

UPDATED 8/11/26



*... Fall Into
What's Next*

IPRA FALL WORKSHOP
CEDAR RAPIDS

SEPTEMBER 14-16, 2026

2nd Annual
**MAINTENANCE
RODEO**
MARION

SEPTEMBER 16, 2026



MORE INFORMATION



WORKSHOP INFORMATION

Hilton Garden Inn

4640 North River Blvd NE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52411

Reservations:

Room Rate: \$134 plus per night

Room Block Ends: August 24, 2026

Reserve Room

Rooms are limited and not guaranteed

Registration Deadline: Sept. 4 at noon

<u>IPRA Member Rate</u>	<u>Non-Member Rate</u>
Full Package: \$175	\$275
Student: \$20	\$20

Late Registration: Sept. 4 at 12:01PM- Sept. 9

<u>IPRA Member Rate</u>	<u>Non-Member Rate</u>
Full Package: \$225	\$325
Student: \$20	\$20

Additional Fall Workshop Information and Registration

Contact Us

Kelly Johnson Rose

President & CEO
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Vice President
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PLANNING COMMITTEE

City of Cedar Rapids - Brian Ruffles, Jerry Kirk, Brittany Hamer
City of Marion - Seth Staashelm, Brinkley Braden

Thank You

MONDAY - SEPTEMBER 14



GOLF OUTING

Twin Pines Golf Course

3800 42nd St NE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52402

Shotgun start at 11 AM

Best Shot
\$60 per golfer
*lunch included

Presented by:
Boland Recreation



Registration



MONDAY EVENING SOCIAL

5:00 PM

Hilton Garden Inn Parking Lot

4640 North River Blvd NE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52411

**meal included*

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

Presented by:



Real People. Real Solutions.

**Join us for an evening of food, drinks,
games, and football!**

Enjoy complimentary food and beverages, challenge your colleagues in yard games and a bags tournament, and enter for a chance to win a custom bags board set courtesy of MUSCO Lighting. Then settle in to watch the Denver Broncos and Kansas City Chiefs face off on the MuscoMAX™ mobile video board and after dark, MUSCO will put on a light show! Bring a lawn chair, connect with fellow professionals, and get ready for a fun night under the lights!



TUESDAY - SEPTEMBER 15

7:30 AM - Registration Opens

Presented by: **SYNLawn**



8:30-9:30 AM Educational Sessions

Session #1 - Social Media that Connects Community

Alexis Hauge, *City of Mason City*

Location: Cedar C

Ready to move beyond simply posting flyers and event reminders? This session will provide parks and recreation professionals with practical social media skills, real-world tips, and proven strategies to create content that connects with their community. Learn how to identify meaningful stories, create engaging content with purpose, increase community involvement, and develop a simple content plan that works. Through examples, discussion, and hands-on planning, participants will leave with actionable ideas they can implement immediately.

Session #2 -Balancing Access & Sustainability in Water Recreation

Paul Marston & Paul Nelson, *ISG*

Location: Cedar DE

The planning and design of recreational areas that incorporate lakes, rivers, or streams require solutions that address user needs while restoring and conserving the waterway, reinvigorating underused space, and enhancing the area's natural resources. This session uncovers a clear path to implementation that leverages public interest in water recreation to integrate water quality and ecological outcomes in recreational design.

Session #3 - Engaging Adults 55+: Programs that make a Difference

Danya Thoms & Katie Poirier, *City of Urbandale*

Location: Cedar AB

The Urbandale Senior Center caters to the 55+ population of the Des Moines Metro with daily, weekly, and monthly programs that connect "seniors" with social programs and crafts, educational opportunities, and health and wellness programs we offer at a reasonable price. Come learn about our most popular programs and classes and what it takes to operate and support a variety of senior citizen programs in your community.

