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Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contact: Heather Weishaar, Outreach Director, 708-588-2282

Excellence Recognized at Annual Conference

La Grange – On January 20, 2017 the Illinois Park & Recreation Association (IPRA) honored several individuals for their commitment and excellent service to parks and recreation in Illinois. During the IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference, IPRA recognized the following for their contributions:

IPRA Professional of the Year Award: Lisa Sheppard, Glencoe Park District

The Professional of the Year Award is an honor presented to an individual with more than eight years of full-time service and has made a major contribution to the park and recreation profession. The award recognizes a person who has shown excellence in promoting parks and recreation on local and regional levels, and someone who consistently goes above and beyond the call of duty.

“As a leader in every sense of the work, her vision, integrity, and ability to build outstanding teams has earned her the respect of her staff and colleagues.” – Carol Mensinger, Director of Finance and Human Resources at the Glencoe Park District.

IPRA Young Professional Award: Liz Serruto, Bloomingdale Park District

The Young Professional of the Year Award recognizes an up-and-coming leader in the field of parks and recreation and is given to an individual with less than eight years of experience, but someone who shows a great deal of promise in becoming a future leader in the field.

“As a passionate, creative, and enthusiastic individual, all of which show in her daily work and interaction with others, Liz Serruto of the Bloomingdale Park District is truly deserving of this year’s IPRA Young Professional Award.” – Sandy Vangundy, Director of Recreation at the Bloomingdale Park District.

IPRA Advocacy Award: Goldman Sachs Team

The IPRA Advocacy Award recognizes an individual or organization whose contributions have made a significant and consistent impact on the parks and recreation field.

“This year’s Advocacy Award goes to a team of volunteers that have provided numerous volunteer hours and financial support to the volunteer service section of the Forest Preserve District of Will County. Known to the District as Prairie People Volunteers, this team of global finance professionals has been providing man-power and financial support to maintain gardens, trails, and facilities that benefit the citizens of Will County.” – Laura Kiran, Director of Marketing and Communication at the Forest Preserve District of Will County.



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IPRA Community Impact Award: Mike Trigg, Waukegan Park District

The IPRA Community Impact Award is presented to a current Illinois park and recreation professional who has made a significant impact in the community they serve through their involvement with local, community, non-profit, and business organizations or government agencies.

“As a center for conservation leadership mentor, he is training a new generation of environmental stewards. His on-going leadership, commitment to excellence, and passion for sustainability continues to impact individuals, the Waukegan community, and his profession. We are pleased to see Mike Trigg of the Waukegan Park District receive IPRA’s Community Impact Award.” – Greg Petry, Executive Director of the Waukegan Park District.

IPRA Robert Artz Lifetime Achievement Award: Tim Dimke, Rockford Park District

The Robert Artz Lifetime Achievement Award is named in honor of Robert Artz who, in 1979, was the newly-hired executive director of IAPD. He was on American Airlines Flight 191 to Los Angeles when it crashed outside O’Hare International Airport leaving no survivors. Robert Artz left a legacy for IPRA as a champion of all that we do and all that we stand for. His award goes to a person with a minimum of 25 years as a full time professional in the field (with over 15 years served in Illinois) whose efforts & contributions have a lasting value and effect on parks and recreation.

“His life goal is to continue to see the Rockford Park District serving its citizens and be a shining example of progressive, creating, and problem-solving government. We are pleased to see Tim Dimke of the Rockford Park District receive IPRA’s Robert Artz Lifetime Achievement Award.” – Ian Linnabary, President of the Rockford Park District Board.

The IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference is the premier state conference for parks and recreation, forest preserves and conservation agencies in Illinois. The IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference brings together more than 4,000 professionals and elected officials for three exciting days of quality educational programming, networking and professional development. In 2017, it featured 18 pre-conference workshops, over 150 educational sessions, and an exhibit hall where more than 325 exhibitors showcased their latest and greatest products and services.

Established in 1944, the Illinois Park and Recreation Association’s mission is to provide and promote exceptional standards of education, networking, and resources for all professionals in the Illinois park, recreation, and conservation communities. For more information about IPRA, its board and mission, please call us or visit the IPRA website: www.Ilipra.org

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