

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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SMP GREEN TIPS CELEBRATE EARTH MONTH

Here are a few ways to care for the planet this April!

- Plant a tree for Arbor Day. Oaks are one of the most beneficial native trees – more than 100 animal species feast on acorns and oak leaves support over 530 species of butterfly and moth caterpillars.
- Create garden gold. Your vegetable trimmings, fruit cores and coffee grounds can transform into compost, a nutrient-rich soil amendment that will help your plants grow, as well as eliminate organic waste going to the landfill.
- Lights out for birds! This time of year, migratory songbirds are making their incredible journeys north

using the starry sky as a guide. Help birds by turning off lights to restore darkness to our skies and reduce window collisions.

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DISCOVER YOUR BACK YARD Section

AMERICAN COOT

By Renell Roebuck, Interpretive Naturalist

If you look out over the water at Nimisila Reservoir Metro Park, you might see a rather strange-looking bird paddling by with its head bobbing forward and back. It is medium-sized, charcoal gray and has a white beak and face shield. Below the surface, it paddles through the water using its unusual, but well-adapted feet. This bird is the American coot (*Fulica americana*), also known as a mud hen.

Its feet are designed for swimming and walking around on matted wetland vegetation — they are lobed instead of webbed like those of a duck or goose. This adaptation allows the coot to forage in wetlands for plants and small aquatic critters like snails and tadpoles. Coots find food both above and below the water, as well as on land.

The next time you are out in Summit Metro Parks, try to sneak a peek at this curious bird and its unusual feet!

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WOMEN OF SUMMIT METRO PARKS

By Stephanie Walton, Chief of Marketing & Communications
and Lindsay Smith, Manager of Marketing & Public Relations

With contributions from Becca Zak, Interpretive Naturalist
and Megan Shaeffer, Cultural Resource Coordinator

Celebrated annually in March, Women's History Month comes with a yearly theme chosen by the National Women's History Alliance. In 2020, the theme is "Valiant Women of the Vote." One hundred years have

now passed since women gained the right to vote, an effort which took nearly 100 years to achieve. It was even longer before some women of color gained full access to the polls. According to the Alliance, the theme honors "the brave women who fought to win suffrage rights for women, and for the women who continue to fight for the voting rights of others."

Summit Metro Parks would not be the park district it is today without the vision, generosity and foresight of the larger-than-life figures who have helped shape it. Many of those groundbreaking contributions came from women who were ahead of their time — and through their actions, helped forge the path for the women who now follow in their footsteps. Today, we share the tales of just a few of the women who are woven into Summit Metro Parks history.

Gertrude Penfield Seiberling (1866-1946)

Married to Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company founder and early SMP board member Frank A. Seiberling, Gertrude Seiberling was a true patron of the arts and cultural affairs in Akron. Her family's land became much of what is today Sand Run Metro Park, including the F.A. Seiberling Nature Realm property. Seiberling enjoyed the outdoors, spending hours in her gardens at Stan Hywet and founding the Akron Garden Club in 1924. She was also active in the Peace Society and Ohio Women's Suffrage Association.

An accomplished opera singer, Seiberling performed at the White House in 1910 for President Taft, and she served as president of the National Federation of Music Clubs from 1919 to 1921. Over the course of her life, she traveled more than 25,000 miles and visited 21 states promoting musical enrichment and appreciation.

Maude I. Watters Milar (1868-1946)

Maude I. Watters Milar served on the very first Akron Metropolitan Park District board as the fledgling park district's first female board commissioner from 1923 to 1929. At just 22 years old, she became a founding member of the Mary Day Nursery, which cared for

children of working mothers and was the pre-decessor to Akron Children's Hospital. She also helped establish the Sumner Home for the Aged.

Milar was elected the Akron Head of Conservation and helped organize the Girl Scouts in Akron. She was the driving force behind the first Akron women's chapter of the National Aeronautical Society, which was the first of its kind in the United States.

Dorothy Adams Hamilton Brush (1894-1968)

When friends and family tried to discourage Dorothy Adams Hamilton Brush from converting some of her land to a public park, she forged ahead, erecting this sign as a social experiment:

"Dear public, they say that if I let you picnic here you will ruin my property. I don't believe it, so I will try my experiment for a year. Please back me up by building no fires and disposing of all your rubbish. If you pick the wildflowers, there will not be any next year. This is a game preserve, so do not shoot."

