Recreation and Park Society is to unite all engaged in the field of parks, recreation, and leisure services in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

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Fall President's Message



Mike Clark,
CPRE, AFO

*President, Virginia Recreation
& Park Society*

Isn't it wild how summer arrives at full speed and rarely lets up?!? Camps, pools, special events, tournaments, vacations, staffing challenges, long days, and even longer weeks... it's one of the most rewarding times of the year, but it can also be one of the most exhausting. Before we move too quickly into what comes next, though, I want to say thank you.

Thank you to everyone who participated in Play All Day VA this summer and helped spread the word in your respective communities about the importance of play and simply getting outside. I also want to thank everyone who was able to join us at Kings Dominion for our annual I Play Too event. I firmly believe that the people who create opportunities for others to play need those same opportunities themselves. That's especially important following such a busy time of year.

The work we do is built around serving others. We create experiences, solve problems, respond to resident concerns, and spend A LOT of time making sure everyone else has what they need. In doing all that, it can become extremely easy to put ourselves at the bottom of that list. However, we can't expect to consistently be our best for our communities, our organizations, our coworkers, or our families if we're not also taking care of ourselves.

As the pace of summer has hopefully settled, I hope you give yourself permission to recover a little. TAKE. THE. VACATION. DAY. Go for a ride or a run or a walk. Turn the phone off for a little while and spend some time with the folks who fill your cup. Perhaps most importantly, check in on the people around you.

That real go-getter, the person who always seems too cool, calm, and collected, and looks like they have everything handled, just might be the person who needs someone most to ask how they're doing. Trust me, that simple gesture goes a long way.

That same spirit of connection is one of the many reasons I hope you'll join us for the 2026 VRPS Annual Conference. Conference is certainly about professional development and becoming better at what we do, but it's also an opportunity to reconnect with friends and colleagues who understand our work in a way very few outside of the profession can.

I hope you'll come to learn something and share something and just relax a little. I hope you'll give yourself a chance to step away from the day-to-day and recharge with your VRPS community.

Summer asks a lot of us and as we head into fall, please remember that taking care of the people who make this profession special (including ourselves) is every bit as important as taking care of the communities we serve.

Warm regards,

Mike Clark, CPRE, AFO

Southwestern Service Area

2025 President

Virginia Recreation and Park Society

MEET YOUR 2026 LEADERS...READY AND AVAILABLE TO SERVE YOU! THE FACES OF VRPS

Thank you for your leadership and service to the 2026 Board and members of VRPS. You are Parks & Rec CHAMPIONS!



Bailey Kasten,
CAE, ICE-CPP
Executive Director



Jason Bookheimer,
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WHAT'S NEW

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VRPS
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THRIVING THROUGH CHANGE

Change has definitely been the theme around VRPS lately! As we cross the halfway mark of our strategic plan, I find myself looking back at just how much ground we have covered together over the past couple of years. It has been a season of bold moves, fresh ideas, and meaningful growth for our society.

When we set out on this path, our goal was to build an organization that truly reflects and supports the modern parks and recreation professional. To get there, we knew we had to update some of our foundations. We rolled out an entirely new membership structure designed to be more accessible and to allow more professionals to participate from agencies large and small. We launched our Gold Level program to support and spotlight the exceptional work happening across our service areas and resource groups. We expanded our community spaces by recently introducing a brand-new Resource Group for Arts and Culture, recognizing the vital creative heartbeat of our agencies. We've launched many new events and

initiatives and have continued to grow our signature events. On top of all that, we completely modernized our technology and website, even moving over to our new home at vaparks.org!

What makes all of this work so exciting is the people bringing it to life. We have had the joy of welcoming so many new members into the VRPS community, alongside inspiring new volunteers and leaders who are stepping up across the state. The energy, passion, and fresh perspectives taking root across our committees, events, and networks are invigorating! I'd also like to recognize our existing and returning leaders whose mentorship and experience have helped us make these changes and transitions with confidence.

At the same time, we know that change can also feel exhausting. Learning new systems, adapting to different processes, and navigating transitions take real time, patience, and mental bandwidth. Growth is rarely a perfectly smooth straight line, and



Bailey Kasten, CAE, ICE-CPP
*Executive Director,
Virginia Recreation & Park Society*

perfecting these new tools will always be an ongoing journey.

I am so deeply grateful for your grace, patience, and enthusiasm as we continue to innovate. Through every system upgrade, new program, and organizational shift, one constant will never change- our unwavering commitment to serving, supporting, and celebrating you, our members. You are the heart of everything we build.