9:30-9:45 AM - Break

Presented by: **MSA Professional Services**



TUESDAY - SEPTEMBER 15

9:45-10:45 AM Educational Sessions

Session #4 - Ushers Ferry Historical Village

Ann Cejka, *City of Cedar Rapids*

Location: Cedar C

TBD

Session #5 - Parks/Conservation Session

Zac Hall, *Kirkwood Community College*

Location: Cedar DE

TBD

Session #6 - Bang for your Buck: Creating Community Experiences Through Aquatics & Recreation

Jordan Allsup & Jack Eckstaine, *City of Grinnell*

Location: Cedar AB

Explore low-cost, high-impact events that create memorable experiences that boost participation and generate positive community support. This session will highlight creative programming ideas, practical strategies for maximizing limited budgets, and ways to develop partnerships that reduce costs while enhancing the participant experience. Leave with fresh ideas you can implement immediately to provide meaningful recreation opportunities while making the most of your resources.

10:45-11:00 AM - Break

Presented by:

MUSCO Sports Lighting



11:00-12:00 PM Educational Sessions

Session #7 - Park System Master Planning that Connects Facilities, Programs & Equity

Jay Lotthammer & Claire Roth, *ISG*

Location: Cedar C

This session will share practical, field-tested insights into building an actionable parks and recreation system master plan. Speakers will highlight a people-focused approach that translates community vision and staff expertise into prioritized actions, informed decision making, and an achievable roadmap. A three-step planning strategy will be described: Assess, Envision, Implement. Continuous engagement will be emphasized as a tool to create a high-quality process and product that includes quantitative and qualitative insight. Long-range planning steps will be covered, including defining guiding principles, evaluating current and future needs, identifying gaps and opportunities, and producing prioritized recommendations that help shape policy, recreation programs, and capital planning. Common challenges will be shared through examples that use this planning framework.

TUESDAY - SEPTEMBER 15

11:00-12:00 PM Educational Sessions continued

Session #8 - Try Lacrosse

Jeff Kueter, *Iowa Lacrosse Association*

Location: Cedar DE

Lacrosse is one of the fastest growing sports in the U.S. and, in Iowa, more than 700 boys and girls participated in competitive play during spring 2026. This session will review how Iowa's lacrosse clubs are engaging with their area Parks & Rec departments and outline a new proposal to create a competitive play offering operated by Parks & Rec. The session also will review grant programs available to provide equipment.

Session #9 - Operational Insights: Lessons Learned, Challenges Faced, and What's Next (ELN Roundtable)

Mallory Iverson, *IPRA*

Location: Cedar AB

The busy summer season is behind us—now it's time to reflect, recharge, and learn from one another. Join fellow Emerging Leaders Network members for an interactive roundtable discussion focused on the successes, challenges, and lessons learned throughout the summer. We'll discuss the tasks and responsibilities that consume the most time, strategies for improving efficiency, opportunities to automate or streamline processes, and approaches to preventing burnout while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Participants are encouraged to share experiences, ask questions, and leave with practical ideas they can apply in their own agencies.

FOR ELN MEMBERS ONLY, [LEARN MORE](#)



Off-Site Tour Opportunity!

Max 15 participants. Pre-register at Registration Table

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Old McDonald's Farm

LUNCH & RECHARGE

12:00-1:30 PM

Location: Hallway/Cedar C

Presented by:

ACCO Unlimited Corporation

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!



TUESDAY - SEPTEMBER 15

1:30-2:30 PM Educational Sessions

Session #10 - Preserving the Past, Building the Future: Historic Park Assets & Capital Improvements

Daniel Calvert, Lee Wheelock, & Stacey Hanley, *City of Des Moines*

Location: Cedar C

This session will use recent City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation projects to show how historic preservation can be successfully integrated into capital improvement planning and project delivery. Examples may include the Union Park Rocket Slide restoration, WPA-era enclosed shelter renovations and conversions, and interpretive projects that connect residents to the history and meaning of public spaces. Presenters will discuss how the team identified historic assets, navigated requirements and partnerships, balanced preservation with modern use, accessibility and safety, and communicated project value to the public. The session will emphasize practical lessons learned, community response, and tools other park and recreation agencies can adapt for their own historic facilities and park infrastructure.

