

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Director:	Laurie Beisecker
Assistant Director	Katie Tomek
Naturalist/Education Program Coordinator	Troy Dunn
Assistant Naturalist	Gabriel Bosen (ended in March due to The Coronavirus)
Parks & Recreation Board	Judy Gerdes Keri-Ann Kalavity M.J. Parri Dot Rapp Tara Regan Tom Craig, Alternate

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- A. Community Special Events
 - 1. Summer Concert Series
 - 2. Independence Day Activities
 - 3. Community Events/Planning Ahead

- B. Recreation Activities
 - 1. Summer Park Program
 - 2. Sports Programs
 - 3. Community Garden
 - 4. Soccer Fields

- C. LRC/Naturalist Programs

- D. Fairlawn Kiwanis Community Center

- E. Staff Training

A. Community Special Events

1. Summer Concert Series

Due to the coronavirus, the summer concerts were cancelled.

2. Independence Day Activities

Due to the coronavirus, the Independence Day activities were cancelled.

3. Community Events/Planning Ahead

Due to the coronavirus, the only activity that continued was the Free Libraries that we have installed at both Croghan Park and Griffiths Park. These boxes hold books for people to take. The idea is to take a book and leave a book in its place. We collect books from residents who want to donate them to us for the libraries. We have been able to keep the libraries stocked with books for both children and adults.

Because we couldn't do our traditional holiday Gingerbread House Making event and Noon Year's Eve, we put together a Gingerbread Person Craft Box and a New Year's Eve Party box for people to purchase online and then pick up. However, due to the elevation of Summit County from red to purple on the Ohio coronavirus advisory map, City Hall had to shut down to the public and we weren't able to move forward with this project. The goal is to be able to create some Winter Fun boxes after the levels drop to use the supplies and help people have something fun to do.

We also have been planning for many new events for 2021. We are hoping to incorporate all the missed activities and events into a single event with events for each missed holiday/event/activity from 2020. All of the summer concerts and Independence Day bands have been secured for 2021 and we hope to add to these events to encourage people to once again be able to be together and have fun.

Our Assistant Director went on maternity leave at the beginning of December. She hopes to be back in the office by the end of March in order to help the Director plan and facilitate the programs that are planned for 2021. We will also have to begin a volunteer program to take the place of the summer staff who will not be replaced in 2021. With only 2 staff members, a core group of volunteers will be essential to be able to provide quality programs and events. The Director will begin to search for volunteers in January.

B. Recreation Activities

1. Summer Park Program

The summer park program was cancelled due to the coronavirus.

2. Sports Programs

We continue to utilize outside groups to provide quality sports instruction to our residents and those of our surrounding communities. All of these groups charge their fees directly to the participants and no fees are charged to the City. Some of the groups donate a portion of the proceeds back to the City. Jump Start Sports, Challenger Soccer and Towpath Tennis are the three groups that provide the following sports instruction to our participants:

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: This camp did not take place this year due to the Coronavirus.

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

3. Community Gardens

This is the tenth year for the Community Gardens located at Fairlawn Park. Garden plots are available to both residents and non-residents of Fairlawn. We have increased the plots currently being utilized by gardeners to 58 many of which are now year-round gardens. They plant vegetables, berries, flowers, bulbs and herbs in both above ground boxes and in the soil.

The gardeners have created their own community, giving advice to each other and mentoring new gardeners. They welcome the public to come look at their gardens and ask questions.

4. Soccer Fields

Due to the coronavirus, the soccer fields were only able to be utilized by 5 elementary school teams and one high school team. The adult leagues were not able to abide by the mandates given to them by the Governor in order to play safely during their season. There were a lot of families that used the fields in order to be able to get out and play safely.

C. LRC/Naturalist Programs

The 2020 calendar year was an unprecedented year with the unexpected arrival of the COVID-19 Pandemic, which interrupted all operations. Before the onset of the pandemic the Learning Resource Center was initially open January 2 through about March 11, 2020. Due to the pandemic and the need to decrease staffing the Assistant Naturalist position was eliminated. The need for that position will be revisited once we are past the COVID-19 restrictions and can

reopen the LRC safely and begin with allowing visitors and scheduling programs once again.

