



## 2014 Congress Education Session Preview Live Chat Transcript: Great Ideas Featured in Charlotte

1:58

**Tom Crosley:**

Welcome! Joining us today are Pat Armstrong, Director of Parks, Recreation and Cemeteries at the Town of Yarmouth Parks and Recreation and Ann Marie Heiser, Deputy Director of the Parks and Recreation Department from the Town of Herndon, VA.

1:58

**Tom Crosley:**

Ann Marie has also worked as Community Services Director and Youth Director for the Recreation and Parks Department at the City of Westfield, MA, Program Director for Wicomico County, MD, and worked with the Champaign (IL) Park District for an undergraduate internship and Program Assistant.

Ann Marie holds a Masters of Public Administration from Westfield State University (MA) and a Bachelor of Science – Recreation from Lock Haven University (PA). She's been a Certified Park and Recreation Professional for 14years, and a member of the National Recreation and Park association since 1994. She's active with the Virginia Recreation and Parks Association as well, acting as the 2014 Education Co-Chair and joined the association in 2008.

1:59

**Tom Crosley:**

Pat Armstrong has served as currently the Director of Parks, Recreation and Cemetery for the Town of Yarmouth, Massachusetts, where she has served for 3 years. A 27 year veteran in the field, she has also served as Director of Recreation for the Town of Yarmouth for 19 years.

As a committed professional, Pat is very active at the state and national levels having served as President of the Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association in 2005-2006, where she remains on the Board of Directors. She served on the NRPA New England Regional Council for 24 years, serving as the Council Chair from 2005-2006. Additionally she was a member of the NRPA American Parks and Recreation Society Executive Committee from 2008-2010. Pat has served NRPA in myriad ways, to include NRPA National Forum Representative for APRS, NRPA Administrators Network Executive Committee and National Forum Representative. Pat has been an active member of the NRPA Congress Program Committee since 2008.

Her passion for community involvement is evidenced by her service to the Rotary Club of Yarmouth where she has been a member for over 13 years and has served on its Executive Committee and as President.

As a result of her untiring and dedicated service to our profession she has been honored as the recipient of the Peter C. O'Brien Humanitarian Award from the Massachusetts Recreation and Parks Association, as well as the Annual Citation Award from the NRPA New England Regional Council.

2:01

**Tom Crosley:**

An important note about today's chat, please: Your chat questions will not appear in the chat feed automatically, but we will work on providing a response to each question. Once the response has been created, we'll try to post both the question and the response together for everyone to see. We'll stop accepting questions at 3:00 pm, but if for some reason we cannot get to all of your questions today, we will send a response to you individually via email. Please begin submitting your questions now.

2:02

**Comment From Michael Kalvort**

I'm looking forward to a great Congress. Many thanks to Tom, Pat, and Ann Marie

**Tom Crosley:**

Thank you for the encouraging words, Michael!

2:03

**Comment From David Miller**

I'm excited for this year's congress

**Tom Crosley:**

Thank you, David! Looking forward to seeing you in Charlotte!

**2:05 Comment From Guest**

How are the sessions selected?

**Pat Armstrong:**

Session proposals are submitted in the Fall and then coellated and reviewed by the Congress Program Committee between Christmas and New Years. The proposals are then ranked and reviewed by the Program Committee early in January and over 200 hours of sessions are selected.

**2:06 Comment From Guest**

I am excited about this year's Congress and the great sessions that will be offered.

**Tom Crosley:**

Great! What type of sessions are you most interested in/are you hoping to attend?

**2:06** Do you plan on attending the 2014 Congress in Charlotte, NC?

Yes

( 50% )

No

( 0% )

Maybe/I Don't Know

( 50% )

**2:07 Comment From Guest**

Any tips for submitting a proposal for Congress?

**Pat Armstrong:**

Absolutely. Make your outcomes measurable and attainable, set the learning goals up front and follow them through the entire proposal and be enthusiastic about your topic.

2:09

**Comment From Guest**

How is it to work with the Congress Program Committee?

**Ann Marie Heiser:**

Working with the Program Committee is really a positive volunteer experience with NRPA. You are required to read and rate over 100 session proposals which is done online at your convenience. Members Travel to the Congress location and meet as a group to discuss the selections which are presented to the committee in ranking order. This occurs over 2 days. NRPA staff prepares all the material during this meeting. Travel and accommodations are the responsibility of the members and NRPA issues each member a free Congress packet for their volunteer service. Great professional experience. Very rewarding. NRPA staff are great to work with also.

2:09

**Comment From Traci Wieland**

I noticed speed sessions are now part of NRPA. Were these well received last year? Are CEUs available?