Thank you for being on this journey with us, and for everything you do to help VRPS thrive!

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bailey Kasten". The script is fluid and cursive.

Bailey Kasten
Executive Director, VRPS

Introducing our VRPS Conference Closing Keynote Speaker Join us in Richmond **October 25–28!**



You Can't Script a Tuesday

Jordana Cole, MAPP, PCC is a leadership coach, organizational consultant, and speaker who sparks behavioral change in leaders and teams. She will deliver the keynote, "Jumping Into the Unknown," at this year's VRPS Annual Conference.

What does a park have in common with an improv stage (Besides Amy Poehler in character)?

You can't script what happens in them.

As a Virginian for the last 27 years, I've been a frequent visitor of Virginia's parks — making close friends at local dog parks, organizing office picnics, hopping in a community pool or ice rink, crunching through the trails next to my backyard, feeling a sense of awe in a fall afternoon at Sky Meadows, or enjoying the winter lights and carnival at Bull Run.

And what I've noticed in my visits is the same thing I've noticed in the other places I've frequented over the past two decades, whether that be performing on an improv stage, leading an office meeting, or in the classroom studying psychology. It's the thing that makes each visit special. And it's the thing that makes you great at what you do: Something unexpected always, always happens.

Picture a Tuesday. You've planned the pool

day for campers for weeks. The schedule is tight, the campers are counting on it, and then the clouds roll in, that first thunderclap booms, the skies open up. Your schedule and plan are suddenly gone.

So what do you do? You don't cancel the joy. The best parks and recreation staff do the same thing that performers do on stage: You pivot to work with what's there. You figure out how you can play indoors, where the kids can go. And, the result of that might even be more fun and memorable than the original plan.

Every single experience you create in a park is unscripted, and it's co-created. You co-create it with your visitors, who show up with their own moods and memories and never quite do what your plan expected. You co-create it with your colleagues, the ones who work in sync with you to keep everything operating smoothly. And you co-create it with the environment itself: the weather that turns, the Zamboni that malfunctions, the wildlife that wanders in and surprises everyone.

The unexpected isn't the thing that ruins the work. Navigating the unexpected

is the work. Not only in the parks and community centers, but also in your life. This makes you something you probably don't give yourself much credit for:

You are an expert improviser.

You spend your days turning whatever reality hands you into something people will remember. That is a rare and beautiful skill, and most of you are doing it while navigating obstacles and crowds, too tired to notice how good you actually are.

So here's my invitation. This October in Richmond, let's not talk about how to control the unexpected or how to create a plan through uncertainty. Let's do the opposite. Let's recharge your inner improviser.

Together, we'll co-create moments that will never happen again. We'll learn ways to give yourselves and others a boost when facing the unknown. And, oh yea, we'll have some fun.

I look forward to playing with you.



2026

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.....

October 25–28

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Richmond!*

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Full Registration:

Now through 9/15: \$515 member, \$590 nonmember
9/16 or later: \$540 member, \$615 nonmember

Daily rates:

Monday \$215 member, \$290 nonmember
Tuesday \$235 member, \$310 nonmember
Wednesday \$165 member, \$240 nonmember

.....

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CONFERENCE LOCATION

Greater Richmond Convention Center
403 North 3rd Street • Richmond, VA 23219

PLAY ALL DAY VA BY THE NUMBERS



By Sarah O'Reilly, M.S., CPRP, Operations Manager and Joy Johnson, M.S. Ed., CPRP, Senior Communications & Marketing Specialist, James City County Parks & Recreation

As another summer winds down, the Virginia Recreation and Park Society celebrates another successful year of **Play All Day VA (PADVA)**—a statewide initiative that continues to unite communities across Virginia through the power of play.

Inspired by the summer solstice and longest day of the year, PADVA challenges agencies to showcase the very best of Parks & Recreation by providing free, accessible opportunities for residents to get outside, connect with their community, and experience the many benefits of play. Whether through special events, fitness classes, nature programs, arts activities, open facility access, or self-directed recreation, the initiative demonstrates the incredible creativity and impact of recreation professionals across the Commonwealth.

This year's initiative brought together 42 agencies representing communities of every size, each putting its own unique spin on access to play. While every agency's celebration looked different, they all shared one common goal: making recreation more accessible and reminding

residents that parks and recreation truly are for everyone.

Participating agencies received complimentary PADVA promotional materials, including crossbody bags sponsored by Active lanyards, beach balls, sunglasses, and other branded resources to help build excitement within their communities. Beyond the giveaways, agencies also benefited from a comprehensive marketing toolkit featuring customizable graphics, social media content, activity ideas, press release templates, and promotional materials designed to make participation simple and scalable for agencies of any size.



