

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

EXPLORE FIELDS TO FORESTS DURING THE 57th ANNUAL FALL HIKING SPREE

Virtual Fall Hiking Spree Kickoff available on Facebook August 30

The largest and longest-running event of its kind in the nation – the annual Fall Hiking Spree – begins September 1 in Summit Metro Parks. This year, the [Fall Hiking Spree](#) theme is “Field to Forest” – celebrating the rich agricultural past of many Summit Metro Parks locations, as well as their successful return to nature. Take a journey on this year’s spree and explore the former farms and fields that are now forests.

Participants can get a head start on the 57th annual Fall Hiking Spree by watching the virtual kickoff event on August 30 and then hiking Piney Woods Trail at Goodyear Heights Metro Park (550 Frazier Ave. Akron). At the virtual kickoff, park staff will give an overview of the spree, unveil this year's t-shirt design, provide information on safe outdoor pickup options and direct participants to a how-to video for affixing their shield to their hiking staff. Watch the kickoff event on the Summit Metro Parks Facebook page: www.facebook.com/summitmetroparks.

Safety is the park district’s top priority. Due to COVID-19, Summit Metro Parks urges visitors to stay home if sick or exhibiting symptoms, wash their hands before coming to the parks, follow directional signage and maintain at least six feet from other visitors. The park district also reminds visitors to avoid congregating in parking lots or at points of interest and to bypass busy areas. Visitors are asked to bring their own water and hand sanitizer and if possible, to carry out their own trash.

What began in the mid-1960s as a way to encourage people to visit a variety of trails, instead of always hiking the one closest to home, has continued to be a family-friendly tradition through the years. A first-time participant who completes eight hikes through November 30 will earn a hiking staff and metal shield. A veteran spree hiker will earn a shield. Hikes can be completed on a person's own schedule and at their own pace.

Every year, an estimated 50,000 people participate in the spree, and between 11,000 and 12,000 hikers earn rewards. Fall Hiking Spree rewards are free to Summit County residents. Out-of-county residents pay to receive rewards (\$10 for first-year hikers, \$5 for veteran hikers). Hiking forms are available [online](#), in the September/October issue of Green Islands magazine and by visiting F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm (1828 Smith Rd., Akron) or Liberty Park Nature Center (9999 Liberty Rd., Twinsburg) during spree rewards pickup sessions ([see website for details](#)). Forms have also been placed in a dropbox outside the park district's administrative offices (975 Treaty Line Rd., Akron).

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Summit Metro Parks manages more than 14,000 acres, including 16 parks, several conservation areas and more than 150 miles of trails, with 22.4 miles of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. Annual attendance averages 5 million visits. Visit us online at summitmetroparks.org.



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