Session #11 - Recruiting & Retaining Volunteers

Taylor Kruse & Ian Cawley, *Houses Into Homes*

Location: Cedar DE

Do you struggle to recruit volunteers for one-time or ongoing projects? Do your volunteers frequently no-call, no-show? Do you ever avoid utilizing volunteers altogether because the training, supervision, and management creates more problems than it solves? Learn from two experts in the non-profit social services field who manage >1,000 volunteers annually from a wide mix of ages, abilities, and group sizes by curating thoughtful experiences and communicating effectively before, during, and after a volunteer activity. We've made lots of mistakes and we want you to learn from them, and better engage your communities in your work!

Session #12 - High Impact, Low Cost Park Activation Strategies

Shawn O'Shea, *MSA Professional Services*

Location: Cedar AB

Meaningful park activation doesn't require major capital investments. This session explores practical, low-cost strategies for transforming underutilized park spaces into vibrant community destinations through flexible programming, community partnerships, and simple infrastructure improvements. From pop-up events, markets, and organized activities to story walks, community gardens, and outdoor fitness spaces, attendees will discover scalable approaches that increase park use, build community connections, and create momentum for future investments. Learn how to leverage existing assets, test new ideas with minimal risk, and maximize impact with limited resources.

2:30-2:45 PM - Break

Presented by: **Pilot Rock**



TUESDAY - SEPTEMBER 15

2:45-3:45 PM Educational Sessions

Session #13 - Conflict to Conversations: Responding to Escalated Patrons

Malory Smysor, *City of Iowa City*

Location: Cedar C

This engaging presentation is designed for leaders who want to master the art of handling upset customers without breaking a sweat. You'll learn practical techniques to stay calm, listen effectively, and de-escalate tense situations - while keeping your professionalism (and sanity) intact. You will learn how to identify escalating situations, how to respond to negative interactions, and get tools to understand how you impact outcomes.

Session #14 - RECreating the Floodplain/Floodway: The Right Use, in the Right Place

Casey Byers & Reid Stamer, *Bolton & Menk*

Location: Cedar DE

Floodplains and floodways offer unique opportunities for creative, flexible recreation when matched with the right uses. This session highlights how to align site conditions with appropriate amenities that can coexist with periodic flooding and how these design choices influence maintenance and long-term performance. Attendees will explore real-world examples of successful park and trail spaces in these environments.

Session #15 - After the disaster: Lessons Learned from the Derecho of 2020

Todd Fagan, *City of Cedar Rapids*

Location: Cedar AB

Recovering from a natural disaster requires careful planning long after the immediate response. This session will highlight lessons learned from post-event debris management and reforestation efforts, including recommendations for bidding and managing large-scale cleanup contracts. Attendees will also gain practical insights into what has—and has not—worked in restoring community tree canopies, helping agencies better prepare for future recovery efforts

Off-Site Tour Opportunity!

Max 15 participants. Pre-register at Registration Table

2:45 PM - 3:45 PM

Marion Uptown Plaza



TUESDAY - SEPTEMBER 15

3:45-4:00 PM - Break

Presented by: TBD

4:00-5:00 PM Educational Sessions

Session #16 - Managing Up: Working Smarter with Your Supervisor

Rachelle Stewart, *City of Cedar Rapids*

Location: C

Managing up is about taking ownership of how you work with your supervisor to create a more productive, collaborative and less frustrating work environment. Whether you're coordinating programs, managing facilities, leading seasonal staff, or supporting departmental operations, your success is often influenced by how effectively you communicate and align with your manager. In this interactive session, participants will learn practical strategies to clarify expectations, communicate proactively, adapt to different leadership styles, and navigate workplace challenges with confidence. Through discussion, self-assessment, and real-world examples, attendees will leave with tools they can immediately apply to strengthen work relationships and improve day-to-day effectiveness.

Session #17 - Safe Play for All - Playground Assessment

Jerry Kirk & Todd Odeen, *City of Cedar Rapids*

Location: Cedar DE

Discuss the methods, documentation and record keeping for inspection and safety of the 52 playgrounds we oversee at Cedar Rapids. 2 CPSI's oversee the process and organize all maintenance of the playgrounds. We will also touch on vandalism frustrations and how to handle playgrounds to make safe.