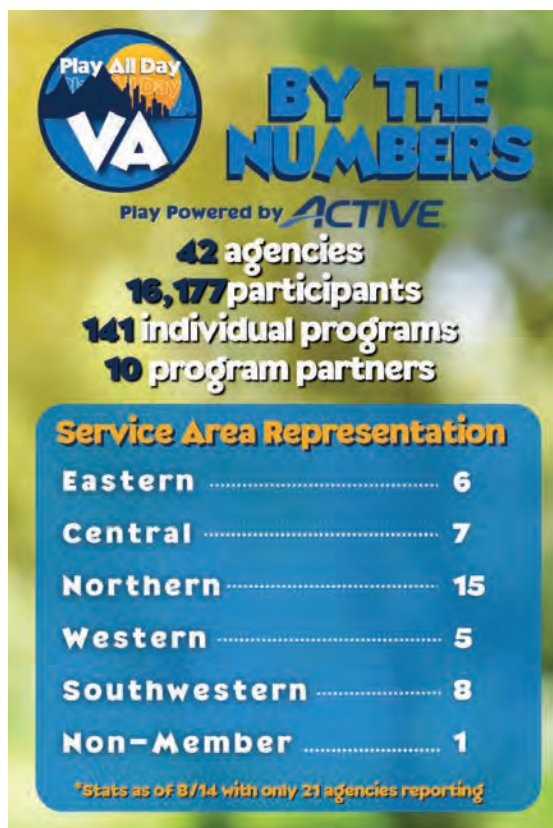
Professionals embraced the challenge by delivering an incredible variety of experiences aligned with the National Recreation and Park Association's pillars of Health & Wellness, Conservation, and Social Equity, coupled with constraints of the Juneteenth Holiday, Father's Day, and the first official week of summer.

One of the greatest strengths of PADVA is that no two celebrations are alike. Agencies are encouraged to design programming that reflects the unique interests, traditions, and recreational assets of their own communities.

Community highlights include:

- Terrarium Making
- Beach Volleyball Social
- Junior Ranger Programs
- Telescope Workshop
- Free Minor League Baseball
- Scavenger Hunts
- Free Pool & Facility Access
- Father's Day Fishing
- Dog-friendly Programs
- Food Truck Rodeo
- VA 250 Programs
- Invasive Species Mapping
- Community Cookouts
- Sensory-friendly Hours

Equally important, many participating agencies eliminated financial barriers by offering free admission to facilities, programs, and amenities, reinforcing the initiative's mission of expanding access to recreation and encouraging residents to try something new.



*Note: Data reflects responses received from 21 of 42 participating agencies as of August 14.

As PADVA continues to evolve, so does its impact. What began as a simple idea has grown into a collaborative statewide movement that celebrates not only the summer solstice, but also the essential role parks and recreation play in creating healthier, happier, and more connected communities.

The Play All Day VA Committee is already planning for an even bigger celebration in 2027 and encourages every VRPS member agency to join the movement. Mark your calendars for Monday, June 21, 2027, and help us continue building a tradition that showcases the innovation, collaboration, and community spirit of Parks & Recreation professionals across Virginia.

Thank you to every agency, partner, volunteer, and participant who made this year's Play All Day VA celebration a success.



2026 Participating Agencies:

Arlington County
Bedford County
Blacksburg
Campbell County
Charles City County
Charlottesville
Chesapeake
Chesterfield
City of Fairfax
City of Manassas
City of Manassas Park
City of Virginia Beach
Colonial Heights
Danville

Fairfax County
Franklin
Gloucester
Hanover County
Harrisonburg
James City County
Leesburg
Loudoun County
Madison
Montgomery County
New Kent County
Northampton County
NOVA Parks
Orange County

Play for All Foundation
Prince William County
Pulaski County
PWCS Aquatics Center
Reston Camps/Reston Association
Reston Community Center
Stafford
Suffolk
Town of Ashland
Town of Colonial Beach
Town of Herndon
Town of Warrenton
Town of Wytheville
Waynesboro



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REC 'N' ROLL MOBILE PROGRAM BRINGS SUMMER FUN AND BIG FUTURE PLANS TO HAMPTON

By LaToya Hudgins, Marketing & Outreach Coordinator, City of Hampton Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services

The Hampton Parks, Recreation & Leisure Services' Rec 'n' Roll Mobile Recreation Program wrapped up another successful summer, bringing free recreational activities directly into local neighborhoods. Throughout July and August, the program's signature Scuttle Bus traveled to community spaces twice a week, making it easy for children and families to stay active, connect, and enjoy positive experiences close to home.

