



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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A. Community Special Events

Bingo Nights

Bingo Nights continued to be very well attended in 2025, with consistently large crowds at events held on March 20, May 15, July 17, and October 16. Games began at 6:00 pm and continue through 7:30 pm, with as many rounds played as time allowed. Winners of each game received a \$25 gift card.

Volunteers from the Fairlawn Seniors Group—Pat Quatraro, Flora Headings, and Becky Katzenmeyer—were invaluable in assisting with entry fee collection and the sale of bingo cards and daubers throughout the evening.

Sponsors for the 2025 Bingo Nights included the Fairlawn City Women’s Club, the Fairlawn Area Chamber of Commerce, CLEO (Connect. Learn. Engage. Organize), and The Village of St. Edwards.



Summer Concert Series

In 2025, the City refreshed its Summer Concert Series to draw larger crowds and enhance the overall experience. Concerts were held on the first Friday of June, July, and August.

- **June 6** – *Pet the Cougar*, a Tom Petty/John Mellencamp tribute band
- **July 4** – *The Mick and Rick Band*, followed by *45 RPM*
- **August 1** – *In the Heartland*, a Michael Stanley tribute band

Each evening included food trucks and beer and hard seltzer sales from Brighten Brewery, sold by the Fairlawn Area Chamber of Commerce. The expanded offerings and updated schedule resulted in

larger crowds, and the refreshed concert series was a successful addition to the City's summer programming.

Independence Day Celebration

The City celebrated Independence Day on Friday, July 4, at Bicentennial Park. Because the holiday fell on a Friday, the celebration was incorporated into the City's refreshed Summer Concert Series. Residents from Fairlawn and surrounding communities gathered to celebrate and enjoy a beautiful summer evening.

Additional entertainment included a face painter and henna artist, providing family-friendly activities throughout the event. The Fairlawn Area Chamber of Commerce managed beer and hard seltzer sales, featuring beverages from Brighten Brewery.

Festivities began at 5:00 p.m. with food trucks and beverage sales, while *The Mick and Rick Band* entertained the growing crowd until 7:30 p.m. At 8:00 p.m., *45 RPM* took the stage and performed until the fireworks began at 10:00 p.m. The evening concluded with a spectacular 20-minute fireworks display by American Fireworks of Hudson.

Holiday Lighting Event

The Holiday Lighting event was held at the Community Center, providing residents with a warm and dry space to enjoy refreshments and holiday music performed by Doug Kaufman. Santa arrived by fire truck, and attendees rang bells together to signal the lighting of the entire City complex. Approximately 100 people attended and enjoyed this festive community event.

Doug continued performing holiday music following the lighting ceremony, while families had the opportunity to take photos with Santa.



Gingerbread House Making

This family-friendly event drew our largest crowd yet, with participants creating impressive gingerbread houses using graham crackers, icing, and a variety of candies and options for

decorating. Participants thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and the creativity on display was impressive. Participants thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and the creativity on display was impressive.

This event would not have been possible without the incredible support of our Senior volunteers, Pat, Flora, and Becky.



Letters To Santa

The Letters to Santa program continued to be a successful initiative for the Department. Letters were deposited in the Santa mailbox outside City Hall, and Santa responded to each one. In 2025, Santa was especially busy, replying to 120 letters. Each child received a personalized response, along with a Nice List certificate and a dated wooden Nice List coin mailed to their home.



B. Volunteers Spotlight: Making Events Possible

Organizing community events is always a joy—but as the sole organizer, it also comes with a lot of work. From planning and setup to welcoming participants and ensuring everything runs smoothly, each event depends on the generosity and dedication of volunteers.

This year, our Senior volunteers—Pat Quatraro, Flora Headings, and Becky Katzenmeyer—were at the heart of making our events a success. At every Bingo Night, they were on hand collecting money at the door, selling cards and daubers throughout the evening, and helping the nights run smoothly from start to finish. Their enthusiasm and attention to detail ensured that each participant had a fun, well-organized experience.

