

1983

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Recommended Citation

Brantly, Herbert (1983) "National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)," *Visions in Leisure and Business*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 3 , Article 14.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/visions/vol2/iss3/14>

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NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION (NRPA)

BY

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the role of NPRA in the leisure industry.

NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION (NRPA)

The National Recreation and Park Association was formed in 1965 through a merger of a number of organizations having similar purposes including the National Recreation Association, the American Recreation Society and the American Institute of Park Executives. Its stated goals are: (1) to promote public awareness of, and support for, the value of recreation and parks in the lives of people, and, (2) to provide services that contribute to the development of NRPA's members. Its members, numbering approximately 15,000 are served by special interest branches. The special interest is generally reflected by the title of the branch: (1) The National Therapeutic Recreation Society; (2) The American Park and Recreation Society; (3) The Armed Forces Recreation Society; (4) The National Society for Park Resources; (5) The Commissioners and Board Members Branch; (6) The Society of Park and Recreation Educators; and (7) The National Student Branch.

The National Association is governed by a 65 person Board of Trustees, at least 34 of whom must be citizen members as contrasted to professional members. Thus, the Association assumes a uniqueness of governance.

Obviously, the purposes of the Association are reflected in its activities. These vary from public visibility to continuing education. In the area of public visibility one finds the "Life. Be In It" program, a substantial national effort at selling the benefits of recreation to the American public. Under its legislative advocacy program one finds activity designed to provide the legislative and executive branches of government with up-to-date information regarding existing programs and anticipated outcomes of proposals under consideration. A recent activity has focused on the proposal by the Congress to establish a Commission to

conduct an assessment of recreation in the United States. In effect, this would focus on a "reassessment" of the conditions which were presented in the Outdoor Recreation Review Commission Report of the 1960's.

Research activity obviously is needed to support the legislative and public visibility activities. In addition, the Association publishes the Journal of Leisure Research, the Therapeutic Recreation Journal and other reports as needed and as resources permit. Through generous support from the Lehman Foundation, the Association for the past several years has been able to encourage research by annually recognizing the outstanding researcher in our field. A cash award, which accompanies this recognition, further stimulates interest in research activities which enhance the delivery of recreation services.

The Annual Congress for Recreation and Parks brings together four to five thousand persons for educational programs. Exhibitors also enhance the Congress by presenting state-of-the-art merchandise and services in parks and recreation.

Several national Schools provide for executive and leadership skill development which contributes to the overall continuing education program of the Association. Where appropriate, CEU's are awarded, which in turn are tied to NRPA's certification program. Each member of the Association who wishes to be certified must not only entrance standards but must maintain a program of continued education reflected by the accumulation of appropriate CEU's.

To date, there are 34 university programs accredited by the National Council on Accreditation, an organization whose development has been enhanced by support from the Association, but whose operation is detached in order to maintain total integrity for the system.

The activities cited above, though not all-inclusive, point to a variable organization, diversified almost beyond belief, which focuses on the delivery of improved recreation services.

Editorial Note: Dr. Brantley is 1983 President-Elect of NRPA.