GREEN ISLANDS

Vol. 60 No. 4 / JUL-AUG ’19

Summit Metro Parks Bi-Monthly Magazine

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Our parks are like green islands in an urban landscape.

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BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
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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.

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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

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MIND, BODY & SOLE

A UNIVERSE OF STORIES!
June 3 – July 27, 2019

Make reading and exercise a part of your day — every day. Both have the power to brighten your spirit, stimulate your imagination and improve your health.

Mind, Body & Sole: A Universe of Stories! is a reading/wellness experience for the whole family.

Fill out a registration card at your nearest Akron-Summit County Public Library and receive your reading and exercise log and program flier.

Read! From June 3 – July 27, check off a box on your reading log. You will win a prize, or be entered into a prize drawing, at each of these reading milestones: 10 days, 26 days, 40 days and 50 days.

On your exercise log, record each day you participate in a movement activity — running, walking, bicycling, yoga, gardening, outside play, physical therapy and more.

When you have reached 26 days of both reading AND exercise, you will receive a Mind, Body & Sole T-shirt. Fill out the entry form at the bottom of your exercise log to be entered into our end-of-summer Grand Prize Drawing.

Find out more about Akron-Summit County Public Library at akronlibrary.org or contact your local branch library.

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DISCOVER YOUR BACK YARD Section

COMMUNITY ART

by Christy Counterman, Marketing Assistant

Under the guidance of our Interpretive Artist Danette Rushboldt, park visitors can let their creativity shine by contributing to one of our many community art projects. Each person creates one part of a bigger artwork. When combined, the final result is enjoyed by the whole community.

This year, we're taking community art on the road. Summit Metro Parks participates in events throughout the county each month, and we will bring our latest art project to some of those locations. Each visitor will be given a chance to contribute to a piece of lasting artwork that will be revealed this fall. Watch SMP's social media and Programs and Events listings for your chance to be a part of community art!

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THE SIGNAL TREE

Davey Tree Expert Company "Adopts" a Local Legend

by Stephanie Walton, Chief of Marketing & Communications

A well-recognized Akron landmark, the Signal Tree has stood for many years in what is now Cascade Valley Metro Park. Keeping it healthy requires considerable attention, and beginning in 2018, The Davey Tree Expert Company "adopted" the iconic bur oak for a five-year period.

Having worked hand-in-hand with Summit Metro Parks staff to ensure the tree's well-being for the past four decades, Davey will donate its care and maintenance services to the park district through 2022.

"As a tree care company, we have a special interest and appreciation for large, historical wonders like the Signal Tree," said Sandra Reid, vice president of corporate communications and strategic planning administration for Davey Tree. "And since the Signal Tree is in a public green space, it's especially important that we keep it healthy so our community can enjoy it for many years to come."

In adopting the beloved tree, Davey will provide regular maintenance and conduct annual health assessments. At the Signal Tree's most recent "check-up," Davey's expert arborists determined that despite its advanced age, the tree is generally doing quite well.

But how exactly does one go about caring for such a tree? Davey's specially-trained staff measure the tree's density at various locations and depths using a tool called a resistograph to determine whether it has any significant weak spots. Over the years, Davey has also installed a system of cables to provide additional structural support and help it bear its own weight. And, the tree's care evolves over time: at one point, a lightning rod was installed to help protect the tree from electrical storms, but it was later removed when it began to damage the tree itself.

Local lore abounds regarding the Signal Tree's age and historic purpose. Some believe it to be upwards of 350 years old, but unfortunately there are no methods for confirming this without harming the tree. It's even more difficult to determine what the tree might have once

“signaled.” During the time when Native Americans lived in what is now Northeast Ohio, special landmarks were commonly used to identify significant locations. The Signal Tree’s unique, three-pronged shape indicates that it may have been shaped by human hands, but why?

Legend has long held that the Signal Tree was a directional marker for the Portage Path, a connection between the Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas rivers for travelers from the ancient Native Americans to the early European explorers. However, given the tree’s distance from the path, modern historians believe it was more likely used for some other purpose.