**Tom Crosley:**

Yes, thanks Traci. We'll be featuring 40 sessions this year, split up over two slots on Wednesday the 15th. No CEU's will be offered, fyi, because of the shortened time of each speed session. Last year, the Speed sessions were among our most highly attended and highly rated education opportunities at Congress.

2:11

**Comment From Rita Shue**

Looking forward to this year's Congress in Charlotte!

**Pat Armstrong:**

It is going to be sooooo much fun! Charlotte is beautiful and the city is perfectly situated for a Congress of our size. The Mecklenburg County staff is so prepared to show off their city there will not be a minute of rest from Sunday through Friday

2:12

**Comment From David Miller**

Can you talk a bit about the speed sessions? No CEUs for them correct?

**Ann Marie Heiser:**

Correct no CEU's for Speed Sessions. Speed Sessions are more informative than educational. Resembles TED talks. There are 40 speed sessions. Many are a shorten version of some speakers educational sessions.

2:13

**Comment From Guest**

Where will the conference be held in 2015?

**Pat Armstrong:**

Las Vegas Baby. At the Mandalay Bay. And there will be fines for sleeping in sessions.

2:13

**Comment From Guest**

Who is the keynote speaker this year?

**Tom Crosley:**

Actually, we'll feature a panel of three keynotes this year: Robert Garcia, Wendall Pierce, and Dr. Maya Rockeymoore. For more information about each of the three keynote panelists, please visit our website here: <http://www.nrpa.org/Congress2014/keynote-speakers/>

**2:15 Comment From Guest**

Ann Marie, How did you get involved with the Congress Program Committee?

**Ann Marie Heiser:**

I answered a calling from NRPA who were seeking committee members. Submitted my resume to NRPA. I wanted to get involved with NRPA and this was a great start for me. NRPA is accepting resumes now for the Program Committee. Submit your resume today to Tom Crosely

**2:16 Comment From Guest**

What's new at Congress this year?

**Tom Crosley:**

Interactive learning space we call the "Learning Playground" for some of our most engaging content, plus 2 "Learning Labs" where attendees can meet with some of their favorite speakers for valuable "facetime" and discuss the problems addressed in each speaker's education session. A great way to gain insight into the attendee's specific issues and potential solve problems when they return home. The "learning labs" will each be located towards the back of the exhibit hall floor and the speakers featured and the times that they'll be available will be posted both during their session, and on the Congress Web site: [www.nrpa.org/congress2014](http://www.nrpa.org/congress2014).

**2:17** What is your role at your agency?

Director

( 33% )

Support Staff

( 0% )

Programmer

( 0% )

Aquatics

( 0% )

Therapeutic Recreation

( 0% )

Other

( 67% )

**2:18 Comment From Michael Kalvort**

I have to go to a meeting, but wanted to show my support for the Committee, NRPA, and Ann Marie who is a great professional in Virginia. She makes all of us better.

**Ann Marie Heiser:**

Thanks Michael. You are a great professional and always enjoy seeing in VA.

**2:19 Comment From Guest**

Are there still opportunities to volunteer at Congress?

**Tom Crosley:**

Yes, limited opportunities to volunteer and receive a discounted registration rates for doing so. Opportunities include: Bag Stuffing, Floor Captains, Volunteer Room, Bag Distribution, Flying Squad and Room Hosting for Education Sessions (Individuals can receive CEUs as a Room Host)

**2:20 Comment From Traci Wieland**

Are there any emerging themes with this year's Congress that you can give us a preview of? It is a bit difficult to gather given we only have the titles at this point, so I was just curious.

**Pat Armstrong:**

Connecting Children to Nature  
P&R role in Healthy Living  
Collaboration, Partnerships and Privatization  
Emergency Preparedness and Catastrophic Incident Response Branding Yourself and Your Organization  
Managing Change

**2:21 Comment From Guest**

How are off site institutes selected?

**Tom Crosley:**

The Off-Site Institutes are selected by our local host committee. This year, Mecklenburg County has done an excellent job of selecting 10 opportunities on Sunday, Monday, and Thursday. It's worth mentioning that pre-registration is required.

2:24 Have you presented a session at the NRPA Congress before?

Yes

( 50% )

No

( 50% )

2:24 **Comment From Guest**

How many education session proposals are typically considered each year?

**Pat Armstrong:**

The Committee strives to recruit 400+ proposals from the general membership and 75+ proposals from vendors and private service providers. These numbers do not include Leisure Research Symposium Proposals or Off-Site Opportunities.

2:25 **Comment From Guest**

Do you have any proposal tips for someone who has never presented at the NRPA Congress before?

