

## **Jerad Campbell**

I live in Aurora with my wife and our three energetic sons (ages 7, 3, and 3). As a family, we value spending time outdoors, and we're frequent visitors to the many parks, trails, facilities, and programs managed by the Fox Valley Park District. These spaces have provided us with opportunities to connect with nature, stay active, and build lasting memories together. Professionally, both my wife and I are public servants. I work in local government, while my wife dedicates her career to education and social work. We are both committed to giving back to our community in meaningful ways and are grateful for the personal and professional growth that the FVPD and our community have offered over the many years.

### **How did your career in the parks & recreation industry begin?**

Years back on a family vacation to Yellowstone National Park (we also visited the Badlands, Grand Tetons, and several other destinations out west). Inspired by that experience, I decided that I wanted to pursue a purpose in the field of outdoor recreation. At that time, I didn't exactly have a plan, rather just a general direction. Ultimately, I ended up attending Illinois State University majoring in Parks and Recreation Administration. I volunteered at many agencies during this time, just trying to get a better understanding of the industry and all its offerings. I ultimately ended up performing an internship for a local county Parks and Recreation department, which I was able to parlay into a seasonal, and then full-time position within that organization. Initially my focus was on the recreation side of things, working guest services, creating and leading recreation programming, working sponsorships, and so on. A new challenging opportunity opened within that same organization and I moved to operations and maintenance. I took with me a firm understanding of programming and business, and began to develop an interest in asset management, asset improvement, and natural resource conservation. Weaving all of these aspects together was challenging and extremely appealing. After gaining knowledge and insight, I had realized that I wanted to expand the opportunity for career growth and applied for a position that interested me at the Fox Valley Park District. I interviewed and hired for a position that we informally called "Trees and Trails." It was a position in our operations work group that primarily focused on all aspects of arboriculture, managing our tree and inventory, and maintaining and managing all aspects of our regional and internal trail systems. I was hooked. I subsequently pursued an open position within the organization in Parks grounds maintenance, performing all aspects of maintaining our wonderful park system. After a few years of development, I was able to apply for and earn a position as a grounds maintenance supervisor, continuing to learn and develop under experienced leadership. Years later I was once again considered for a promotion to serve as Assistant Director of Parks. While serving in that role, I once again was the beneficiary of great leadership and the opportunity to develop, learn, and be a part of challenging and rewarding work. Having served in that role for almost six years, an opportunity presented itself to serve as our Acting Director of Operations, which eventually led to a formal role.

### **Describe the main responsibilities of your role:**

At its core, my role is essentially customer service, for both internal and external customers. We cooperate amongst all departments and stakeholders to fulfill our mission of enriching our community with fun, diverse and safe park and recreation experiences. Primary responsibilities revolve around planning, coordinating, directing, and overseeing all of the dynamic plans and strategies of the operations department. One of our main focuses is improving, maintaining, and managing district land and facilities. We care for all aspects of our fixed

(and mobile fleet) assets and also collaboratively deliver capital improvements by way of renovation and new construction.

**What do you enjoy most about working for the Fox Valley Park District?**

What I enjoy most about our organization is the incredible diversity we experience in our people, residents, and the wide range of parks, facilities, and programs we offer. Each day presents new and unique challenges at all levels, which keeps the work exciting and meaningful. The culture here fosters professional development and encourages staff to explore fulfilling and rewarding opportunities. I take great pride in serving the community where my family and I live, knowing that the work we do has a direct, positive impact on the place we call home.

**What traits do you feel lend well to a career in parks & recreation?**

Service. Innovation. Willingness to accept new challenges. Working with colleagues to achieve collaborative goals and accomplishments.