

News and Views

2017 International Trail Symposium

American Trails — A nonprofit that protects America's network of trails — has selected Dayton as the host city for its May 2017 International Trails Symposium.

“The event will showcase not only the Dayton region but the Midwest as a destination for outdoor recreation and a place where it's fun and easy to have an active, healthy outdoor lifestyle,” said Amy Dingle, Five Rivers MetroParks director of outdoor connections.

The International Trails Symposium will be presented in Dayton by several partner organizations, including Five Rivers MetroParks, Greene County Parks & Trails, the Miami County Park District and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

Region 1 Bowling Green Parks & Recreation

Bowling Green Parks & Recreation has had several personnel changes recently. Kristin Otley is the director as of July 1, Ivan Kovacevic is the recreation coordinator as of July 27, and Cheryl Witt is the business office supervisor as of September 28.

Region 2 City of Broadview Heights

On November 3, Broadview Heights residents approved a \$15 million bond issue to pay for an expansion of the Broadview Heights Community & Recreation Center. The expanded facilities will offer something for everyone and will bring the city to new heights in recreation!

“Over the past several years, residents have expressed interest in expanded recreational opportunities,” said Paula Horner, parks and recreation director. “Based on feedback received, we have developed a plan to expand these opportunities.”

The expanded recreation center will include a new indoor aquatic facility, modern locker

room facilities and additional family changing rooms, additional gyms, a new fitness center with state-of-the-art equipment, a new indoor track, dedicated senior space and programming, multipurpose rooms available for rent and expanded child care facilities.

It is anticipated that construction on the facility expansion will begin in 2016. “I am very excited to finally be moving forward with the expansion of the Broadview Heights Community & Recreation Center,” Horner said. This is a project that has been in the works for many years, and it will be a wonderful addition for the community.

Geauga Park District

After a busy 2015, Geauga Park District was excited to put its snowshoes back out at The West Woods Nature Center in November for free borrowing whenever the snow decided to show up! Visitors are encouraged to call to reserve a pair, but snowshoes are otherwise available on a first-come, first-served basis to anyone 18 and older for up to two hours of use. Pairs are also available for children over 40 pounds with an adult. Once again, naturalists also scheduled programming around this awesome opportunity and resumed their public call list for anyone wanting notification of “pick-up programs” when the weather is right. The West Woods is also a hopping place for its third, and already more successful than ever, Bird in the Hand feeding station, allowing visitors to feed black-capped chickadees (and the occasional tufted titmouse or red-breasted nuthatch) right from their hands. In optimal



conditions, people have reported as many as 60 chickadees in a 20-minute span! It just doesn't get much more magical than that.

Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District

Nationally, October is recognized as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Locally in Tuscarawas County, Union Hospital created an initiative called “Paint Tusc Pink” to raise awareness and asked organizations within the community to partner in this initiative by creating pink displays in the front of their business locations. The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District (MWCD) accepted this invitation plus took it one step farther. The MWCD created a display called “kayak for cancer,” which not only caught the eye of local residents but also sparked the interest for an annual kayaking event where participants paid to participate in an instructor-led paddle at Atwood Lake. This event garnered not only com-



munity support but also sponsor support from the American Canoe Association and Muskingum Watershed Conservancy Foundation. Despite cool autumn temperatures, the day was beautiful and drew canoe and kayak participants from around the state, including a mother-daughter team, with both being breast cancer survivors! In addition to this community event, the MWCD main office in New Philadelphia hosted an employee cookout that encouraged the staff to wear pink and donate to Cookout for a Cure. The proceeds totaled \$550 from Cookout for a Cure and Kayak for Cancer and were donated to Union Hospital's Breast Imaging Center to help

offset the cost of mammograms for those in need. These events not only united the staff but also the community, and plans are in place to continue these efforts for many years to come.

Summit Metro Parks

Lisa King was named executive director of Summit Metro Parks in September 2015. King, a state-registered landscape architect and graduate of The Ohio State University, was most recently the district's chief of planning. She has also been its landscape architect.

Summit Metro Parks will celebrate its 95th anniversary this year. The park district was established December 31, 1921.

In 2016, Summit Metro Parks will open its first mountain bike trail (Hampton Hills Metro Park, Akron) and a collegiate-level cross country course (Silver Creek Metro Park, Norton). The district will also launch a brand-new website.

City of Westlake

The city of Westlake's Recreation Department has been working to plan year-round, family-oriented activities — programs or events the entire family can participate in. Most of these events occur or are themed around holidays or the seasons. Here are some of those activities.

Spring Family Fun Night is an event held close to St. Patrick's Day. This event features Irish dancers, balloon twisters and face painters, and allows children to run around the city's recreation center gymnasium. A giant, 18-foot, inflatable slide and bounce house add to the fun.

The Fall Festival/Pumpkin Hunt is over 15 years old and has grown wonderfully over those years. Children get to wander through the pumpkin patch and take home their very own pumpkin. Children get to have their faces painted while watching stilt walkers, jugglers, superheroes and even a princess or two. Families have the opportunity to experience pony and hay wagon rides while listening to music.

The Trick or Treat Trail event allows families to dress up and walk at night along the decorated and not-too-spooky Trick or Treat Trail. The trail features both live acted and decorated scenes, including Dracula's castle, Frankenstein's laboratory and a variety of scarecrows.



Holiday Family Fun Night features holiday carolers, holiday videos set in a movie theater setting, a DJ playing participants' favorite Christmas and holiday tunes and a craft room. The special part of the night is Santa Claus sitting in front of the fireplace reading "Twas the Night Before Christmas."

Youngstown Park and Recreation Department

The city of Youngstown Park and Recreation Department partnered with Black Knights Police Association and Buckeye Health Plan to offer the community Safe Halloween Night. For Christmas, the department partnered with Youngstown Association of Black Professional Firefighters and Buckeye

Health Plan to offer the community Lunch with Santa. We provided the venue, security personnel and a staff member to assist as needed. Buckeye Health Plan provided a monetary donation and drawstring bags with its logo. Black Knights Police Association and Youngstown Association of Black Professional Firefighters hosted their respective events, decorated the venue and made sure that all attendees had an enjoyable and memorable experience. Both events were well-attended, and we look forward to having them in years to come. The park director strongly feels that establishing partnerships with trustworthy groups is the key to providing programs and events as we deal with budget constraints. We hope to establish a new partnership that will enable us to offer the community an event for Easter. Buckeye Health Plan has come forward and pledged to be a long-term partner within our community, and we could not be more grateful for its efforts. In addition to helping with the aforementioned events, Buckeye Health Plan also helped provide field trips for our summer day camp children and made the summer outdoor movie series a huge success. Thumbs-up for great people coming together to do great things!

Region 3 Blue Ash Parks & Recreation Department

With the combination of upcoming retirements and the increased growth of the Blue Ash Parks & Recreation Department, we have been approved to move forward with our succession plan, which will occur over the next two years. The succession plan includes several new and redefined positions that include a deputy director (Kathy Swensen), an administrative assistant (Susan Trammel), a parks and golf maintenance superintendent (Brian Kruse), a golf and recreation operations superintendent (Tiphonie Howard), and an assistant recreation superintendent (Dan Guthrie). Several other positions have been redefined, and plans have been made to incorporate additional full-time and part-time permanent positions in the near future to keep up with our ever-improving facilities and expanding programming areas.