

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION

2018 ANNUAL REPORT

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A. Community Special Events

1. Summer Concert Series

The Park and Recreation Board chose the concerts for the Friday Night Summer Concert Series again this year. Concerts were held on each Friday from June 15 – July 27 with various types of musical entertainers performed in Bicentennial Park. Each group performed from 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Diverse styles of music were heard including, oldies, country, acoustic guitar and polka.

2. Independence Day Activities

The parade was again sponsored by a donation from the **Fairlawn Area Chamber of Commerce**. On Wednesday, July 4, the Independence Day Parade marched down West Market Street from the St. Hilary parking lot to the old Telxon building parking lot (3320 West Market Street). We once again had volunteers from the Copley-Fairlawn Kiwanis serve as our line organizers. Once the parade passed them, the people could make their way to Bicentennial Park for the Fireworks Event, event, which is underwritten by the **Fairlawn Community Foundation**. Mick & Rick played in the gazebo for two hours while food trucks served the people attending the event. The Brass Band of the Western Reserve played next and kicked off the fireworks display. The Fairlawn City Women's Club also sold refreshments during the concerts and the Copley Fairlawn City Schools Transportation Department provided free shuttles for the people from Summit Mall to the park.

3. Children's Events

Our children's parties continue to be successful, hosting both Fairlawn residents and those from our neighboring communities.

Colors Day, Bike Decorating Day, Carnival Day, Community Helpers Day and Water Day were held during the summer park program and proved to be fun additions for our summer camp kids. The summer park staff ran the events and the children and parents would like to see many of these become annual events.

Gingerbread House Making was brought back for the fourth year. Families made gingerbread houses from graham crackers held together with icing and a choice of toppings to decorate their houses. While the children were working on their creations, Santa and Mrs. Claus arrived to visit with each child and give them a small gift.

B. Recreation Activities

1. Summer Park Program

We again had great attendance at our daily park activities which include borrowing equipment (tennis racquets, balls, hula hoops, games, etc.), daily sports and games at the parks and participating in craft time with the staff. The special event days outlined in the Children's Events section were a success and will continue in the years to come.

2. Sports Programs

T-Ball: Jump Start Sports provided children aged 3 and 4 the opportunity to learn the basics of T-ball on Tuesday evenings at Croghan Park. Each child has practices and games and comes away with an MLB hat, team shirt, and award.

Hummingbird Soccer: Jump Start Sports came to the parks to provide basic soccer instruction to children ages 3, 4 and 5. The camp meets on Saturday mornings for an eight week session. Each child comes away from the camp with knowledge of dribbling, passing, trapping, shooting and positioning as well as a t-shirt and trophy.

Lacrosse: Jump Start Sports lacrosse is an eight week camp designed to give elementary school age children a positive introduction to the sport of lacrosse. They met at Croghan Park on Tuesday evenings

Challenger Soccer Camp: For the second year, the #1 soccer camp in America and Canada offered two half day and one full day program at Croghan Park this year. We had a good turn out and plan to offer this camp again in the future.

Tennis: Towpath Tennis Center again provided two tennis sessions at both Croghan and Griffiths Parks. They offer classes to both children and adults.

C C. LRC/Naturalist Programs

Naturalist Programs

The Naturalist strives toward creating and executing nature, wildlife, environmental and natural resource education programs for children and adults of all ages and to promote community science. This goal was attained through offering a wide range of both popular and new programs and creating new and lasting partnerships. The Naturalist traveled to many local institutions to present nature education programs as well as hosting many groups, schools, scout troops, and visitors by offering various programs, clubs, and events at Fort Island Park and off-site. Of the variety of programs were offered some required pre-paid registration while others only required the participants to show up for free programs such as hikes and free talks and workshops. Some programs were held on an a bi-weekly or weekly basis such as Yoga, Garlic Mustard Pulls, hikes and monthly bird watching days. Others were offered only once as a special event. Larger events were planned and held in collaboration with other organizations such as River Day in spring in conjunction with Friends of the Crooked River.