Session #18 - Golf Course Grounds Management

Jason Koester, *Grinnell College*

Location: Cedar AB

A session on general practices implemented for a successful golf course grounds, from proper mower, aeration, sand top dressing, seeding, PGR applications, fertilization. In depth with depend on the audience and their experience in the field, which will be determined by asking the group at the start of the session.

TUESDAY EVENING SOCIAL

PICKLE PALACE

101 1st Ave SW, Cedar Rapids

6 PM - 8 PM

Unwind from the day's sessions by connecting with fellow parks and recreation professionals at Pickle Palace in Cedar Rapids' Kingston Yard District. Enjoy a private social in our reserved party room featuring a buffet dinner, then take time to explore all that Pickle Palace and the surrounding area have to offer.

Please note: IPRA has not reserved pickleball courts or duckpin bowling lanes. If you would like to participate in either activity, please visit the Pickle Palace website to make a reservation or view court and lane availability.



**Presented by:
Carrico Aquatic
Resources**



WEDNESDAY - SEPTEMBER 16

7:30 AM - Registration Opens

Presented by: **JEO Consulting Group**



JEO CONSULTING GROUP

8:30-9:30 AM Educational Sessions

Session #19 - Re-imagining Swimming Lesson Registration... A Simpler Way to Do It!

Brian Ruffles & Sidney Carstensen, *City of Cedar Rapids*

Location: Cedar C

Swimming lessons registration can be difficult for both patrons and Aquatics professionals. All of the different levels, timeslots, and changes can lead to a lot of staff hours, not to mention refunds and cancellations. This session will go into a new way to register for swimming lessons without having to have parents selecting levels for their children.

Session #20 - Leading with Alignment: Anchoring Parks & Recreation Excellence in Values

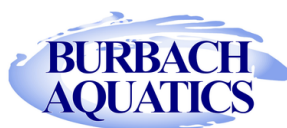
Kim Downs, *City of Marion*

Location: Cedar DE

Great leadership doesn't start with a strategic plan; it starts from within. In the fast-paced world of municipal parks and recreation, leaders are constantly balancing community demands, budget constraints, and operational hurdles. To navigate these challenges effectively, leaders must deeply understand and articulate their core values. Grounded in the proven principles of Kouzes and Posner's *The Leadership Challenge*, this session explores the critical practice of "Modeling the Way." Participants will discover how to uncover their personal and organizational values, align their daily administrative practices with those values, and build authentic trust across their teams. By learning to lead with clarity and consistency, attendees will walk away with actionable tools to transition from everyday task-managers to transformative team leaders.

9:30-9:45 AM - Break

Presented by: **Burbach Aquatics**



9:45-10:45 AM Educational Sessions

Session #21 - Keep Them Coming Back: Strategies for Seasonal Staff Retention roundtable

Colby Vlieger & Katie McGrane, *City of Ankeny*

Location: Cedar C

Recruiting seasonal staff is challenging enough—keeping great employees returning year after year can be even harder. Join this interactive roundtable discussion focused on seasonal staff retention across parks and recreation, including aquatics, recreation programming, camps, special events, and more. Participants will share successful strategies, lessons learned, and creative approaches to building a positive workplace culture that encourages staff to return season after season. Whether you're struggling with retention or looking to strengthen an already successful program, come prepared to learn from peers and contribute your own ideas.

