

Save Summer Swim campaign earns WPROA Silver Star Award



Photo by Empire Photography

(Left to right) WPROA Past President Shelley Strasser, Hartford Parks and Recreation Director Randy Wojtasiak, Washington County Parks and Trails Coordinator and Marketer Sophia De La Pasque and WPROA President Stephanie Schlag at the 2023 WPROA Annual Conference & Trade Show.

WASHINGTON COUNTY — Washington County, the Kettle Moraine YMCA and Hartford's Veteran's Memorial Aquatic Center were awarded the Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association Silver Star Award for the Save Summer Swim campaign, during the 2023 WPROA Annual Conference & Trade Show that ran from Jan. 31 through Feb. 3.

According to the release, the Silver Star Award was in the Creative Service Delivery/Marketing Programming category.

“When we learned that some municipal pools would close during the summer of 2022, we found a creative solution. Save Summer Swim gave county residents access to beach and swimming amenities at a discount,” said Washington County Executive Josh Schoemann. “I’m happy that the Wisconsin Parks and Recreation Association recognized our innovative partnership with the city of Hartford and the Kettle Moraine YMCA.”

“WPROA is our state association, and to be recognized on a state-level stage

as a part of any program or to receive any recognition from them is a great honor,” said Hartford Parks and Recreation Director Randy Wojtasiak. “It’s great publicity for our department and our community”

“I give all the credit to Josh Schoemann, the county executive, for really having a great vision on how we can collaboratively work closer together,” said Kettle Moraine YMCA CEO Rob Johnson.

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The Save Summer Swim campaign, which was proposed by Schoemann in June 2022, used American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to increase wages for lifeguards at the VMAC, which will be added to the cities' budget overtime, and to provide a 50 percent discount swim passes to the VMAC, Kettle Moraine YMCA and three county parks with non-lifeguarded facilities for Washington County residents.

According to Wojtasiak, the Save Summer Swim campaign, which his predecessor Mike Hermann worked on as his last project as Hartford's Parks and Recreation director, was a benefit to the VMAC and the community.

"It was great that the county stepped forward to offer to do this," said Wojtasiak. "It was a benefit to our facility and the residents of Washington County to be able to access our facility with that discount-

ed rate."

Additionally, Kewaskum approved covering an additional 50 percent discount for the Kettle Moraine YMCA for village residents, which allowed them to receive a free day of admission at the YMCA, according to Johnson.

He added that the YMCA saw great participation from county residents due to the summer swim pass.

The plan was proposed in response to several swimming facilities in the county being closed for the summer 2022 season, largely due to a shortage of available staff.

According to Johnson, the collaborative effort in 2022 should have a positive impact on 2023 as well.

"The aquatic market, specifically, is very difficult to hire and one of the things that we talk about all the time is sustainability," said Johnson. "Josh obviously helped us with some ARPA funds to get us through last summer, but really he put the onus back on us to say, OK, how can we get these pools open the

next summer. I can tell you, we've already hired and trained 13 lifeguards for the city of West Bend in a collaborative effort to try and get Regner Park open this summer."

He added that through this new collaboration, it's not about competing for lifeguards anymore.

"At the end of the day, Regner Park is open for three months in the summer and we're open 12 months out of the year," said Johnson. "We want to train those staff, so hopefully they come to work for us during the school year."