Programs completed: 107 (Yoga, 30 sessions, and -ology Days, 20 sessions, and Garlic Mustard Pulls counted as 1 program each)

Program participants: approximately 1,259

The Naturalists are committed to fostering a greater awareness, deeper understanding of and appreciation for the natural world around us in which we live through interactive, hands-on educational programming in all of the parks' programs offered throughout the year. Both the Naturalist and Assistant Naturalist continue to be committed to interpretation of nature, wildlife, and environmental issues through educational programs, hikes, Learning Resource Center

displays, camps, workshops, talks, and seminars for the entire Fairlawn and Akron community. Interpretation also included a better emphasis on historical and cultural interests of the park and the greater Akron and Bath Township areas. The Naturalists encouraged citizen science by engaging the public in conservation efforts, participating in local bird counts for submission to bird conservation organizations, bee and other pollinator observations, and other environmental issues of concern to the general public. Bluebird boxes and bat boxes continue to be replaced as needed throughout the park to replace the old ones. Local volunteers have continued to build and donate these types of items as replacements as needed, and we are very appreciative. The Naturalist continues to research and implement an Invasive Species Management Plan for Fort Island/Griffiths Park in an effort to control unwanted plants from taking over all available growing space (such as Garlic Mustard, Japanese Knotweed and Phragmites). Volunteers come to the park at various times during the year to help control these invasives by hand pulling for disposal. Nesting of bluebirds continues to be monitored. Due to the bluebird box initiative during the last three years, eastern bluebirds have returned as ongoing residents of Fort Island Park. This is a testament to the success of building and placing new bluebird boxes throughout the park. Additionally, the pollinator garden in front of the LRC has been filling in with native plants and pollinator friendly plants over the course of the past two years. To maintain this area as an optimal pollinator garden and teaching garden for our nature programs and the general education of the community, a fence was erected with gate access to it. This will help to keep visitors from walking through the garden, stepping on new plants and seedlings, and from picking the blooms. We saw many more butterfly species this year because of the flourishing of this garden. For the first time we were able to rear Monarch caterpillars on the Milkweed in the garden and release up to 25 adult Monarch butterflies. This was very exciting for the community to be a part of and observe. The insect collection display continues to grow as new specimens are added each season. Both Naturalists have continued to gather and prepare an archive of the native flora and fauna of Fort Island Park with photo and written description. This is an ongoing project that will take several seasons to compile, so it is a work in progress with the intent of making it available to the public. Likewise, the Naturalists have begun creating an herbarium collection for the LRC. Seasonal collections of plants from Fort Island Park and Fairlawn Park at the Oxbow have been dried, pressed, and identified and make up this current collection. This, too, is an ongoing project that will take several seasons to complete. In 2018, we also began a preliminary new collection of seeds from various plants to begin compiling a seed bank for dry storage.

The USDA Animal Welfare permit and the Educational Animals Collection permits are in good standing. In addition, we also obtained the U S Fish and Wildlife Service permit to be able to house migratory birds and/or their parts for educational and program purposes at the Learning Resource Center.

For the purposes of professional development and to keep current with what is happening in the science field the Naturalist and/or Assistant Naturalist attended the following professional development conferences:

- Ohio Woodland Steward's Woodland, Water and Wildlife Conference
- Wildlife Diversity Conference
- Ohio Reptile and Amphibian Conference
- Monarch Webinar
- Ohio Natural History Conference
- Wildlife Symposium at Zanesville State College
- OPRA Visit – Wildlife Conservation Center – Stark Parks
- Lake Erie Science and Nature Center
- Lake Park Farm

Training on Sportsman Software

The Naturalist increased efforts to advertise and cross-market programs by posting events on Beacon Journal.com, Patch.com, SummitCountyCalendar.org, Akron-Summit Visitors Bureau, sending press releases to the West Side Leader, hosting open houses, implementing new classes, programs, and clubs, and being part of various community events such as Earth Day at the Akron Zoo (Party for the Planet and Senior Safari Day), and talks given to local clubs such as Nordonia Hills Library, AARP, various other adult and senior groups. The Naturalist and Assistant Naturalist also successfully utilized social media to reach out to the public in advertising impromptu events, science education, and to solicit material donations for the LRC. We continue to post regularly on the city's park Facebook page highlighting different upcoming events, park events that took place, highlighting daily items of interest, and posting nature pictures with identifications or explanations for educational purposes. We have also made efforts to respond to survey feedback and requests for programs that the residents would like to see us do.

