

The IWGA hired Lisa Voight as its first Chief Executive Officer in March. Initially tasked with setting up the headquarters in Colorado Springs, the CEO supervises the day-to-day operations of an organization that seeks to bring increased professionalism to the way it conducts its business. Given Lisa's background and demeanor, that is bound to happen in a big way.

FORUM's Roland Hilfiker talked to the CEO about The World Games, their sports, their administration and, of course, two baby girls.

FORUM: Starting something from scratch can make for excellent opportunities. Does this apply to opening the IWGA's first professional headquarters as well?

Lisa: I am honored to be the first CEO of the IWGA. Getting these headquarters started is a fantastic opportunity to work with the IFs on creating an important and successful brand identity for The World Games.

FORUM: You and the IWGA were flooded by congratulatory messages upon your appointment. Some even came from Switzerland.

Lisa: I was flattered to be congratulated by so many people after my selection as CEO. The messages from distinguished leaders in sports such as Dr. Jacques Rogge, IOC President, Mr. Gilbert Felli, Olympic Games Executive Director, and Mr. Hein Verbruggen, UCI President, who I had worked with during my tenure at USA Cycling, were all very complimentary.

FORUM: Tell us more about your background in cycling!

Lisa: I was the Executive Director/CEO of USA Cycling from 1993-2002. During my tenure, I oversaw the governance restructuring and corporate merger of USA Cycling. When I became the chief executive of the US Cycling Federation, the USCF was only amateur road and track racing. In 1995, we created a new corporate structure, USA Cycling, and brought amateur road and track racing, mountain biking, professional racing and BMX (the new Olympic discipline) under one corporate umbrella. USA Cycling started to be very competitive internationally, which in turn made us very successful in bringing many corporate partners on board. I am proud of our accomplishments at USA Cycling, and it was indeed a privilege to work on behalf of athletes such as Lance Armstrong. When I started at USAC, he was on our development national team. To be a witness to Lance's first win at the

1999 Tour de France — only a few but for him very trying years later — was an emotional and proud experience.

FORUM: Didn't you also serve your National Olympic Committee in various capacities?

Lisa: I have served on the US Olympic Committee's Board of Directors since 1995 as a representative of the National Governing Body Council. I have served on many USOC Committees. I was elected to serve on the USOC Executive Committee, in 2000, and I am currently a member of the International Relations Committee and the Ethics and Governance Task Force, which just recommended sweeping changes to the USOC governance structure.

FORUM: Either you are the exception to the rule or there appears to be gender equality in sports administration at last!

Lisa: My curriculum as a professional and volunteer in sports administration could serve well to suggest that all prejudices have been overcome and that there is equal opportunity for men and women. However, while there has been some progress, there is certainly room for even better gender equality in sports administration at the leadership level. It is highly encouraging that the IOC President was recently quoted as saying that *more needs to be done and the IOC needs to lead by example*.

FORUM: Which are Lisa's sports, the ones she practices and those which — as she is watching them on TV — have her on the edge of her seat, ready to leap and cheer?

Lisa: I am a big sports fan! I enjoy doing and watching many sports. I am addicted to the Olympic Games and the Tour de France. I participate in running and recently did my first 10 km with my twin girls in their baby jogger! Cycling, mountain biking, hiking, golf, fly-fishing, skiing, aerobics, I do them all! I make it a

priority to stay fit and healthy. My grandfather was a professional golfer and my husband a professional cyclist: sports always were and will be a big part of my personal and my professional life.

FORUM: Will Lance Armstrong win his fifth Tour in succession?

Lisa: Lance is an amazing athlete and person. He is so talented and driven. I think he will definitely win his fifth and sixth Tour in succession.



FORUM: What do the 33 member IFs and the many sports of The World Games have in common?

Lisa: The people making up the IFs and participating in these sports are the common denominators. I love that individuals can be so passionate about their sport, wanting me to know what makes it so special. The passion and the energy of the individuals involved make it all the more exciting to be part of the IWGA team!

FORUM: Familiarizing yourself with the 30+ sports of The World Games requires considerable effort. Will you read up or try out?

Lisa: I do plan on acquainting myself with the many sports of The World Games by doing as much research as possible and by learning from all who are willing to spend time teaching me the finer nuances of their sports.

FORUM: What are the other challenges of your first year as CEO?

