

the

Grapevine



June
2020
Edition

Questions or comments?



**WESTCHESTER RECREATION
AND PARK SOCIETY, INC.**
P.O. Box 152 • Valhalla, New York 10595

WRAPS Presidents Message—by Brian Gray

This year has been challenging to say the least and not how I envisioned ending my term as President of WRAPS. Had you told me in February, over the next 5 months, basketball leagues would come to a screeching halt, all programming would cease, day camps would be cancelled during the summer and the opening of pools would be uncertain I would have called you crazy. Fast forward 5 months and look where we are – an unbelievable turn of events and we are in the midst of the unimaginable.

The events surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic has redefined life as we knew it and ultimately changed how we operate as a profession.

Unfortunately, understating the uncertainty of these unprecedented times, we can only speculate what our new normal will look like in the months and years ahead.

I have always valued WRAPS for the networking opportunities provided, the educational sessions I have attended, and the colleagues and friends I have gained throughout the years. I want to thank the WRAPS Executive Board for their professionalism and support throughout my presidency. Over the past 5 months, opportunities WRAPS has provided for our membership has become more valuable than ever as we embarked on an opportunity to offer our membership with updates pertaining to programs and facilities all in a virtual environment.

I look forward to the days when we can once again all gather together to celebrate our profession and the great services we offer our residents as well as the professionals that make it all happen. I couldn't be any more proud of this organization and it has been an honor serving as your President the past 2 years. As I become a member of the coveted Past President Club, I assure you WRAPS is in good hands with our new President, Dave Goldberg and Vice President Sally Veltidi. I wish the new Board the best of luck and will always make myself available for assistance.

Understanding the crazy times we are living in, please remember to take time with family and friends (socially distanced of course), stay active in WRAPS, and be sure to stay safe and healthy.



Community Spotlight- Westchester PRC By Beth Bricker & Virginia Carnes

What became known as Westchester County Parks began as a bill in the New York State Legislature. The Duell-Moore Bill, introduced on Feb. 22, 1922 by New York State Senator Holland Sackett Duell, authorized the Westchester County Board of Supervisors to appoint a commission of nine people to acquire land for a parks system. Senator Duell, who lived at what is today Lenoir Preserve, was a lawyer, U.S. Army officer and politician.

The bill was officially signed by New York's Governor Nathan L. Miller on March 27, 1922. The newly formed Westchester Parks Commission which represented men and women from all sections of the county got immediately to work. The group had broad powers to take over land to incorporate into park and the lands they recommended would be purchased by the Board of Supervisors.

On March 27, 1922, the county purchased Mohansic Park for \$1 as the first park in the Westchester County park system. Since the commission's vision included getting the parks up and running swiftly, that is exactly what they did. By the summer of 1922, Westchester residents were enjoying Mohansic for boating, fishing, camping and picnicking or just communing with nature. Today, Mohansic comprises only the golf course; the park portion was deeded back to the State of New York in 1957 and opened as FDR State Park in 1982.



After studying the park needs of county residents, the Westchester Parks Commission in May of 1923 published a groundbreaking vision to create a "chain of parks connected by parkways, stretching from the Hudson River to the Long Island Sound" and to "girdle Westchester within 10 years... with a park and parkway system unique on the east coast." Toward that end, land was purchased for parks that became Glen Island Park on Long Island Sound, Croton Point Park in Croton, and parkways such as the Saw Mill River Parkway and Hutchison River Parkway.

