

## The Relevance of Play; The Relevance of MRPA

**By Rich DiGirolamo**

As a professional speaker who brings fun and play to my audiences, I get what you do. I get why you do it. I get why it is important to the population you serve. In my world play connects teamwork, communication, and creativity in organizations. In your world it connects things like cognitive learning, emotional health, and rehabilitation.

I often hear comments and criticism about the “play” thing. I choose to process those comments as “they’re just jealous.” It’s not that I/we play as our profession; it’s that we’re having a good time, making a difference, and love our work. That annoys people. Most people do not love their work. I don’t know about you, but inside I say “Hoo-Hoo!”

Never has there been a time when play is more needed in our world – for so many reasons; not just the clinical. Never has there been a time when it is more relevant. And don’t let anyone fool you; no one can do it better than those trained professionals who continue to seek out educational opportunities to understand the importance and need for play; or as you call it – Recreation; more specifically, Recreation Therapy.

But you are only as relevant as the investment you make in yourself. So with that said, don’t you even think of putting anything in the calendar other than participating in this year’s MRPA Conference September 23-25. You do; and I’ll send Rula after you.



Now more than ever you need to connect with your peers; to talk about the challenges that face you; to share the successes you have experienced, to come up with solutions to things like wages, benefits, licensing, and so much more. It's time for you to play like there's no tomorrow. Or drink all of the issues away. (That would be water. Wink.)

Therapeutic Recreation is on the map; it is receiving the recognition it deserves; yet even in these challenging times it is up to you (and me) to make sure that the recognition continues to grow. Are you up for the task? Are you up for having some fun?

I'm your keynote speaker in September. We're gonna talk about the challenges, the successes, how to deal with the negative comments, and so much more. We're gonna laugh and play to our hearts content. But I promise you this, at the end of those few days you'll have some new tools to be better at what you do! I'm gonna do my part to make sure of it; I know your conference organizers are doing the same; even as you are reading this.

So you have a few options:

1. Crawl back under the covers and hope for miracles
  2. Use Wikipedia as your source for education
- Or
3. You can Save the Date and come out and play in September. You can be part of the solutions; be part of the industry growth and transformation that is occurring right now.

I just returned from speaking at a Youth Leadership Conference where economic fears, declining customer base, managing volunteer time, and wages/benefits were on the top of the delegate's minds. They showed up to the conference to identify solutions. Sure, they whined a little bit (and I'll let you do that too if we must); but in the end we discussed and identified new and unconventional opportunities.

So.....

Save the Date. Block the Date. Pencil in the Date (I prefer a pen). Blackberry it. App it. Outlook it. Put it on your Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and other Social Media accounts. You get my point. This is the one conference you won't want to miss; you shouldn't miss.

And in the meantime, go directly to your closet and start picking what outfit goes with what, who you are going to room with (heck, pitch a tent in the parking lot if that will be more fun), who you secretly wish you could room with (heck, go for it!), who you are going to travel with, and let's get excited.

As Recreation Therapists you matter to the lives of so many. They need you; they also need to know that you are constantly working to improve yourself in order to improve their lives. But more importantly, your profession needs you – more than ever.

So what's next? Go register, Silly! And if the conference committee tells you the registration information is not ready yet, give them grief and tell them YOU'RE sending Rula after them. (I will loan her out if necessary.) And in the meantime if you want to see who this crazy character is; visit a special page on my website I have created just for you at <http://richdigirolamo.com/MRPA>

I'll see you in Mt. Pleasant in September.

*Rich*