

Paying It Forward **By Cindy Curtis**

Foundation of VRPS Board Member **Foundation of VRPS Platinum Level Member**

After 33 years as a parks and recreation and municipal government leader in communities across Virginia, I was fortunate to retire from public service in April 2016. Over the past year, I embraced my newfound “freedom” and spent time reflecting on what the next stage of my life should become. I now lead several community-based volunteer initiatives and provide consulting services while also shortening my bucket list. Thanks to the many skills I gained from VRPS educational programs, mentoring by its diverse leadership, networking with colleagues, and volunteering in a myriad of society activities during my professional career, I am enjoying a vibrant and engaging semi-retirement.

In pondering how I can give back to an organization that has given so much to me, I came to the realization that I want to ensure the VRPS tradition of continuing education, networking and legislative advocacy remains strong in the years to come. I believe in the profound ways park and recreation programs and facilities positively impact our communities and state. I want to support future professionals by ensuring they receive the same leadership building blocks and principles that allowed me to enjoy a wonderful and fulfilling career. So how am I paying it forward?

First, I am a Platinum contributor to the Foundation of VRPS and participate as an active board member. As we all painfully recall, the Great Recession resulted in significant reductions to professional development budgets. Contributions to the Foundation help ensure member access to the Society’s vibrant learning programs and networking activities, which have and will continue to grow future VRPS leaders.

Second, I regularly connect with active and retired Society members to encourage advocacy for our profession and its many programs and facilities. Recognizing that VRPS members represent many different political entities, it remains imperative that we present a united front regarding the relevance of our profession and the importance of its work to our diverse communities and natural environments.

Third, I made a bequest to the Foundation of VRPS in my will. I believe it’s important to endow not only your family, but also the organization(s) you believe make a difference. I want my money to go to places that I trust and value. As a long-term member and beneficiary of VRPS, I am part of an institution that represents professionalism, challenging work, diligence and close camaraderie. It’s my desire to support future generations of VRPS members in their personal and professional growth.

There are many other ways to provide financial support to our professional organization. If you are interested in discussing these options, please reach out to me, Jim Stutts, Greg Sager or the other members of the Foundation. I encourage you to think about how you can make a meaningful difference in the future of VRPS, its members and our Commonwealth. I know the person I am today is due in no small part to the time I spent engaged with the work of VRPS and its Foundation and I will pay it forward.