



2025 FALL WORKSHOP

featuring 1ST ANNUAL MAINTENANCE RODEO

**OCT
13-15**

*Fall Workshop - Ankeny
Maintenance Rodeo - Johnston*

Thank you to City of Ankeny & City of Johnston for hosting IPRA



THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR SPONSORS!



JEO CONSULTING GROUP



**BOLTON
& MENK**

Real People. Real Solutions.



SiteOne
LANDSCAPE SUPPLY



CUNNINGHAM RECREATION



BURBACH AQUATICS, INC.
ARCHITECTS & ENGINEERS



Pilot Rock
Rj Thomas Mfg. Co.

WORKSHOP INFORMATION

Courtyard by Marriott

2405 SE Creekview Drive
Ankeny, IA 50021

Reservations:

Room Rate: \$114 plus per night

Room Block Ends: September 22, 2025

[Click Here](#) to Reserve

Rooms are limited and not guaranteed

Registration Deadline: Oct. 3 at noon

IPRA Member Rate	Non-Member Rate
Full Package: \$175	\$275
Student: \$20	\$20

Late Registration: Oct. 3 at noon - October 8

IPRA Member Rate	Non-Member Rate
Full Package: \$225	\$325
Student: \$20	\$20

*Additional Fall Workshop Information and
Registration can be found [here](#).*

Contact Us

Kelly Johnson Rose

President & CEO
kelly@iapra.org
641-325-2164

Mallory Iverson

Vice President
mallory@iapra.org
641-990-3887

TIGER TEAM

City of Ankeny - Katie McGrane, Colby Vlieger, Whitney Garcia, Ryan Harkema
City of Johnston - Kari Allen, Molly Moore

Thank You

MONDAY - OCTOBER 13



GOLF OUTING

Otter Creek Golf Course

4100 NE Otter Creek Drive
Ankeny, IA 50021

Shotgun start at noon

Best Shot

\$60 per golfer

**lunch included*

Presented by:
Boland Recreation



Golf outing registration is a separate registration than fall workshop.

Registration click [here](#)

MONDAY EVENING SOCIAL

5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Otter Creek Golf Course

4100 NE Otter Creek Drive
Ankeny, IA 50021

**buffet dinner included*

*Golf outing awards will be presented
during the evening social*



IOWA FOUNDATION
FOR PARKS AND
RECREATION

*Silent Auction for IFPR
will be held during the
evening social.*

Presented by:
Bolton & Menk



**BOLTON
& MENK**

Real People. Real Solutions.

TUESDAY - OCTOBER 14

7:30 AM - Registration Opens

Presented by: [SYNLawn](#)



8:30-9:30 AM Educational Sessions

Session #1 - Personal Safety & Awareness in Parks

Trevor McGraw, *City of Ankeny Police Department*

Location: [Salon 1](#) [CEU 0.1](#)

General Safety precautions, tips, and awareness of dangers to employee safety while maintaining parks. Subjects covered will include dealing with found illegal items, dealing with homeless individuals in parks, general safety tips, and more.

Session #2 - Future-Proofing Parks & Recreation: Trends, Technology, & Master Planning

Jay Lotthammer, *ISG*

Location: [Salon 2](#) [CEU 0.1](#)

The future of parks and recreation is evolving rapidly. This session explores key trends, emerging technologies, and data-driven forecasting methods to help you navigate shifting demographics, climate challenges, and changing user preferences. Gain insights into strategic master planning to build resilient, adaptable programs and facilities for the next generation.

Session #3 - 8 Simple Rules for Social Media Engagement

Jessie Brown, *Iowa DNR*

Location: [Salon 3](#) [CEU 0.1](#)

Tired of playing defense in your social media comments? Time to be the head coach of your agency's social presence! This presentation will equip you with 8 simple rules of engagement to transform your social communities. Discover strategies to proactively foster positive interactions, leverage everyday wins for stronger connections, and confidently navigate thorny situations.

