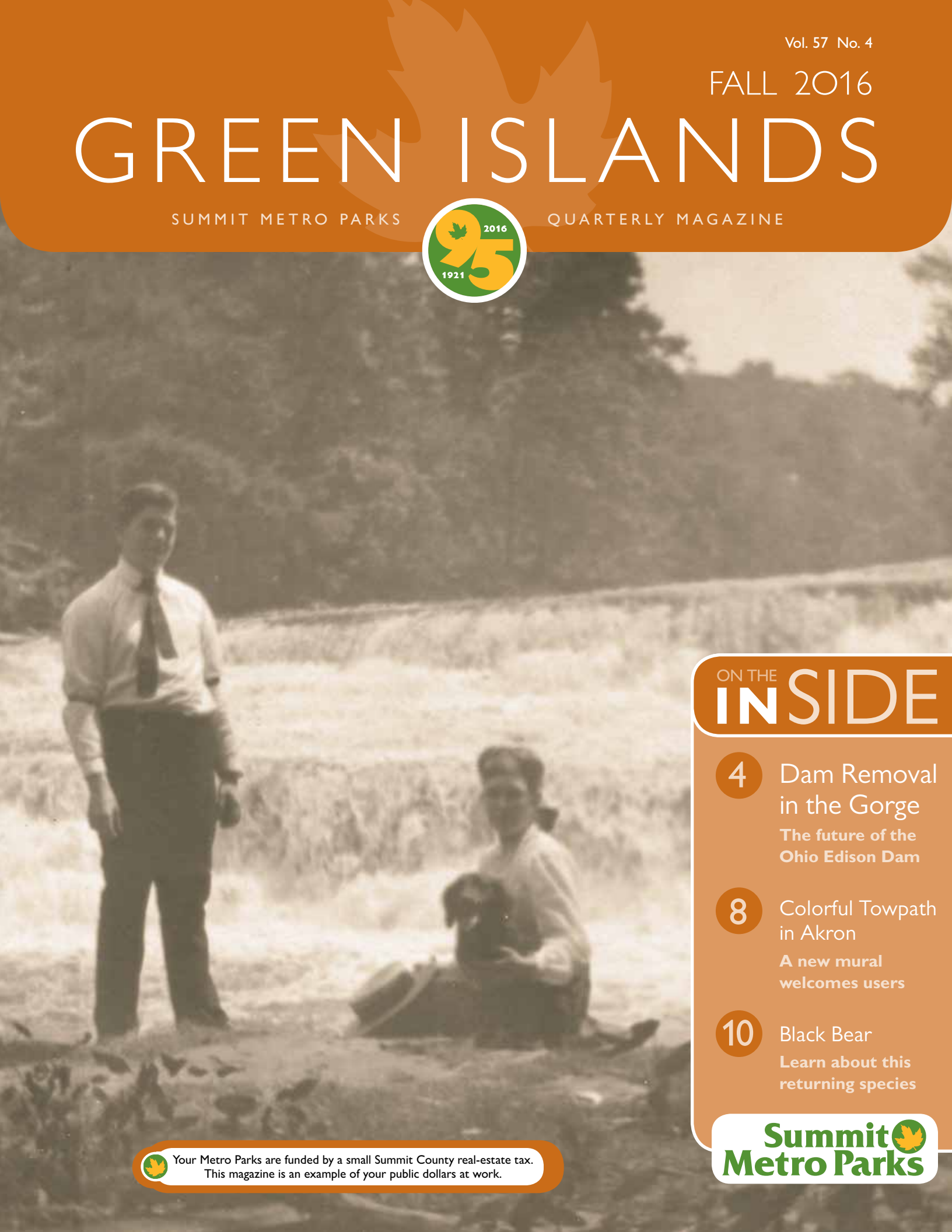
Vol. 57 No. 4

FALL 2016

GREEN ISLANDS

SUMMIT METRO PARKS QUARTERLY MAGAZINE



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Your Metro Parks are funded by a small Summit County real-estate tax. This magazine is an example of your public dollars at work.

Summit Metro Parks

Our parks are like green islands in an urban landscape.

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This magazine is mailed free of charge to Summit County residents. To join the mailing list, send your name and mailing address to marketing@summitmetroparks.org or call 330-867-5511.

Green Islands can be downloaded online: summitmetroparks.org

Printed on FSC®-certified Chorus Art Silk; a 30% post-consumer, processed chlorine-free recycled paper.

