

# **DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION**

## **2015 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 19 – July 31 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, Caribbean, polka and patriotic.

### 2. Independence Day Activities

Our Fireworks event, which is underwritten by the **Fairlawn Community Foundation**, was held on Sunday, June 28, once again brought thousands of people to Bicentennial Park and the surrounding areas. The Brass Band of the Western Reserve headlined our show again this year and kicked off the fireworks display. This year we had food trucks in the Fairlawn Kiwanis Community Center parking lot and the people loved it. The trucks were a big success. The Fairlawn City Women's Club also sold refreshments during the concert and the Peterman Bus Lines once again provided free shuttles for people from Summit Mall to the park.

The parade was again sponsored by a generous donation from the **Fairlawn Area Chamber of Commerce**. On Saturday, July 4, the Independence Day Parade marched down West Market Street from Fairlawn Towne Center to Dillard's Parking lot. We once again had volunteers from the Copley-Fairlawn Kiwanis serve as our line organizers.

### 3. Family Fun Night

Family Fun Night was held at Bicentennial Park on Friday, August 7.

We had well over 100 families in attendance and everyone enjoyed bounce houses, a ride on the trackless train, snow cones, popcorn and games. *Finding Nemo* was shown on a large outdoor screen at dark.

### 4. Fairlawn Food Truck Roundup and Car Cruise In

The Fairlawn Food Truck Roundup was brought back this year to Bicentennial Park, but we added a Car Cruise In, that was held in the Bock & Clark parking lot at the same time. The event was held on Sunday, September 6 from 11 am – 6 pm. We had nearly 20 food trucks almost 100 cars.

A check for \$2735 was presented to the Fairlawn Community Foundation which came from an entrance fee for the food trucks.

### 5. Children's Events

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

*Glow in the Dark Egg Hunt* was a new event held on April 2. We had over 100 children hunting for eggs. Once they finished, they enjoyed hot chocolate, coffee and donuts from the Doughs Nuts on Wheels donut truck.

*Fall Harvest Festival* was a new event this year, held on October 15. Families enjoyed many activities including crafts, pumpkin tic tac toe, train rides, caramel apple making, corn hole, guess how many jars, face in the hole pictures and much more.

*Santa is Calling* was brought back this year after a 13 year rest! Some of our Senior Group men volunteered to assume the role of Santa and call the children to tell them that he would be arriving soon and remind them to be good! The children were in awe as they spoke with Santa, and the parents expressed their thanks for the call.

*Gingerbread Making* was another new event which was a resounding success. Families made gingerbread houses from graham crackers held together with icing and a choice of 15 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 present.

## 6. Senior Group

This December marked the two year anniversary of the first event of the Fairlawn Senior Group. The group has grown and is a welcome addition to the Fairlawn Kiwanis Community Center offerings. They enjoy a variety of programs and events, both in our Community Center and at outside locations. The group has an event planned for the first Monday of each month, while the Planning Committee meets on the third Monday of each month at City Hall.

## 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 Summer Park Program offered: *Bubble Day*, *Tie Dye Day*, *National Ice Cream Day* and *All American Cookout*. All these were successful events with the Summer Park Staff hosting them.

### 3. 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.

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. LRC/Naturalist Programs**

### **Naturalist Programs**

The Naturalist strives toward creating and executing environmental education programs for all ages and to promote community science. This goal was attained through offering a wide range of programs and creating new and lasting partnerships. The Naturalist traveled to many local institutions to present nature education programs as well as hosting various programs, clubs, and events at Fort Island Park. A variety of programs were offered for all age groups some of which required 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 ongoing basis such as weekly Yoga and monthly bird watching days. Others were offered only once as a special event.

Programs completed: 90

Program participants: approximately 1500

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). Nesting of bluebirds is also being monitored. In 2015 new bluebird boxes were built and installed at Fort Island Park, some by a single boy scout and others by a girl scout troop of 3 girls. Additionally, new bat boxes were built by two scout troops to replace the old ones that were in disrepair. Another Girl Scout troop also built three insect collection display cases for the LRC and contributed to the insect collection by collecting on-site at the park throughout the summer. A Copley High School student created and implemented a bird and butterfly observatory by redesigning the large front garden of the LRC. In addition, a new permanent fire pit was built on-site at Fort Island Park for outdoor programs throughout the year. Diseased trees were removed from the location of the new fire pit and other trees around the park were pruned. Some of the worn and damaged boardwalk boards are also being replaced over time by various boy scouts.

The Naturalist at Fort Island Park is also preparing to submit an application for a new permit that would allow for a Category I Wildlife Rehabilitation permit. This permit would allow the Naturalist to rehabilitate small non-rabies vector mammals for eventual release such as various squirrel species, eastern cottontail rabbits, chipmunks, and woodchucks.

For the purposes of professional development and to keep current with what is happening in the science field both the Naturalist attended the following professional development seminars:

- Ohio Woodland Steward's Woodland, Water and Wildlife Conference

- Wildlife Diversity Conference

- Federal Endangered Species Act Conference

- Ohio Wildlife Rehabilitator's Association Conference

- Category I Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit Training

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 the following events: Kid's Career Day at the University of Akron, Earth Day at the Akron Zoo (Party for the Planet and Senior Safari Day), and the Kindercare Parking Lot Party to increase public knowledge of the Parks and Recreation programs. 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 have posted more regularly on the city's park Facebook page highlighting different upcoming events, park events that took place, 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.

Partnerships were maintained with Village of Richfield Parks and Recreation, Copley-Fairlawn Schools, especially Ft. Island Elementary, local Girls Scouts and Boy Scout troops, and Copley-Fairlawn School's Science Olympiad team. Outreach efforts are also being made 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 class visits, invasive beetle monitoring, and a current on-going Entomology collection for the LRC). We continue to increase the number of visitors as well as 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, Virtual Academy, The Elms, Copley-Fairlawn Middle School, KinderCare, Tallmade Summer Camp, Nordonia Hills Summer Camp, local Daisy scouts, Brownies and Girl Scout troops, one Boy Scout Troop, Tree City USA, and the Stark County Community Action Agency.

Volunteer numbers are up to 41 on the books, but only about 22 actually followed through with volunteering regularly. Total volunteer hours up 174 from last year.  
Volunteer total hours: 418

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 2015 year: 11,448.

The program animals housed at the LRC in 2015 include: Rock Pigeon, Albino Pigeon, Eastern Box Turtles (4), Ferrets (3), Russian tortoise, Common Musk turtle, Painted Turtle, Louisiana Milk Snake, Red Rat Snake, Great Plains Rat Snake, Northern Water Snake (juvenile), California King Snake, Red-eared Slider turtles (5), Koi pond fish, Gray Tree Frog (deceased), Fire-bellied Toad (2), Northern Green Frog, Guinea Pigs (2), Cockatiel, Parakeet (2), Peach-faced Love Bird, Mourning Dove (released), Jenday Conure, Holland Lop-Eared Rabbit, Chilean Rose-Haired Tarantula (deceased), Veiled Chameleon, Bearded Dragon, Geckos (2), Hermit Crabs (2) (1 deceased), and Goldfish and Tropical Aquarium Fish.

## **D. Fairlawn-Kiwanis Community Center**

Ongoing rentals by instructors:

- Every Monday, the lower level is rented for a Tai Chi class.
- Every Monday and alternating Thursdays, the upper level is rented for a Body Sculpting Class.

Civic Groups holding regular meetings in the Community Center:

- 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 War 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.
- This year we have added an Epilepsy Support Group who meets on the third Wednesday of each month.