Session #22 - Unhoused in Parks

coming soon

Location: Cedar DE

TBD

MAINTENANCE RODEO

WEDNESDAY - SEPTEMBER 16

Lowe Park

4501 Irish Drive

Marion, IA

Registration Deadline: September 4 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: September 4 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 - 12:30 PM	COMPETITION (PLANT ID MUST BE COMPLETED FIRST) EXHIBITOR BOOTHS
12:30 - 1:15 PM	LUNCH SPONSORED BY <u>CUNNINGHAM RECREATION</u>
1:15 - 1:30 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
LEAF BLOWER CHALLENGE
ZERO TURN OBSTACLE
TRAILER MANEUVER
NAIL DRIVING
SKID STEER COURSE

PRIZES FOR TOP 3 WINNERS IN EACH EVENT

Event Manual & Rules *coming soon*

THANK YOU SPONSORS



SPEAKER BIOS

Alexis Hauge, *Marketing & Communications Specialist, City of Mason City*

Lexi Hauge is the Marketing & Communications Specialist for Mason City Parks & Recreation, where she oversees marketing, social media, and community engagement. She previously interned in marketing at Sukup Manufacturing Co. and led marketing for Campus Activities at the University of Northern Iowa, helping grow its social media platforms by more than five times. Lexi is passionate about creating engaging content and helping organizations use social media to connect with their communities.

Brian Ruffles, *Aquatics Program Supervisor, City of Cedar Rapids*

Brian has been the Aquatics Program Supervisor for The City of Cedar Rapids since the spring of 2022. Prior to that, he was the Aquatics Director at Coe College and oversaw the creation and growth of their swimming lessons program. Brian has been involved in swimming lessons in some capacity since the summer of 2000 and has experience working in five different swimming lessons curriculums, along with helping to create two curriculums from scratch.



Casey Byers, *Urban Design Practice Leader, Bolton & Menk, Inc.*

Casey Byers is the Parks Practice Area Leader at Bolton & Menk and has been practicing landscape architecture for 20 years. From neighborhood and community parks to open space and recreational trails, Casey has been guiding communities and stakeholders to find creative solutions to complex park and recreation projects across Iowa and the upper Midwest.



Claire Roth, *Planner, ISG*

Claire Roth is a planner at ISG specializing in park system master planning, community engagement, and strategic planning. She partners with municipalities and park agencies to evaluate park assets, engage residents, prioritize investments, and develop actionable plans that guide the future of parks, trails, recreation facilities, and open spaces. Claire is passionate about helping communities create park systems that reflect local priorities while remaining sustainable, accessible, and resilient for years to come.

SPEAKER BIOS



Colby Vlieger, *Recreation Supervisor, City of Ankeny*

Colby has been in Parks and Recreation for over 7 years and worked briefly in aquatics before transitioning to athletics. Working in Ankeny the last 5 years, he has really enjoyed running the youth leagues and connecting with returning coaches each year. Seeing the positive experience they create for their youth is incredibly rewarding. Outside of work, Colby stays busy with his 2 young kids and is currently coaching his oldest in 3 year old soccer.



Daniel Calvert, *Development & Planning Administrator, City of Des Moines*

Daniel Calvert, CPRP, CPSI, currently serves as Development and Planning Administrator for the City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department, leading capital projects for parks, trails and recreation improvements that honor a place and create a memorable space. Originally from Des Moines, his career has taken him from Florida to Atlanta, and the Cincinnati region, and now back in his hometown of Des Moines. While in Fort Myers, Florida, Daniel was appointed by the City Council to the Historic Preservation Commission. Collectively these experiences offered a diverse view of how public and historic spaces function, evolve and are embraced. That experience still shapes his work today - because the best park projects do more than preserve the past; they give it a useful, accessible, and memorable next chapter.



Danya Thoms, *Recreation Supervisor, City of Urbandale*

Danya Thoms serves as the Recreation Supervisor for the City of Urbandale Parks & Recreation Department, where she oversees senior services and community recreation programming. She is passionate about creating meaningful opportunities that promote lifelong learning, health and wellness, social connection, and active living for older adults. Danya has worked in Parks & Recreation for 11 years and has served in a variety of roles, including childcare, youth programming, adult recreation, aquatics, event planning and food and beverage operations. Her diverse experience has provided her with a well-rounded perspective on creating engaging programs and fostering strong community connections.