The experiment was a success, and today we have Brush to thank for Furnace Run Metro Park in Richfield. You can find a boulder commemorating the Brush family on Old Mill Trail.

Among her many accomplishments, Brush was also a reformer in women's reproductive rights who helped found the Maternal Health Association. She was an author and playwright, and as an interesting piece of Summit County trivia, her sister Margaret Hamilton played the Wicked Witch in the Wizard of Oz!

Willie Mae Prather (1914-1983)

The stories of Summit Metro Parks include not just those who helped create the park district, but those who once lived within it. One of the ways we learn about those who came before us is through historical documentation and archaeology. Like all the past residents of our properties, Willie Mae Prather is an important part of the cultural fabric of the landscapes that have become Summit Metro Parks.

Living in one of Akron's first integrated neighborhoods at what is now the Valley View Area of Cascade Valley Metro Park, Prather moved to Ohio from Alabama when her husband began working at Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company. She was a homemaker and active in the Shelton Temple Church of God in Christ. According to Joan Gattuso, whose family employed Prather from the late 1950s through the 1970s, "We loved her, and she loved us ... I am so grateful that Willie Mae played such an important part in my life. She was a loving, kind woman who lived large beyond any stereotype. Her memory is still very alive in me, and I give thanks and smile every time I think of her."

Christine Dietrich Freitag (1934-2018)

As a lifelong environmentalist who was committed to a wide array of civic causes, Christine Dietrich Freitag founded Friends of Metro Parks, an organization that supports and encourages public enjoyment of Summit Metro Parks through membership, outreach and advocacy. She also played a key role in forming the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, then serving as the president of the park's Conservancy. Freitag served on the board of the Ohio Environmental Council and founded Scenic Ohio.

She was president of the Garden Club of America from 1993 to 1995 and was especially committed to protecting rare and endangered plant species. Preserving the Summit Metro Parks monkshood population is one of the park district's longest-running conservation projects, initiated and funded by the Akron Garden Club under Freitag's leadership. Regarding her invasive species work, she once remarked that "Pulling garlic mustard in the Cuyahoga Valley and in Summit Metro Parks has been especially satisfying."

Frances Seiberling Buchholzer

Having grown up on several hundred acres in Northfield, Frances (Fran) Buchholzer's childhood instilled in her a passion for nature. She has spent her career focusing on the conservation of natural resources and educating the public about their importance. She was recently quoted in Crain's Cleveland Business advocating for getting

people into the parks in order to foster an appreciation for the out-doors: “If you are going to want to conserve something, you have to have passion to do so.”

Buchholzer served on the Summit Metro Parks Board of Park Commissioners for 19 years and for a portion of her tenure was part of an all-female board consisting of herself, Carol M. Curtis and Rainy G. Stitzlein. She was also appointed by Governor George Voinovich as the first female director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and currently plays an active role on the boards of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and Great Lakes Biomimicry.

Lisa M. King

Appointed in September 2015, Lisa M. King is the seventh director of Summit Metro Parks and the first woman to hold the position. Her responsibilities include leading the organization to ensure achievement of its mission, financial viability, short and long-term growth and stability. King continues to champion a mission-driven focus that has been an SMP trademark for nearly 100 years. In her position as director, King especially enjoys hearing stories from visitors about the role parks play in their daily lives and how those experiences have shaped them and their families.

An employee since 1998, King says, “The joy in creating public spaces is watching people enjoy them.” In her time with the park district, she has also served as its landscape architect and chief of planning, managing a variety of facility and trail improvement projects. She is most proud of her work over the past 15 years acquiring, designing and opening Liberty Park, now home to countless plant and animal species and dozens of recreational opportunities.

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SMP Community Spotlight:

ILENE SHAPIRO

Summit County’s first female county executive shares her perspective on the value Summit Metro Parks brings to residents.

By Lindsay Smith, Marketing & Public Relations Manager

A diverse and well-rounded career path led County Executive Ilene Shapiro — the first female to hold this seat in Summit County and in Ohio — to where she is today. Shapiro sees her role as two-fold: the work itself and the example she sets for others.

