



2023 NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Innisbrook Resort | Palm Harbor, FL



we are
ALL IN *at*
INNISBROOK

SALAMANDER COLLECTION

November 11-14, 2023
www.RCRA.org

Message from President Kevin Nelson

WELCOME TO THE 42ND RCRA NATIONAL CONFERENCE!

Welcome to the Resort and Commercial Recreation Association National Conference. This is #42. And, if you've read *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, you know that the number 42 is the answer to "the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything." What a wonderful opportunity to be at this historic conference, #42, to learn, to meet new and see "old" friends. And to create opportunities for ourselves and our organizations. And, to spend some time discussing the future of our beloved association.

I am so very thankful for so many people. First, to the Board of Directors. These good people dedicate so much time to serving RCRA and the individuals within our group. I truly enjoy working with them. My fellow presidents, Annie & Brian, are dedicated servants who want nothing but the best for RCRA. Thank you. Also, to Catrina and Kelsey, our treasurer and secretary, thank you for taking the time amidst your busy schedules to help us with your wonderful talents. And, finally, to our directors-at-large, Brooke, Dan, Katie, & Michelle, thank you for your efforts and passion.

There are many others who help us along the way. I can't name them all here because I'll forget someone. But for those who help with awards, committees, idea share calls, helping with social media, participating at conference, etc., thank you for your time, effort, and desire to be with us.

We are so grateful for the team at Innisbrook Resort that have been so helpful in assisting us put together a fantastic conference. Please look around and take part in what this beautiful place has to offer...from golf, to pools, to pickleball, and bike rides. Please thank them when you have an opportunity.

Enjoy a great conference!

Kevin Nelson

GENERAL INFORMATION

Registration Desk Hours

SATURDAY: 12:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. (Resort Lobby)

SUNDAY: 8:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. (Edinburgh Foyer)

MONDAY: 8:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. (Edinburgh Foyer)

TUESDAY: 9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. (Edinburgh Foyer)

Vendor Exhibit Hall / Demos

VENDOR SETUP: Sunday 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. (Edinburgh Foyer)

VENDOR DEMOS: Sunday from 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. (Edinburgh Foyer)

VENDOR EXHIBIT HALL: Sunday 1:30 - 5:30 p.m., Monday 8:30 a.m. - 5p.m. (Edinburgh Foyer)

VENDOR COCKTAIL HOUR: Monday from 6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. (Edinburgh Foyer)

Internship/Job Fair

JOB FAIR SETUP: Sunday from 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (Salon 7-9)

JOB FAIR PROPERTY INTRODUCTIONS: Sunday from 3:15 p.m - 3:30 p.m. (Salon 10)

JOB FAIR: Sunday from 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. (Salon 7-9)

Interviews

INTERVIEW DRAFT: Professionals Only; Sunday from 4:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. (Salon 10)

STUDENTS PICK-UP INTERVIEW SCHEDULES: Sunday from 5:45 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.

(Registration Desk - Edinburgh Foyer)

INTERVIEW BLOCK 1: Monday from 1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. (Salon 7-9)

ADDITIONAL INTERVIEW TIME SLOTS: *It is possible that professionals and students will have conflicting schedules during the scheduled time for interviews. Separate interview sessions may be scheduled at the discretion of professionals.*

RCRA'S Membership Breakfast and RCRA Awards Gala

The Membership Breakfast and RCRA Awards Gala are for all RCRA Conference attendees. If you are traveling with a guest who is interested in attending, please register and purchase a ticket at the Registration Desk. The cost is \$30 for the Membership Breakfast and \$75 for the RCRA Gala.

If you have any dietary requests or restrictions and are attending the Membership Breakfast and/or RCRA Gala, please complete the dietary request form at the Registration desk.

Resort Packages Silent and Live Auction

Choose from FANTASTIC resort packages and more! During the conference, auction packages will be displayed at the RCRA Registration Desk in the Edinburgh Foyer. There are minimum starting bids for each package that reflect extraordinary values. Silent auction bidding begins on Sunday evening at the President's Social. The live auction will take place on Monday evening at the RCRA Gala. Student specific packages at lower price points are available – great for Spring Break! Cash and credit cards are accepted for payment.

NOTE: *Agencies that are donating vacation getaways for the auction, please drop off certificates at the Registration Desk by noon on Monday.*

Lucky Logo Drawing

Participate in a great opportunity to win fabulous prizes! The "Lucky Logo" Drawing will be held on Sunday evening at the Theme Night Party. Tickets may be obtained by partaking in the Casino Royale games. Bring cash!