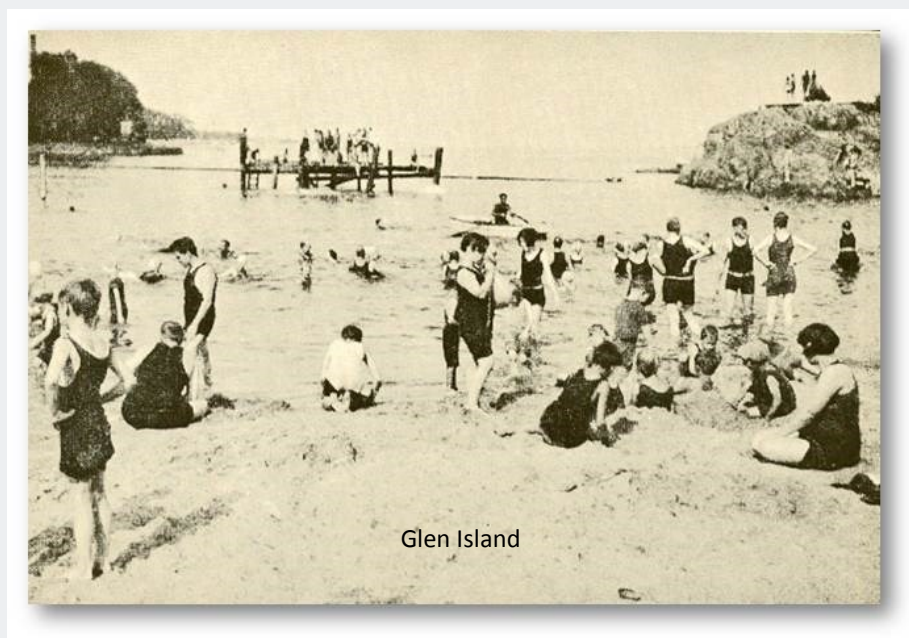
Formalized recreation had its beginnings in January of 1924 with the creation of the Westchester Recreation Commission. It was the first of its kind in the state and only the second in the country. It was headed by Mrs. Eugene Meyer who said, "The Recreation Commission will organize activities carried out in our parks. Most Westchester folk have forgotten how to play and it is the intention of the commission to teach such persons how to enjoy themselves again." The five women on the commission were charged with planning recreation and amusement spaces, and arranging for public entertainment in the parks. They also established playgrounds and operated a summer camp at Croton Point Park.



Community Spotlight- Cont.

Both the park and recreation commissions operated independently until Jan. 1, 1962 when they were merged into today's Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation. The department, now headed by a commissioner, held a renewed vision to double the county's recreation facilities and acquire 8,000 acres more parkland by 1985.

Today, the Westchester County Parks Department encompasses 50 park units on 18,000 acres of parkland. The land is home to pools and beaches, golf courses, trailways, nature centers and specialty destinations like Muscoot Farm, Lasdon Park and Arboretum, the Westchester County Center and Playland Park. Westchester County Parks has also earned national accreditation four consecutive times and is the only accredited park system in New York State. Now nearing the centennial mark, Westchester County Parks look forward to a continuing visionary future.



Glen Island

Coronavirus Article - By Matt Arone, Past President

“Sorry folks, park’s closed. Moose out front shoulda told ya.”—John Candy in National Lampoon’s Vacation.

Imagine being told that the entire purpose of your profession is not permitted any more. Similar to prohibition in the 1920's which banned the manufacturing, transportation and sale of intoxicating liquors. Imagine being a brewery worker or a tavern owner back then and being suddenly stopped in your tracks. Well something similar has just happened to our profession. We are recreation professionals with the responsibility of providing our residents healthy activities, well maintained athletic facilities and exciting special events. But somewhere back around March 13th, it all came to a screeching halt due the very serious health crisis we are still enduring as I write this article. It's a story we all know, but the Coronavirus or COVID-19 has forced all of us to cease almost all of our actions. Cont. Next Page...

Coronavirus Article - By Matt Arone, Past President Cont.

People are losing their lives. No school for kids, people forced to work from home, stay at least 6 feet from others and wear gloves and masks if you do have to venture out. Stores, restaurants, barber shops and subway trains have all been shut down. Jobs have been lost. Only essential workers such as those in the medical profession and emergency services should be out there on a daily (and nightly) basis. Recreation and leisure does not rank towards the earliest of the activities that will be phased back in when the time comes. You've heard a thousand times, we are in uncharted waters.