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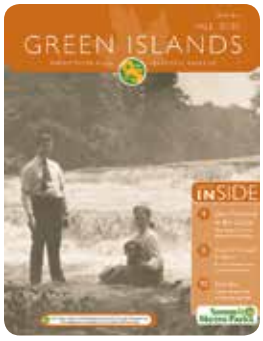
BOARD of PARK commissioners

Joel D. Bailey *Mark A. Spisak* *Herbert Newman*
Tonya Block *Jane Bond*

The park district's governing body is appointed by the Summit County Probate Judge. Commissioners serve overlapping three-year terms and are assisted by the executive director, who oversees the work of full-time and part-time employees, seasonal workers and volunteers. For more information, please call the administrative offices at 330-867-5511.



ABOUT the **COVER**

A couple poses in front of the scenic "Big Falls" in Cuyahoga Falls over 100 years ago.

PARK news

- The last day to turn in Summer Biking Spree and Metro Parks Running Spree forms is October 15. Rewards can be picked up at the **administrative offices** *(975 Treaty Line Rd., Akron)*, **F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm** *(1828 Smith Rd., Akron)* or **Liberty Park Nature Center** *(9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg)*.
- A **new animated YouTube video** explains the reasons why visitors should remain on designated trails in the Metro Parks. View the video at youtube.com/summitmetroparks.

Summit Metro Parks

summitmetroparks.org

PARK news (continued)

- The **Silver Creek Metro Park Cross-country Course** *(4579 Medina Line Rd., Norton)* opened in August. Built to college specifications, the course sits on about 140 acres. It has a 1-mile inner loop and 1.25-mile outer loop. The trails measure 10 meters (33 feet) wide.

For more news, visit our all-new, mobile-friendly website:
summitmetroparks.org

SHIELD ASSISTANCE DATES

The 53rd annual Fall Hiking Spree is the largest and longest-running event of its kind in the nation. A first-year hiker who completes eight trails before November 30 earns a hiking staff and shield. A veteran hiker earns this year's hiking shield.

Volunteers will help attach your new shield to your staff on the following locations and dates:

Liberty Park Nature Center *(9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg)*
Sunday, October 2, 1 – 3 p.m.

Goodyear Heights Metro Park *(2077 Newton St., Akron)*
Sunday, October 23, 1 – 3 p.m.

Furnace Run Metro Park *(4955 Townsend Rd., Richfield)*
Sunday, November 6, 1 – 3 p.m.

F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm *(1828 Smith Rd., Akron)*
Saturday, November 12, 1 – 3 p.m.
Saturday, November 19, 1 – 3 p.m.
Saturday, November 26, 1 – 3 p.m.
Saturday, December 3, 1 – 3 p.m.

FRIENDS OF METRO PARKS

Friends of Metro Parks is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that supports the park district in many ways, including educating visitors about important issues and connecting residents of Summit County with the rich resources of our Metro Parks. Membership dues allow Friends to support the mission and programs of the park district.

For information about joining Friends:
friendsofmetroparks.org

Go out and EXPLORE!

"The spree is my stress reliever."

~ Vanessa, with sister Ramona

Sep. 1 to Nov. 30

Trails range from easy to challenging. Hiking forms are available online and at all *Acme Fresh Market* stores. Spree rewards are FREE for Summit County residents.

First-time participants who complete eight trails receive a hiking staff and shield. Veteran hikers earn a shield.

Summit Metro Parks

hikingspree.summitmetroparks.org
330-865-8065 | #SMPspree

DAM

Gorge Metro Park is entering a new era in its vibrant and intriguing history. The Ohio Edison Dam is being studied for removal, and Summit Metro Parks supports the effort.

With no electric production for years, the Ohio Edison power plant was razed in 2009.

REMOVAL
IN GORGE METRO PARK

Elaine Marsh, Watershed Specialist

The "Big Falls" on the Cuyahoga River before the construction of the dam

History of the Gorge

The Gorge is located in an improbable section of the Cuyahoga River. The river was formed about 12,000 years ago, when the Wisconsin glaciers retreated to their northern origins. Only 100 miles long, the river is young, shallow and slow moving — except in the Gorge. The river falls a total of 700 feet in elevation from its headwaters in Geauga County to Lake Erie at its mouth. Over 200 feet of that elevation drop happens within a short, two-mile section of the Gorge.

Harnessing the River's Power

In the late 19th Century, the Northern Ohio Traction & Light Company (NT&LC) began purchasing land in what would later become Gorge Metro Park. The company was looking to expand its production of electrical power and had an eye on harnessing the Cuyahoga.

