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NO SHADOW OF A DOUBT: GROUNDHOG DAY IS FUN IN METRO PARKS

Superstition says if a groundhog comes out of hibernation on February 2 and sees its shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter. If it emerges and fails to see its shadow, there will be an early spring.

Join wildlife rehabilitator Fran Kitchen and a Summit Metro Parks naturalist to learn the natural history of these infamous rodents, Saturday, January 30, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. at Goodyear Heights Metro Park (2077 Newton St., Akron).

The program includes a craft, a chance to see a live groundhog and a short hike. Please bring a donation of laundry products or small wicker baskets to help Kitchen with injured and orphaned animals.

For more information, visit summitmetroparks.org or call 330-865-8065.

Naturalist Dave Brumfield said the tradition of Groundhog Day can be traced back to an ancient European celebration that marked the halfway point between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. German settlers brought with them the custom of associating animal shadows with weather forecasting when they arrived in the United States.

“Groundhogs are members of the squirrel family, and are sometimes referred to as woodchucks, land-beavers or whistle pigs,” Brumfield added. “They have heavy bodies with short, strong legs and can dig burrows up to five feet deep and 30 feet long. Some are able to remove up to 700 pounds of soil when digging!”

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Summit Metro Parks manages 14,100 acres, including 16 parks, several conservation areas and more than 125 miles of trails, with 22.4 miles of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. Annual attendance averages 5.2 million visitors.

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