More than just a place to play, the Scuttle Bus created a safe, welcoming environment where youth participated in sports, fitness, and arts and crafts, all while staying connected via an onboard Wi-Fi hotspot.



Summer Impact by the Numbers

This summer, the program recorded 281 participant visits across 10 targeted events in high-need Hampton communities. Beyond fitness and fun, the initiative addressed critical resource gaps by distributing 200 nutritious USDA meals to participating youth. These achievements were made possible through strong community partnerships, including collaboration with the Hampton Police Department and the G-Zone Gaming Bus.

Looking Ahead: A Mobile Resource Hub for 2027

Hampton Parks, Recreation & Leisure Services is already looking toward next summer with plans to expand the program through a new partnership with Hampton Public Libraries.

The vision for 2027 is to transform the Scuttle Bus into a comprehensive mobile community resource hub. By traveling together, recreation and learning will become a one-stop experience where residents can:

- Access library services: Apply for and receive a library card on-site.
- Explore materials: Browse books, educational tools, and digital resources.
- Connect online: Utilize online library services and high-speed Wi-Fi.
- Find support: Obtain vital community resource and city information.

By combining recreation, literacy, and technology, this upcoming expansion aims to remove traditional barriers and bring essential city services directly to the doorsteps of Hampton residents.

Naturalist *Nugget*



THREE-LINED SALAMANDER

During the warm and humid days of summer, reptiles and amphibians- like this Three-Lined Salamander (*Eurycea guttolineata*)- become more active. This is because reptiles and amphibians are ectothermic, which means they get their warmth from the environment around them!

Photo Credits: Bella Canovas, Rockwood Nature Center



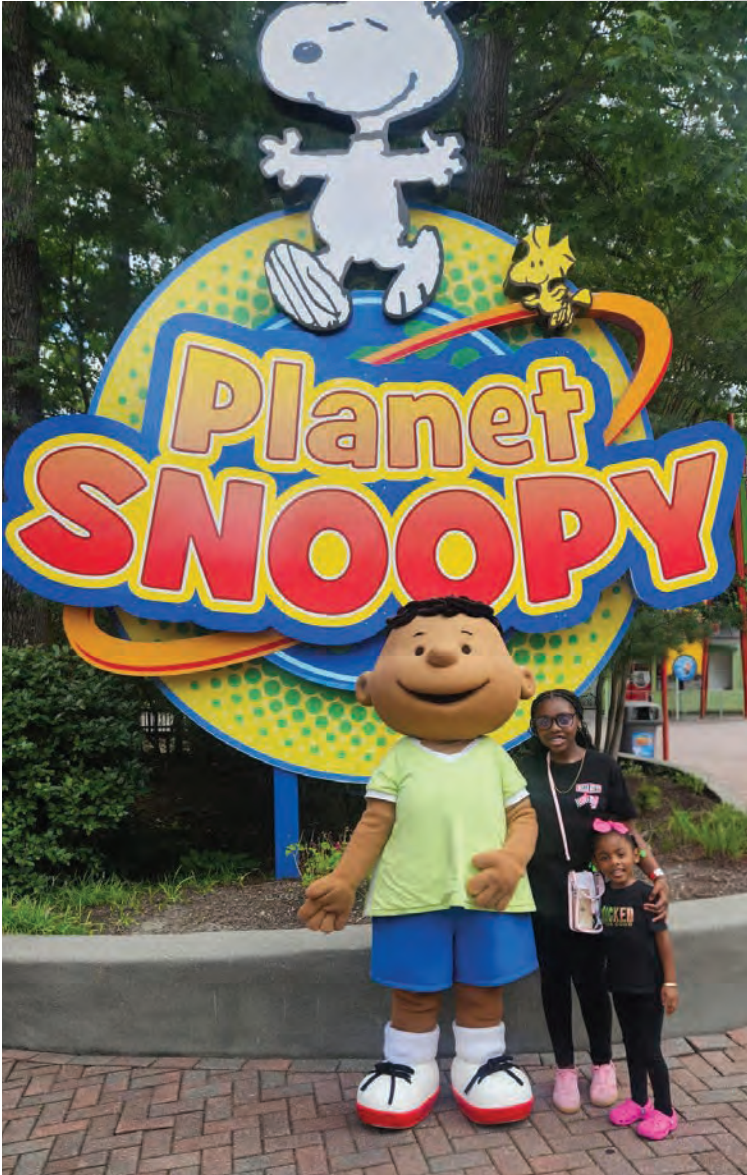


I PLAY TOO: 2026 CELEBRATION!

