



IPRA Today's MEET A MEMBER - JUNE

- Name: **Kim Wascher**
- Employer: **Village of South Elgin**
- Position: **Director Parks & Recreation Department**
- Educational Background: **Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education & Coaching Minor**
- How long a member of IPRA? **17 years**
- Why is IPRA membership important to you? **IPRA Membership is important to me in two very important ways. The first is the education opportunities. From the workshops, to webinars, to conference, to many different schools and academies I have attended...IPRA provides a great foundation for those of us in the field to improve and learn about the latest trends, and make us better leaders. The second important point of IPRA membership is the networking opportunities. I have been introduced to so many professionals and made so many different connections it is just amazing. I know if there is anything I need, a professional is out there who can guide me. These professionals have encouraged me and given me the guidance to be where I am today!**
- Best thing about working in the field of parks & recreation? **The best thing about working in the field of parks & recreation is seeing the smiles on the faces of program participants, families at special events, or neighbors at a park ribbon cutting knowing we have made a positive impact on their lives.**
- In your opinion, what is the biggest issue facing parks & recreation? **The biggest issues facing the field of Parks & Recreation are offering a top notch product for programming to withstand the competition from the private sector. We have to continue to ensure our programs and facilities stay current and are inviting to our participants. The second issue is funding. With the financial issues facing the state we continue to see grant opportunities frozen or not offered anymore. Those of us with foundations who look for private dollars to assist with building new facilities face the same struggles as we are encountering other foundations looking for these same private dollars.**
- What advice would you give a recent college graduate? **Dive into your career path whole heartedly and take every opportunity offered to you! Engage in offerings through IPRA to learn as much as you can about the field of Parks & Recreation. Challenge yourself to go above and beyond each day to provide residents and guests to your community the best recreation opportunity. Look to expand your knowledge base by always being open to learn new avenues in the field of parks & recreation, making yourself more marketable.**
- Tell us a little known fact about you! **One of my professors at Iowa State University presented a lesson plan / curriculum paper I wrote to the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance National Conference Committee. My paper was selected to be presented that year at the national conference. He and I traveled to St. Louis to present the knowledge learned from the paper.**
- What was your path to a career in Parks & Recreation? **During my sophomore year of college I started working summer day camp programs. I continued to work these programs during my summers and spent time during other breaks working various programs and fell in love with the field.**
- What is your favorite Parks & Recreation program you've been a part of? **Our Department offers a program called Rapid Response Recreation that travels to different parks in the community on a daily basis and attends events on weekends offering carnival games and other activities. About our third year of the program, the Village had the opportunity to do a vehicle swap with the Fire District. Our staff inherited an ambulance as part of this swap. Our staff entered a park in style with a flashing light bar and working siren! We also kept a helium tank for balloons in the same compartment built originally for an oxygen tank. Can't think of a better way to drive around to parks and events bringing recreational fun.**



536 East Avenue / La Grange, Illinois 60525 / P 708.588.2280 / F 708.354.0535 / ilipra.org

- Who do you admire, and why? My Grandma Hodel. She was an amazing woman. She raised two children while my Grandpa was in World War II. She never said no to anyone. She spent hours volunteering her time and giving to others. She passed along so many great lessons and valuable skills. I learned so many things from her. After she had a major stroke when I was twenty four, she was left partially paralyzed on one side of her body. She never gave up and persevered through many challenges, continuing to laugh and smile all the time. The one goal she had following her stroke was to walk down the aisle for my wedding. Many of us could not hold back the tears as she did what she set her mind to and walked down the aisle at my wedding with a huge smile on her face. She taught me to never give up, always work as hard as you can, and give back to others as they have given their time for you!