

Session: *An Essential Public Service: Marketing Parks & Outdoor Recreation*

Panel: Dr. Dorothy Anderson, U of MN; DHA@umn.edu

Chris Kimber, MN Dept. of Health; Chris.Kimber@state.mn.us

Cindy Diamond, Diamond Marketing Solutions, cdiamonds@comcast.net

Moderator: Aaron Wunrow, DNR, aaron.wunrow@dnr.state.mn.us

Note-taker: Jade Templin, DNR, jade.templin@dnr.state.mn.us

- Key points from the panel discussion

Dorothy Anderson, University of Minnesota - Benefits Based Management (BBM)

[\(link to presentation\)](#)

Discussed four types of benefits (personal, social/community, environmental, and economic) and how managers work with visitors and local communities to provide benefits that add “value” to people’s lives.

Chris Kimber, MN Dept of Health – Health Benefits of Exercise & Recreation

[\(link to presentation\)](#)

Discussed health benefits of physical activity (quality of life improvements, economic savings from reduced health care costs, etc.) and the need to “make the healthy choice the easy choice.” Looked at how health benefits contribute to BBM and what partnership opportunities exist in MN to help develop and market health-related programs.

Cindy Diamond, Diamond Marketing Solutions – Brand Strategy and Three Rivers Park District Case Study

[\(link to presentation\)](#)

Discussed a “business” view of parks and their place in competition with other service providers, how do our customers see us. Used TRPD case study to illustrate the development of a brand strategy based on organizations values that guide marketing decisions – publications, focus on target audiences, etc.

- Q & A after speaker/panel presentation

Q: How much of the case studies or examples are transferable?

A: TRPD as a stand-alone district may have more flexibility to define its message and create its own brand. Can also develop a hierarchy of “brands” – brands underneath the umbrella brand that addresses programs or target groups.

Q: How do you integrate varying values within a community for BBM?

A: Agency needs to set back and allow the communities to mediate or moderate their own value sets – it’s not the agency v. communities over determining values.

Q: How do we market health and other benefits to the State Legislature?

A: Focus on the cost issue – parks as “outdoor health clubs” that create cost savings. Need to bring in the medical community as a partner to explain and sell the benefits.

Examples:

- *TRPB “trails at your own pace” program – identified easy/short trail loops appropriate for arthritis sufferers.*
- *10,000 steps program – multiple agencies participating.*
- *Dakota County and Health Partners “Do” campaign spin-off under development”*
- *City of Adeline, Australia – health clubs organize runs or other events in parks for members and nonmembers (boosts park visits, clubs recruit potential new members)*

Other ideas:

- *Health insurance cost reduction with health club membership, why not if a park user?*

Comment from a participant: Exercise is only a part of what people are interested in, what would boost visitation, etc. Don't become too focused on programming and marketing just about exercise.

Q: What are some of the hazards of branding?

A: Hazard if it is too internally focused, if your branding doesn't match the interest of the public or how they see you. Branding with others as part of a partnership can also create disconnects – what if some partners does not follow through, using the consistent message, providing the programming links, etc.

Q: Problem if we are targeting too narrow – we could be missing whole populations or groups? For example, focusing on current users misses non-users.

... and ...

Q: Health Departments and other groups have more acceptable target audiences. Parks are expected to be all things to all people. How does branding work for us?

A: In TRPD case, they were unfocused now, not really taking to anyone. Branding helps identify primary group to focus on to achieve goal of increasing visitation, when that is working, then the district can focus on secondary markets and groups. Important to not confuse targeted marketing with targeted service delivery. Focusing your marketing on certain groups or activities doesn't mean you are no longer providing services or facilities for other groups.

Q: BBM looks for managers to work most closely with local communities, yet many parks serve people for further way. Should we be focused on local communities or where our users live/their values?

A: Managers need to work on two levels – for local communities and for visitors – because they are linked. It is important to work cooperatively with local communities because your visitor's experience begins before they enter your park, in begins in the local community they pass through to get there. Shared sense of place with the park and local community will also help build local support for your park.

- What are the 3 most important factors/ideas to emerge from this session?
 1. *Targeting your marketing efforts is not the same as limiting the groups you serve.*
 2. *More target messages have more impact on more people than a general message aimed at a wider audience.*
 3. *Unifying your message, is critical but some “sub-branding” consistent with the overall message is ok.*
 4. *Partnerships can be valuable in selling your message, i.e. health care providers supporting your “parks for health” message.*