9:30-9:45 AM - Break

Presented by: [MSA Professional Services](#)



YPN

TUESDAY - OCTOBER 14

9:45-10:45 AM Educational Sessions

Session #4 - Urban Coyotes: Citizens' Options & Cities Roles in Management

Andy Kellner, *Iowa DNR*

Location: Salon 1 CEU 0.1

Where there is food and space, there is a way for wildlife. Along with a number of wildlife species, coyotes call our cities home. This can be a good thing with a number of benefits from having this wily critter around. But, all things come with balance. There are tried and true tactics to help reduce conflict and prevent negative interactions. Increasing knowledge of citizens and city workers alike is the first step. This presentation will go over basic coyote ecology, tactics that work, state regulations vs city ordinances, and elements of urban coyote management plans.

Session #5 - Communication & Conflict: De-escalating Volatile Situations in Sports Officiating

Todd Tharp, *Iowa High School Athletic Association*

Location: Salon 2 CEU 0.1

The Session will define what different conflicts may occur during athletic competition, understanding how these conflicts affect the players, coaches, spectators, and umpires, and provide techniques and strategies to have appropriate conversations with all stakeholders involved in the athletic competition.

Session #6 - Leading with Presence: Cultivating Awareness & Trust

Holly Espenhover, *UnityPoint Health*

Location: Salon 3 CEU 0.1

Through reflection, discussion, and micro-practices rooted in both leadership science and nature's wisdom, attendees will leave with a deeper understanding of how presence builds psychological safety and trust, tools to manage emotional reactivity and strengthen daily awareness, strategies to influence with integrity—especially without formal authority, and a renewed sense of purpose grounded in the environments they protect and the people they serve.

10:45-11:00 AM - Break

Presented by: [RecDesk](#)



11:00-12:00 PM Educational Sessions

Session #7 - Unlocking Park Building Potential: A Path to Conservation & Wellness

Jay Lotthammer & Mitchell Workmon, *ISG*

Location: Salon 1 CEU 0.1

Investing in public park buildings can unlock the hidden potential of local community parks. Discover how strategic investments in public park buildings foster social equity by providing accessible, quality spaces for all. Learn about innovative conservation efforts that enhance sustainability and community health. Join us to explore success stories and practical strategies that transform parks into vibrant, inclusive spaces for Iowa communities.

TUESDAY - OCTOBER 14

11:00-12:00 PM Educational Sessions continued

Session #8 - IPERS

Location: Salon 2

Learn how to make the most of your Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System (IPERS) benefits. This quick session covers how IPERS works, how to check your accounts, and what to expect when planning for retirement. Perfect for public employees at any stage in their career!

Session #9 - Ideas to Involve your Local High School with your Parks & Recreation Program

Todd Tharp, Iowa High School Athletic Association

Location: Salon 3 CEU *pending*

This session will describe opportunities for parks and recreation programs to engage with the local high school(s) to increase participation in the parks and recreation programs. As a former high school athletic director, Todd Tharp has directly worked with high schools and parks and recreation programs to expand the relationship between the two entities.

OFF-SITE TOUR OPPORTUNITY!

Max 15 participants. Pre-register at Registration Table

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM



RALLY COMPLEX



PRAIRIE RIDGE SPORTS COMPLEX

LUNCH & RECHARGE

12:00-1:30 PM
Location: Salon 4

Enjoy an Executive Boxed Lunch following a brief presentation of the new board member installation and Annual Report. Then, relax—grab a seat in the common area, head outside, or return to your room to recharge. Take a moment to check in with work and come back refreshed for afternoon sessions!

Presented by:
Burbach Aquatics, Inc



www.burbachaquatics.com | baae@centurytel.net

TUESDAY - OCTOBER 14

1:30-2:30 PM Educational Sessions

Session #10 - Gearing up for Prescribed Fire

Tyler Baird & Alex Lorack, *City of Iowa City*

Location: Salon 1 CEU 0.1

Are you considering starting a prescribed burn program or expanding your current program? This session will cover the gear that is essential to safely and successfully kit out your fire crew. We will cover the essentials as well as gear we have come to appreciate and rely upon for more advanced burns. Come ready to learn about different prescribed fire tools, how much starting a program may cost, and bring your questions about how to gear up for next fire season.

Session #11 - Biking Together: A Collective Path for All

Shawn O'Shea & Shannon Gapp, *MSA*

Location: Salon 2 CEU 0.1

This session will provide the audience with insights into the benefits of biking for all ages and abilities. We will explore how cycling can foster community connections, promote physical and mental well-being, and create inclusive environments. Participants will learn practical tips for making biking accessible to everyone, regardless of age or skill level.