Lisa: Getting up to speed on all the sports, establishing contact and an optimal working relationship with the

IFs and the Duisburg Organizing Committee. Plus all the other basic challenges of setting up an office from scratch! I was accustomed to having 60 plus individuals working for me. The challenge now is not to have a big staff with expertise in specific areas. Angela and I will have to become experts in everything from marketing to accounting, from IT problems to whatever the issue at hand. It is all very different from running a high-profile NGB with a large budget and a large full-time staff. But this will be fun!

FORUM: You probably started off by thoroughly analyzing the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of The World Games.

Lisa: There are many strengths of The World Games concept. I think their sports are fun and cool, inviting great interest and participation. The popularity of the sports on the program is the primary strength. The concept that the host city may bring on one or two sports of its choice adds to that. The popularity of and the participation in The World Games have both grown. Comparing the six editions from Santa Clara to Akita reveals impressive growth! Weaknesses that we will be focusing on: the lack of general awareness about The World Games, the full appraisal by key people of just what a tremendous property The World Games represent. You and the communications and marketing group have done a great job with the brand image and the awareness campaigning already. Another area that we now need to improve upon is corporate sponsorship, possibly having to partner with our host cities organizing committees to accommodate corporate sponsors and sharing in marketing and television revenues. Overall there is tremendous opportunity.

FORUM: Colorado Springs is known as the *Amateur Sports Capital of America*. Just like Lausanne, it offers the unique congeniality and synergies that the presence of several sports governing bodies can bring about.

Lisa: Colorado Springs is host to the US Olympic Committee, many American federations, two IFs — both members of the IWGA — and now the IWGA. Colorado Springs has a strong commitment to amateur sports. To be based here is a definite advantage and does bring about important synergies between these sports and their administrations.

FORUM: Something very beneficial, particularly for recruiting staff! It shouldn't come as a surprise that you have worked with Angela Scholze before.

Lisa: We are very fortunate to have Angela on the team. Angela and I have worked together in the past at U.S. Olympic Committee events. She did an excellent job in the international relations and the games preparation divisions. She was also instrumental in the bid city selection process, which ultimately put NYC 2012 forward as the USOC choice.

FORUM: Members of the IWGA board describe the facilities at the El Pomar Executive Office Building as perfect and the foundation's offer as most generous.

Lisa: We are privileged to have our headquarters at the El Pomar Foundation's main building. The foundation's chairman, Mr. Bill Hybl, is very supportive of international sports and has been particularly generous and gracious in his offer to the IWGA. But we must also recognize the IOC and IOC President Jacques Rogge for their support and the contributions that make these headquarters possible.

FORUM: You're coming off a sabbatical year of sorts, the family and particularly your twin baby girls took up all of your time for the past 12 months. Tell us more!

Lisa: My husband Craig Griffin is originally from New Zealand and was a competitive cyclist. He was a three time Olympic coach for the US Cycling Team and currently works for CTS, an Internet coaching business for endurance sports training. We are the proud parents of twin girls, Anna and Kate, who were born on May 6, 2002. Since we cannot be certain what sport they will take up later, we expose them to as many as possible at an early stage.



International World Games Association — Angela speaking!

Should you contact the headquarters by phone, you will almost inevitably talk to Angela Scholze first. She is the executive assistant who joined Lisa Voight in setting up the new offices at 10 Lake Circle in Colorado Springs. Originally from Wisconsin, Angela moved here in 1998 and started to work for the United States Olympic Committee (USOC). The following are but a few of the more recent stations in her curriculum vitae:

Games Services Coordinator, International Games Division:

Planned, coordinated and monitored all pre-Games housing and USOC VIP housing at all Games between 1998 and 2002 for 400+ athletes, VIP and staff.

Bid Administrative Specialists, International Relations Division:

Reviewed the U.S. bid city documents and prepared summaries (approximately 700 pages each) of the U.S. bids for the 2012 Olympics.

Reported findings to Olympic Task Force Committee and assisted in selecting finalists and U.S. Candidate for the XXX Olympiad.

This dedicated team player with an outgoing personality and excellent oral and written communications skills will be the first point of contact at the IWGA Headquarters.



10 Lake Circle
Colorado Springs, CO 80906
USA
TEL: +1 719 471 80 86
FAX: +1 719 471 81 05
info@worldgames-iwga.org

Office hours are from 08:00 to 17:00 Mountain Time (UTC minus 6 hours for daylight saving time, UTC minus 7 hours otherwise)