Later in the season, they played a critical role in the annual Gingerbread House Party. Arriving early to set up tables, arrange candy, and prepare the icing stations, they welcomed families with warm smiles and assisted with check-in. During the event, they guided children through their candy selections, offered encouragement, managed the candy table, replenished supplies, and helped clean up—all with patience, good humor, and boundless energy.

It is because of volunteers like Pat, Flora, and Becky that our community events are not only successful but truly memorable. Their commitment exemplifies the spirit of volunteerism, and I am deeply grateful for their ongoing support. Recognizing their contributions in this annual report is a small way to honor the big difference they make in the life of our department and the community we serve.

C. Recreation Activities

Croghan Park Playground

Planning for a new playground at Croghan Park began in early 2024 and included numerous discussions and meetings with the public, the Park Board and several playground equipment companies. Bids for the new playground were presented in early December, and in late January, Snider Recreation, the local representative for Burke Playground Equipment, was selected to design and install the playground.

The goal was to host a grand opening by Memorial Day weekend. While the project timeline extended slightly beyond that target, the playground officially opened on June 2, 2025.

The grand opening drew a large crowd, with many children already enjoying the playground before the ceremony even began. When it came time for the ribbon cutting, the excitement was undeniable, the children enthusiastically called out “Cut it, cut it!” prompting speeches to be kept short so the ribbon could be cut. The moment perfectly captured the community’s enthusiasm, and the new playground has since become a big hit not only with Fairlawn residents, but also with families from neighboring communities who visit Croghan Park to play.



Sports Programs

The Parks and Recreation Department continues to partner with experienced outside organizations to offer a variety of sports instruction opportunities for both residents and visitors from neighboring communities. These partnerships allow participants to access high-quality programming at no cost to the City, as all registration fees are collected directly by the instructors. Jump Start Sports and Towpath Tennis Center currently provide the following instructional programs:

T-Ball

Jump Start Sports offered a T-Ball program for children ages 3 and 4, introducing participants to the fundamentals of the sport through age-appropriate practices and games held on Tuesday evenings at Croghan Park. Each child received an MLB hat, team shirt, and an award as part of the program.

Hummingbird Soccer

Jump Start Sports also delivered its Hummingbird Soccer program for children ages 3, 4, and 5. This eight-week session, held on Saturday mornings in the parks, focused on building foundational soccer skills including dribbling, passing, trapping, shooting, and positioning. Participants each received a program t-shirt and trophy.

Tennis

Towpath Tennis Center once again hosted two instructional tennis sessions at both Croghan Park and Griffiths Park. These sessions were open to children and adults, offering instruction for a range of skill levels and providing opportunities for participants to learn and improve in a supportive environment.

Community Gardens

The Fairlawn Community Garden program was introduced in 2012 and was formally closed this year as part of a broader effort to prepare the park for future improvements and new projects. At the time of closure, 16 gardeners remained active in the program. These gardeners were notified in advance and asked to remove all personal property by the end of October.

Following the removal of personal items, the clearing process began to open the area for future park development. While the Community Garden had served many gardeners over the past 14 years, this transition allows the City to re-evaluate how the space can best be used to meet the evolving needs of the community.

Soccer Fields

The fields supported a wide range of users, including elementary through adult soccer teams, as well as elementary and high school lacrosse teams. The fields are in regular use on weekday evenings and weekend mornings, along with additional game times as needed.

Outside of scheduled league play, many residents also took advantage of the open field time, making full use of the facilities whenever they were available.

D. Fairlawn Nature Center

In 2025, the City Council passed a resolution officially renaming the Learning Resource Center at Fort Island Park as the **Fairlawn Nature Center**. This new name more accurately reflects our role and mission as part of the Parks and Recreation Department, while eliminating any confusion

regarding affiliation with a school or tutoring center. A new sign was installed in front of the building, and updated lettering was added on the side facing the parking lot. Since the change, the new designation has already had a positive impact, helping visitors easily locate the center and understand its purpose in the community.