Join us to discover how we can pedal together on a collective path towards healthier, more connected communities. Whether you're a seasoned cyclist or new to biking, this session will prepare you with the tools and inspiration to promote biking for all ages and abilities in your community.

Session #12 - Transforming Your Dog Parks into Self-Funding Community Hubs

Brian Hatfield, *Bark Pass*

Location: Salon 3 CEU *pending*

Many Parks & Recreation departments face issues with open-access dog parks: managing crowd levels, keeping facilities in good condition, ensuring pets are vaccinated, and finding reliable funding. Without understanding who's using the park or how often, enforcing rules and planning ahead is difficult. Permits change the game.

2:30-2:45 PM - Break

Presented by: [Pilot Rock](#)



2:45-3:45 PM Educational Sessions

Session #13 - Green Infrastructure Stormwater Management in Parks: Planning & Implementation

Nick Lenox & Becky Ford, *City of Ankeny*

Location: Salon 1 CEU 0.1

Urban parks are increasingly recognized as vital assets for managing stormwater sustainably while enhancing public spaces. This session explores how to better manage green infrastructure and integrate it into your park planning and retrofits that will improve water quality, reduce flooding, and support ecological resilience.

TUESDAY - OCTOBER 14

2:45-3:45 PM Educational Sessions continued

Session #14 - Calm in the Chaos

Amy Erickson, Grace Balison, Erica Eichhorn, *City of Coralville*

Location: Salon 2 CEU 0.1

We will provide a welcoming and useful approach to stress management that can be implemented into your work environment using breath work, your body and your mind to reset.

Session #15 - Aquatic State Code

Chad Smith, Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals & Licensing

Location: Salon 3 CEU *pending*

This session offers a practical, behind-the-scenes look at the responsibilities and expectations of county health inspectors, with a focus on aquatic facility operations. Participants will gain insight into inspection protocols, learn how to foster collaborative relationships with inspectors, and explore emerging technologies that support safer, more compliant environments. Whether you're a facility manager, lifeguard supervisor, or program coordinator, this session equips you with actionable strategies to enhance safety and align with Iowa Code requirements.

OFF-SITE TOUR OPPORTUNITY!

Max 15 participants. Pre-register at Registration Table



ALBAUGH SENIOR COMMUNITY CENTER

3:45-4:00 PM - Break

Presented by: [MUSCO Lighting](#)



TUESDAY - OCTOBER 14

4:00-5:00 PM Educational Sessions

Session #16 - YPN Roundtable

Chad Tiemeyer, *City of Carroll*

Location: Salon 1

Join fellow YPN professionals for an open roundtable designed to spark conversation, share challenges, and build connections. This interactive session offers a space to ask questions, exchange ideas, and explore solutions to the unique hurdles young professionals face. Whether you're navigating career transitions, seeking mentorship, or just looking to expand your network—this is your chance to be heard and inspired.

Let's talk real experiences, real questions, and real growth.

IPRA Young Professional Network sponsored by Burke



Session #17 - Aquatic Centers - A Service to the Community or Community Service? (Roundtable)

Katie McGrane, *City of Ankeny*

Location: Salon 2 CEU 0.1

In this roundtable discussion, we will talk about the relationship between your aquatic center and your community. Discussion topics will include community partnerships, behavioral policies and staff de-escalation training, and the general role your aquatic center plays within your community and surrounding areas. We'll end the discussion with any "summer scaries" you'd like to share with the group.

Session #18 - Approaches to Everyday Parks Challenges (Roundtable)

Kari Allen, *City of Johnston* & Tyler Baird, *City of Iowa City*

Location: Salon 3 CEU 0.1

This engaging roundtable session invites parks and recreation professionals to share insights and solutions to common operational hurdles. From seasonal hiring and teambuilding to mowing, custodial work, and snow removal, we'll dig into what keeps parks running smoothly throughout the year. Attendees will exchange best practices in urban forestry, playground maintenance, and interdepartmental collaboration with streets, engineering, and refuse teams. We'll also explore creative partnerships that elevate community impact—making this an open, collaborative space for practical advice and fresh perspectives.

JOIN US

TUESDAY EVENING SOCIAL

**details on the following page*



TUESDAY EVENING SOCIAL

Uptown Garage Brewing Co.

