

# GREEN ISLANDS

Vol. 60 No. 5 / SEP-OCT '19

Summit Metro Parks Bi-Monthly Magazine

## ON THE INSIDE

page 4 DISCOVER

Hike to Celebrate a River's Rebirth

page 7 EXPLORE

Programs and Events

page 17 ENJOY

Starting a Fall Hiking Spree Tradition

Our parks are like green islands in an urban landscape.

## IN THIS ISSUE

Crayfish

Hike to Celebrate a River's Rebirth

Employee Spotlight: Jerry Harris

Programs & Events Guide

Starting a Fall Hiking Spree Tradition

Hampton & Friends

Fall Hiking Spree Form

## BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

Mark A. Spisak Chair

Joel D. Bailey

Tonya Block

Herb Newman

Tina Ughrin

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.

Lisa M. King Executive Director

## EDITORS

Stephanie Walton Chief of Marketing & Communications

Mike Greene Education & Recreation Manager

Lindsay Smith Marketing & Public Relations Manager

## DESIGN & ART DIRECTION

Jennie Levy Graphic Designer

Karl Simonson Graphic Designer

Summit Metro Parks

975 Treaty Line Rd., Akron, OH 44313-5837

Administrative Offices: 330-867-5511

F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm: 330-865-8065

Liberty Park Nature Center: 330-487-0493

Seasonal Information: 330-865-8060

Volunteer Information: 330-865-8047

[summitmetroparks.org](http://summitmetroparks.org)

Photos contributed by:

Rob Blair, Jerry Cannon, Christy Counterman, Nathan Eppink, Jeff Hill, Tim Hite, Jennie Levy, Mikaila Odell, JJ Prekop Jr., Robert Roach, Karl Simonson, Ann Steiner, Rob Vaughn, Craig Walton

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](mailto:marketing@summitmetroparks.org) or call 330-867-5511.

Green Islands can be downloaded online:  
[summitmetroparks.org](http://summitmetroparks.org)

copyright 2019 Summit Metro Parks

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

page 2

## SHIELD ASSISTANCE DATES '19

The 56th annual Fall Hiking Spree ends November 30 and forms can be turned in for rewards through March 31, 2020.

Is attaching the hiking spree shield more challenging than actually hiking the eight trails? Summit Metro Parks volunteers will gladly attach it for you at no charge on the following dates:

Liberty Park Nature Center (9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg)

Saturday, October 5, 1 – 3 p.m.

Furnace Run Metro Park (4955 Townsend Rd., Richfield)

Sunday, October 27, 1 – 3 p.m.

F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm (1828 Smith Rd., Akron)

Saturday, November 9, 1 – 3 p.m.

Saturday, November 16, 1 – 3 p.m.

Saturday, November 23, 1 – 3 p.m.

Saturday, November 30, 1 – 3 p.m.

Goodyear Heights Metro Park (2077 Newton St., Akron)

Sunday, December 8, 1 – 3 p.m.

page 3

## DISCOVER YOUR BACK YARD Section

### COMMUNITY ART

by Carmen Schwab, Interpretive Naturalist

Believe it or not, several species of crayfish can be found in the Metro Parks. These small lobster-like crustaceans make their home in fresh water, both above and below ground, all over Summit County. Some species are found in rivers, streams and ponds, while burrowing species prefer groundwater.

You may be able to find evidence of these burrowing grub-eaters — they leave a volcano-shaped mud chimney that can be several inches tall. Be careful not to hit a dried chimney with the lawn mower! Crayfish are an important part of the ecosystem. They benefit us by serving as a clean-up crew, eating insects and decaying organic matter. They are also an important food source for many predators, including fish, otters and great blue herons.

pages 4 and 5

## HIKING THE CUYAHOGA THIS FALL

Celebrate a River's Rebirth

by Stephanie Walton, Chief of Marketing & Communications

By now you many have heard that 2019 was a big year for the Cuyahoga River — this summer marked 50 years of renewal since the river's infamous fire on June 22,

1969 and celebrations have been held up and down the river's length.

The Cuyahoga River gives us so much to be proud of — as a direct result of the fire, and the national outrage that followed, the modern-day environmental movement was born. Voices across the country, including many from Northeast Ohio, demanded that something be done — and they succeeded, driving the creation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1970 and the clean water and clean air laws and regulations that quickly followed.

Because of those changes, Americans enjoy dramatically cleaner waterways than we did 50 years ago. And our own Cuyahoga River is no exception! That's why, for this year's Fall Hiking Spree we're inviting you to "Hike the Cuyahoga" for yourself. Nine of this year's 13 designated trails feature the Cuyahoga River or one of its tributaries, allowing you to complete all eight of your spree hikes while honoring, exploring and discovering this exceptional river.

Towpath Trail at Big Bend Trailhead:

This trail will take hikers 1.8 miles out and back along the Cuyahoga River to its confluence with the Little Cuyahoga. At the turnaround point, visitors will enjoy views of the future Valley View Area of Cascade Valley Metro Park, where grant funding is allowing park staff to restore the historic barn, 200 acres of land and 5,000 feet of the Cuyahoga.

Towpath Trail at Wilbeth Road Trailhead:

Hikers will enjoy a 2.2-mile roundtrip trek to Summit Lake, which feeds into the Cuyahoga River watershed and is a little-known member of the Portage Lakes. This trail will allow hikers to view construction work on the future Summit Lake Nature Center, a facility made possible through local and national grant funding and which is expected to open to the public in 2020.

Bike & Hike Trail at State Route 91 Trailhead:

Beginning at Brust Park, this paved, 2-mile roundtrip hike allows visitors to experience a particularly scenic section of the Cuyahoga River where a variety of wildlife can be observed, including great blue herons, Canada geese and a number of duck species.