NOTE: All members donating baskets for the raffle, please drop off items at the Registration Desk by noon on Sunday.

Dress Code During the Conference

Business casual is suggested for all of the sessions unless otherwise stated in the program.

Conference Badge

Please wear to all sessions.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Kevin Nelson
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INNISBROOK

SALAMANDER COLLECTION



ON SITE ADVENTURES

Hungry? Check Out *THREE* Great Dining Options:

- Market Salamander Grille & Bar
- Packards Steakhouse
- Grill at Lochness

Work Hard, Play Harder!

- Resort Pools
- Tennis, Golf
- Spa
- Surry Bikes - tell them you are with RCRA for a FREE bike rental!

OFF SITE ADVENTURES

Check Out Our Vendor Member - Empower Adventures!

Did you know Empower Adventures is less than 20 mins away? Get your thrill on with Zip Line or a Paddle Board Adventure! Book today and mention you're with RCRA for a discounted rate!



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2023

Dress Code: Day/Casual; Evening/Wear your Colors

12:00 pm - 6 pm

Registration Desk is Open

Location: Resort Lobby

Pick up your name badge and learn how to access the conference brochure and app.

9:00 am - 6:00 pm

Property Spotlight

Location: Resort Grounds

Enjoy the things Innisbrook Resort has to offer including Lochness Pool, Surey Bikes, golf, and more. Stop by their famous *Cars and Coffee* event from 9am-1pm at the Edinburgh Hall Parking Lot. Cars and Coffee is an annual event that collects non-perishables for families this Thanksgiving holiday with Feeding Tampa Bay.

6:00 pm - 6:30 pm



Student Welcome Social

Location: Lochness Pool

Calling all students! Join us for some great ice breaker games while getting to know other students.

6:30 pm - 9:00 pm

Welcome Kick Off Pool Party!

Presenters: RCRA's Board of Directors

Location: Lochness Pool

The official Welcome to Innisbrook Resort and the 2023 RCRA National Conference!

The RCRA Board of Directors will help you 'JUMP' into conference with a splashing good time. While in attendance, network with fellow members, play various games including Level Up by Wildly Different, Glow Golf with Glow Golf Vibe, and so much more! Don't forget to wear your swim suit for open swim from until 7:45pm. Come hungry, the Lochness Grill will be open for our event!



WELCOME SOCIAL

Pool Party

OPEN SWIM
WEAR YOUR SWIM GEAR FOR A NIGHT OPEN SWIM!

START CONFERENCE IN STYLE WITH OUR
POOL PARTY
AT LOCHNESS POOL
SATURDAY 6:30PM

EVENT LINEUP

- Open Swim
- Food Available for Purchase
- Glow Golf, Deck Games
- Heads or Tails
- 'Level Up' hosted by Wildly Different
- And More!

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2023

Dress Code: Day/Business Casual; Evening/ "Casino Royale" theme or Casual!

6:45 am - 7:30 am

Morning Wellness Walk & Talk

Host: Brooke Edwards

Location: Edinburgh Foyer

8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Registration Desk is Open

Location: Edinburgh Foyer

8:00 am - 11:00 am

Job Fair Setup

Location: Salon 7-9

Hiring Agencies: Salon 7-9 will be open from 8-11am for you to set up your job fair table.

8:00 am - 11:00 am

Vendor Setup

Location: Edinburgh Foyer

Vendors: Please prepare your vendor demo set up in Edinburgh Foyer from 8-11am.

8:30 am - 11:30 am

Awards Breakfast & Keynote

Content is King: Breaking Through the Clutter in Hospitality

Presenter: Board of Directors & Ben Lorenzen

Location: Edinburgh East

Awards Breakfast: We will recognize members for their contributions to the recreation industry and RCRA by awarding the following: Outstanding Professor Award, Outstanding Student, Outstanding Vendor, Premier Recreation Operation Award, and Student Scholarships. Introductions of the Board of Directors Nominees and Vendor Members will follow.

Keynote: In today's fast-paced digital landscape, it's no secret that "Content is King!" This mantra holds particularly true for hospitality professionals striving to create memorable experiences for their customers, members, and themselves. In a world inundated with information, the key to success lies in crafting engaging and valuable content that sets you apart from the crowd.