SPEAKER BIOS



Ian Cawley, *Executive Director, Houses into Homes*

Ian Cawley is the Executive Director of Houses into Homes, a 10-year-old nonprofit dedicated to providing furniture and household essentials to individuals and families in Johnson County. After a successful career in sales, a “midlife clarity” helped accelerate his transition into more meaningful, community-driven work. Before stepping into the Executive Director role, Ian served as the organization’s Interim Volunteer Coordinator and Director of Operations, gaining firsthand experience in volunteer engagement, recruitment, and daily operations. His journey through these roles has shaped the way he approaches organizational growth—focusing on strong relationships, meaningful volunteer experiences, and fostering a community where people feel valued, empowered, and connected to the mission. Ian is also an avid ‘park-hopper’ on the weekends, alongside his 6 year old daughter!

Jack Eckstaine, *Recreation Coordinator, City of Grinnell*

Jack Eckstaine has seven years of experience in the park and recreation field and five years experience working in aquatics. He is currently serving as the Recreation Coordinator for the City of Grinnell.



Jason Koester, *Golf Course Superintendent, Grinnell College*

Jason Koester, CGCS, is the Athletic Field Manager and Golf Course Superintendent at Grinnell College. Being involved in Turfgrass management his entire life, he has a true passion for natural Turfgrass, its positive impact on the environment, recreational aspects, and great employment opportunities. He enjoys giving back to the Turfgrass industry through volunteer board service during his career with the ITI, ISTMA, IGCSA, and ISHS. Jason enjoys spending time with his family, attending sporting events, classic cars, and coaching basketball.

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.



Jeff Kueter, *President, Iowa Lacrosse Association*

Jeff Kueter is President of the Iowa Lacrosse Association. Iowa Lacrosse represents the youth and High School lacrosse clubs in Iowa. They support competitive play, officials recruitment and training, as well as seek partnerships to grow lacrosse in other areas in Iowa. Jeff is also the founder and president of the Cedar Rapids – Iowa City Lacrosse Club, known as the Kingfisher Club. He credits relationships with Parks & Rec departments in the region for the club's growth and continued success.

SPEAKER BIOS



Jerry Kirk, *Recreation Maintenance Manager, City of Cedar Rapids*

Jerry has been in the Parks and Recreation Field for 20 years and in maintenance for his entire life. He has been at the City of Cedar Rapids for 16 years and worked in a Parks and Recreation capacity in other communities before coming to Cedar Rapids. He holds a strong belief that Parks and Recreation are a must for all ages to connect with nature and other people. The ability to have areas that are inclusive for all to play is a tremendous asset for our patrons and he is proud to be able to be a part of those operations. His focus is managing the maintenance of the six pools, Recreational Facilities and the 52 playgrounds within the city. He is a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional, Certified Pool Operator, Certified Playground Safety Inspector, Certified Backflow Tester and a Certified Pesticide Applicator. My hobbies are playing in a band in my spare time and serving the community I live in as a Volunteer Fireman [35 years] and Mayor 27 plus years.

Jordan Allsup, *Parks & Recreation Director, City of Grinnell*

Jordan Allsup has been in the field of parks and recreation for a total of 15 years. He has served as the Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Grinnell for eight years.



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 4 years and currently oversees two aquatic centers as well as a variety of youth and adult recreation programs, sports leagues, and special events.



Katie Poirier, *Senior Recreation Coordinator, City of Urbandale*

Katie has worked for the City of Urbandale's Senior Recreation Center for almost 9 years. She began as an administrative technician and became the Recreation Coordinator in March of 2020. Katie lives in Des Moines, with her husband, son, daughter, 2 dogs and 2 cats. Katie hopes that you will come away from this session with a few ideas to support the senior citizens in your community in aging well.