“I think the qualities and skills I and many women possess — the ability to collaborate, communicate and compromise — help immensely in this role. It feels like women bring these skills and others to the table in a new and different way. I work hard to stay focused, be genuine and be a ‘do-er.’ ” And while Shapiro doesn’t necessarily see herself as a role model, she hopes her example provides opportunities for other women.

When she’s not working to advance our communities, Shapiro can be found enjoying a moment in the Metro Parks. While she said it is impossible to pick a favorite, Shapiro values that SMP provides access to different types of activities for all kinds of people. “Whether you want to walk through a park, jog on a trail or even practice your archery skills, SMP has something for everyone. For me, just being outside in the Metro Parks takes me to a place of calmness and tranquility. I think experiencing nature brings you down to a very humanistic level where you can appreciate the beauty and simplicity of our world,” she shared.

“Summit Metro Parks really sets us apart from other metropolitan communities. We are unique because we have so much green space to offer — □4,000 acres to be exact! Many communities long for a park system as comprehensive and beautiful as ours. Summit Metro Parks also embraces all people in our community. It has something to offer everyone and that makes our county an attractive destination. Summit County is a welcoming community and I believe Summit Metro Parks is a symbol of our collective friendliness and generosity,” added Shapiro.

ENJOY Section

GREEN GIRLS GAIN GROUND

By Lindsay Smith, Marketing & Public Relations Manager

Jennifer Davis, a former Summit Metro Parks outreach assistant, is a passionate advocate of the outdoors. She's an active co-founder of a local group called the "Green Girl Gang," a club of women and others who seek opportunities to empower each other through their love of the outdoors. The group tackles service projects that help the environment and also coordinates cultural events that support their mission.

Davis hit her stride with the organization after receiving a message on Instagram from the group's founder, Jessica Suvak.

"She saw that I was tagged in a climbing post, and saw how passionate I am about outdoor recreation and community-building," shared Davis. "She originally started this group due to the lack of women in her outdoor circle. She needed that connection and relation to other women, as do many of the ladies in our group," she added. "There is no way that she or I were the only women who enjoyed having fun and getting a little dirty along the way."

The Green Girl Gang is forever changing and growing; it consists of about 30 members locally, with additional volunteers serving on a drop-in basis. Eventually, the group would like to establish chapters in different states. Davis currently runs the Akron chapter, while Suvak, along with others, manages the Cleveland chapter.

Each chapter hosts a diverse array of events that encourage women to unite and connect, including fly-fishing clinics, a clothing swap (where all leftover clothing goes to a battered women's shelter), park and lake cleanups, women's wellness retreats featuring

camping and backpacking, as well as occasional impromptu meet-ups for mountain biking, hiking, winter sports and more.

While their outdoor sessions benefit members on a personal level, the positive impact of the group is also measurable for the community. Last year, Davis removed over 600 pounds of trash from Summit Lake in Akron, and her intent is to double that amount in 2020. Ultimately, Davis continues this effort because of the positivity it brings to her life. "The entire experience is rewarding. I have met so many wonderful women who are now my best friends. We have helped communities and neighborhoods, and it's such a rewarding feeling to have people recognize you by the group you are associated with, and hear how we inspired and gave them hope."

The Green Girl Gang is a women-focused group, but does not discriminate — men are welcome, too, and the group is LGBTQ-friendly. Davis said if it wasn't for the Green Girl Gang, she wouldn't be who she is today. "I am forever thankful for each and every one of these women. I went from being surrounded by only male counterparts in my outdoor activities, and lacking a sense of relation, to feeling empowered on a level I didn't know was possible."

The Green Girl Gang welcomes interaction and inquiries through Instagram, where they may be reached at [@thegreengirlgang](https://www.instagram.com/thegreengirlgang).

The Summit Metro Parks Foundation

The Summit Metro Parks Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that was established in 1991 to further the goals and mission of Summit Metro Parks. We are grateful to the many people, organizations, businesses and agencies who made gifts, grants and

sponsorships January 1 through December 31, 2019.
These donations and other forms of support create thriving parks that are a cornerstone of Summit County's quality of life, and benefit the park district's charitable, educational and scientific initiatives.

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