11:30 pm - 5:30 pm

Vendor Exhibit Hall & Demos

Location: Edinburgh Foyer

Venture out to engage and play with our Vendors located in the Edinburgh Foyer. Make sure to stop by from 11:30am - 1:30pm while demo *Skeet Battle with Tropical Extremes* is going on!

1:30 pm - 2:15 pm

All Grown Ups Are Pirates

Presenter: Ben Lorenzen

Location: Salon 3-4

In a world that often seems fixated on serious responsibilities and grown-up obligations, "All Grown-Ups are Pirates" invites you on an exciting journey into the realm of personal growth, development, and rediscovering the power of fun.

1:30 pm - 2:15 pm

Current Trends in Global Recreation

Presenter: Lisa Linden

Location: Salon 5-6

In 1998, I presented "Global Trends in Recreation" at the RCRA conference and thought it might be time for an update! Some things have changed, meanwhile some remain the same. In the last year, I have been to 15 international kid's clubs in 6 countries and collected domestic and international data from questionnaires and focus groups on kid's and teen programs and clubs from around the world. I hope that this session will give you clarification, inspiration, for creative programming for your respective demographics, and motivation to ensure your clubs are up to date and exceeding family expectations. This is an interactive session with the intent to collaborate with our members and share other recreation highlights.

2:30 pm - 3:15 pm

The Importance of Risk Management, Emergency Action Plans, and Being Prepared for ANYTHING!

Presenter: Dr. Kate Price-Howard

Location: Salon 5-6

Working in resort destinations is NOT for the faint of heart! Disasters (natural & otherwise) have become a major part of life in the recreation industry, for both professionals & interns. Many resorts have been affected by the onslaught of hurricanes, not to mention the COVID pandemic. Tornados, fires, and floods seem to pop up all over the place; and earthquakes still rock our friends in California and Hawaii. This panel will pass along professional advice of how to be prepared and bounce back.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2023

Dress Code: Day/Business Casual; Evening/ "Casino Royale" theme or Casual!

2:30 pm - 3:15 pm

The Art of Storytelling

Presenter: Ben Lorenzen

Location: Salon 3-4

Dive into the elements of storytelling! We are all story tellers whether we believe it or not! Learn simple concepts on how to impact the chemicals in your members or customers brains and get them to REACT! This personal journey looks at examples within yourselves and also some of the biggest hospitality businesses in the world.

3:00 pm - 3:15 pm



Job Fair 101

Location: Salon 10

Students and Emerging Professionals: Meet in Salon 10 to hear about job fair expectations and tips and tricks to have a successful job fair!

3:15 pm - 3:30 pm



Job Fair Property Introductions

Location: Salon 10

Students and Emerging Professionals and Hiring Agencies: Meet in Salon 10 to hear from the Hiring Agencies you'll meet at the job fair.

3:30 pm - 4:30 pm



Job Fair

Location: Salon 7-9

Professionals and students bring your resumes and meet informally with perspective internship and employment opportunity properties.

4:30 pm - 5:00 pm

Job Fair Draft

Location: Salon 10

Hiring Agencies Only: Please meet in Salon 10 to schedule student interviews.

4:30 pm - 5:15 pm

Community Cultivation: Fostering Connection and Engagement

Presenter: Mindy Anderson, Jenna Brut & Michelle Kithcart

Location: Salon 5-6

Join us for an exciting session where we delve into the dynamic world of lifestyle in community development. At "Community Cultivation," we will explore the multifaceted responsibilities of general managers and lifestyle directors in fostering a strong sense of community and connection. Through engaging sessions and collaborative discussions, we will explore the strategies and techniques that drive successful connection events and activities critical for building a vibrant community.

5:45 pm - 6:15 pm

Pick Up Interview Schedules

Location: Registration Desk

Students: Visit the registration desk to receive a copy of your interview schedule.

7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Excellence in Programming: Awards Presentations

Location: Edinburgh East

Applicants for RCRA's Excellence in Programming Award will make a case for why their program is most deserving of the award through 'Top Rec' "pitches". A live audience of session attendees will be able to ask the contestants questions and have the opportunity to vote on the program they think deserves the Excellence in Programming Award. *Presenters, please set up by 6:30 p.m.

8:00 pm - 10:00 pm

Casino Royale President's Social

Location: Edinburgh West

Feeling lucky? Bring your cash for a chance to win big on Roulette, Black Jack, Craps, and more! Winnings will be chances to win some awesome swag in our annual Lucky Logo Fundraiser!

Pro Tip!
Don't forget to bring
CASH to tonight's social!

