



Your Back Yard for 100 Years

## NEWS RELEASE

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### SUMMIT METRO PARKS HONORED WITH STATEWIDE AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Summit Metro Parks has received three 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 5 – Marketing Innovation**

Your Back Yards for 100 Years: The Summit Metro Parks Centennial Campaign

*The Summit Metro Parks centennial campaign was an innovative marketing initiative that encouraged participation in the park district's 100th anniversary celebration. This fully integrated marketing campaign emphasized the value of parks and recreation by highlighting a century of conservation of natural and cultural resources, enjoyment of our parks, and the support and generosity of the local community.*

#### **Second Place: Category 8 – Environmental & Interpretive**

Fighting Species Extinction with Wild Back Yards

*Wild Back Yards is a new initiative that encourages the Summit County community to work together to counteract the effects of habitat loss and fragmentation. Launched by Summit Metro Parks in 2022, this countywide, multi-year effort seeks to reduce non-native species coverage, increase native plants and diversity of habitat, reduce the ecological footprint of residential landscaping, and improve understanding of sustainable landscaping practices among Summit County residents.*

### **Third Place: Category – Recreation Programs & Events**

#### Camping for All

*In 2022, Summit Metro Parks launched “Camping for All” to help more families access the joys of camping. Park staff recognized that many people are interested in camping but lack the skills, confidence, equipment or resources to begin. Camping for All met this community need by providing free camping instruction, hosting safe overnight camping experiences, and loaning free camping kits. This comprehensive program reduced the financial burden of camping, addressed the fear of camping outdoors in an unfamiliar space and provided knowledge and support through high-quality camping opportunities with professional staff.*

“These are the best of the best,” said OPRA Executive Director Woody Woodward. “This was a highly competitive process and the winners have gone above and beyond in improving the quality of life in their communities.”

Summit Metro Parks staff will accept the awards on January 31, 2023 at OPRA’s Awards Celebration as part of the 2023 OPRA Conference & Trade Show in Sandusky. OPRA is a non-profit, public interest organization representing more than 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-winners/>.

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Established in 1921, Summit Metro Parks celebrated its centennial anniversary in 2021. The park district manages more than 15,000 acres throughout 16 parks, three nature centers and over 150 miles of trails, including 22 miles of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. Annual attendance is approximately 5.5 million visits. Find us online at [summitmetroparks.org](http://summitmetroparks.org).



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