*By Jen Lipsey, Event & Communications Strategist,
Virginia Recreation and Parks Society*

VRPS extends its sincere thanks to Kings Dominion for generously hosting VRPS members and their guests during this year's I Play Too celebration on August 22. The day offered our parks and recreation professionals—who devote so much of themselves to creating opportunities for others to play, connect and thrive—a well-deserved chance to relax, recharge and make joyful memories with friends and family. With complimentary admission to Kings Dominion and Soak City, parking and a shared meal inside the park, attendees were able to step away from the demands of their work and prioritize their own well-being. We are grateful to Kings Dominion for helping VRPS bring the spirit of I Play Too to life and for making this special day of connection and play possible.





FROM STUDENT TO COLLEAGUE

By AJ McCage, M.S., CTRS, Therapeutic Recreation Coordinator II, Henrico Recreation and Parks and Brandon Dent, Henrico Recreation and Parks Summer Inclusion Coordinator, Virginia State University Graduate



When Brandon walked into my Special Topics in Recreation class at Virginia State University, I had no idea that a few months later I would be working alongside him.

As an adjunct professor, I get to experience one of my favorite parts of recreation from a different perspective. I get to introduce students to a profession that many of them may not fully understand yet. As a therapeutic recreation professional, I also get to see those same concepts play out in real communities, with real participants, families, and staff. Brandon's story brought those two worlds together for me.

When he first entered my class, his understanding of parks and recreation was limited. He shared that he originally thought recreation was mostly about maintaining recreation centers and the property around them. He didn't realize the breadth of programs, services, partnerships,

and opportunities that exist within our profession. That changed throughout the semester.

Special Topics in Recreation focused on core topics that students will encounter in the field: team building, inclusive recreation, positive youth development, program planning, and professionalism. We didn't just talk about these concepts. We worked through real-life examples and situations that challenged students to think about what they would do once they were working in the field. Brandon embraced that.

He was the student who didn't just want to know the answer. He wanted to understand why. He engaged in discussions, challenged his own thinking, and consistently connected what we were talking about in class to the larger role recreation can play in people's lives.

One of the conversations that stuck with him was around inclusive recreation. We

watched *Harper's Playground*, which tells the story of a child who was unable to use her local playground because of her disability and a family who worked to create a playground where children with and without disabilities could participate together. Brandon said the story sparked his interest in learning more about inclusion. At the time, that was a classroom conversation. A few months later, it became his job.

Brandon joined Henrico Recreation and Parks as an Inclusion Coordinator for our middle school summer camps. Suddenly, the ideas we had discussed in a classroom were no longer hypothetical. He worked with campers, communicating with staff, navigating different perspectives, and helping create an environment where campers could participate and feel included.

This was the part of the experience that I found most rewarding as both his professor

and his supervisor. I wasn't watching Brandon complete an assignment anymore. I was watching him apply what he had learned.

He began to see inclusion differently, too. Brandon reflected that his experience taught him that we need to "regularize environments" where all campers can participate together and that everyone deserves the same respect, opportunity, and attention. He talked about how meaningful it was to create environments where participants could thrive and simply have a good time.

That is something we talk about often in recreation, but it means something different when you see a student begin to understand it through experience. The summer also taught Brandon things that cannot easily be taught in a classroom. He learned that people receive instructions differently and that good leadership sometimes means adjusting your approach. He learned the importance of following up with both campers and staff to make sure expectations were understood. He learned to listen to different perspectives, even when they differed from how he would have approached a situation.

Brandon reflected on the trust families place in recreation professionals when they

leave their children in our care. He talked about how meaningful it was when families shared that their children talked about camp at home. Those moments helped him understand that what we do can extend far beyond the hours a participant spends in our program.

One of my favorite reflections from Brandon was about a camper who asked him, "How does Mr. Brandon have all of those tattoos and still manage to be nice to us?" It was a funny question, but it made Brandon stop and think.

He recognized that he was also serving as an example of what leadership can look like. He wrote about being a person of color with visible tattoos and how his experiences have challenged some of the assumptions people may make about him. His summer gave him another opportunity to show young people that leadership, professionalism, kindness, and success can look different than they may expect. That is the part of recreation that can be easy to overlook.