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2023

Dress Code: Day/Business Casual; Evening/ Semi-Formal

6:45 am - 7:30 am

Morning Wellness Walk & Talk

Host: Michelle Kithcart

Location: Edinburgh Foyer

8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Registration Desk is Open

Location: Edinburgh Foyer

8:00 am - 10:00 pm

Vendor Exhibit Hall

Location: Edinburgh Foyer

8:00 am - 8:45 am

Annual Business Meeting

Presenter: Board of Directors

Location: Salon 5-6

Join us for a recap of 2023 and present 2024 goals.

9:00 am - 9:45 am

Excellence in Programming Round Table

Location: Edinburgh West

Inviting all to partake in a roundtable discussion of the RCRA premier recreation operation nominees' new programs and charity work.

9:00 am - 9:45 am



Keys to Being a Successful Leader

Presenter: Brennan Brossman

Location: Salon 2

Employers often look for several key qualities and attributes in young talent, especially recent college graduates. We will discuss some of the factors that are highly valued including leadership qualities to focus on to increase your value in the work force.

10:00 am - 10:45 am

Chat GPT/AI - Making Our Jobs Easier

Presenter: Kevin Nelson

Location: Salon 2

Want to make some tasks on your business/career less time consuming? Learn about ChatGPT and how it can help you have time for all that's on your list (including your own recreation).

10:00 am - 10:45 am

Crafty Creations

Presenter: Annie Pilek

Location: Salon 3-4

Lead craft sessions, art studio, or hands on crafty sessions with guests? Join me for a fun interactive session where I will share with you my favorite crafts that are easy to make on a tight budget and those that are worth investing in.

10:00 am - 10:45 am

The Art of Five-Star Luxury Service: Elevating Experiences & Exceeding Expectations

Presenter: Kari Bowman-Leslie & Jessie Decker

Location: Salon 5-6

Join us for an engaging experience where we explore the art of pampering and exceeding expectations. Through interactive discussions, discover the secrets behind world-class hospitality that transforms a simple stay into a memorable masterpiece. Immerse yourself in the world of personalized attention, impeccable amenities, and unparalleled service, and learn how these elements come together to create a truly luxurious and unforgettable guest experience. Whether you're a recreation professional seeking to elevate your services or a hospitality enthusiast fascinated by luxury travel, this session promises to be an enjoyable journey into the heart of impeccable hospitality.

11:00 am - 11:45 am

Capital Requests in Recreation

Presenter: Catrina Vargas

Location: Salon 2

Introduction to the Capital Request process. Learn of different kinds of requests, items to be included, and how the more information can lead to a capital approval. Also, a peak at the capital request process with a current capital request, pickleball courts at Hammock Beach.

11:00 am - 11:45 am

Corporate Group; A Revenue Driver

Presenter: Jennifer Lesnick

Location: Salon 3-4

Learn how to enhance corporate, wedding and social group programming with creative activities that help your hotel or resort drive revenue.

11:00 am - 11:45 am

Why "Happy" Employees Matter

Presenter: Charles Hammersley

Location: Salon 5-6

Looking at how creating a "happy" work environment for employees results in more productive, secure jobs, increased productivity, less burn-out and greater sales. This presentation will focus on developing happy skills.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2023

Dress Code: Day/Business Casual; Evening/ Semi-Formal

1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Research Symposium

Location: Salon 2

1-1:30pm: Exuma Bahamas Cruisers: Understanding this unique visitor with Importance-Performance Analysis by Dr. Joshua Carroll

1:45-2:15pm: Evaluating Happiness Courses: Fall 2015 to Fall 2022 by Dr. Charles Hammersley

2:30-3pm: Connecting with International University Students at On-Site International University Locations by Dr. Harriet E.T. Dixon, Dr. Kate Price-Howard, Dr. Patrick Holladay, and Dr. Anthony Dixon

3:15-3:45pm: Influences Impacting College Students' and Young Professionals' Career Choices: Insights for the Private Club Industry by Dr. Jill Fjelstul

4pm-4:30pm: 2023 RCRA Wage, Benefit, and Job Satisfaction Survey by Dr. Kate Price-Howard, Dr. Andy Holdnak, Dr. A. Scott Rood, Dr. Kevin Nelson, and Dr. Frank Tsai

1:30 pm - 5:00 pm

Job Fair Interviews

Location: Salon 7-8

Students and professionals, please refer to your interview schedule for time allotments.



