

GREEN ISLANDS

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Summit Metro Parks Bi-Monthly Magazine

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Our parks are like green islands in an urban landscape.

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BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

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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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SMP GREEN TIPS

Save – Reduce

Here are a few suggestions to save money and reduce your carbon footprint

- Plan a stay-cation. Staying close to home this summer will allow us all to save money and fuel compared to long-distance travel. Explore a new Metro Park or go camping at Nimisila Reservoir!
- Chill out. Air conditioning accounts for a huge spike in energy use during the summer months. Save on energy costs by adjusting the temperature while you're away from home. Using a programmable thermostat can help keep you on track.
- Hoof it! Reduce your carbon footprint by walking or biking when traveling short distances.

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DISCOVER YOUR BACK YARD Section

SWALLOWS

By Carol Vigorito, Interpretive Naturalist

Agile aerialists that expertly catch insects in midair, swallows are fascinating summer residents of Summit Metro Parks.

TREE SWALLOWS (*Tachycineta bicolor*), with their iridescent green-blue backs and clear white fronts, are easily recognized as they glide and dip, hunting insects over marsh or meadow. Be alert! These birds are protective of their tree cavity or nest box and will dive-bomb interlopers. You can often find them at the Tallmadge Meadows Area of Munroe Falls Metro Park.

See if you can spot one bathing by skimming the water's surface!

BANK SWALLOWS (*Riparia riparia*) can be found swooping low over the Cuyahoga River to catch insects in the Oxbow Area of Cascade Valley Metro Park. To identify these birds, look for their subdued brown coloring and a distinctive breast band. Search for the burrows they make using their small beaks to dig three feet deep into sandy river banks.

Enjoy viewing these species before summer ends — soon, they'll migrate south for the winter!

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DISC GOLF — A NEW WAY TO CONNECT WITH NATURE IN SMP

By Stephanie Walton, Chief of Marketing & Communications

Summit Metro Parks is always listening to feedback from the community, and on one thing the message was clear: Summit County residents wanted a disc golf course in their Metro Parks! Luckily, the park district had the perfect location available — an NCAA-certified cross country course at Silver Creek Metro Park in Norton. Hosting the University of Akron's home cross country meets only a few times each fall, the course is well-suited for dual use.

So, what exactly is disc golf? Well, it's just like golf — but with flying discs similar to Frisbees®. Players aim to get their disc from the tee to the target (usually a raised metal basket) in the fewest number of throws. Various weighted discs are used for different types of throws, just as drivers, irons and putters are selected in golf. There are obstacles in the form of trees, shrubs and water features, but unlike traditional golf, it is usually free to play disc golf.

First formalized as a sport in the 1970s, disc golf has steadily gained in popularity as some traditional golf courses have struggled or closed. As one measure of the sport's growth, membership in the Professional Disc Golf Association (PDGA) has grown by 225 percent since 2009.

Summit Metro Parks created the new course almost entirely in-house. All course maps and signage were designed, constructed and installed by park staff. Summit Metro Parks staff also cleared the site, installed major components and performed all concrete work, grading and seeding of tee boxes. For scoring, the course uses the paper-saving UDisc Disc Golf app, allowing users to access a map of the course and their personal statistics for each hole, while also creating an online community that drives users to the facility.

To ensure the course met PDGA standards, the park district engaged well-known disc golf architect Bill Griffith. As a result, the finished course perfectly takes advantage of the site's rolling hills, open vistas and forested areas and is fully integrated into the existing park. Each hole was designed to challenge various aspects of the game while responding to the site's natural topography.

The 18-hole course is laid out over approximately 74 acres and includes 9,000 feet of fairway. Most holes are 400 to 700 feet, with Hole 16 topping out at 1,001 feet. Overall par is 61, and players typically golf in groups of four or fewer, making disc golf a good activity for social distancing.

The course is open 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily and there is no charge to play. Visitors are asked to bring their own discs. Whether you're new to the sport or an experienced disc golfer, we invite you to come out today!

The Disc Golf Course is located at Silver Creek Metro Park — 4579 Medina Line Rd. (Norton). Visit the Park & Trail Alerts page at summitmetroparks.org to check the cross country schedule before planning your visit.

