



"We exist to provide outstanding opportunities through recreation for children and adults with disabilities."

Welcome to the NWSRA Family!

We are very excited to welcome you to our extended family! This electronic packet was created to introduce you to NWSRA and your new role as a NWSRA Board representing your Park District.

Although, we may not have been the first Special Recreation Association (SRA) established, we truly believe that we are the BEST! The very first intergovernmental partnership or SRA came to life in 1970 and was the first of its kind in the United States. The SRA Model still only exists in Illinois. In 1974, NWSRA was formed per the Park District Code, Section 5-8 and Section 11-95-14 of the Municipal Code. In 1974, NWSRA conducted its' first weekly program for 23 children with multiple needs. Forty plus years later, NWSRA now offers approximately 2,166 programs yearly and through the partnership with 17 park districts in the northwest suburbs of Chicago support 1,070 inclusion placements a year. Making NWSRA the largest Special Recreation Association in Illinois.

Our organization was created to provide for the establishment, maintenance and management of joint recreation programs for persons with disabilities in the community. The benefits of jointly providing recreation for people with disabilities include:

- Serving Communities by providing outstanding opportunities for recreation and leisure programs and services for residents with disabilities. Did you know that approximately 11% of the children and adults who are residents in your community have some type of disability? The recreational needs of any individual of any age, with any type of disability including cognitive, mental or physical needs can be met through our partnership.
- NWSRA offers specialized technical training and inclusion support for your park district's staff to ensure safety, best practices and to minimize risk ensuring access to all programs, facilities, parks and playgrounds provided to your residents.
- Access to the Handicapped Accessible funds to make ADA improvements to your programs, facilities, parks and playgrounds made available through Senate Bill 1881 in 2003. These funds can only be levied for if you have partnered with an SRA. The model created by the park districts has succeeded beyond all expectations. Today, there are more than 200 communities in 28 SRAs across the State. Your Park District can take great pride in meeting the needs of all of your residents' effectively through the NWSRA recreation and therapeutic recreation programs and services. By recognizing the value of providing services together, you have helped not just your residents with and without disabilities, but people all over Illinois.

We are extremely pleased that we have twice received the National Gold Medal Award recognizing our commitment to citizens with disabilities. Celebrating Ability has been a long standing theme, creating an atmosphere in programs and in the community to expect the best. Each citizen can participate at their highest level of ability and experience active, healthy leisure and recreational

An extension of the local park districts serving

Arlington Heights • Bartlett • Buffalo Grove • Elk Grove • Hanover Park • Hoffman Estates • Inverness • Mount Prospect
Palatine • Prospect Heights • River Trails • Rolling Meadows • Salt Creek • Schaumburg • South Barrington • Streamwood • Wheeling

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lifestyles that are self-fulfilling. NWSRA is a partnership of 17 park districts in the northwest suburbs of Chicago committed to supporting community access to recreation for people with disabilities. Through innovative partnerships and advocacy efforts, NWSRA seeks to be regarded as the leading force, creating greater options that enrich the life experiences of participants with disabilities, their families and the communities we serve.

The partnership between NWSRA and the 17 park districts has clearly been influenced by the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, a federal mandate that requires recreation agencies, municipalities, cities and villages to provide inclusive opportunities and support for individuals with disabilities.

Communication is key and in this day and age technology has allowed us to stay connected instantaneously. NWSRA has created a Board of Director's portal that can be accessed by going to www.nwsra.org/directors. This site will give you New Board Member information, Schedules, Meeting Information, Surveys/Reports, Compliance Projects, ADA Resources, the NWSRA Budget and Marketing information. During our New Board Member Orientation, I will walk you through the Director's Site and the information that it provides.

NWSRA has incorporated a non-profit foundation, Special Leisure Services Foundation (SLSF), to create additional revenue sources and to provide a format for greater community involvement and public understanding of the services being provided by NWSRA. To learn more about SLSF and to access the SLSL Trustee Board information, please visit www.slsf.me/directors. This site will give you orientation to SLSF information, Talking Points, Meeting Information, Reports, the SLSF Budget and Marketing information. I serve as the President of the Special Leisure Services Foundation. I will walk you through the SLSF Trustee's Site and the information during our New Board Member Orientation.

It is only by providing good services, and continually improving those services, that we enhance the quality of life for your residents. You are the representative on the NWSRA Board. The Board supervises the Executive Director, and also sets policies, and long range plans. NWSRA hired me as the third Executive Director to lead the Association on September 12, 2011. If any questions should arise at any time feel free to reach out to either myself at tcrawford@nwsra.org or my Administrative Coordinator Jessica at jvasalos@nwsra.org. I look forward to working with you, your Board of Commissioners, staff and residents of your District.

We could not do what we do without you!

Sincerely,

Tracey M. Crawford, CTRS, CPRP
Executive Director