305 SW Walnut Street, Ankeny

6 PM - 8 PM

*arrive early to get settled if planning on participating in BINGO



Wind down your day with a relaxed evening of good conversation and great company. This casual social offers the perfect chance to catch up with old friends, make new connections, and enjoy a few laughs over everyone's favorite low-stakes competition: BINGO! Whether you're networking or just kicking back, there's something for everyone in this laid-back gathering.

**food provided*



Presented by:
Carrico Aquatic
Resources



WEDNESDAY - OCTOBER 15

7:30 AM - Registration Opens

Presented by: [JEO Consulting Group](#)



JEO CONSULTING GROUP

8:30-9:30 AM Educational Sessions

Session #19 - Iowa Food Code

Julie Kraling, *Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, & Licensing*

Location: [Salon 1](#) CEU *pending*

Join a representative from the Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals & Licensing for a clear overview of licensing requirements under the Iowa Food Code. This session will spotlight the key responsibilities of food permit holders and offer guidance to help operators stay informed, compliant, and inspection-ready.

Session #20 - Why a PGA Professional?

Greg Mason, *Iowa PGA Section*

Location: [Salon 2](#) CEU 0.1

PGA professionals wear many hats to boost revenue and offer dynamic programming to parks and recreation departments. Learn why hiring more PGA professionals matters, what to look for, and how they can elevate the offerings at your parks and recreation department.

9:30-9:45 AM - Break

Presented by: [BarkPass](#)



9:45-10:45 AM Educational Sessions

Session #21 - Breathe Life Back Into Your Community

Derek Lord, *City of Ankeny*

Location: [Salon 1](#) CEU 0.1

Discover how parks and recreation play a vital role in driving economic growth, workforce development, and community revitalization. This session will explore strategies for aligning your department's goals with local economic development efforts to create new amenities, attract talent, and build vibrant, livable communities. Whether you're from a rural town or a growing city, learn how Ankeny is leveraging parks and public spaces, and more specifically, bike trails, to enhance quality of life for both residents and visitors.

Session #22 - Building Inclusive Communities: Practical Strategies for Implementing Adaptive Programs

Melissa Clarke-Wharff, *Can Play*

Location: [Salon 2](#) CEU 0.1

This session will provide practical strategies for launching adaptive programming in small communities. Gain insight on getting started along with tips to overcome common challenges faced by smaller communities. Whether you are new to adaptive programming or looking to expand, this session will offer guidance for fostering inclusivity in your community.

MAINTENANCE RODEO

WEDNESDAY - OCTOBER 15

Lew Clarkson Park

7501 NW 54th Ave
Johnston, IA 50131

Registration Deadline: October 3 at noon

Registration Fee: \$20 per person
(competitor or spectator)
lunch included in registration

Late Registration: Contact us

*****Maintenance Rodeo registration is
included in Fall Workshop full package***

Register HERE

Exhibitors

Registration Deadline: October 3 at noon

For more information on exhibitor booths
and fees, click [here](#).

**Event Information
& Flyer**

MAINTENANCE RODEO

9:00 - 10:00 AM

EVENT SIGN UP FOR COMPETITORS
MEET & GREET WITH EXHIBITORS

10:00 - 12:00 PM

COMPETITION
EXHIBITOR BOOTHS

NOON

LUNCH SPONSORED BY CUNNINGHAM RECREATION

12:30 - 1:30 PM

EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS

Sprayer Calibration - What are the steps? Quincy Law, ISU
Playground Safety & Maintenance Eddie LaRoque, Playground Guardian

1:30 - 2:00 PM

AWARDS

EVENTS

Event registration will take place the morning of the event at the registration table from 9 am to 10 am. Competitors can sign up for any or all events. Trailer maneuver requires teams of 2.

PLANT IDENTIFICATION SPONSORED BY HILLYARD

LEAF BLOWER CHALLENGE SPONSORED BY SITEONE LANDSCAPE SUPPLY

ZERO TURN OBSTACLE SPONSORED BY MTI DISTRIBUTING

TRAILER MANEUVER SPONSORED BY MTI DISTRIBUTING

PRIZES FOR TOP 3 WINNERS IN EACH EVENT

Event Manual & Rules *coming soon*

THANK YOU SPONSORS



SPEAKER BIOS

Alex Lorack, Assistant Superintendent of Parks & Forestry, City of Iowa City

Alex has worked for the City of Iowa City for 5 years. 1.5 years as the Asst. Superintendent of Parks and Forestry. Before that, he worked federally as a wildland firefighter, either seasonally or as a permanent employee, for over 7 years.