Glens Trail at Gorge Metro Park:

This moderately challenging, 1.8-mile hike features dramatic views of the Cuyahoga River and the gorge that gives this park its name. Located nearby is the Gorge Dam, one of the last remaining significant water quality impediments on the river today. Summit Metro Parks is working with a large group of partners to leverage federal funding to remove the dam.

#### Chuckery Trail at Cascade Valley Metro Park:

This 2.4-mile hike begins and ends at the Signal Tree, one of Akron's most well-known landmarks. The trail travels alongside the river before making a steep climb and stairstep descent back to the river's shores. Once there, visitors can sit on a bench to take in the view.

#### Overlook Trail at Cascade Valley Metro Park:

Everyone will enjoy this flat, paved hike to the best view in town of the Cuyahoga River. The Overlook Deck is a half-mile roundtrip walk from the parking lot and offers a spectacular panoramic vista of an oxbow located 125 feet below.

#### Quarry Trail at Deep Lock Quarry Metro Park:

The 1.4-mile trail provides glimpses of the Cuyahoga River, Towpath Trail and Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, as well as a former stone quarry once owned by a founder of Quaker Oats. Named for what was once the deepest lock on the Ohio & Erie Canal, the park is a noted Important Bird Area (IBA) offering excellent wildlife viewing opportunities.

#### Deer Run Trail at O'Neil Woods Metro Park:

This challenging, 1.8-mile trail follows a path worn by white-tailed deer and provides scenic views of the Cuyahoga River Valley. It travels along Yellow Creek, one of the Cuyahoga River's healthiest tributaries.

#### Old Mill Trail at Furnace Run Metro Park:

This 1.4-mile trail travels near Furnace Run, another of the Cuyahoga's healthiest tributaries. Visitors will also enjoy hiking through beech-maple woods and viewing a marker describing the 1929 donation of the surrounding land to the park district.

To read about one family's experience starting a new Fall Hiking Spree tradition, see page 17. A full list of 2019 Fall Hiking Spree trails is available on the back cover.

Please check our Alerts page for the latest updates on the City of Akron's Cuyahoga Street construction project and SMP's Gorge Metro Park parking lot updates.

page 8

#### SMP Employee Spotlight:

##### JERRY HARRIS

Jerry Harris, assistant park manager of Greenways at Summit Metro Parks, has been with the park district since 1992. We asked him to share more about his important work.

How long have you been with Summit Metro Parks?  
Which positions have you held since you've been here?

JH: I was hired as a "full-time rover" for the maintenance department, where I filled in at each park where there was a need, working mainly out of Munroe Falls. After spending many years at both Firestone and Cascade Valley Metro Parks, I was promoted to crewleader in 2016. In late 2017, I transferred to Greenways (SMP's multipurpose trail system). In 2018, I was promoted to my current position as assistant park manager.

What do you do in your current role at Summit Metro Parks?

JH: My role is to manage and maintain the Towpath Trail from Summit Lake to Clinton. My crew is responsible for keeping the trail repaired and clear of debris all year long. Additionally, I am monitoring the renovation of the Pump House as it is transformed into the Summit Lake Nature Center.

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

JH: I get a great sense of satisfaction knowing I helped with the construction and development of Silver Creek Metro Park. That was my first experience taking an undeveloped wooded area and turning it into the beautiful park it is today.

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

JH: I have been married to the love of my life, Rosita, for 28 years. We have three wonderful children: Anesa (24), Bryce (21) and Blake (12), who is pictured with us. We

love the Overlook Trail at Cascade Valley Metro Park for the best views in every season.

page 17

ENJOY Section

## STARTING A FALL HIKING SPREE TRADITION

by Lindsay Smith, Marketing & Communications Manager

Summit County resident Ann Steiner says as a parent, it's easy to fall into the mindset that you need to spend money to entertain your kids. But for no more than the cost of getting to the Metro Parks, she and her young son had eight priceless adventures together while completing the Fall Hiking Spree.

How did the Steiners get started on the Fall Hiking Spree? "I'd heard about it on social media in years past and decided it was finally time to try it," she said. So she did a little homework and selected the Spree trails that would be feasible for her son, age three at the time.

Steiner hopes her son remembers the Fall Hiking Spree as a special time he got to spend one-on-one with his mom. "I know the Spree made him more adventurous — it was such fun for me watching him get excited when it was what he called 'a tricky path' (one with rocks or roots to navigate over) or when he'd tell me that he wanted to lead the way," she reflected.

"After just one year of the Spree, I'm hooked. There are so many gorgeous Metro Parks that you sometimes need a nudge to go explore, and once you do, you wonder 'Why didn't I do this sooner?' I know we didn't even begin to scratch the surface of what the Metro Parks has to offer with the eight hikes we did last year, so I can't wait to do it again this year."

Summit Metro Parks invites you to begin your own new tradition. The Fall Hiking Spree happens annually from September through November, and serves as an opportunity to connect with nature and loved ones while creating memories money can't buy.

page 19

Cuyahoga River FIRE FACTS

- The first recorded incident of the Cuyahoga River catching fire was in 1868.
- When the Cuyahoga River caught fire on June 22, 1969, it captured national attention.
- The fire helped lead to the creation of the Clean Water Act and the Environmental Protection Agency.
- There are NO photos from the 1969 fire; "Time Magazine" used a photograph from a 1952 fire.
- The river, which was once devoid of fish, now supports 44 species!
- The 1969 fire inspired the song "Burn On" by Randy Newman, and "Cuyahoga" by R.E.M., among others.