**Ann Marie Heiser:**

Tips would be to make sure you have measureable objectives that relate to your topic. Make sure the application is completed in full. Be thorough in your description and topic should be an upcoming theme or trend in the field so attendees can relate to your topic.

2:29 **Comment From Guest**

Will there be live, web streamed sessions offered again this year?

**Tom Crosley:**

Yes, Congress Live! will feature 10 streamed sessions for those folks who cannot attend Congress in person. We'll post information about Congress Live on our website here soon: [www.nrpa.org/congress2014](http://www.nrpa.org/congress2014)

2:30 **Comment From Guest**

Pat, how did you get involved with the Committee?

**Pat Armstrong:**

I was recruited by my college roommate, Wendy Rubin, who was on the PC for 12 years and was the Chair in Seattle. She said this committee was one of the best experiences she had ever had working with NRPA and that I would not regret it. WOW was she right! I have met some wonderful professionals who are friends for life and my community has benefitted greatly from the many contacts and ideas I have brought back home and implemented.

2:30

**Comment From Guest**

Are there any "must-see" sessions/speakers this year?

**Ann Marie Heiser:**

To name a few: David Carter, Molly Hetrick, Neelay Bhatt, Gary Packan, Jamie Sabbach, John McGovern, Lori Hoffner, Tom O'Rourke, Richard Dolesh

2:33

**Comment From Guest**

I really enjoyed the functionality of the mobile app last year. Will that be a feature used again this year?

**Tom Crosley:**

Yes, for Charlotte we're excited to roll-out a "new and improved" app to replace our on-site program! Stay tuned!

2:35

**Comment From Guest**

How do you recruit for speakers to present at the Congress?

**Pat Armstrong:**

We ask the State Executive Director's to forward names of power sessions conducted at their conferences. We ask similar associations for recommendations on successful presenters on management topics and we ask our educators who is trending with their students.

2:36

**Comment From Guest**

Has the Crawford Lecturer been announced yet?

**Ann Marie Heiser:**

Has not been officially announced but Fran Mainella has agreed to be the Crawford Lecturer.

2:39

**Comment From Guest**

What have been some of the biggest changes you've seen with Congress over the years?

**Pat Armstrong:**

The use of handheld technology has made the transfer of information so quick and so efficient it is hard to keep up with all of the trending and tweets. The more condensed program has made it necessary to come prepared or you are going to miss out on something great. The tracking of program offerings into tracks and topic areas has been really helpful.

2:41

**Comment From Guest**

When making proposal selections, does the program committee prefer to sessions of a more interactive nature than the standard lecture format?

**Ann Marie Heiser:**

There is no preference on the type but the committee likes to have a mix if possible. The only way the members will know if the session is interactive if the presenter includes this in their proposal.

2:43

**Comment From Guest**

I noticed on your preliminary schedule that my two favorite speakers are presenting sessions at the same time - and I want to attend both. Would you ever consider rescheduling certain sessions?

**Tom Crosley:**

It's worth mentioning that the schedule could change between now and then, but it's our goal to have many similar tough choices for folks to make throughout the conference. :) Shoot me an email at [tcrosley@nrpa.org](mailto:tcrosley@nrpa.org) and I can keep you updated!

2:44

**Tom Crosley:**

We're preparing to wrap things up....please submit any questions or thoughts now!

2:45

**Pat Armstrong:**

If you have not presented before, and would be interesting in submitting a proposal, PLEASE come to my session, "How to Submit A Successful Proposal For Congress". The panel will give you great tips and will even help edit your submission if you ask really nicely. We are not above bribes either :-)

2:46

**Comment From Rita Shue**

Great job Tom, Pat and Anne Marie! I encourage anyone who is interested in serving on Program Committee or submitting a session for next year to speak with any of the Program Committee members! See you in Charlotte.

2:47

**Comment From Guest**

You mentioned earlier about the new learning opportunities on the exhibit floor - who are some of the presenters?

**Tom Crosley:**

Rich DiGiromalo, Molly Hetrick, Jodi Rudick, and Andre Pichly, just to name a few

2:48

**Tom Crosley:**

I'd like to thank Ann Marie and Pat for joining us today! And thanks everyone for attending. We'll post a transcript of today's live chat on our website.

2:50

**Ann Marie Heiser:**

Thank you! This was a great opportunity to present questions about the education sessions. Very pleased to be part of NRPA and providing my service. See you in NC!

2:52

**Pat Armstrong:**

This has been a wonderful opportunity to reach out to the membership at large and discuss our upcoming Congress in Charlotte. I hope many of you will make the case with your agency that an investment in sending you to NRPA Congress is an investment in the healthy future of your agency. From small town divisions to county-wide departments, every one can learn something new EVERY year at Congress. Come join us in Charlotte and see you y'all soon.