Relationships were maintained with Copley-Fairlawn Schools, especially Ft. Island Elementary, local Girls Scouts and Boy Scout troops, local Home-School groups, and other out of town schools. Outreach efforts continue to increase partnerships with local colleges, universities, professors, undergraduate and graduate students, and community scientists by promoting and making available the LRC and Ft. Island Park as a regional field station to be utilized for current and on-going scientific research (i.e. College Ecology and Environmental Studies class visits, invasive beetle monitoring, and on-going Entomological and Botanical collections for the LRC). Our visitor counts have remained high with a high volume of traffic through the LRC. We continue to promote various collaborative events for the aim of getting groups of persons from the community to gather at or on the grounds of the LRC and Ft. Island Park in the interest of learning and promoting science within the local and surrounding communities. We have offered additional and more varied programs for all age groups and interests and we have provided more public talks such as talk given to groups such as the Women's Club, the Garden Club, the senior citizens group as well as other free public talks offered at the LRC. We continued our regular contacts and made some new ones with the following schools: The University of Akron, Fairlawn Lutheran School, Waite Elementary School, Arrowhead Elementary School, Shaw JCC, St. Hilary Elementary School, Cloverfield Elementary, Virtual Academy, The Elms, Copley-Fairlawn Middle School, KinderCare, Tallmadge Summer Camp, Nordonia Hills Summer Camp, local Daisy scouts, Brownies and Girl Scout troops, Boy Scout Troops, Hattie-Larlham, and Kidz Zone (for disabilities), and speaking engagements for groups including Nordonia Hills women's club, Fairlawn Seniors, AARP group, and a few local home school groups. We have continued our new collaboration and partnership with the University of Akron Field Station at Bath Nature Preserve. Field station manager Dr. Lara Roketenetz continues to reach out to us with an interest in collaboration on some programs at both sites (ours and theirs) with ideas of cross advertising and presenting programs together.

Over the last three years we have also joined with the Akron Audubon Society for the annual Christmas Bird Count on the third Sunday of December. These counts are then compiled from all over nation for the National Audubon Society. This year (2018) at Fort Island Park on the morning of the count we counted 36 different species and 404 total individuals.

Volunteer numbers are at 42 on the books, with 26 volunteering regularly at some point during the year.

Total Volunteer hours in 2018: 793 hours

The Learning Resource Center continues to be visited frequently by the community. Hours were extended to include some evening hours and partial Saturdays during the year.

Total visitors for the 2018 year: 11,478. (as of Dec 26)

The program animals housed at the LRC in 2018 included: 2 Pigeons, Eastern Box Turtles (4), Ferrets (2), Common Musk turtle, Painted Turtle, Louisiana Milk Snake, Great Plains Rat Snake, Northern Water Snake (juvenile), California King Snake, Mexican Milk Snake (juvenile), Garter snakes (2, juvenile), Brown Snake (juvenile) Red-eared Slider turtles (4), Koi pond fish, Gray Tree Frog, Wood Frog, Fire-bellied Toad (1), American Toad, Chinchilla, Cockatiel, Parakeet (4), Jenday Conure, Holland Lop-Eared Rabbit (2), Chilean Rose-Haired Tarantula, Bearded Dragon, Geckos (1), and Goldfish and Tropical Aquarium Fish.