Between January 2 and March 11, we were able to offer 24 classes with 220 total participants. We were able to continue our Yoga class between June 10 and November 10, which included another 20 classes and an additional 117 total participants. These numbers bring our totals to 44 individual classes with 337 total participants for the 2020 calendar year. Everything else was cancelled and the Learning Resource Center has remained closed to visitors.

We were able to bring on board an unpaid intern from the University of Akron. Ross Smith is a third year Biology student who was offered and accepted the internship which began on December 4, 2020. He is interested in being mentored and learning what he can during his limited time with us to increase his field skills, knowledge and know-how of becoming a Naturalist, and of getting experience within a parks and recreation system along with the inner workings of a city government.

During this pandemic the Naturalist has been doing a number of things which include making building and interior display improvements, maintain outdoor pollinator gardens as well as bird and bat boxes, engaging the public on social media by publishing online pre-recorded or live video of lessons, activities, story time, craft ideas, celestial events, garden lesson, virtual hikes, wildlife highlights, and more. LRC permits were also renewed and inspections passed. The Naturalist has also been creating new content for when we can reopen safely. This content includes new classes, new camp themes, etc. The Naturalist along with the intern will be presenting a series of online content moving forward that will be regularly scheduled each week. For the time being, the Yoga practice will also move to an online live feed. The intern will also help work with the pressed botanical collection by properly mounting each dried specimen with proper labeling. We are also working on a new map and guide for Fort Island Park and a few other small publications relating to park flora and fauna. We are also working on some content samples to be considered for educational signage to place at designated areas in and around Fort Island Park and Fairlawn Park. We also continue to respond accordingly to public calls and concerns about questions or injuries concerning local wildlife. The Naturalist and intern also participated in this year's Great Christmas Bird Count for the Audubon Society. This was our park's third year participating in this project. In recent years Fort Island Park has typically counted over 30 species of bird with the number of individual birds amounting to more than 400 birds. The count is done on one visit on one day. This is extraordinary amounting to the uniqueness and diversity of our park. Our numbers will be added to the national count as part of the greater effort by the National Audubon Society of tracking bird populations throughout North America. The Naturalist continues to monitor and study the parks for its flora and fauna, maintain comprehensive lists of all that is found in park locations, create a photo library of all flora and fauna, and note the ecological changes over time. This includes Fort Island Park and Fairlawn Park.

The LRC continues to keep current three permits: USDA animal welfare and education permit, Division of Wildlife collection permit, and the US Fish and Wildlife salvage permit.

For the purposes of professional development and to keep current with what is happening in the science field, the Naturalist attended the Wildlife Diversity Conference in Columbus before the pandemic shutdown. Other professional trainings/workshops/seminars moved to online venues for the remainder of the year.

Before the pandemic shutdown there were about 15 youth volunteers coming in to help with

animal care and programs. The volunteer program has been suspended during COVID-19.

The program animals housed at the LRC in 2018 include 1 Virginia Opossum, 2 Pigeons, 1 Jenday Conure, 1 Parakeet, Cockatiel, 4 Eastern Box Turtles, 2 Ferrets, 1 Chinchilla, Chilean Rose-haired Tarantula, 2 Garter Snakes, 1 Brown Snake, 1 Louisiana Milk Snake, 1 Northern Water Snake, 1 Green Anole, 1 Bearded Dragon, 1 Common Musk Turtle, 1 Painted Turtle, 4 Red-eared Sliders, various Koi and other Fish.

Animal losses through natural death or euthanasia in 2020 included 2 parakeets, 2 Holland Lop-eared Rabbits, a large Veiled Chameleon, and an American Toad.

The only new animal acquired early in 2020 before COVID-19 is the Virginia Opossum.

D. Fairlawn-Kiwanis Community Center

Ongoing rentals and Civic Group meetings have all been cancelled due to the pandemic, however, following are the groups that typically meet and will meet again once able:

- 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:

OPRA Conference – February 3-6, 2020

Women in Leadership – cancelled due to the coronavirus

NRPA Conference - cancelled due to the coronavirus

Eastside Roundtables 2020

- **February 12, May 1 (virtual), August 9 and December 9 (virtual)**

Troy:

Wildlife Diversity Conference – March