

Summit Metro Parks
975 Treaty Line Rd.
Akron, OH 44313-5837

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For more information, contact:

Stephanie Walton
Chief of Marketing & Communications
330-865-8040 x215
swalton@summitmetroparks.org

Lindsay Smith
Marketing & Public Relations Manager
330-865-8040 x207
lsmith@summitmetroparks.org

SUMMIT METRO PARKS HONORED WITH STATEWIDE AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Summit Metro Parks has received two Awards of Excellence from the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association (OPRA). OPRA's annual Awards of Excellence recognize organizations throughout Ohio that embody the vision, dedication and demonstration of excellence in parks and recreation. These awards highlight the efforts of those organizations that transcend everyday standards to make a difference and improve the quality of life in Ohio communities.

The park district has received the following awards:

First Place: Category 2 – Capital Improvement
Summit Lake Nature Center (411 Ira Rd., Akron)

Created with input from residents and stakeholders, the park district's first urban nature center celebrates the local community, the natural resources of Summit Lake and the intersection of people and place. The nature center is a product of Reimagining the Civic Commons and is made possible with the help of many grants and private contributions.

Second Place: Category 6 – Natural Resources & Conservation
Cuyahoga River Restoration at Valley View (1212 Cuyahoga St., Akron)

Long ago altered to create the golf course, the park's water features were returned to life with grant funding from the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration and Great Lakes Commission Regional Partnership, as well as the Ohio Public Works Commission Clean Ohio Conservation Fund. This effort included restoration of a one-mile section of the Cuyahoga River and resulted in improvements to 1,500 feet of headwater stream, 30 acres of wetlands and 40 acres of floodplain. Nesting bald eagles and returning fish populations are evidence of the project's resounding success.

“Every year, we say that these award winners represent the best of the best in parks and recreation in Ohio,” said OPRA Executive Director Woody Woodward. “But this year, these award winners are particularly powerful. These projects, programs, and events were carried out through a pandemic and sought to make an impact in the lives of people as they struggled through these difficult times. More than anything, these award recipients demonstrate the significant impact that parks and recreation departments continue to make on people and on the communities they serve—even in the midst of a global pandemic.”

Summit Metro Parks staff will accept the awards on February 8, 2022 at OPRA's annual conference in Sandusky. Ohio Parks and Recreation Association is a non-profit, public interest organization representing over 2,000 professionals and citizen board members striving to provide quality park and recreational facilities and opportunities for all Ohioans while protecting and preserving Ohio's natural resources. For more information, visit <https://opraonline.org/opra-awards-of-excellence/>.

For more information about Summit Metro Parks programs and initiatives, call 330-867-5511.

Established in 1921, Summit Metro Parks is celebrating its centennial anniversary this year. The park district manages more than 14,000 acres throughout 16 parks, three nature centers and more than 150 miles of trails, including 22 miles of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. Annual attendance in 2020 was 6 million visits. Visit us online at summitmetroparks.org.

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