So let's talk about how we started reacting back in March. My work calendar was pretty busy back then, but cancelations to upcoming events happened pretty quickly. St. Patrick's Day parties and parades took the first hit. It amazes me thinking back to that time that some of us were debating whether to hold these events as we might not have known the severity of this situation. Some other of our smaller classes were being "postponed." I still have a flyer in my community center that says, "BINGO for March 14th and 28th has been postponed. Next BINGO will be April 11th." Senior citizens are at most risk so we all had to make sure they were kept safely at home. Who would have known then that caring for them by getting groceries delivered and calling their homes was going to be one of our main responsibilities for the next few months? I started a folder in my e-mail box called "Coronavirus" just to store a few e-mails that were trickling in. Now that folder is jammed packed.

Our facilities were shut down. Rec offices, community centers, senior centers, town halls, nature centers and even our parks and playgrounds had to be closed to the public. I've seen basketball hoops bagged or taken down. Swimming pools are still empty in some cases. Some of us haven't been back to the office since mid-March. Others haven't been in the presence of their co-workers as our municipalities are limiting staff in order to help lessen the chance of spreading the virus. Budgeting and spending has been frozen. The brakes were slammed and everything basically stopped.

March turned to April. The cute little interactive or virtual programs all were hitting it big for a while. Those ideas have shown how creative members of our profession are. I've seen arts and craft lessons made available on town websites, dance parties on Facebook Live and even a few people in spring bunny costumes hitting the streets on DPW trucks wishing everybody well-wishes. It was important for all of us to stay busy at work trying to feel worth-while as if we had to justify our jobs. But the ballfields were empty and the swing-sets weren't swinging. Instead our parks crews were putting up social distancing signage and yellow caution tape. We still had to be busy while worrying about our own family and friends getting ill.

Swimming pools and summer camps are scheduled to start in May and June. The county's health department cancelled their mandatory camp workshop. So much for mandatory, huh? So now a little panic is settling in. Parents and kids need us more than ever in the summer. How can we possibly run a safe camp under these circumstances? Are we even going to be permitted to with restrictions and new regulations? Cont. Next Page....

Coronavirus Cont.

I'm not sure I want to run a camp where I have to take each camper's temperature every morning. Or put kids on a cramped school bus for a trip to an amusement park which might not even be opened. Some parents might not even feel comfortable sending their children to camp in order to insure their health. Buddy checks while keeping 6 feet apart? I wonder how pool memberships have been going. Everybody I spoke to says they are extremely lower than usual. We've been told we can fill our pools, but we might not be able to open them.

"Chlorine kills the virus!" I was hearing early on. Maybe there's no evidence the virus can be spread in a swimming pool, but what if that pool isn't properly maintained? Plus, we still have to practice social distancing while in the pool, staying away from people that might be coughing or sneezing. It's a total mess. We need a lifeguard!

But through it all, WRAPS and the recreation profession has shown what we are made of. We have proven that although not officially deemed essential, we are. Residents are cooped up in their homes, so they crave our parks and trailways more than ever. The closings of our playground units and tennis courts have caused complaints because they are so needed. As mentioned earlier, our senior citizen populations need welfare check-ups, food and medicine so we've increased our responsibilities toward their necessities. There is a "Home Recreation" link on the WRAPS webpage that lists virtual and on-line activities residents can do at home; all submitted by local recreation departments. Our camp sub-committee has been in constant contact with the health department giving all of us updates on what the latest news is regarding camp possibilities.

We have just organized weekly Zoom information sessions for our membership with a different topic relating to our field and the COVID-19 pandemic so we can all try and stay informed and consistent. Speaking of Zoom, our WRAPS executive board hasn't stopped either as we made history holding our first ever video communication board meeting. I can't wait to read the minutes from that day.

The bottom line is as usual, the usefulness of recreation and parks is frequently forgotten in comparison with some of our other services. But we are proving how important we are. Staying active and getting outside is vital during these times. Not just for our physical well-being, but for our mental state as well. Research shows that getting outside in nature or any green space has many mental health benefits. Walking has been proven effective in reducing anxiety and depression, and there is further evidence that walking in nature improves those results even further. So I ask all of our recreation professionals to stay strong at this time. Our profession is taking a huge hit as the cancelations and closings pile up. The state shutdown regulations in our region were just extended again as I write this article. However we need to continue finding new and creative ways to keep the public active and healthy. We need to figure out how to safely allow residents to walk and play in the parks while continuing to discourage large gatherings. We've got our work cut out for us, but WRAPS has stuck together and leaned on each other like never before. Keep up the good work, keep wearing your masks while in high density areas and please stay healthy. We need all of you because we are essential.