1:30 pm - 2:30 pm

Professional Headshots

Location: Edinburgh Terrace

Need an updated professional headshot? Head to the Edinburgh Terrace to have yours taken! Headshots will be delivered via email after the conference.

3:30 pm - 4:15pm

Playground Safety - Injury Prevention

Presenter: Chris Parkinson

Location: Salon 3-4

Today's topic is part of an ongoing series on Injury Prevention in early care and education settings. Today we will be talking about playground safety, a very important topic for early care and education providers when it comes to keeping children safe during play time. Children spend a lot of outdoor time on the playground, and while injuries on the playground are very common, they are also predictable and preventable.

3:30 pm - 4:15pm

Resort Events

Presenter: John Schroeder

Location: Salon 5-6

Event planning for your resort and what type of events you can bring or do that add value to your property. From Cars & Coffee, Trolley Tours, Concerts, Oktoberfest and more!

4:00 pm - 4:45 pm

Games, Games, Games

Presenter: Calvin Joustra, Maggie Kwolek, Tyler Ketley

Location: Edinburg West

Wrap up the educational sessions with this incredible, hands-on, interactive session where you will be sure to learn and meet someone new.

6:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Vendor Happy Hour Mixer

Location: Edinburgh Foyer

Members, come gather before the gala for photos and continue to meet with our amazing RCRA vendors.

7:00 pm - 9:30 pm

Andy Holdnak Awards Gala & Silent Auction

Presenter: Board of Directors

Location: Edinburgh East

Experience the National Conference in RCRA style at this semi-formal event. Enjoy a wonderful dinner, induction of officers, silent and live auction for multiple exciting vacation getaways, 2023 National Conference showcase and awards presentations to include: Debbie Regnone Service Award, Howard Uibel Award, President's Award, Property Host Award, Excellence in Research Award, Excellence in Programming Award, Making the Difference Award, and Exiting Board Member Awards.

Auction: This is your chance to buy your next vacation, spring break or family getaway. There will be a Silent Auction to start, and some packages will go live after dinner. Resort Packages start at \$250! You do not have to be present to win. Contact a member of the Ways and Means Committee if you would like the option to bid via phone.

9:30 pm - 11:00 pm

Gala After Party

Location: Edinburgh East

Boogie on down and join us for an after-gala celebration with *Rebel*, a classic rock experience with covers of The Beatles, Aerosmith, Bon Jovi, Queen, Rolling, Stones, The Eagles, and MORE!

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2023

Dress Code: Day/Business Casual; Evening/ Casual

9:30 am - 10:30am

Townhall Meetings

Join us for a recap on the 2023 RCRA National Conference. Committee Chairs gather real time feedback and discuss strategic plans for the future of the organization.

Education Townhall

Location: Salon 2

Emerging Professional Townhall

Location: Salon 10

Professional Townhall

Location: Salon 3-4

Vendor Townhall

Location: Salon 5-6

10:30am - 11:30am

CPR Certification

Presenter: Dan Merenick & Katherine Caffery

Location: Salon 3-4

Become Red Cross certified or renew a current certification. \$36 pp. Sign up by emailing: kcaffrey@reston.org. Class limit 12 people.

1:30 pm - 3:30 pm

RCRA Rebrand Summit

Presenter: RCRA Rebrand Committee

Location: Edinburgh East

Join the RCRA Rebrand Committee for an interactive brainstorm session on the future of RCRA. We need you to share your feelings on important topics to continue the success of RCRA. No matter what type of member you are, all members are important for the success of this organization.



SPONSORED BY
TAD ENTERTAINMENT

STAND-UP COMEDY SHOW

TUESDAY

NOVEMBER 14, 2023

FEATURING



TIM BATEMAN

Edinburgh East, 7:30 - 8pm

Join us for an exciting farewell evening with a comedy act by
Tim Bateman!

SPEAKER BIOS

Mindy Anderson



Mindy Anderson is the Director of Lifestyle for the South Region. Her role involves providing support to FirstService-managed communities with respect to lifestyle operations. Mindy joined FirstService Residential in 2021, bringing with her over 20 years of experience in property and luxury lifestyle and amenity management. Prior to joining FirstService Residential, Mindy held leadership positions at Castle Group and WTS International, where she served as Regional Director. Originally from Tampa, Mindy graduated from the University of South Florida with a Bachelor of Science degree in Exercise Science and Health Promotion. She is licensed as a Community Association Manager (CAM) and is also a Certified Manager of Community Associations (CMCA). Mindy resides in Lithia, Florida, with her husband, two children, and their puppy. In her free time, she enjoys engaging in fitness and sporting activities. Mindy is an active member of her community; she is on the Board of her local YMCA and serves as the acting secretary on her HOA Board of Directors.