“It could mark a gathering place, maybe for ceremonies. It could show the way to another area or trail, or to good hunting and fishing grounds,” explains Summit Metro Parks Education and Recreation Manager Mike Greene. “Early Europeans might have shaped the tree for their own purposes, such as for a property boundary marker.” Unfortunately, the specifics of the tree’s past are likely to remain a mystery forever. But one thing is for certain – Summit Metro Parks and Davey Tree are committed to providing the best care possible for this cherished local treasure.

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SMP Employee Spotlight:

Shannon Hasenstab & Cody Hasenstab

Shannon Hasenstab and her son Cody both began their careers at SMP in 2009, and have enjoyed serving the public in different ways in the □0 years since. Get to know them and the important work they do.

What is your role at Summit Metro Parks?

SH: As chief of customer service and assistant to our executive director, I lead a team of customer service representatives who assist park patrons in various ways each day, such as taking reservations for our rental facilities and registering patrons for programs.

CH: As part of the maintenance department, my crew is responsible for day-to-day park operations, ranging from cleaning to landscaping and taking care of our properties.

What’s your favorite project you’ve worked on?

CH: I’ve had the privilege of making sure wildlife has the environment required to grow and thrive. This wide-reaching project includes planting native flora, removing invasive species and knowing the best time to maintain trees to have minimal impact on wildlife.

You’re featured in this year’s ad campaign.
Can you tell us about those photos?

SH: My son Cody and I are enjoying a summer walk. Munroe Falls Metro Park has always been a favorite because I have so many happy memories there, from visiting with my husband when we were dating in high school, all the way to bringing my kids here when they were little and watching them enjoy swimming and playing in the lake.

What’s your best tip to enjoy the Metro Parks?

CH: I encourage people to cultivate a connection with nature, and SMP offers dozens of naturalist-led programs each month. Stop by the visitors center at F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm or the nature center at Liberty Park in Twinsburg to chat with a naturalist, or just take a solitary walk through the woods and bask in the serenity of nature.

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ENJOY Section

Find Your Summertime Adventure in the Parks

by Stephanie Walton, Chief of Marketing & Communications

Summer is officially in full swing, and SMP has you covered with warm-weather activities for the whole family. Whether you prefer swimming or skating, music or movies, there’s an adventure for everyone this summer in Summit Metro Parks.

Attend Films with the Fireflies

New this summer, Summit Metro Parks is offering a series of free, family-friendly outdoor movies shown at parks across the county. Pack some popcorn and candy, bring a blanket or your favorite chair and join us for a relaxing evening under the summer night sky. Visit the website for showtimes and locations.

Go Jump in a Lake

At Munroe Falls Metro Park *(Munroe Falls)* and Silver Creek Metro Park *(Norton)*, lake swimming is available with lifeguards on duty May 25 to August 11, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays, and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekends and holidays. Daily admission is $5 for adults, teens and kids age 5 and up. Season passes are $40 for adults and teens 13 and older, and $20 for ages 5 to 12 and seniors 65 and older. Children under age 5 are always admitted free. Pack a picnic, or enjoy a selection of treats from the concession stand.

Catch a Concert

Throughout the summer, the all-volunteer Metro Parks Ensemble provides several free “Music by the Lake” performances. These concerts begin at 7 p.m., and feature free lake swimming from 3 to 6:45 p.m. Kids’ activities and dessert are also provided. For a full schedule of Ensemble performances, visit the Summit Metro Parks website.

Perfect Your Paddling

For those who enjoy kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding — or want to give it a try — Summit Metro Parks offers a variety of naturalist-led programs for all skill levels at area lakes. Paddle with a certified instructor and a naturalist to learn strokes, practice safety techniques and see wildlife around the water. Visit the website for more information or to register for a program.

Play on the Parkway

Sand Run Parkway goes car-free between N. Portage Path and Merriman Road on summer weekends through Labor Day. The closure of this nearly half-mile section of the parkway allows visitors to walk, jog, skate or bike safely on the road. In addition, a car-free parkway helps protect endangered wildlife and sensitive habitats. Runners and walkers who wish to extend their journey from the Sand Run Jogging Trail can now make a round trip totaling nearly seven miles. Parking nearest this section of the parkway is available at the Old Portage Area of Sand Run Metro Park.

For more information on summertime activities, concerts, movie showings and program schedules, visit summitmetroparks.org.