



Illinois Park & Recreation Association
15 Spinning Wheel Road, Suite 218
Hinsdale, IL 60521
(708) 588-2280

Contact:

Illinois Park & Recreation Association
Heather Weishaar
heather@ilipra.org
708-588-2280

For Immediate Release

**Glencoe Park District Employee Awarded for Professionalism at
Statewide Conference**

Hinsdale, IL – On January 30, 2026, the Illinois Park & Recreation Association (IPRA) honored Shannon Stevens from the Glencoe Park District with the IPRA Young Professional of the Year Award, for her commitment and excellent service to parks, recreation, and conservation in Illinois. Ms. Stevens was recognized during the IAPD/IPRA Awards Program at the IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference, held at the Hyatt Regency Chicago.

The IPRA Young Professional of the Year Award recognizes an up-and-coming leader in the field of parks and recreation, is given to an individual with less than eight years of experience, and someone who shows a great deal of promise in becoming a future leader in the field.

Shannon Stevens exemplifies what it means to be a rising leader in parks and recreation. Her dedication to safety, community, and innovation has made a lasting impact on the residents of Glencoe and professionals throughout Illinois.

One of Shannon's most notable achievements is the creation of the Beach SAFE program, which has reached over 700 children ages 3 to 11. By partnering with Early Childhood programs and the local school district, she integrated water safety education into the curriculum, strengthening the culture of safety at Glencoe Beach.

Shannon expanded her focus on safety by developing a series of boater safety videos for the lakefront. These resources are now required viewing for all new boaters, modernizing how safety information is shared while ensuring education and enjoyment go hand in hand.

Her commitment to community building shines through signature events like Summer Splash at the beach and Themed Family Skates at the ice rink, which attract over 1,000 participants annually. She also facilitated a school-based skating program that enables more than 800 students to learn to skate each year.

Through her innovation, leadership, and commitment to both her community and profession, Shannon Stevens truly exemplifies the best of what a young professional in parks and recreation can be.

‘Congratulations to Shannon for being recognized by her peers with this award for her passionate dedication to her community and to the profession,’ Suzi Wirtz, IOM, IPRA Executive Director. ‘I personally am impressed by emerging young talent who take the lead on innovation and make lasting contributions. I’m excited to continue to see how Shannon will help shape the future of the profession and the association.’

Established in 1944, the Illinois Park & Recreation Association (IPRA) serves over 3,000 park, recreation, and conservation professionals throughout the state, and is a national leader in providing premier education, networking, and resources. For more information about IPRA, its board and mission, please visit the IPRA website: www.Ilipra.org.

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