In 1911, NT&LC built the dam at 57 feet high and 420 feet wide, creating the dam pool that extends over a mile upstream. The pool provided cooling water for a coal-fired power plant built in 1912.

Construction of the dam began in 1910.

Construction of Northern Ohio Traction & Light Company power plant circa 1911

In 1929, the land was leased to Summit Metro Parks, but the utility retained rights to use and maintain the dam in its related power activities.

Between 1998 and 2009, various plans to use the Ohio Edison Dam for power generation were investigated. None proved viable, and by 2009 all remaining pieces of electric production were razed. Since 1991, the dam that had once given rise to the park has lain idle with no future prospects.

continued on page 6

The natural beauty and power of the "Big Falls" was a popular destination for local residents and tourists.

continued from page 5

Bringing Down Dams

Dams are barriers that negatively impact water quality. They reduce dissolved oxygen, modify flow, trap toxins, prevent fish passage, interfere with sediment transport and alter the aquatic food web. They increase algal growth, reduce sediment-dwelling populations, vary water temperature, and obstruct many biological and chemical processes that are important to the river ecology.

As a result of these negative effects, several obsolete dams on the Cuyahoga have already been removed in Cuyahoga Falls, Kent and Munroe Falls.

The Ohio Edison Dam is one of the greatest unresolved water quality problems on the Cuyahoga River. The U.S. EPA has conducted two studies of the sediment behind the dam, finding 832,000 cubic yards of moderately contaminated sediment at the base of the pool. The sediment is a health threat to aquatic life and must be removed before the dam can come down.

A number of programs could fund substantial portions of its removal, estimated by the Ohio EPA to cost $70 million. The Ohio EPA is currently investigating options. Meanwhile, Summit Metro Parks will lead efforts to educate residents about the process.

Benefits of Removal

The benefits of removing the Ohio Edison Dam include clean water and scenic, economic and recreational opportunities.

Once the sediment and the dam are moved, water quality in Gorge Metro Park will be improved, benefitting the health of natural resources and of the people who experience them. The river will find its way back to its historic natural grandeur, revealing the Big Falls for which Cuyahoga Falls was named. Gorge Metro Park will be reinvented, offering brand-new cultural and natural assets for staff to discover and showcase.

When the Ohio Edison Dam comes down, the true power of the Cuyahoga River will be unleashed: a free flowing river that sustains living systems and spectacular natural beauty. No one alive today remembers the natural falls. The uncovered beauty and recreational opportunities could turn Gorge Metro Park into a renowned tourist destination, as it was in the late 1800s.

IN YOUR BACK YARD

GREEN SNAKE *(Opheodrys vernalis)*

The balance of protecting natural resources and providing public recreation can be a big challenge for the park district. Often, we have to be creative problem-solvers. Such was the case when we discovered a population of endangered green snakes *(Opheodrys vernalis)* while constructing the new Mountain Bike Area in Hampton Hills Metro Park *(2092 Theiss Rd., Akron)*.

The initial excitement of this discovery quickly gave way to concern. How would a small, ground-dwelling snake get along with mountain bikes? Summit Metro Parks staff immediately moved into action.

- Biologists began to survey and inventory the range of the species in the area.
- Staff began moving sections of the trails away from core habitat areas.
- Different construction materials were used to deter snakes from lingering on the trail surface.
- Construction was timed to avoid sensitive periods in the snake's lifecycle.
- Signs were installed to educate bikers about avoiding impacts.
- A monitoring program was designed and implemented to evaluate whether the trail is having an impact on this very rare species.

With the Mountain Bike Area having been open for several months now, we are pleased to share that there have been no instances of green snakes being killed on the trails. Staff will continue to monitor this area and work to ensure the protection of the endangered species for the people of Summit County.

Mike Johnson, Chief of Natural Resources

TAKE A COLORFUL INTO

A colorful mural at the corner of Quaker and Ash streets welcomes Towpath Trail visitors to Downtown Akron.

TREK DOWNTOWN AKRON

Rachel Whinnery, Marketing Assistant

Don't let the vibrant colors fool you — you haven't landed in Oz. The new mural on the Cascade Parking Garage at the corner of Quaker and Ash streets was completed in June as part of the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition's iTowpath initiative. It was designed by local artist Jessica Lofthus.

The Downtown Akron section of the Towpath Trail is being improved to encourage residents to bike and walk into the city. iTowpath is funded by the Knight Foundation, Akron Community Foundation and GAR Foundation.