We lost 8 animals by death of natural causes in 2018: 1 Russian Tortoise, Red-Eared Slider, Red Rat Snake, Fire-bellied Toad, Peach-faced Lovebird, Leopard Gecko, and 2 Hermit Crabs

We gained 8 animals by rescue or donation in 2018: Eastern Chipmunk, Domestic Pigeon, Brown Snake, 3 Parakeets, Crayfish, Wood Frog

D. Fairlawn-Kiwanis Community Center

Ongoing rentals and Civic Group meetings:

- Every Monday, the lower level is rented for a Tai Chi class.
- Fairlawn City Women's Club holds their general meeting on the first Friday of each month and their Board meetings on the third Friday of each month
- Fairlawn City Garden Club holds their meetings on the second Friday of each month
- VFW post #349 holds their meetings on the third Thursday of each month
- World War II/Korean and Vietnam Wars Roundtable holds their meetings on the fourth Wednesday of each month
- Fairlawn Toastmasters holds their meetings on the first, third and fifth Tuesdays of each month
- WWII/Korean War Roundtable hosts their speakers on the fourth Thursday of each month.
- Fairlawn Seniors hold their events on the first Monday of each month.
- Epilepsy Support Group meets on the third Wednesday of each month.

E. Staff Training

Laurie & Bridget:

OPRA Conference – January 28-31, 2018

- Facilitates Asses Management: Planning for the Future
- Powered by Purpose
- Free Staff Training: Engage, Retain & More!
- Visionaries & Visuals: Creative/Artist Partnerships in Parks
- Appreciology
- Breaking Bad: Becoming the Leader you are Destined to Be!
- 7 Habits of Successful Leaders Who Break Barriers to Create
- Developing Your Leadership Pipeline
- Stories from the Other Side
- Developing an Effective Corporate Sponsorship Program
- Driven to Overcome

Laurie

NRPA Conference - September 24-28, 2018

- Get Out of the (Rule) Box: Stop Thinking Like a Municipal Employee
- Parks for Inclusion: Working Towards Health Equity for our most Vulnerable Populations
- Exploring the Role of Parks and Recreation from a Mayor's Perspective
- More Recreation Program Hacks: 60+ Ideas in 60 Minutes
- Grantmaking Success: A Conversation with Funders
- Best Practices When Approaching Diverse Communities and How to Engage Them
- The Dreaded 'S' Word
- Recreation: A Tool for Reshaping Northwest Indiana's Lakefront

Eastside Roundtables

- **February 7, May 2, September 2 and December 12, 2018**

OPRA Visit to the Wildlife Conservation Center – Stark Parks – May 17, 2018

Sportsman Software Training – November 30, 2018

Troy and Evan

Monarch Webinar – February 15, 2018

On the Wings of Monarchs: A 10,000 foot view of species conservation (Wendy Caldwell, Monarch Joint Venture)

Ohio Natural History Conference – February 24, 2018

Natural History of the Glaciated Allegheny Plateau

Wildlife Diversity Conference – Columbus – March 6, 2018

a) Predawn Aces: Acoustic and Aerial Warfare Between Bats and Their Insect Prey, b) Ready, Set, Shoot: Photographing and Sharing Images of Predators and Prey, c) Eyes in the Skies: Raptors of Ohio, d) Dragons and Damsels in Distress: Where are They Now? (Ohio Dragonfly Survey OSU Museum of Biological Diversity), e) Are You Seeing What I'm Seeing: Public Perception of Wild Urban Canids, f) The American Trickster Revealed: Recent Research on Coyotes, g) Overcoming Predation: Caterpillars that Scream, and h) Reconnecting Habitat: Partnerships for Predators and Prey

Ohio Woodland, Water, and Wildlife Conference – Mansfield – March 7, 2018

a) Salamanders and Snakes: Habitat Management for Amphibians and Reptiles, b) Identifying Pesticide Exposure Risks for Pollinators & Beneficial Insects Across the Landscape, c) Ohio's Comeback Critters: Bears, Bobcats, Otters, and Fishers, d) Climate Change Impacts to Forests and Wildlife, and e) What is Beech Leaf Disease? What You Need to Know.

Ohio Amphibian and Reptile Conference – Columbus – March 20, 2018

Wildlife Symposium at Zanesville State College – March 24, 2018

OPRA Visit to the Wildlife Conservation Center – Stark Parks – May 17, 2018

Sportsman Software Training – November 30, 2018

Lake Erie Science Center and Lake Park Farm Tours – October 2, 2018 and October 30, 2018