

FEBRUARY

JULIENE HEFTER - VOLUNTEER

National Recreation and Park Association

Julienne Hefter takes her job seriously. "I'm very passionate about the aquatic profession," she says. "It's our job as professionals to inform people of safety, risk management, and liability." She takes it so seriously, she's putting measures into effect this year as president of the National Recreation and Park Association's National Aquatic Branch. Her goal is to bring more attention to the industry within the U. S., because she feels a lot of people outside the industry don't perceive aquatics as a true profession.



Part of her plan includes developing a certification course for managers, a program she first tried to develop as chair of the National Aquatic Management School. With such a program, professionals can learn to plan procedures, write staff manuals, run their operations, and engage in stronger risk management. She also wants to encourage veteran industry members to move up into more administrative positions, higher up within Parks & Rec.

A competitive swimmer from childhood through her years at the University of Wisconsin-Lacrosse, Hefter studied organizational leadership and quality during her graduate years at Marian College in Fond du Lac, Wis. She was always involved on the state level in aquatics and soon moved up the ranks to the national level. The 39-year-old deputy director of the Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association also hopes that all the different associations within the industry will collaborate to create a consistent message in safety.

"There are so many different levels of training and opportunities," she says. "I'm an individual that is big on teamwork and cooperation."

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Her hope is that within the next 10 years, the various organizations will work together to lower the number of drownings and near-drownings by educating each other and their communities. For the past 10 years, she has tackled these issues by speaking at conferences on management, special events, programming, staff training, sponsorship and team building.

No matter what she does, she strives to give aquatics professionals a sense of ownership in their titles. Providing them with additional training and education goes a long way toward doing just that. "I want to take care of those people," she says. "We're trying to make aquatic professionals as well-rounded as possible."

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