Amy Erickson, Recreation Superintendent, City of Coralville

Amy Erickson is the Recreation Superintendent for the City of Coralville and is a certified Parks and Recreation Professional. Amy grew up as a Parks and Rec Kid in Forest City, Iowa and has worked in the field since she was 16 years old. She graduated from the University of Iowa with Bachelor's Degree in Sports, Health, Physical and Leisure Studies with an emphasis in Community Recreation. Her passion is connecting and growing the interests and skills of the Coralville community with special events, programming, and facilities. Amy enjoys kayaking, trail walks, reading, group fitness, and traveling especially visiting her daughter, Brianna, in Austin, TX. Amy lives in Coralville with her husband Brad and their two pups.



Andy Kellner, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa DNR

Andy Kellner is an urban wildlife biologist and human-wildlife conflict specialist with the Iowa DNR. He has 17 years of wildlife management, research, and conflict experience from several areas across the country. Andy has been working with the Iowa DNR Wildlife Bureau since 2011, with over 10 of those years focusing specifically on human-wildlife conflict. Andy earned degrees in Anthropology and Conservation Biology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Go Badgers) as well as completing the Certified Public Manager course through Drake University.



Becky Ford, Stormwater & Environmental Manager, City of Ankeny

Becky Ford is the Stormwater and Environmental Manager for the City of Ankeny. She is a Professional Engineer licensed in the State of Iowa, a Certified Floodplain Manager, and a Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control. She has 20 years of experience; the last six (6) years with the City of Ankeny. The Public Works – Stormwater division is responsible for the City of Ankeny's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) permit compliance, maintenance of the stormwater systems in the City of Ankeny, and coordinates with the Parks Department on the maintenance of and improvement projects for greenways, streams, native vegetation areas, wetlands, and stormwater detention basins.



SPEAKER BIOS

Chad Tiemeyer, Director of Parks & Recreation, City of Carroll

Chad Tiemeyer joined the City of Carroll in the fall of 2021 as Director of Parks & Recreation, bringing with him experience from Shenandoah, Iowa, where he had previously served as Parks & Recreation Director for seven years. He holds a B.A. in Exercise Science with an emphasis on Health and Wellness Promotion from Central College in Pella. Tiemeyer oversees 15 full-time employees and 80 part-time employees.



Derek Lord, Economic Development Director, City of Ankeny

Derek Lord is the Economic Development Director for the City of Ankeny, where his primary role is business retention, expansion, and recruitment. Derek's work touches a diverse range of projects and new initiatives aimed at growing Ankeny's workforce and attracting new investment. Before joining the City of Ankeny 12 years ago, he held community and economic development leadership positions with the Iowa Economic Development Authority and the City of Green Bay, Wisconsin.



Erica Eichhorn, Recreation Program Supervisor, City of Coralville

Erica Eichhorn has served as a Recreation Program Supervisor for the City of Coralville's Before & After School Program at James Van Allen Elementary for more than 16 years. In this role, she manages daily operations, including staff hiring and training, parent communication, and the design of engaging activities for children. Beyond BASP, Erica enjoys planning and helping with the execution of community-wide special events that bring families together and strengthen connections across Coralville. She is dedicated to creating safe, supportive, and fun environments where children and families can thrive, while fostering teamwork, creativity, and community spirit. Outside of work, Erica enjoys spending time with her husband and their two boys.



SPEAKER BIOS

Greg Mason, Executive Director & CEO, Iowa PGA Section

Currently, the Executive Director/CEO of the Iowa PGA since 2018. Greg was a part of four startup golf operations, including ownership of two of those facilities. He was the President of the Iowa PGA from 2009-2011 and the President of the Iowa Golf Council from 2022 to now. He also worked at two municipal operations: Irv Warren Memorial Golf Course in Waterloo and Waverly Golf Course in Waverly, IA. An advocate for all golf facilities hiring PGA Professionals to enhance their golf operations. Their unique abilities to teach the game of golf assist in increasing revenue growth, along with cost savings in those operations. Two of his former assistants still work for Municipal Golf Operations in Waverly and at Brown Deer Golf in Coralville. He hopes to assist you through this presentation and Q&A to seek out a PGA Professional to enhance your operations.



