

VERNON HILLS PARK DISTRICT  
**JEFF FOUGEROUSSE**  
**HONORED PROFESSIONAL AWARD**

Carol Sente, VHPD Commissioner, 847.421.8440, [csentevhparkdistrict.org](http://csentevhparkdistrict.org)

Jeff has passionately dedicated 40 years to the Illinois parks and recreation field including the past 12 years as Executive Director of the Gold Medal award-winning Vernon Hills Park District. Our park board selected Jeff from a strong candidate pool for his proven ability to build, grow and effectively utilize his ever-expanding network for the benefit of our District and our profession.

His performance has even exceeded our Board's high initial expectations. We have watched Jeff utilize his exceptional abilities to achieve high functioning relationships with each park commissioner that has or is serving on his board regardless of personality. He brings this same vigor to building relationships with not only his immediate Federal, County and State elected officials but also electeds from geographies spanning Illinois. Closest to home, he expends weekly, even daily, effort communicating with his local governmental counterparts and innumerable corporate sponsors all to advance the field of parks and recreation.

In his trademark personable and interactive manner, Jeff empowers each of his five board members to become strong citizen advocates and challenges them to grow year over year. All board members participate in the IAPD board development program with senior members achieving "master" and newer achieving "notable" board level. He has encouraged his two new board members to participate in IAPD Boot Camp and created unique roles for each commissioner based upon their interests. Jeff uses IAPD Board Development workshops to aid his board's growth. His Board President was recipient of the Rising Star award and Board VP was recipient of the Legislator of the Year Award. Jeff hosted Lake County's IAPD legislative breakfast on several occasions and works tirelessly with state legislators to advance every legislative initiative affecting our industry. He immediately welcomed our newest State Senator and enlisted her assistance to thwart an intrusive new water reservoir from a neighborhood park while finding a superior solution welcomed by a neighboring agency.

He encourages his board members to actively engage as liaisons with other local governmental units to promote parks and recreation, form strong bonds with their elected peers and suggest opportunities for intergovernmental partnerships. In fact, Jeff was instrumental in encouraging one of his board members to run for state representative and to use that platform to advance the field of parks and recreation.

Jeff has proactively built valuable relationships and close friendships with local, county, state and federal electeds and their professional staff who represent the Vernon Hills community, the community in which he resides, and Illinois as a whole. He makes time to meet with them regularly in person and via calls, emails and invitations to our events, utilizing his remarkable connector skills to benefit our District and the profession. In both communities in which he worked, Jeff initiated a quarterly local officials get-together to form strong bonds and dramatically increase our number of successful intergovernmental agreements. Since Jeff has arrived at Vernon Hills, our District has exponentially grown our number of state, county and

local grants and developer monies. This year alone, he helped generate over \$750,000 in grants, receipt of a \$2.25 PARC grant, and (notified today) a \$500,000 capital grant to expand our fitness, recreation and childcare services.

Under Jeff's leadership, the Vernon Hills Park District won the 2021 NRPA Gold Medal award and is a proud and repeated IAPD Illinois Distinguished Agency. On behalf of a friend who passed, Jeff founded the Paul Fabbri Foundation for brain tumor research, served on its board for 25 years, raised over \$750K and served as Chairman of the American Brain Tumor Assn. for 4 years.

Jeff has worked tirelessly to advance the parks and recreation industry while participating in the following organizations in both his working and home community - his local YMCA, Rotary Club, Lions Club, Special Recreation District, High School Advisory Board, July 4<sup>th</sup> event committee, AYSO, American Cancer Society (Relay for Life Captain) and the national Community Solutions association for homeless individuals.

He served on the Joint Conference Committee (1992-2000) and was Co-Chair. He was a IPRA Board Member, Chairman and Past Chairman, an affiliate chair (North Shore Round Table), PDS and NRPA Sports Management School graduate. Under his tenure, our agency was awarded the Youth License Plate Award.

Jeff has presented numerous sessions at the Joint Conference and State Universities and has authored several articles in the IPRA magazine. Jeff is a Certified Park and Recreation Professional and graduated with an MBA from Aurora University and a B.S. from Illinois State University. Jeff currently lives with his wife in Elmhurst.