Jenna Brut



Jenna Brut Garces is the Regional Director of Lifestyle for FirstService Residential in the NE FL market. Her role involves direct support to Lifestyle Directors, and Managers, pertaining to Lifestyle at developer-maintained communities. Her specialty is 55+ Active Adult communities. Jenna has been with FirstService since 2015 and before that she held various event planning roles for a cumulative 20 years' experience. Raised in Jacksonville, FL, Jenna graduated from the University of North Florida with a Bachelor of Science degree in Communications and Charis Bible College with a degree in Theology. She was co-owner of a small recording studio, and, while her daughter was young, she had a small company, which made children's clothes and accessories. Currently she still lives in Jacksonville and has a daughter who is graduating this year, a puppy named Winston, and 'too many' plants. In her free time, she goes to all the high school and club sports games for her daughter and nephews, spends time with family and friends, loves the beach and going to listen to live music. She is an active member at church and, even though it's not as often as she'd like, plays in the worship band.

Kari Bowman-Leslie



Kari Bowman-Leslie is the Recreation Director at Salamander Resort and Spa in Middleburg, Virginia where she has been since it opened in August of 2013. Kari also serves on the Middleburg Business & Professional Association Board of Directors since 2019. Prior to Salamander, Kari was at Kiawah Island Golf Resort for 10 years starting as an Intern and through the ranks to Recreation Manager and Co-Marathon Director. While attending Iowa State University Kari spent her extra time working in the Intramural Department and also 3 years at the Nevada Parks & Recreation. Kari has been a member of RCRA since 2003. Kari lives in Winchester, Virginia with her husband Brandon and two dogs, Cubby and Copper.

Brennan Brossman



Brennan Brossman is a Penn State University graduate and attended the RCRA conference in 2011 as an undergraduate student. His academic internship and first job after graduation were both a result of networking at the RCRA conference. Brennan now lives in Charlotte, NC with his wife and 3 young children. He is a National Sales Manager for the largest pool product distributor in the world. He works with waterparks, resorts, hotels, universities, and professional athletic facilities throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Katherine Caffrey



After graduating from Marymount University with a degree in Business Management, Katherine worked in the surf/skate/snow recreation industry. Realizing a career working with children was her passion, she spent 10 years teaching kindergarten and then in 2017, Katherine moved back into the recreation industry, becoming the Recreation Manager at Reston Association where she currently oversees youth programs and summer camps. Katherine has been an American Red Cross CPR/First Aid/AED Instructor for the past 4 years and she spends each spring certifying her over 70 staff members in this lifesaving skill.

Dr. Joshua Carroll



Dr. Joshua Carroll is a Professor of Recreation, Parks and Tourism at Radford University. His teaching and research focus on sustainable, nature-based tourism and how this can be used as a pathway toward positive community development and ecological integrity. He has worked on many projects with agencies and organizations such as the US National Park Service, US Forest Service, State Parks, various beach communities, and river systems. His work has made valuable contributions in several locations such as New England, California, Colorado, Bahamas, Virginia, and Alaska. Dr. Carroll holds a Ph.D. and M.S. in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources, both from Colorado State University.

SPEAKER BIOS

Jessie Decker



Jessie Decker is a Human Resources specialist with the heart of a Recreation professional. She is Corporate Trainer at Chatham Bars Inn, a luxury Cape Cod resort, rated as a Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star property. She holds a degree in Recreation Management from the University of New Hampshire and has worked with the luxury resort since 2000. In addition to leading the resort's training and development initiatives, Jessie has held the positions of Intern, Activities Coordinator, Recreation Manager and Human Resources Manager at the resort.

Dr. Anthony W. Dixon



Dr. Anthony W. Dixon serves as a Professor in the School of Hospitality, Sport and Tourism Management at Troy University. Dr. Dixon earned his doctoral degree from Clemson University in Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management with an emphasis in sport, tourism, and economic development.

Dr. Harriet E.T. Dixon



Dr. Harriet E. T. Dixon is an Assistant Professor in the School of Hospitality, Sport and Tourism Management at Troy University. Dr. Harriet Dixon earned a Ph.D. in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management from Clemson University. Dr. Dixon's research interests include: Tourism Behavior, Leisure Behavior, Tourism Behavior, Constraints to Leisure, the Travel Experience, the Aquatics, Qualitative Research Methods.

