

# Inside NYSRPS



RAYMOND GOMES

## President's Message

Hello Everyone, I hope this message finds you well and you're having a successful spring/summer season. It is my pleasure to address you at this time as I begin to serve you over the next 12

months. I am truly honored and humbled to serve the Society as its President.

I would like to begin by congratulating Elaine Apfelbaum on an outstanding term. Her leadership and passion elevated our entire organization to a new professional level. Also, congratulations to those professionals who made the Saratoga Conference such a fun and rewarding experience, especially Conference Co-chairs Myla Kramer and Joe Archino. Thanks Myla and Joe! Finally, I would like to thank all those committee members who give so much time and energy into making our society such a success. Their hard work and dedication is so appreciated.

As I write this message I am remembering the lost of three of our greatest professional icons, Dr. Fran Wallach, Dr. Salvatore Prezioso and Joe Davidson. I was blessed to know them personally and professionally. Suffice to say they were pioneers in the Parks and Recreation Field and an inspiration to so many. Their work in our field was legendary and they will be truly missed.

We, as members are very fortunate to have a dedicated executive staff that handle the Society's day-to-day operations and much more. They along with Executive Board have many new initiatives and programs planned to meet the ever-changing needs of the membership. With this in mind here are some of the goals and objectives we have set forth for the coming year.

1. Move forward on our initiative to recruit and retain young professionals through our new Student Chapter membership category. Also increase our connection and communication with students through the use of social networking sites including [www.nysrps.ning.com](http://www.nysrps.ning.com) and [www.myspace.com/nysrps](http://www.myspace.com/nysrps).
2. Continue to nurture our relationship with other professional societies enabling us to offer shared/partnered programs such as the Downstate Conference.
3. Persist in our effort to maintain a balanced budget while keeping membership rates affordable.
4. Continue advancement of our new web site, [www.nysrps.org](http://www.nysrps.org).
5. Continue membership outreach to state organizations and the New York City/ Metro area.
6. Examine and review of our awards criteria.

These are just a few goals the Executive Board will be discussing in the up-coming year. We welcome any questions or comments you may have.

On behalf of the Executive Board, the Executive Director and the NYSRPS staff I wish everyone a happy and healthy summer.

Sincerely,  
*Raymond M. Gomes*

P.S. I'm looking forward to working with Paul Blake and the LILSA team who will host our 69th conference at the Hyatt Hotel in Long Island.

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# IT'S THE LAW!

I have been advocating for the use of person first language for more than 20 years, most of those while living and working in New York. And, in all those years, I never once described person first language as politically correct. I described it as accurate, positive, and sensitive; as a technique for communicating humanness; but never as politically correct. But now it is the law!

Previously approved by the New York State Assembly and Senate, but vetoed by former Governor Pataki; the “person first” bill was reintroduced by Assemblyperson Harvey Weisenberg (D-Long Beach) in February and signed into law on August 1, 2007 by Governor Spitzer. The bill requires the use of person first language when describing individuals in legal documents, publications, and state and local legislation. The text of the bill reads:

“On or after the effective date of this section (immediately), all new and revised statutes, local laws, ordinances, charters or regulations promulgated or any publication published by the state or any political subdivision that refer to persons with disabilities shall seek to:

- I. avoid language that
  - a. implies that a person as a whole is

- disabled (e.g., the mentally ill or the learning disabled),

- b. equates persons with their condition (e.g., epileptics, autistics or quadriplegics),

- c. has negative overtones (e.g., afflicted with cerebral palsy, suffering from multiple sclerosis, confined to a wheelchair or wheelchair bound) or

- d. is regarded as derogatory or demeaning (e.g., handicapped or mentally deficient)

2. replace non-respectful language by referring to persons with disabilities as persons first (e.g., individuals with disabilities, individuals with developmental disabilities, individuals with mental illness, individuals with autism or individuals with mental retardation).”

So there you have it: accurate, positive, and sensitive; a technique for communicating humanness; and now, in New York, the law! The Recreation, Parks, and Leisure Studies Department at SUNY Cortland has for some time now had a commitment to the use of person first language. Students will find a statement to that effect in every course syllabus. Additionally the NYS Inclu-

sive Recreation Resource Center now in its second year, and also located in the RPLS Department at SUNY Cortland is working to educate the folks across the state about person first language as part of “Inclusion U,” an full day training designed to prepare individuals to gather descriptive and detailed information about recreation programs, areas, and facilities so that potential users may make better plans for enjoyable inclusive recreation.

If you have been way ahead of the legislation, congratulations! If not, perhaps it is indeed time to get on board. If you are interested in learning more about Inclusion U or the NYS Inclusive Recreation Resource Center, please contact us at [InclusiveRec@cortland.edu](mailto:InclusiveRec@cortland.edu).

By Dr. Vicki Wilkins, IRRC

