

## Career Profile: Tara Eggleston, CPRP, AFO



### **Job title and description:**

Assistant Division Chief in the Sports, Health, and Wellness Division.

M-NCPPC Department of Parks and Recreation

Within this role, I am responsible for overseeing department-wide programming and facility operations for aquatics and tennis. I have direct oversight of 10 aquatic facilities and/or sports complexes and I am responsible for programming, budget, personnel management and staff training. I am also responsible for developing partnerships with other organizations that further enhance the programs offered by my facilities.

### **What led you to your career in Parks and Recreation?**

I grew up attending and participating in Parks and Recreation programs to include swimming lessons, summer day camps and playgrounds programs. I fell in love with swimming and decided that I wanted to become a lifeguard. Lifeguarding was my first job and I worked for M-NCPPC's Department of Parks and Recreation throughout high school and college. A couple of years after graduating from college, I was offered a full-time position managing an indoor aquatic facility. Since that time, I have been promoted through the ranks to my current position.

## **What skills, experience and qualifications are necessary for you to do your job?**

In addition to practical facility management experience, knowledge of aquatic programs, training, and operations is essential to this position. Continuing to train and earn professional certifications is also important. I currently hold the following certifications:

- Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP)
- Aquatic Facility Operator (AFO)
- Certified Pool Operator (CPO)
- American Red Cross Lifeguarding/First Aid/CPR & AED
- American Red Cross Lifeguarding Instructor (LGI) & Instructor Trainer (IT)
- American Red Cross Water Safety Instructor (WSI) & Instructor Trainer (IT)

## **What challenges do you face in your job?**

Risk management is a big challenge when operating aquatic facilities and programs. Ensuring properly trained staff are in place, safety and pool operating equipment is regularly maintained and serviced, and managing a large complement of career and seasonal/intermittent staff can be challenging at times.

## **What is the most rewarding aspect of your career?**

Having the ability to offer programs and services that potentially save and improve lives is a wonderful feeling. I really enjoy working with my team to develop new programs and outreach in our communities. And being in a position that can influence change is another rewarding aspect of my career.

## **What advice do you have for job seekers interested in your position?**

My advice to job seekers interested in my position would be to constantly train and stay involved with your programs, staff and operations. Whenever possible, work to broaden your professional network via state and national conferences, committees, boards, and training opportunities.

## **How has NRPA helped you in your career?**

NRPA has provided tremendous professional development and networking opportunities for my career. In addition to offering the Aquatic Facility Operator certification, NRPA has afforded me opportunities to train other aquatic professionals via the annual Congress and Exposition and the National Aquatic Management School (NAMS). I also had the opportunity to serve as

the 2013-2014 Aquatics Network Chair and this was a great opportunity for me to engage and work with industry professionals from across the country.

NRPA was also the vehicle that introduced me to the National Recreation and Park Ethnic Minority Society (EMS) which again, has broadened my professional network. I have continued to correspond and work with professionals within the EMS and it has been a wonderful experience.