Naturalist Programs

In 2025, the Naturalists offered a total of 87 programs and classes, engaging 866 participants throughout the year. These offerings included a mix of registered sessions, pop-up free programs, and visits from scout and school groups, providing educational and recreational opportunities for children, families, and adults alike. Programs ranged from hands-on nature experiences to seasonal workshops, fostering curiosity and learning about the environment.

The Nature Center welcomed 11,649 visitors in 2025, reflecting strong community engagement with our educational and recreational programs. These programs not only provide opportunities for residents to explore and connect with nature but also strengthen our role as a resource for environmental education within Fairlawn and the surrounding communities.



Owl Pellet Dissection



Survival Skills Camp



Archery



Bug Camp



Art Class



Fairy Garden Class

Permits/Licenses

The Fairlawn Nature Center currently holds four key permits and licenses, enabling us to provide educational programs, maintain live wildlife, and operate as a wildlife rehabilitation facility. All permits and licenses are currently valid and in good standing, with 100% compliance for all requirements.

1. USDA Animal Welfare Act License

This license allows the Nature Center to operate as a Class C live animal exhibit center. Our certification has been successfully renewed through December 3, 2028, ensuring our continued ability to provide wildlife education and conservation programming through live animal exhibits.

2. Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife Wild Animal and Education Permit

This permit authorizes the Nature Center to maintain live native wildlife and house educational wildlife artifacts such as nests, eggs, feathers, and bones collected from the wild. The permit is scheduled for renewal by March 2026, allowing us to continue offering conservation-focused educational experiences to our visitors.

3. United States Fish and Wildlife Service Permit

This permit allows the Nature Center to care for and display materials related to migratory birds as regulated under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. Renewal is scheduled for March 2026.

4. Wildlife Rehabilitation Category 1 Permit

This newly obtained permit allows the Nature Center to operate as a wildlife rehabilitation center for small mammals, including rabbits, chipmunks, squirrels, opossums, and groundhogs. This permit is scheduled for renewal in March 2026.

These permits and licenses are essential to the Nature Center's mission, ensuring we can provide safe, educational, and conservation-focused experiences for visitors while complying with all federal and state regulations.

The Fairlawn Nature Center continues to prioritize delivering engaging and impactful programming while addressing areas for growth to better serve the community. A key focus in 2025 has been local wildlife rehabilitation, made possible through our newly obtained permit. This service has been very positively received by the community, with strong support including donations directed specifically toward rehabilitation efforts.

During the first season of wildlife rehabilitation, the Nature Center fielded 396 wildlife-related phone calls and accepted 108 animal intakes for care. Many of these animals were successfully rehabilitated and released or transferred to appropriate facilities. Others were unable to be rehabilitated and either passed on naturally or were humanely euthanized when necessary. These efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to wildlife education, conservation, and community service.



Baby rabbits in rehab



Baby opossum in rehab

Conservation/Tracking

The Fairlawn Nature Center continues its seasonal bird monitoring programs, and 2025 proved to be a record-setting year. Migration counts in and around Fort Island Park, Fairlawn Park and Rosemont Preserve documented 106 different bird species, our highest total to date. The 2025 Christmas Bird Count, conducted in partnership with the local Audubon Society, recorded 43 species and a total of 1,450 individual birds, also the highest count in our history.

The Oxbow at Fairlawn Park continues to function as an important habitat, attracting a wide range of wildlife, including wetland birds, muskrats, reptiles, amphibians, and numerous native plant species, all of which are actively monitored. As the Rosemont Nature Preserve continues to develop, we anticipate tracking additional native species, which is expected to further increase both our bird counts and the diversity of other wildlife observed.

Ongoing conservation and educational projects support bluebirds, local bat populations, native plant gardens, and beneficial pollinators. In addition, the state has reported growing populations of eagles, coyotes, bobcats, and black bears, and we expect these species may increasingly appear in our area. This highlights the continued need for educational programming to inform the community about these native wildlife species and their habitats.

