**Conference: Your resource for knowledge and professional growth.**

GRPA’s Annual Conference is your number one membership value added benefit. Regardless of this being your 17th year in attendance or your very first year. Here are some tips to take advantage of the many resources you will discover over the next 4 days.

**PEER NETWORKING**

Remember you are the “Expert” in your field. With the opportunity to be exposed to over 600 “Experts” opportunities to learn and ask questions will be in abundance. Engaging with a peer can easily lead to advice that can last your entire career. Take a few moments to introduce yourself to those next to you in a session. Have a seat in the hallway and participate in a conversation or just listen. When you go out to eat, sit at a table with attendees that you do not know. Every time you walk into your hotel lobby, you are sure to run into a group that is engaged in a spirted conversation about a parent or a maintenance issue. Never discount the many moments you will have at an evening network event to ask, “where are you from”, as the relaxed environment leads to great problem-solving opportunities. Networking this week may be your most beneficial benefit of conference, and it can begin with a simple “Hello, my name is”.

**ATTEND A SESSION**

With over 60 sessions this week, there is one for you. You will find a variety of presenters from your local peers to nationally known speakers. These sessions have been selected so there is something for everyone based on interest and network specific topics. Many of our presenters present throughout the nation at a variety of workshops and settings. Remember the benefits of networking, imagine learning directly from a professional that networks with professionals throughout the country.

**ATTEND OUR UGA CARL VINCENT INSTITUTE SESSIONS**

GRPA has been working for many years to launch a program that will provide you with a Certificate Program that recognizes and identifies your professional commitment to the field and proof of further education. You will have an opportunity to attend the first offerings of our core classes that, when combined with network specific classes, will be recognized with statewide official certificates of recreation and parks learning from UGA. These accomplishments will be easily recognized by your elected officials as they will be structured the same as ACCG and GMA certificates of learning. You will also be able to look for yearlong opportunities around the state in all network categories.

**ATTEND THE EXIBHIT HALL**

GRAP offers one of the largest Recreation and Parks specific exhibit halls in the country. With over 120 booths, there will be a company that represents what you are in the market for. Remember, the companies’ representatives are industry experts. Their products and programs are combined with decades of serving departments just like yours. GRPA values these interactions and has made sure there are no other sessions or events scheduled during the exhibit hall hours. You can join us for the provided lunch, play our exhibitor game or bid on a silent auction to benefit the Leadership Program all while seeing what is new in our industry.

**ATTEND THE BUSINESS MEETING**

GRPA is your association, come and see how it works. Your leadership will update you on progress from the past year along with goals for our future. Many of our association’s awards will be presented at the event as well. Awards allow you to see what other agencies are accomplishing and are a great opportunity to be inspired to create a new program or project. Awardees work hard throughout the year and appreciate your support while being recognized. Supporting all our professionals is a great way to bring our association together. Additionally, your vote counts, don’t miss the opportunity to vote for your upcoming leadership.

**ATTEND THE AWARDS BANQUET**

We truly are an association of many talents and accomplishments. The banquet allows us to be proud and celebrate ourselves not as individuals but as a collective group that serves the citizens of Georgia. It’s an evening of dressing up a little, but also an evening of inspiration and celebration. You will hear a recap of Presidents Estes year of service along with the goals of our incoming President Cosby. Their comments represent the direction of GRPA along with their true gratitude for what you do for our association. Representation of our accomplishments will also be recognized with our most prestigious recognition. Learning how our agencies and professionals serve our chosen profession provides insight you cannot achieve anywhere else.

**BE YOU**

You are here because an agency, director or supervisor wants to recognize your commitment. You are here because you have chosen to seek knowledge in the profession you chose to serve others. You have skills and knowledge that others are seeking to learn from. Use these four days to introduce yourself to professionals that are here for the same reasons you are. Starting the conversation, being a part of the conversation or listening to the conversation are your beginnings to looking forward to your next GRPA offering.