SPEAKER BIOS



Kim Downs, *Deputy City Manager, City of Marion*

Kim Downs is the Deputy City Manager for the City of Marion, Iowa, where she leads the daily operations of a community of approximately 43,000 residents. In this role, she oversees Public Works, Engineering, Community Development, Parks and Recreation, and Economic Development, ensuring that city services run efficiently and effectively. She also spearheads regional collaboration initiatives for infrastructure and federal funding projects, reflecting her commitment to creating sustainable and thriving communities. Kim's career in municipal government spans nearly 26 years, beginning in the early 1980s as a social worker before transitioning into local government. She started as a part-time city clerk in a small Iowa town and progressed through positions including deputy city clerk, city clerk, and city manager over 18 years. Her extensive experience has given her a deep understanding of municipal operations, team leadership, and public service, allowing her to guide her teams with purpose and integrity. Kim holds a Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Administration from Mount Mercy University and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Dubuque. She is a strong advocate for women's leadership development and is actively involved with professional organizations such as the Iowa City Managers Association and the International City/County Management Association. Guided by a personal set of five core values, she emphasizes authenticity, service to others, and purposeful leadership in all aspects of her work.



Lee Wheelock, *Deputy Senior Park Planner, City of Des Moines*

Lee Wheelock is Deputy Senior Park Planner for Des Moines Parks and Recreation and a Licensed Professional Landscape Architect with more than 16 years of service to the City. His work includes park planning, design, and capital-improvement projects that balance community use, accessibility, safety, and historic preservation. Highlights of his historic restoration and adaptive reuse project work includes the restoration of Union Park's landmark Rocket Slide and the renovation and enclosure of WPA-era shelters at MacRae, Greenwood, Columbus, and Drake parks, adapting these historic structures into welcoming, year-round community gathering spaces while retaining their distinctive character. Through these projects, Lee has helped preserve Des Moines' park heritage and extend its value for future generations.

SPEAKER BIOS



Malory Smysor, *Program Supervisor, City of Iowa City*

Malory Smysor earned her Master of Science in Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration with a concentration in Therapeutic Recreation from Western Illinois University. She has been a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS) for over fifteen years, bringing extensive experience in community recreation. Malory currently serves as a Program Supervisor for the City of Iowa City, where she oversees the Adaptive and Inclusive Recreation and Outreach Program. She collaborates with community partners to develop innovative, person-centered recreation opportunities for Iowa City and the surrounding areas. Malory is passionate about advancing equitable access to recreation and has led initiatives that expand inclusive programming throughout her community.



Paul Nelson, *Landscape Architect, ISG*

Paul Nelson is a landscape architect based in the Des Moines area for the past 10+ years. He has had the opportunity to work on several water trail projects regionally.

Rachelle Stewart, *Human Resources Director, City of Cedar Rapids*

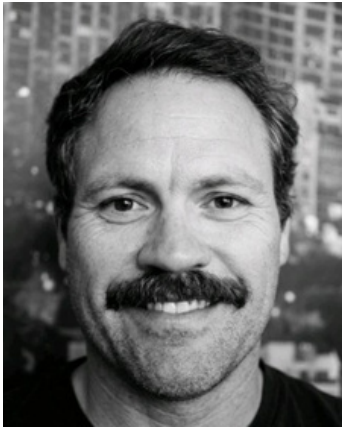
Rachelle Stewart is the Human Resources Director for the City of Cedar Rapids, where she leads HR strategy and services for a workforce of more than 1,400 employees across a wide range of municipal operations. With experience in leadership development, employee relations, and organizational effectiveness, she enjoys helping supervisors and employees build stronger workplace relationships through practical, real-world strategies they can use right away.



Reid Stamer, *Water Resources Project Manager, Bolton & Menk, Inc.*

Reid Stamer is a Water Resources Project Manager whose career has been grounded in ecology, watershed stewardship, and the restoration of natural systems. Since 2009, he has worked on stream and wetland restoration, watershed assessments, green infrastructure, and floodplain management projects. His work focuses on helping communities understand and work with natural river and floodplain processes to create resilient, sustainable public spaces that balance recreation, environmental stewardship, and flood risk.

SPEAKER BIOS



Shawn O'Shea, *Client Service Manager/Urban Planner/Remote Pilot, MSA Professional Services*

Shawn O'Shea is a Client Service Manager, Urban Planner and Remote Pilot. He is a certified planner (AICP). Shawn has 15 years of experience as an urban/regional planner and holds a Master's Degree in Community and Regional Planning from Iowa State University.