We often talk about the programs we deliver and the outcomes we measure. But sometimes our greatest impact is simply being present in someone's life and showing them another possibility. Brandon described his summer in three words: **"Empowering the Youth."** He explained that one of his

biggest takeaways was understanding how important it is to speak truth and positivity into kids' lives early because we don't always know what they may be experiencing when they go home. He shared that he did not have the best summer camp

experience growing up, but that meeting someone who poured positivity into his own life changed him for the better.

Now he was trying to do that for someone else. That connection is what brought the experience full circle for me. As his professor, I hoped Brandon would leave my class with a better understanding of recreation. As his supervisor, I watched him begin to understand what it means to be a recreation professional. But somewhere along the way, the relationship became bigger than a class or a summer job. It became a professional connection. And honestly, I think that is one of the most important things we can offer students.

As recreation professionals, we have opportunities to teach, mentor, encourage, challenge, and advocate for the people entering our field. We may never know exactly where those relationships will lead. A student may become a seasonal employee. A seasonal employee may become a full-time professional. That professional may eventually become a colleague, supervisor, mentor, or leader in our field. We don't always get to see the full circle.

I was fortunate enough to see it happening with Brandon. I had the opportunity to watch a student who once had a limited understanding of parks and recreation discover the possibilities within the profession. I watched him take concepts from a classroom and apply them with campers. I watched him learn from his team, grow in his leadership, and become more confident in his role. And I watched him care. That may be the thing I appreciated most.

If I could hire Brandon again, I would do it over and over. Not because he knew everything when he started, he didn't, and none of us do. I would hire him because he was willing to learn. He cared about the



campers. He cared about doing the job well. He asked questions, adapted, and continued to grow. Those are the qualities we should be looking for in the next generation of recreation professionals.

Brandon's experience also changed the

way I think about my role as an educator. Teaching recreation isn't just about preparing students to pass a class. It is about helping them see themselves in a profession they may not fully understand yet. It is about giving them opportunities to connect theory to practice and showing them that the work

we do matters.

Sometimes, those connections lead somewhere we expect. Sometimes, they don't. And sometimes, a student walks into your classroom and eventually walks into your workplace.

NEWS FROM THERAPEUTIC RECREATION



FROM MENTAL HEALTH TO RECREATION: *Finding My Passion Again*

By Erin Barclay, Therapeutic Recreation Coordinator I, Henrico Recreation and Parks

When I started college at Longwood University, I knew I wanted to work in therapeutic recreation. I studied therapeutic recreation because I liked the idea of using activities and recreation to help people build skills, connect with others, and improve their quality of life. After graduating, though, my career took me in a more clinical direction.

I began working in psychiatric hospitals, where I gained a lot of experience working with people who were going through difficult times. While this was different from what I originally pictured myself doing with a therapeutic recreation degree, it taught me a lot about mental health, communication, crisis situations, and how important it is to meet people where they are.

From there, I moved into a case management role working with survivors of human trafficking. That experience gave me an entirely different perspective. I worked closely with survivors and helped connect

them to resources, provided support, and helped them work toward their goals. It was challenging work, but it was also incredibly meaningful. My time in mental health and social work helped me develop skills that I still use today, including patience, empathy, problem-solving, and advocating for the people I work with.

Eventually, I found my way back to where I started, therapeutic recreation. Moving into parks and recreation has given me the opportunity to reconnect with the field I originally went to school for and the part of my career that I have always been passionate about.

One of the things I really enjoy about therapeutic recreation is that it allows you to focus on a person's strengths and interests instead of only focusing on their challenges. Recreation can give people opportunities to try new things, build confidence, make friends, and feel like they are part of their community. I have seen how something as

simple as participating in an activity can create a meaningful experience for someone.

My background in clinical mental health and social work has also helped me in my current role. I understand that everyone comes with their own experiences, needs, and challenges, and sometimes participation looks different for everyone. I enjoy being able to work with participants, families, and staff to find ways to make programs more accessible and inclusive.

Coming back to therapeutic recreation feels like coming full circle for me. I am grateful for the experiences I had in mental health and social work because they shaped who I am professionally, but I am especially excited to be back in a field that I was passionate about from the beginning. Parks and recreation has given me the chance to combine everything I have learned throughout my career with what I originally went to Longwood to do and I am excited to see where that takes me.

BEYOND THE FIELDS AT *River City Sportsplex*

By Devon Schonauer,
Writer, Romtec, Inc.



On tournament weekends, River City Sportsplex comes alive. From early morning through evening, athletes fill the fields, families gather along the sidelines, and visitors spend the day taking in everything the facility has to offer. Located in Chesterfield County, Virginia, the 115-acre sports complex has grown into one of the Mid-Atlantic's leading destinations for youth and amateur sports. With 16 synthetic turf fields, it welcomes teams and spectators from across the region and has become a major part of the area's recreation and sports tourism.



