

Looking to the Future

Lindsay Sypnieski

Looking ahead to the next twenty-five years, what are the greatest challenges and opportunities that public gardens will face?

When looking ahead to the next twenty-five years, I think our challenge will be evolving how our gardens relate to people. For some people, our gardens are a respite from technology, and they use their visit to escape from the outside world and immerse into nature. Others want to learn and get answers, and seek entertainment. How can we appeal to both of these audiences and be everything to everyone? I believe that is our greatest challenge and opportunity.

What can gardens do to overcome these challenges and take advantage of these opportunities?

To attract new visitors, I believe we need to further embrace technology. Filling a gap that would otherwise require additional staffing, technology can be used in way finding and educational activities to help us meet the visitor experience expectations of our future visitors, members, and donors. To be successful, we'll want to balance offerings that include technology with opportunities for social interaction that tie with our mission. Our visitors will continue to expect us to connect with them through technology and social media and I believe that visitors will crave the types of interactions that we can meet through educational classes, events, guided walks, and garden interactions. It may be impossible to be everything to everyone; I believe that it is through balance that we can get closer to that sweet spot, without compromising our mission and values.

What role could APGA play in assisting gardens to overcome these challenges and take advantage of these opportunities?

I believe APGA plays a great role in providing opportunities for gardens to connect and learn from each other. The more gardens that can take part in conferences and smaller regional meetings, the better it is for everyone. Every garden has its own unique challenges and opportunities, but for the common ones we face, we can accomplish much more if we share our best practices with each other. APGA fosters those connections and should continue to do so in the coming years.

Lindsay Sypnieski is the events manager at Como Park Zoo & Conservatory. She may be reached at lindsay.sypnieski@ci.stpaul.mn.us.

