

GREEN ISLANDS

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Summit Metro Parks Bi-Monthly Magazine

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Let's Grow Akron

Our parks are like green islands in an urban landscape.

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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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VISIT OUR!

FARMER' MARKET AT SUMMIT LAKE

Every Tuesday evening from June 7 to September 27, visitors can enjoy beautiful, fresh produce from the Summit Lake Neighborhood Farmers' Market. This market has been operating at Summit Lake since 2015 and continues to expand each season. Residents of Summit Lake grow their own vegetables, herbs and fruit. Some of these are used to make pickles, jams, jellies and baked goods throughout the year. Residents directly benefit from the farmers' market by selling their produce or gaining access to fresh food that may otherwise not be available in their neighborhood. We look forward to seeing you at the next market!

DISCOVER YOUR BACK YARD Section

Trail treasures

DISCOVER THE VALLEY VIEW AREA

The Valley View Area of Cascade Valley Metro Park is the park district's newest park area and offers so much to enjoy. At the Cuyahoga River overlook during a foggy morning, stand and imagine what is around the riverbend of this newly restored treasure.

Summit Metro Parks protects and conserves land — but we don't stop there. Thanks to generous grant funding, we have had opportunities to return places like Valley View to their native form for all to enjoy. We invite you to see for yourself the array of renewed life from the 1.6-mile Celebration Trail that opened last fall. Signage along the way will help guide and enhance your journey.

SUMMERTIME FUN IN SMP

By Stephanie Walton, Chief of Marketing & Communications

Now that summer is officially underway, Summit Metro Parks invites you to enjoy our local rivers and lakes with a variety of fun activities for the whole family. Paddle, cast, snap and observe your way through summer while exploring all that SMP has to offer.

PADDLE THROUGH SUMMIT COUNTY

Whether you've never paddled before or you never miss an opportunity to get out on the local waters, SMP has options for you. "For those new to kayaking or stand-up paddleboarding, we offer river- and lake-based programs at Munroe Falls, Silver Creek, Nimisila Reservoir and Gorge Metro Parks, as well as Summit Lake Nature Center," says Community Engagement Manager Meghan Doran. "You can choose a one-hour program to learn the basics, or a two-hour program to learn to paddle and take a guided tour with a naturalist." Act fast; programs require registration and fill up quickly!

Prefer to strike out on your own? Summit Metro Parks offers canoes, rowboats, stand-up paddleboards (\$10/hour or \$30/day) and pedal boats (\$5/half-hour) for rent at Silver Creek Metro Park (5000 Hametown Rd., Norton). Visitors must provide a \$20 refundable deposit and a valid driver's license. At least one person in the boat must be 18 years of age or older, and payment may be made by cash or check only.

Personal watercraft are permitted at several Metro Parks, including Firestone, Gorge, Liberty, Munroe Falls, Nimisila Reservoir and Silver Creek. They are also permitted on Summit Lake and on the Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas River Water Trails. Please visit summitmetroparks.org/paddling.aspx for important safety information and motor restrictions.

CAST A LINE

SMP naturalists also offer free fishing programs for anglers of all ages — and even provide equipment on a first-come, first-served basis. “It’s amazing seeing a child’s face light up with the thrill of the catch,” says Naturalist Dave Daly. “We love teaching them a skill they can enjoy with friends and family for the rest of their lives.”

Visitors are also welcome to fish on their own at many Metro Parks locations, either from a boat, dock or the shore. Lakes are stocked frequently and feature species such as black crappie, bluegill sunfish, channel catfish, common carp, rainbow trout and yellow perch. For a full list of fishing locations, rules and regulations and commonly found species, please visit summitmetroparks.org/fishing.aspx.

SNAP A LASTING MEMORY

If you’re more into the beautiful scenery created by the waterways of SMP, check out Nimisila Reservoir Metro Park (6194 Christman Rd., Green). A recent Akron Beacon Journal article called it a “sunset paradise,” as it frequently features strikingly colorful displays as nightfall approaches. The lake is also home to a variety of wildlife, top-notch fishing opportunities and a campground. As an added bonus in late August, visitors will enjoy a truly magical experience as thousands of migrating purple martins perform their aerial acrobatics each evening before roosting in the lake’s reed beds.