For many visitors, a trip to River City Sportsplex begins with a game but often transforms into a full-day experience. Teams travel from surrounding communities to compete, while families spend time together between matches and explore the spaces available beyond the fields. As more tournaments and community events fill the calendar, the need for spaces that serve athletes, spectators, and families has grown.



As the facility has expanded, Chesterfield County has invested in improvements that enhance the experience for both residents and visitors. What began as a place focused primarily on organized athletics has developed into a community destination where people can gather, relax, and enjoy the outdoors even when there is not a tournament taking place.

That vision took a major step forward with the opening of The Park at River City Sportsplex. Designed as a "park within a park," the new recreation area gives families another reason to visit, whether they are attending a tournament or simply

looking for an outdoor space to enjoy together.

“We wanted to provide more of a play space for passive recreation for families and kids; not only for the people coming in for tournaments, but also for Chesterfield County residents and people who live in the region. It’s a nice destination for all those groups,” says Chris Hale, Capital Projects Manager, Chesterfield County Parks and Recreation.

The addition has changed the way people experience River City Sportsplex. While the facility remains known for hosting major sporting events, it now offers more opportunities for everyday recreation. Children can cool off at the splash pad, play on the inclusive playground equipment themed around the James River ecosystem, and visitors of all ages use the one-third mile fitness trail with a dozen fitness stations.

Supporting these new amenities are several behind-the-scenes improvements that help

the sportsplex operate as a year-round destination. New structures, including ADA compliant restroom buildings, three covered picnic pavilions, and utility buildings, were provided by Romtec to support the needs of a high-traffic public facility. These features help create a comfortable and convenient experience for everyone using the park. The covered pavilions are in constant use with park goers enjoying shade while children play nearby, and while families enjoy a meal or host birthday parties.

The new structures were also designed to complement the existing character of River City Sportsplex. By matching the surrounding architecture, the additions blend naturally into the facility and help maintain a cohesive look. The result is an expansion that feels connected to a place already familiar to thousands of athletes and families.

The recent development of the Park at River City Sportsplex reflects Chesterfield County's commitment to expanding

outdoor recreation. New turf fields, recreation areas, and visitor amenities have helped transform the sportsplex into a destination that serves both athletes and the broader community.

Rather than being defined solely by the action on its fields, River City Sportsplex has grown into a place where the day doesn't end when the final whistle blows. Throughout the year, the parks and recreation department hosts thousands of guests at major events such as the Snowball Festival, Kite Day, Splash and Slide, and Spooktacular, helping to transform it into a hub for community gatherings. The splash pad, playground, and fitness facilities attract residents, and the pavilions allow friends to linger longer, providing shade to break from the heat and space to enjoy a meal together. Whether visitors come to chase a championship or simply enjoy an afternoon outdoors, River City Sportsplex has become a destination that brings people together long after the games are over.



VRPS MEMBER News

Making Moves *(Promotions/New Job)*

Michael D. Clark, CPRE, AFO

Mike has recently transitioned to Assistant County Administrator with Franklin County. He will be overseeing Parks and Recreation, Libraries, Tourism/Communications, and GIS. Congratulations to our VRPS President on this exciting career opportunity!



In Memoriam



Ronald Byron "Ronnie" Burroughs

Ronald Byron "Ronnie" Burroughs, 85, of Newport News, Virginia, passed away on Monday, July 13, 2026, after a life dedicated to service, community, and family

Early Life and Education

Born April 24, 1941, Ronnie was the son of the late Bobby and Ruth Burroughs and brother to Tina Farmer. He graduated from Newport News High School in 1960 as a proud Typhoon

Career and Community Service

Ronnie served as Director of Recreation and Parks for the City of Newport News for 42 years, retiring with deep respect from the community he loved. His vision and dedication created cherished traditions, including:

- Mid-Week Oasis
- Christmas Festival of Lights
- Bringing top performers to the city, including Gloria Estefan for Fourth of July celebrations
- Initiating Newport News' first tourism department

- Serving on the Newport News Employee Municipal Credit Union Board of Directors for over 20 years

Retirement and Later Years

After retiring, Ronnie and his wife of 58 years, Joyce, enjoyed a "snowbird" lifestyle in Florida, enjoying golf, cruises, pool time, and friends. Following Joyce's passing, Ronnie faced the challenges of Parkinson's disease but found peace in being reunited with her in Heaven

Family

Ronnie is survived by:

- Children: Kristine Burroughs, Ashley (David), Chip Burroughs, Jaynee Burroughs Kannan (Christopher)
- Grandchildren: Johua Parker (Cassandra), India Burroughs, Cameron Kannan, Bayden Burroughs, Sydney Kannan
- Great-grandchildren: Olivia Jenkins, Grey Hansen, Liam Hansen

Legacy

Ronnie is remembered as an exemplary husband, father, grandfather, and friend — a man of wisdom, loyalty, and unwavering commitment to making Newport News a better place. His gentle spirit and guiding presence will be deeply missed.