Dr. Charles Hammersley



Charles Hammersley, Ph.D. is a professor in the Parks & Recreation Management Program at Northern Arizona University. In the past 24 years at NAU he has developed and taught courses across the PRM curriculum. His academic emphasis includes commercial recreation, facility design, ecotourism and happiness courses. Dr. Hammersley has presented numerous educational and research sessions at national, state and local park and recreation associations and agencies. Since 2015 he has taught the Happiness course to over 2,000 students and conducted happiness workshops for community groups.

Dr. Andy Holdnack



Dr. Andy Holdnack, is recently retired and was the former Assoc. Chair of Regional Programs for the Global Hospitality & Tourism Management Department at the Univ. of West Florida

Dr. Patrick J. Holladay



Dr. Patrick J. Holladay is a Professor at Troy University. His research focuses on sustainability, social-ecological resilience, and community development through tourism in areas like cultural heritage, agriculture, natural resources and faith/spirituality. He is a Research Fellow with Tourism RESET and the Past President of Georgia Grown Trail 17.

Dr. Jill Fjelstul



Dr. Jill Fjelstul is an Associate Professor at the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. She joined the faculty in August, 2005, completing her doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from the UCF College of Education in January, 2006. Her academic interests are aligned with golf and private club management, tennis management, and hospitality in sports. Her research interests are with the RV industry, golf, club, and tennis management, and online education. She joined UCF in 1996. Dr. Fjelstul has extensive background in developing successful programs, both academically and industry based. At Rosen College, she wrote and successfully defended a Bachelor of Science degree program in golf and club management. More recently, she created the official academic partnership with the United States Tennis Association, which launched in Fall, 2016, becoming the founding Director of the Professional Tennis Management Program.

SPEAKER BIOS

Michelle Kithcart



Michelle Kithcart leads and develops our lifestyle directors and managers across the region through the creation of training programs, SOPs, and resources, as well as best practices. She is responsible for propelling efforts to enhance the resident experience, innovating technology solutions, and driving culture throughout the organization. She works closely with the market leaders and regional support teams to provide additional resources and support for our lifestyle programming efforts. She is responsible for coordinating lifestyle conferences and monthly training programs, creating programming resources and distributing weekly support communications, onboarding and training new associates, and providing valuable input on developing lifestyle programming SOPs and tips of the week.

Before joining our team, Michelle worked in the special events and resort recreation fields and in the gated-community sector of event and activity planning for 20+ years. Her experiences span a diverse base of homeowners and multiple lifestyle communities. During her tenure as a lifestyle director, she worked closely with the on-site sales teams and potential buyers to promote lifestyle. Michelle was involved with all aspects of the community, including planning and implementing small- and large-scale events, vendor negotiations, budgeting, forecasting, board reporting, coordinating fitness classes, personal trainers, seminars, workshops, bus trips, excursions, clubs, and overseeing and leading hundreds of volunteers.

Jennifer Lesnick



Jennifer Lesnick is a graduate of Cornell University, School of Hotel administration. She began her hotel career with Four Seasons, Omni and Hyatt hotels in operations and sales. Jennifer was an association planner in Chicago for the National Restaurant Association and the International Foodservice Manufacturers Association before starting her own 3rd party meeting and event planning company. After 22 years of her consulting practice, Jennifer moved to Cape Cod to first join Chatham Bars Inn as their assistant director of tennis and is currently the manager of recreation and activities. Jennifer has been with Chatham Bars Inn for 3 years.

Lisa Linden



Lisa Linden, the creative mastermind and owner behind Creative Recommendations is an innovative leader and enthusiastic trainer. Lisa has a strong background in customer service, planning and directing activities and programs as well as marketing recreation services and supervision. She is dedicated, passionate and committed to her profession and wants all the teams that she works with to push their potential and be their best self. Some of her “favorite things” include golf, music and travel. Lisa has a B.S. in Parks and Recreation Administration with emphasis on Commercial Recreation from Illinois State University.