Holly Espenhover, Regional Director of Human Resources, UnityPoint Health

Holly is an Iowa native and has been working in the healthcare industry for the past 15 years in human resources, leadership, organizational development, and organizational strategy. She served as the Chief People Officer for Stewart Memorial Community Hospital for almost a decade before joining UnityPoint Health – Fort Dodge in 2021, where she now serves on the Senior Team as Regional Director of Human Resources.

In her early career, she served active-duty Army from 2001–2007 and was stationed in Italy for her entire tour. It was there she met her husband, Adam, also from Iowa, and together they recently celebrated 20 years of marriage. They live in Carroll and have two sons—Ethan (20), who is serving overseas in the Army, and Connor (15), a sophomore in high school. As a family, they enjoy traveling, skiing, camping, home renovation projects, and spending time with friends and their extended family.

Holly earned her master's degree in Leadership Development from Drake University and is in the final year of completing her doctorate in Interdisciplinary Leadership through Creighton University. She has found that her strengths and purpose have led her to a fulfilling career in organizational and leadership development, where her focus is on cultivating workplace cultures that value respect, kindness, excellence, and purpose.



SPEAKER BIOS

Jay Lotthammer, Sports + Recreation Development Strategist, ISG

Jay Lotthammer served as the Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Eden Prairie, Minnesota, from 2007 to 2023. During his 16-year tenure, Jay led significant enhancements to the city's parks and recreation facilities. Beyond his role as Parks and Recreation Director, Lotthammer served as the Interim City Manager and as a board member and board chair of the Eden Prairie Community Foundation. Before his time in Eden Prairie, Jay spent 19 years with the City of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, where he rose from a seasonal part-time employee to the Director of Parks and Recreation. During his time in Brooklyn Park, he was responsible for extensive program development, the establishment of many neighborhood parks, the oversight of two golf courses and the development of a premier athletic complex. In addition to his organizational leadership, Jay dedicated 12 years to teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in sport and facility management at Concordia University - St. Paul. He holds a master's degree in Sport Management and a bachelor's degree in Physical Education from the University of Minnesota. Jay is now a part-time consultant with ISG, where he brings his expertise to parks and recreation departments by guiding park development, master planning, operational analysis, and recreation program evaluation.



Jessie Brown, Social Media Specialist, Iowa DNR

Jessie Brown has led the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' social media efforts for more than a decade, working to inspire, engage, educate, and build quality relationships between government and residents. She's an okay angler, a semi-retired camper, and a good person to go hiking with if you like stopping a lot for photos she might need someday and hearing random facts about wildlife, pop culture, and where they intersect. Jessie has led a charge to develop government social media in a strategic, entertaining, and engaging approach that's resulted in national, state, and local recognition. She has spoken at national and international conferences and served in leadership roles for national and local social media organizations.



Kari Allen, Parks & Recreation Superintendent, City of Johnston

I have spent the past 20 years in park maintenance with the City of Johnston. I have witnessed a community double in size and increase its park space by double. All of this growth has come with a fair share of challenges, both good and bad. Some we have control over, and some we don't. Learning the difference is key to success.



SPEAKER BIOS

Katie McGrane, Recreation Supervisor - Aquatics, City of Ankeny

Katie has worked in the aquatics field for 11 years. She has experience working for municipal aquatic centers, University of Northern Iowa Recreation Services, and the YMCA, as well as getting the opportunity to work for the Navy MWR in Yokosuka, Japan. Katie has been with Ankeny Parks & Recreation for 3 years and currently oversees two aquatic centers as well as a variety of youth and adult recreation programs, sports leagues, and special events.



Melissa Clarke-Wharff, Executive Director, Can Play

Melissa Clarke-Wharff is the Founder of Can Play Adapted, a non-profit organization dedicated to serving children across Iowa who face various barriers. Can Play's innovative adapted programs provide opportunities for children living with physical, cognitive, emotional, and chronic health conditions to be active and engaged, regardless of their challenges. The inspiration for Can Play came from Melissa's personal experience when her son Jack suffered six strokes at the age of eight. Navigating Jack's new "normal," Melissa discovered significant gaps in the availability of recreational activities for children with special needs in her community. Determined to address these gaps, she founded Can Play to ensure that all children, regardless of their abilities, have access to inclusive and adaptive recreational programs. Before establishing Can Play, Melissa had a successful career in the hospitality industry, where she worked for nearly 25 years. She held roles in catering sales and served as a Food and Beverage Director, gaining valuable experience in management and operations.