Kyle Kutuchief, Akron program director for the Knight Foundation, said: "This is one piece of a larger plan to bring new life to our city and spark connections. The mural showcases Akron talent, while helping to make the towpath an anchor for community activity."

Towpath Trail visitors now travel into downtown through this unique metal archway.

Jessica wasn't the only artist involved in iTowpath projects. John Comunale designed and built an archway near the mural. Two more are planned to create more welcoming entrances into Akron.

John also created artistic bike racks found throughout downtown. Other iTowpath improvements include the installation of bicycle service stations, improved wayfinding signage and underpass improvement projects.

Partners for the Quaker and Ash projects include The City of Akron, Downtown Akron Partnership, Akron Art Museum and ArtsNow.

Summit Metro Parks manages 22.4 miles of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, from the southern boundary of the Cuyahoga Valley National Park to the Stark County line, except about three miles in Downtown Akron.

Species Spotlight BLACK BEAR

HISTORY

Considered **extirpated** in Ohio by **1850** due to habitat loss and hunting

In 1973, a sow (female) and cubs were reported in Ohio after being absent for more than 120 years.

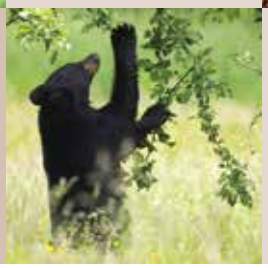
APPEARANCE

Male
black bears average **300 pounds.**

Female
bears average **175 pounds.**

An adult black bear can weigh anywhere from **150** to **700 pounds.**

A male black bear may stand **5** to **6 feet** tall on its hind legs.



Black bear color phases can include black, chocolate brown, cinnamon brown, blue-black, and white.

BABIES

Cubs are born in mid-winter. A mother may have two or three cubs.

A **typical cub** weighs about **8 oz** at birth — as much as a block of cream cheese.

Cubs remain with their mother for the first year and a half, then look for their own territory.

The majority of bears in Ohio weigh between 125 to 250 pounds and are juvenile male bears.

DIET

In fall, black bears become excessive eaters to gain enough weight to hibernate and survive winter.

A bear will eat between 15,000 and 20,000 calories a day — the human equivalent of eating 35 Big Macs in one day!

Bears are opportunistic eaters, consuming grasses, nuts, berries, insects, carrion and other items.

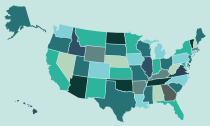
FUN FACTS

Black bears are able to run up to **35** mph.

Black bears may seem to be nocturnal in areas with higher human activity.

However, they are **crepuscular**, which means they are active in early morning and late evening.

Black bears have relativity short claws, allowing them to climb trees.



Black bears reside in **40 out of 50 U.S. states.**

Black bears prefer **wooded areas with a dense understory**, but they will use open areas.

Black bears *can* be found in Summit County.

They can live up to **20 years** in the wild.

@akronbear • #akronbear

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Summit Metro Parks is celebrating its 95th anniversary this year!

In addition to this milestone for the park district, several other Metro Parks reached noteworthy anniversaries in 2016.

5 YEARS
Liberty Park / Twinsburg Ledges Area, Twinsburg
Munroe Falls Metro Park / Tallmadge Meadows Area, Tallmadge
Springfield Bog Metro Park, Springfield Twp.

30 YEARS
Cascade Valley Metro Park / Schumacher Area, Akron

50 YEARS
Silver Creek Metro Park, Norton

75 YEARS
Firestone Metro Park, Akron

LP MF SFB CVN SC F

2016 Fall Hiking Event

FALL HIKING SPREE

TO PARTICIPATE

Hike at least eight of the designated trails. After completing each hike, date your form. Hikes must be completed September 1 through November 30. Parks are open daily, 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., unless otherwise noted.

First-year hikers earn a hiking staff and shield. Veteran hikers earn the hiking shield. Since the program is funded by Summit County tax dollars, out-of-county residents pay to receive their hiking rewards ($10 for first-year hikers, $5 for veteran hikers).

WHERE TO GET YOUR REWARD

BRING COMPLETED FORMS TO:

Administrative Offices
975 Treaty Line Rd., Akron 44313
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday

F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm
1828 Smith Rd., Akron 44313
Noon to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday

Liberty Park Nature Center
9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg 44087
Noon to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday

Rewards are not available after March 31, 2017.