Ben Lorenzen



Hello my name is Ben Lorenzen! I work at a Club in Omaha Nebraska called Champions Run. I am the Creative Director, Chief Memory Officer, Director of Vibe and all things fun! You're on this page reading about me for a reason - and that reason is -TO MAKE MAGIC! My purpose is to inspire people to be greater than they thought they could ever be! I have been happily married to my wife Allison for two years! I grew up working in aquatics and clubs since I was 15 years old. I went to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Majored in Communication and Video Production. I worked as the Web Director for a pharmacy Chain in Omaha Nebraska for 3 years, when I was approached for the Champions Run position. I have been at Champions Run for 8 years now and love every minute of it, because every day is different!

Dan Merenick



Dan Merenick, Sr. Program Manager, at Reston Association in Reston, VA from 2015-present. Prior to Reston Association, spent 24 years at a variety of jobs in Recreation, from resorts, private clubs, YMCA's, city & county parks and recreation agencies, and a variety of homeowner associations. RCRA Board of Directors 2006-2008 and in 2009 was awarded the Debbie Regnone Service Award. Dan rejoined the board in 2022 where is currently the Professional Committee Liaison. In 2022, Dan was awarded one of RCRA's highest honors, the Howard Ubel Lifetime Achievement Award. Dan has been a presenter at previous conferences discussing program planning, trends in the industry, risk management and led group panels at both regional and national conferences.

Kevin Nelson



Dr. Kevin Nelson, is a Professor of Business Administration (Resort Management) and former associate dean at Western Colorado University.

SPEAKER BIOS

Chris Parkinson



With over 2 decades of sales and management experience under my belt, one of my greatest strengths lies in my ability to create and cultivate relationships through servant leadership. I firmly believe in putting the needs of others before my own, and I have found this approach to be incredibly effective when it comes to sales and management. By genuinely caring about the success and satisfaction of those I work with, I am able to foster trust and loyalty, ultimately leading to long-term partnerships and repeat business. I am someone who is always willing and committed to personal and professional growth. I understand the importance of continuously improving and learning new skills in order to stay ahead in today's competitive business world. I enjoy taking on new challenges and actively seeking feedback in order to enhance my abilities and contribute even more to the success of the company.

Annie Pilek



Currently the Director of Recreation and Entertainment at the Mohonk Mountain House, New Paltz, NY. I have been employed at Mohonk for 18 years. I was the Children's Program Manager for 3 years, Activities Manager for 7. I attended SUNY New Paltz for my undergraduate and received a Master's in Teaching as well from SUNY NP. I love arts and crafts my whole life. My favorite thing besides making things is finding new ideas, sharing them, and helping people with some hands-on fun.

Kate Price-Howard



Kate Price-Howard, Ph.D., is an associate professor for Troy University for the School of Hospitality, Sport and Tourism Management within the Sorrell College of Business and has worked in the hospitality industry for more than 35 years. Her work during these years was primarily at resort and property management companies, but also included academia, cruise ships, summer camps, and recreation therapy. She has experientially taught commercial recreation to college juniors and seniors in an internship setting as an agency supervisor for her own company, Go Play, Inc., since 2001. She is a board member of SECSA (Southeast, Central & South America Federation of ICHRIE), and a current member of Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association, and Resort and Commercial Recreation Association, and recently became an editor for the Journal of Tourism Insights.

A. Scott Rood



A. Scott Rood is an Associate Professor and former chair of the Department of Hospitality & Tourism Management at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, MI.

John Schroeder



With two decades of experience under his belt, John continues to be a driving force in the world of event management. His passion for bringing people together, whether for philanthropic endeavors, sports-related causes, or shared hobbies, remains undiminished. He envisions a future where events will continue to serve as powerful tools for connecting people, raising awareness, and making a positive impact in the world.

Dr. Frank Tsai



Dr. Frank Tsai, is a respected associate professor in the Department of Sport Management, Hospitality & Tourism at Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania.

Catrina Vargas



Catrina is a 19-year hospitality veteran, having experience in all departments (yes, including engineering). Most of her experience is in the recreation field leading fishing, high ropes courses, bike rentals, tennis, beach operations, inflatable and resort water parks, water ski, children's centers, spas, fitness, and special events such as Hot Air Balloon Festivals and even an 8 million light Christmas show. Catrina has also led South Seas Island Resort as their Director of Guest Experience when it was the 2020 Premier Recreation Operation Award recipient for 300-799 room resorts. She is currently a member of the Executive Committee at Hammock Beach Golf Resort & Spa as the Director of Recreation, Spa, Fitness, Tennis, Beach, and Pool/Water Park Operations

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Conference Reflection

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GRATITUDE LIST

THINGS THAT MADE ME HAPPY:

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