SPEAKER BIOS

Mitchell Workmon, Landscape Architecture Group Leader, ISG

As a leader for ISG's Landscape Architecture Practice Group, Mitch supports a creative and passionate team that designs parks, playgrounds, athletic complexes, streetscapes, plazas, trails, urban areas, schools, and more. Mitchell thrives in collaborative settings and takes pride in helping clients and the communities they serve to create a vision and bring those visions to life.



Nick Lenox, Parks & Recreation Director, City of Ankeny

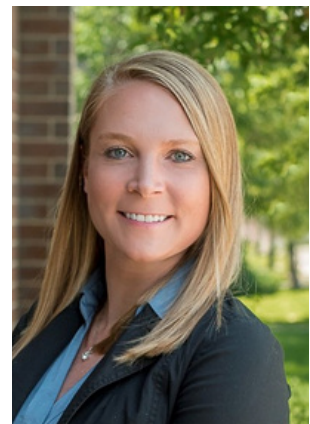
Nick started with the City of Ankeny as a Recreation Coordinator in 2005 and has served as the Director since being promoted in 2013. Nick is responsible for the Parks & Recreation Department operations, which include over 800 acres of parkland, 49 parks, 100+ miles of trails, two aquatic facilities, a community center, an 18-hole municipal golf course, and 3 sports complexes.

Nick attended the Li3 Leadership Institute, has served on a variety of committees for IPRA, as well as President of the Association from 2021-2023, and is a Certified Park and Recreation Professional through the National Recreation and Park Association. As a proud father of two energetic boys, in his free time, he's basically running his own little Parks Department at home by managing everyday chaos, mediating sibling rivalries, and occasionally negotiating bedtime like it's a city council meeting.



Shannon Gapp, Senior Planner, MSA Professional Services

Shannon is dedicated to creating equitable, healthy, sustainable, and resilient communities. As both a project planner and landscape designer, she understands how planning principles inform the built environment. Her experience includes urban design, parks and community master planning, public engagement, GIS analysis and mapping, community visioning, land use planning, construction documentation, digital rendering, and more. Exposure to both the public and private sectors has allowed her to see first-hand the importance of community involvement in planning and design.



Shawn O'Shea, Client Service Manager, MSA Professional Services

Shawn O'Shea, AICP, is a Client Service Manager, Urban Planner, and Remote Pilot. His experience includes Community/Regional Planning and Design, GIS Analysis and Planning, Comprehensive Planning, Land-use Planning, Downtown Planning, Park Planning, Funding, and Public Engagement. He is a certified planner (AICP). Shawn has 13 years of experience as an urban/regional planner.

Shawn holds a master's degree in Community and Regional Planning from Iowa State University.



SPEAKER BIOS

Trevor McGraw, Police Sergeant, Ankeny Police

An 11-year veteran of the Ankeny Police Department, Sergeant McGraw currently oversees the Community Engagement Team, which leads the department in Mental Health response, the Crime Free Multi-housing program, and community education events. Sgt. McGraw is an instructor for Crisis Intervention Techniques and has received specialized training in Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. In addition, Sgt. McGraw leads the Department's Defensive Tactics program as an instructor responsible for teaching Officers self-defense and arrest/control tactics. In addition, he is an Entry Team, Team Leader on the multi-jurisdictional Suburban Emergency Response Team, which is utilized in high-risk call-outs and search warrant executions in Polk and Dallas County.



Tyler Baird, Superintendent of Parks & Forestry, City of Iowa City

Tyler Baird is the Superintendent of Parks and Forestry for the City of Iowa City. He has worked in the parks industry for over a decade and started working for Iowa City in 2015. Tyler holds a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from Iowa State University, a Master of Human Dimensions in Ecosystem Science and Management from Utah State University, and a Master of Public Administration from Drake University. Additionally, he is a Certified Park and Recreation Professional, Certified Public Manager, and Certified Arborist.