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SMP Community Spotlight:

VERRELLE WYATT

Akron Marathon Race Director

By Lindsay Smith, Marketing & Public Relations Manager

Verrelle Wyatt may have only stepped into the role of director this year, but he's no stranger to blue-line action. Wyatt has participated in 16 Akron Marathon races since 2010 and was the second-place finisher of the 2017 race. Wyatt graduated from Copley High School and went on to attend Campbell University on a running scholarship, later earning his doctoral degree in physical therapy from Walsh University.

Wyatt, like many Summit County residents, said the Jogging Trail in Sand Run Metro Park (Akron) is his go-to spot for running. "This trail has been a staple in my training since high school, and it's such a joy to see the activities provided by Summit Metro Parks in and around this area. If you're running, walking, biking or simply spending time with family and loved ones — the Metro Parks has an activity for you!"

As a lifelong resident of Summit County, Wyatt noted the value of the park district, adding: "Summit Metro Parks provides our community with the opportunity to get outside, breathe the fresh air and simply enjoy a better quality of life. Whether you're exercising, hosting a family gathering, capturing a portrait of something memorable or simply inhaling all the positive vibes provided by the Metro Parks, our community is brighter because of this incredible asset."

UPDATE:

The Akron Marathon has made the decision to hold a

virtual race this year and will no longer travel the Towpath Trail as indicated in our previous issue.

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ENJOY Section

REPAIRING A LEGACY

Mark Szeremet, Land Acquisition Specialist

Ohio's oil and natural gas heritage, with origins as early as 1814, has provided an abundance of energy over the years. But as oil and gas wells have aged and changed ownership, many have been abandoned and become defunct — turning into what are called “orphan wells.” Such was the case with four orphan wells at the park district's Columbia Run Conservation Area off Boston Mills Road in Boston Heights.

Drilled in the 1940s and '50s, Summit Metro Parks “inherited” these wells when we acquired this property in 1970. Older wells such as these often leak methane, a greenhouse gas even more powerful than carbon dioxide at trapping heat and warming the climate. After working with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Oil and Gas Resources Management Orphan Well Program (ODNR), Summit Metro Parks, in cooperation with Cuyahoga Valley National Park, has remediated this problem. Using a qualified contractor, ODNR has successfully plugged the wells and mitigated the leaking natural gas.

Significant planning and consideration for the environment was necessary to successfully complete this project. Project partners worked in conjunction with the Army Corps of Engineers to obtain a stream crossing permit, worked with local municipalities to obtain permits to access the property via municipal roads, and planned access for the numerous pieces of plugging equipment that needed to travel over rough terrain to reach the wells. Due to the age and poor condition of the wells and

the lack of historical records, ODNR had to rely on their in-house expertise and that of the plugging contractor to deal with numerous challenges that arose during the process. In the end, all four wells were properly plugged with cement and Summit Metro Parks staff have restored the land to its natural state — where it will remain a protected habitat for wildlife.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources' Orphan Well Program is administered by the Division of Oil and Gas Resources Management using severance tax dollars from the Oil and Gas Fund. If you believe you have an orphan well on your property, please contact them at 330-308-0007.

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Hampton & Friends

Activities for Adventurers of All Ages

PINE NEEDLE PAINT BRUSHES

Materials needed:

- Small twigs
- String, twine or rubber bands
- Conifer needles (pine needles, spruce needles, cypress needles, etc.)
- Tempera paint or liquid watercolor
- Plain paper

Directions:

1. Go outside and look for conifer trees or shrubs from which to collect needles. Check around the bottom of the tree for needles or branches that have fallen to the ground. Be careful; some conifers have sharp needles! If they are wet, let them dry a little before making the paint brushes.

2. Place the needles around the end of the twig and wrap string or twine around the needles and twig to secure them in place. You can also use a rubber band to attach the needles if you have no twine or string. If you like, you can make a different brush for each paint color.
3. Now is the fun part: Use the brushes to paint a beautiful picture!

For an added sensory experience, include some drops of different essential oils in the paint!