OBSERVE OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS

“For a relaxing and rewarding activity, the lakes, ponds and rivers of SMP are a wonderful place to view wildlife,” says Interpretive Naturalist Janean Kazimir. “Nesting waterfowl, such as wood ducks and mergansers, dot the landscape.” Bald eagles, osprey and hawks can be seen hovering high in the clouds. Migrating songbirds settle in for breeding season after flying thousands of miles to reach our natural areas. SMP’s most recent addition, the

Valley View Area at Cascade Valley Metro Park (1212 Cuyahoga St., Akron), is a restoration success story that hosts many bird species. Stop by any of our nature centers to find out about the latest sightings!

Visit summitmetroparks.org to learn more about naturalist-led programs featuring the lakes, rivers and streams of Summit Metro Parks.

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A Naturalist’s Legacy

By Meghan Doran, Community Engagement Manager

What do you get when you combine a teacher, an enthusiastic steward of the outdoors and a performer? A naturalist, of course! Add puns, loyalty, wit and theatrical production to the mix, and you can imagine what a joyful career it is to be an interpretive naturalist. It’s no wonder we refer to Community Engagement as the “fun” department!

For the last 31 years, we were blessed to have one of the best naturalists in Ohio working for Summit Metro Parks. Naturalist Mike Greene, a recent retiree, is the perfect example of an enthusiastic teacher gone wild! After years of teaching in a formal school setting, Mike made the move to the outdoor classroom. His passion for cultural and natural history inspired visitors and naturalists alike. Mike was instrumental to the development of the department and encouraged others to follow in his footsteps by demonstrating his knowledge and passion for the field of interpretation. His programs and staff development opportunities became legendary over the years. He will be sorely missed by his regular program attendees, his staff and his colleagues across the park district.

During our busiest season, naturalists provide approximately 80 programs per month, ranging from recreational opportunities to interpretive hikes. In

addition to these in-person programs, the community engagement staff provides virtual programs on a variety of topics, such as nature journaling, landscaping and more.

While goodbyes are hard, we are hopeful and confident Mike's legacy will be passed on to many others who have collaborated with him and to young people who may be searching for a career at Summit Metro Parks. Visit our website summitmetroparks.org to learn more about employment opportunities.

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LET'S GROW AKRON

By Katelyn Freil, Marketing Specialist

Stop by the community garden at Summit Lake Nature Center on any given day this summer and you'll see neighbor helping neighbor next to raised beds, where fresh greens are intertwined with vibrant colors of tomatoes or peppers.

Chances are one of those neighbors will be Lisa Nunn, director of Let's Grow Akron, a local nonprofit that focuses on supporting community gardening where food access, particularly access to fresh healthy foods, is low.

Let's Grow Akron's community garden at Summit Lake transformed along with the redevelopment of an old pump house into the newest Summit Metro Parks nature center. The gardens increase access to high quality, nutrient-dense and sustainable food for community members, while offering programming through the site's four demonstration beds.

"Everyone needs to eat, and everyone needs to eat healthy," said Nunn. "We're putting the power to do this back in the hands of our neighbors and community."

Beyond offering the space and skills to grow food, Let's Grow Akron offers canning and cooking programs, which

foster fellowship and allow space for neighbors to share. Long-time gardeners and canners bring a lifetime of experience to classes, sharing recipes, techniques and their own flavor with those growing (no pun intended!) their skills.

This sharing of food and knowledge feeds relationships beyond the garden or kitchen, where neighbors support one another in life. Lisa knows she can count on neighbors in any community where Let's Grow Akron works should she need help.

One neighbor and friend is Jetora Carter, a Summit Lake resident and seasonal outreach assistant at Summit Lake Nature Center. Jetora and her family have gardened at the center since the old pump house days, saying the best part is interacting with neighbors and having fresh food available. Her goal this year is to grow everything she needs for homemade pico de gallo and spaghetti sauce.

The gardens have had a profound impact on Jetora's family. Her daughter, Zarien, grew up in the gardens. Now 21 years old, Zarien works with Lisa at Let's Grow Akron, building gardens and supporting programs she once enjoyed as a child.

"In the garden, people of different ages and backgrounds can come together, and it doesn't matter your differences," Lisa said. "Everyone is dirty, everyone is working together."

Learn more about Let's Grow Akron by visiting letsgrowakron.org or the Summit Lake Nature Center (411 Ira Ave. in Akron).

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TOUCH-A-TRUCK at Munroe Falls Metro Park
August 13, 2022 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Autism-friendly hour – 9 to 10 a.m.
Touch-A-Truck continues – 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.