TO RECEIVE YOUR REWARD BY MAIL

Veteran hikers may mail their completed forms to the administrative offices. **Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.** Shields are mailed flat. **Rewards are not available after March 31, 2017.**

TOWPATH Trail
Clinton Trailhead
2749 North St., Clinton 44216

CASCADE VALLEY Metro Park
Oxbow Trail / Oxbow Area
1061 Cuyahoga St., Akron 44313

FIRESTONE Metro Park
Redwing Trail / Tuscarawas Area
2620 Harrington Rd., Akron 44319

FURNACE RUN Metro Park
Rock Creek Trail / Brushwood Area
4955 Townsend Rd., Richfield 44286

GOODYEAR HEIGHTS Metro Park
Alder Trail / Pioneer Area
550 Frazier Ave., Akron 44305

GORGE Metro Park
Gorge Trail / Main Entrance
1160 Front St., Cuyahoga Falls 44223

HAMPTON HILLS Metro Park
Adam Run Trail / Main Entrance
2925 Akron-Peninsula Rd., Akron 44313

LIBERTY PARK
Ledges Trail / Twinsburg Ledges Area
9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg 44087

MUNROE FALLS Metro Park
Indian Spring Trail / Lake Area
521 S. River Rd., Munroe Falls 44262

2016 Commemorative Hiking Shield

F.A. Seiberling NATURE REALM
Cherry Lane / Fernwood Loop
1828 Smith Rd., Akron 44313

O'NEIL WOODS Metro Park
Deer Run Trail
2550 Martin Rd., Bath 44333

SILVER CREEK Metro Park
Pheasant Run Trail / Pheasant Run Area
5000 Hametown Rd., Norton 44203

SPRINGFIELD BOG Metro Park
Prairie Trail
1400 Portage Line Rd., Springfield Twp. 44312

WOOD HOLLOW Metro Park
Downy Loop Trail
2121 Barlow Rd., Hudson 44236

Hiker's Choice
☐ Hike any ONE of your favorite METRO PARKS trails.

Need directions? Check our website: **hikingspree**.summitmetroparks.org
Additional forms are available online and at *Acme Fresh Market* locations in Summit County.

Summit Metro Parks

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Please share this publication and recycle it when finished.

53rd ANNUAL FALL HIKING SPREE

INDIVIDUAL & FAMILY/GROUP HIKING FORM

PRIMARY PARTICIPANT — FIRST-YEAR Hiker ❑ VETERAN ❑ SUMMIT CO. RESIDENT ❑ Yes ❑ No

Primary Participant's Last Name | First Name | M.I. | Age

Address | City | State | Zip

Email | Phone

ADDITIONAL PARTICIPANTS — FIRST-YEAR Hiker ❑ VETERAN ❑ SUMMIT CO. RESIDENT ❑ Yes ❑ No

Last Name | First Name | M.I. | Age

Last Name | First Name | M.I. | Age

Last Name | First Name | M.I. | Age

Last Name | First Name | M.I. | Age

Last Name | First Name | M.I. | Age

METRO PARK	TRAIL	SYMBOL	MILEAGE	CLASS	RATING	SIGNATURE (Only if staff or volunteers are available)	DATE
TOWPATH / Clinton	North St., ***north*** to Center Rd.		2.8	A / B	1		
CASCADE VALLEY	Oxbow		1.2	C	2		
FIRESTONE	Redwing		1.1	C	1		
FURNACE RUN	Rock Creek		1.2	C	1		
GOODYEAR HEIGHTS	Alder		1.4	B / C	1		
GORGE	Gorge		1.8	B / C / D	3		
HAMPTON HILLS	Adam Run		3.2	C	3		
LIBERTY PARK	Ledges		1.1	C	2		
MUNROE FALLS	Indian Spring		2.2	C	2		
NATURE REALM (no pets)	Cherry Lane / Fernwood Loop		1.5	C	1		
O'NEIL WOODS	Deer Run		1.8	C	3		
SILVER CREEK	Pheasant Run		1.2	C	1		
SPRINGFIELD BOG	Prairie		1.6	C	1		
WOOD HOLLOW	Downy Loop		1.2	C	1		
Hiker's Choice (Metro Park ONLY)	_____	☐	___	___	___		

Rating: 1=Easy 2=Moderate 3=Strenuous
Class: A=Multipurpose B=Accessible C=Basic D=Primitive
Visit our website for rating and class definitions

Summit Metro Parks
330-867-5511 • **hikingspree**.summitmetroparks.org

All trail mileage reflects **round-trip** hikes

THIS FORM MAY BE REPRODUCED.