Sidney Carstensen, *Aquatics Coordinator, City of Cedar Rapids*

Sidney Carstensen is the Aquatics Coordinator for the City of Cedar Rapids, where she has proudly served for the past 4.5 years. She brings extensive experience from her previous roles with the City of Iowa City Pools and the Mount Vernon Pool. With more than 10 years of swim instruction experience, Sidney is deeply passionate about teaching swimming lessons and expanding access to aquatics programs. She has played a key role in launching Cedar Rapids' Free Swim Lesson Program and developing a specialized swim lesson program in partnership with Therapeutic Recreation.



Stacey Hanley, *Urban Designer, City of Des Moines*

Stacey is a licensed Architect and Landscape Architect with 20 years of professional experience. Before joining the City of Des Moines, she worked in private practice designing schools, streetscapes, parks, and other public spaces throughout Iowa and the Midwest. She currently serves as the Urban Designer for the City of Des Moines in the Planning and Urban Design Division, where she provides staff support to the Historic Preservation Commission and leads special projects, including ReflectDSM, the City's historic preservation plan. Her work centers on historic preservation, community design, and creating places that celebrate and strengthen local character. Stacey brings a multidisciplinary perspective to her work, with expertise in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, planning, and historic preservation. She earned a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from Iowa State University and a Master of Architecture from the University of Minnesota.

SPEAKER BIOS

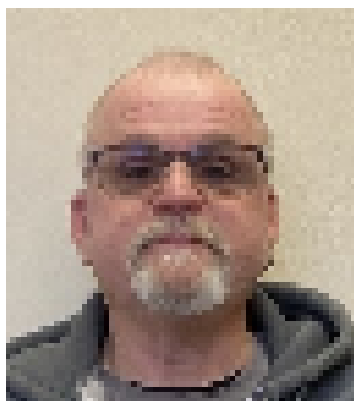


Taylor Kruse, *Warehouse & Volunteer Coordinator, Houses into Homes*

Taylor Kruse is the Warehouse & Volunteer Coordinator at Houses into Homes, where she brings positivity, connection, and a passion for creating a fun and rewarding volunteer experience while supporting the organization's mission. She graduated from the University of Iowa with a Bachelor of Science in Sports and Recreation Management, where she developed a passion for community engagement and volunteer programming. During her internship with the City of Ankeny Parks and Recreation, she gained experience supporting volunteer initiatives and saw firsthand the impact that meaningful volunteer opportunities can have. At Houses into Homes, Taylor fosters a welcoming warehouse environment where volunteers feel connected, appreciated, and excited to return. She believes volunteers are more than just helping hands—they are valued members of the team who should have a voice, take ownership, and see the direct impact of their work. Through relationship-building, collaboration, and a lot of laughter, she helps create a volunteer culture where people feel like they belong and know their time is truly valued.

Todd Fagan, *City Arborist, City of Cedar Rapids*

Todd Fagan is an ISA Certified Arborist and TRAQ-qualified professional with more than 25 years of experience managing urban forestry programs in both Iowa and Illinois. As the City Arborist for Cedar Rapids, he oversees a \$2 million municipal forestry operation, leading efforts to improve safety, efficiency, and tree care standards across the city. His work includes modernizing tree planting and protection specifications, updating city code, guiding contractor compliance, and strengthening cross-department collaboration to support healthy, resilient urban forests. Todd was a key member in Cedar Rapids' post-derecho restoration planning, providing expert guidance that helped shape the ReLeaf plan to replant 40,000 trees after the 2020 storm.



Todd Odeen, *Maintenance Repair Worker II, City of Cedar Rapids*

Todd has been with the City of Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation department for 30 years. In this time, he has been a Certified Pool Operator for 32 years working in Pools in his prior employment. He is a Certified Backflow Prevention Assembly Tester [25 years] and earned his Certified Playground Safety Inspector 6 years ago. He oversees all playground inspections, documentation and maintenance of the 52 playgrounds in our Parks systems. He also is on the Maintenance team for our 6 swimming pools as well as various other Recreational Facilities. His vast maintenance skills and mechanical knowledge has made him mentor to our other staff as well as other departments within the city.