Visit
<https://www.vaparks.org/events>
for the complete VRPS Calendar of Events.



Cheers to 60 Years of Play!

For six decades, you've trusted Cunningham Recreation to help create parks, playgrounds, and outdoor spaces that bring communities together. What began as a family business has grown into a lifelong mission—designing places where people of all ages can play, connect, and thrive. Your partnership has made this journey possible, and we're grateful for the opportunity to serve you.



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2026 VRPS BOARDS, KEY LEADERS AND STAFF

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Treasurer	AJ McCage, M.S., CTRS	Henrico Recreation and Parks	804-833-5064	Mcc159@henrico.gov
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Board Member	Alister Perkinson, CPRP	James City County Parks & Recreation	757-207-0002	Alister.Perkinson@jamescitycountyva.gov
Board Member	Jane Rudolph	Arlington Co Parks and Recreation	571-338-6260	jrudolph@arlingtonva.us
Board Member	Jason Bookheimer, CPRP	Danville Parks and Recreation	434-799-5150	bookhjl@danvilleva.gov

SERVICE AREA CHAIRS

Central	Karen Gray	Chesterfield Co. Parks & Recreation	804-717-6255	grayka@chesterfield.gov
Eastern	Angie Sims	James City County Parks & Recreation	757-259-5403	Angie.Sims@jamescitycountyva.gov
Northern	Derrick Cowles	Vienna Parks and Recreation	703-862-2409	Derrick.Cowles@viennava.gov
Southwest	Justin Price	Pittsylvania Co. Parks and Recreation	434-713-9011	justin.price@pittgov.org
Western	Kylie Ritts	Waynesboro Parks & Recreation	540-942-6737	rittskr@ci.waynesboro.va.us

RESOURCE GROUP CHAIRS

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Seniors	Elaine Thompson	Colonial Heights Recreation and Parks	804-520-9220	thompsons@colonialheightsva.gov
Special Events & Marketing	LaTanjia Snelling	Reston Community Center	703-390-6180	Latanja.Snelling@fairfaxcounty.gov
Therapeutic Recreation	Tracy Newsom, CTRS	James City County Parks & Recreation	757-259-5354	Tracy.newsom@jamescitycountyva.gov
Young Professionals Network	Mackenzie Dodds, CPRP, CPSI	Campbell Co. Parks & Recreation	434-332-9848	mldodds@co.campbell.va.us
Outdoor Resource Group	Maggie Wiles	Danville Parks and Recreation	434-799-5150	wilesmc@danvilleva.gov

ENTERPRISE GROUP CHAIRS

Annual Conference 2026	Chris Frelke	Richmond Parks, Recreation & Comm Facilities	804-646-1128	christopher.frelke@rva.gov
LTI 2026	Brian Gannon, CPRP	Reston Community Center	703-390-6170	Brian.Gannon@fairfaxcounty.gov
Awards & Citations	Leslie Bowery, CPSI, CPRP	Winchester Parks & Recreation	540-662-4946 x16	Leslie.Bowery@winchesterva.gov
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BOARD LIAISONS

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Rural Agency Network.....	Justin Bullock

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Health & Wellness	Jane Rudolph
Park Operations.....	Alister Perkinson
Senior.....	Steve Torpy
Special Events & Marketing.....	Tabitha Martinez
Therapeutic Recreation.....	Justin Bullock
Outdoor.....	Jason Bookheimer
Young Professionals.....	Jason Bookheimer

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Annual Conference.....	Mike Clark
PADVA	Jane Rudolph

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LOOKING FOR KEY TEAM MEMBERS?

Visit the VRPS Career Center and Job Board!

Posting jobs to the Job Board is a FREE service to VRPS members, and you can have your ad featured for \$25. Visit www.vaparks.org and click on **Career Center/Job Board** at the top of the main page — to post a job you will need to log in with your website credentials.

For information and instructions on posting to the job board you may visit this link. ▶▶▶▶

Job Board
Posting
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