Binghamton Recreation Playground—By Dave Goldberg

This has been a year to remember, or forget. We, as recreation professionals, have been struggling with the COVID -19 pandemic and how to reinvent ourselves. This in itself is challenging enough, then throw into that mix someone vandalizing one of our parks or playgrounds, well that is exactly what happen at the Binghamton Recreation and Parks department.

One of their community built playgrounds was lit on fire and burnt to the ground. Brian and I were contacted by Jason Mara, our rep at NYSRPS, informing us about this tragic event. We, as a board, discussed this and wanted to help them in any way we could. So we offered a \$1,000 donation to help them rebuild their playground. We felt this was the right thing to do and this is the WRAPS way, we help those in need.



Our contact at the Binghamton Recreation Department has been Patrick McGinnis and if you would like to reach out to him he can be reached at prmcginnis@cityofbinghamton.com

www.WRAPSNY.com

Please visit our Societies Website for up to date information on Events, Vendors, Entertainers, Past photos and job announcements!

Recent Uploads/Adds:

- 6 WRAPS Zoom Meetings covering a wide variety of topics
 - Camps
 - Pools
 - Play Ball!
 - What Now?
 - Seniors
 - Rec After Covid-19
- Zoom Meeting with the Westchester DOH
- Zoom Meeting Swearing Ceremony Executive Board
- Home Recreation Information

DATE TO REMEMBER:

September 25-
Awards & Scholarship
Luncheon

WRAPS EXECUTIVE BOARD VOTING RESULTS

David Goldberg	President
Sally Veltidi	Vice President
Matt Trainor	Treasurer
Kim O'Brien	Secretary
Jennifer Giusti	Member at Large
Bob Kaczmarek	Member at Large



COVID-19 PHOTOS TO REMEMBER



SLEEPY HOLLOW

PLAYGROUNDS AND SKATE PARK



STOP CLOSED
Until further notice

Help stop the spread & Stay Safe

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, all City of Rye playgrounds and Skate Park are closed until further notice. Studies have shown that the virus can stay on surfaces for up to several days and playgrounds cannot be disinfected at a rate to keep you safe.

PARKS are OPEN for passive activities

Families are welcome to walk through the parks but PLEASE TO NOT ENGAGE IN SPORTS OR ACTIVITIES THAT REQUIRE PHYSICAL OR SHARED CONTACT. Park visitors are asked to adhere to all closure notices and current social distancing recommendations of maintaining a minimum of 6 feet from others.



Disease Prevention
6 feet
Maintain social distancing

For the most up-to-date information
www.ryeny.gov www.cdc.gov

RYE



DOBBY FERRY

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WRAPS WEBSITE

Since you are reading the Grapevine on the WRAPS website, why not explore the entire site! Check out our Vendor and Entertainer Members, our social/events page and our NEW Employment page! Have any idea for the website? Email Kyle Thornton at kthornton@yorktownny.org!

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Copy and paste the above address for our WRAPS Facebook Page! Be sure to like the page to keep up to date on what's happening within WRAPS.

CALL FOR GRAPEVINE ARTICLES!

The next issue of the Grapevine is scheduled to be printed in November 2020!

Anyone interested in submitting materials must do so by **Wednesday, October 28, 2020**

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Are you an Entertainer or a business looking to reach a Parks & Recreation audience? Please check out: www.WRAPSNY.com for more information on how to become a member of WRAPS!

NYS Opening Guidelines

If you have not received - below is a valuable resource as we move forward and continue to reopen.

Statewide guidelines have been released for sports and recreation for regions effective July 6th for regions that have reached Phase 3.

<https://forward.ny.gov/statewide-guidelines>