



**PRESS RELEASE  
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**Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association (NSSRA)  
Executive Director Craig Culp Celebrates 10 Years with the Agency**

**Northbrook – December 13, 2018** – This month Craig Culp celebrates 10 years of service with NSSRA. A significant achievement, Culp has served as NSSRA’s Executive Director since 2009, having been in the field of therapeutic recreation since 1993 and previously serving as Superintendent of Recreation at M-NASR (Maine-Niles Association of Special Recreation) for ten years.

Founded in 1970, NSSRA serves approximately 1,600 children, teens and adults with disabilities living in its partner communities throughout the northern suburbs. With nearly 500 recreation, sport, cultural and social offerings throughout the year, NSSRA is dedicated to creating new experiences, opportunities for leisure time, skill development and perhaps most importantly, friendship.

When Culp was named director ten years ago, NSSRA was in the midst of significant internal transition and navigating rough financial waters. Thanks to Culp’s leadership and dedication over the last decade, NSSRA is now not just financially stable, but also operates with a strong, passionate and vibrant internal culture amongst its staff members, an accomplishment significantly impacting NSSRA participants, families and partner agencies for the better. The positive transformation that NSSRA has experienced in the last several years cannot be understated, in large part due to Culp’s steady guidance and commitment.

“Craig Culp has been a tremendous asset and leader for NSSRA,” said Ron Salski, NSSRA Board Chair and Executive Director of Lake Bluff Park District, one of NSSRA’s 13 partner agencies. “NSSRA participation has grown significantly and NSSRA is financially sustainable due to his leadership and quality staff.”

Culp’s first priority is and always has been NSSRA participants. He is never too busy for people, period, and can often be found chatting with participants in the front office, at program jumping into a friendly game of basketball or rolling up his sleeves to help a participant with a craft or puzzle.

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“When I think about Craig and I think about his relationships with our participants, all that I can say is that he has so much compassion. He’s just got such a big heart,” said Liza McElroy, NSSRA Board member and Executive Director of Park District of Highland Park. “I was on the Board when we hired Craig, and not only was he the best candidate for the job, but what impressed me out of the gate was his ability to foster relationships and to build bridges.”

Indeed, Culp has excelled at cultivating relationships in the NSSRA community, not just with staff, participants and families, but with its 13 partner agencies and supporting organization, NSSRA Foundation.

Steve Wilson, Executive Director of Wilmette Park District, spoke to this, saying, “Craig has been a great point of contact for every board member. He is a true asset to the 13 communities the board members represent, and I for one am thankful for all he and NSSRA do to make the places we work and the communities we serve better places to live and raise our families.”

“We are so lucky to have Craig at the helm of NSSRA,” said Sue Hartemayer, parent of NSSRA participant, Kirk, Winnetka resident and Foundation director for 20 years. “Craig exudes kindness, enthusiasm and compassion. He is always upbeat and friendly, always.”

The Foundation particularly has thrived in the last ten years, providing over \$259,000 in scholarships since 2009, purchasing eight vehicles for NSSRA’s transportation needs, and donating \$110,000 in start-up funding for NSSRA’s adult day program, Enriched Lifestyles for Adults (ELA). Since 1997 NSSRA Foundation has raised over 1.8 million to benefit NSSRA programs and services.

Heidi Katz, longtime attorney for NSSRA and friend of Culp’s, captured the impact of Craig’s leadership and influence well, saying, “This zeal to ensure everyone gets a chance to be in the game plays out with inspiring results every day at the local level. Craig is not easily discouraged when particular projects or objectives meet obstacles but moves forward with determination to find a way to meet the ultimate objective. Put simply, he is one of the most positive, persistent and good-hearted people I have ever met.”

At the end of the day, Culp is unwaveringly committed to giving every NSSRA participant a place to play, grow and belong. The NSSRA community as a whole is incredibly fortunate to have such a committed and visionary professional leading the way to an ever-brightening future.

### **Additional Comments:**

“On behalf of Mayor Charlie Pecaro, the Highwood City Council and City Manager Scott Coren, I want to congratulate you on your 10-year anniversary as NSSRA Executive Director. Our community is so proud to be a NSSRA Partner Agency, and the accomplishments you and the NSSRA staff have delivered over the past decade is nothing short of extraordinary! Thank you for your vision, leadership, dedication, and tireless efforts that have delivered a lasting, positive impact on the lives of countless NSSRA participants and families. Here’s looking forward to many years of continued success!” – Jim Hospodarsky, Highwood Alderman and NSSRA Board Member

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“Craig delivers passion and commitment to the NSSRA family. Participants and staff benefit from his never-ending energy and devotion. Congratulations, Craig, on a decade of exceptional service to NSSRA!” – Molly Hamer, Executive Director of Northbrook Park District and NSSRA Board Member

“Craig is an outstanding leader and mentor for the NSSRA staff. He is a strong and active proponent of providing top recreational services for people of all ages and different ability levels. NSSRA is fortunate to have him as the Executive Director.” - Terry Porter, Former Executive Director of Wilmette Park District and, later, President of NSSRA Foundation’s Board of Directors

“It’s been such a pleasure getting to know and work with Craig in various capacities over the past several years. In him, I see a strong and visionary leader who is totally dedicated to the organization and his team. He creates a positive environment, empowers his staff and wants the best for everyone. When Craig sets goals, he engages completely and will not stop until they are achieved. His longevity, and that of others, in the organization speak to his commitment to creating and maintaining a positive, supportive and growth-minded culture at NSSRA. I have great admiration for Craig’s determination, tenacity, loyalty to his work and family, his pursuit of excellence and his love for fun. These qualities, and many more, make him an inspirational leader. I look forward to partnering with Craig and his team at NSSRA for many years to come. Congratulations on an amazing decade of service and leadership and here’s to many more!” – Ashley Ward, Director of Community Development at The Chamm’d Foundation

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NSSRA provides and facilitates year-round recreation programs and services for children, teens and adults with disabilities who live in the partner communities. NSSRA is an extension of ten park districts, two cities and one village in the northern suburbs of Chicago. This partnership includes the Park Districts of Deerfield, Glencoe, Glenview, Highland Park, Kenilworth, Lake Bluff, Northbrook, Northfield, Wilmette and Winnetka; the Cities of Highwood and Lake Forest; and the Village of Riverwoods. NSSRA has been creating an environment of belonging through play since 1970, and has the distinction as the first Special Recreation Association in the country. For more information about NSSRA and the programs and services they provide visit [www.nssra.org](http://www.nssra.org).

Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association Foundation (NSSRA Foundation) was established in 1997 to support the mission of NSSRA by raising and granting supplemental funding. NSSRA Foundation raises funds throughout the year with all proceeds benefiting the Association. The Foundation, in conjunction with NSSRA, hosts annual events for all donors, supporters and families. The Foundation also raises funds through solicitation of grants and their annual Holiday Appeal. Throughout the year, NSSRA Foundation receives generous support from many individuals, corporations, foundations, businesses and community organizations. For more information about NSSRA Foundation visit [www.nssrafoundation.org](http://www.nssrafoundation.org).