Volunteers

The Fairlawn Nature Center was supported by 27 volunteers, ranging in age from 10 to 17. Most of these volunteers contribute their time during the summer months, while approximately eight continue to volunteer throughout the school year, including after-school and home-school programs. Collectively, these dedicated individuals contributed approximately 401 hours of service over the course of the year, providing invaluable support to the Nature Center's programs and operations.

Current Program Animals at FNC

1 European Starling
1 Jenday Conure
1 Black-headed Caique
4 Eastern Box Turtles
4 Ferrets
1 Chilean Rose-haired Tarantula
2 Garter Snakes
1 Dekay's Brown Snake
1 Louisiana Milk Snake
1 Northern Water Snake
1 Uromastyx
3 Red-eared Sliders
2 Midland Painted Turtles
1 Ball Python
2 Leopard Geckos.
1 Cuban Tree Frog
1 Western Hognose Snake
1 Virginia Opossum
1 Fox Squirrel
1 Striped Skunk (ODNR fur farm rescue)
1 Red Fox (Transferred to WEST Wildlife)

Program animal losses in 2025: 1 Cockatiel, 1 Chinchilla, 1 Guinea Pig, 1 House Sparrow, 1 Bearded Dragon

D. Fairlawn-Kiwanis Community Center

The facility continues to serve as a hub for community programs, meetings, and trainings:

- **Tai Chi Class:** Every Monday evening, the lower level is rented for instruction.
- **Fairlawn City Women's Club:** General meetings on the first Friday of each month and Board meetings on the third Friday.
- **VFW Post #349:** Meetings on the fourth Monday of each month.
- **World War II/Korean and Vietnam Wars Roundtable:** Meetings on the fourth Wednesday of each month.
- **Fairlawn Seniors:** Planning meetings on the first Monday of each month and events on the third Monday.
- **Epilepsy Support Group:** Meetings on the third Wednesday of each month.
- **Fairlawn Area Chamber of Commerce:** Uses the building regularly for Speed Session meetings, Board meetings, and event planning sessions for City-sponsored activities.
- **Board of Elections:** Multiple uses throughout the year for election volunteer trainings and as a polling location.
- **Fairlawn Police and Fire Departments:** Utilize the building for trainings.
- **Joint Safety Meetings** are also held regularly at the facility.

Special Event Usage (No-Cost Rentals)

The facility continues to support community-focused events at no cost, including:

- **Safety Town:** Held the third week in June.
- **Shop with a Cop:** Held the first Saturday in December.

- **Cops4Kids with Autism Annual Toy Giveaway:** Held the last Saturday before Christmas.

The building's versatile usage demonstrates its ongoing importance as a center for community engagement, civic involvement, and public safety programming.

E. Staff Training

Laurie:

OPRA Annual Conference

February 3-6 – Sandusky

Eastside Roundtables:

April 2 – Pepper Pike

July 31 – Beachwood

September 30 – Mayfield Heights

Sportsman Software Training Webinars

Every other month throughout the year

OPRA Region 2 Workshop - May 2 - Strongsville

NRPA Annual Conference

September 15-19, Orlando, FL

Participation in training programs and professional conferences allows the Parks and Recreation Director to earn the continuing education credits required to maintain her professional certifications. The **Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP)** credential serves as the national benchmark for excellence in the parks and recreation field.

Maintaining the CPRP designation reflects that the Director has met the necessary education and experience requirements, highlighting her commitment to professional growth and her expertise in key areas of parks and recreation management.

Troy:

Webinars – Partner Engagement Webinar

Amphibians Webinar

Sportsman Update Webinar

Maple Trees (syrup production) Webinar

Woodland, Water, and Wildlife Conference

March 5, Mansfield

Wildlife Diversity Conference

March 19, Columbus

Botanical Symposium

March 28, Columbus

Ohio Wildlife Rehabilitator's Association Conference

November 7-9, Mt. Sterling, Ohio

Spencer:

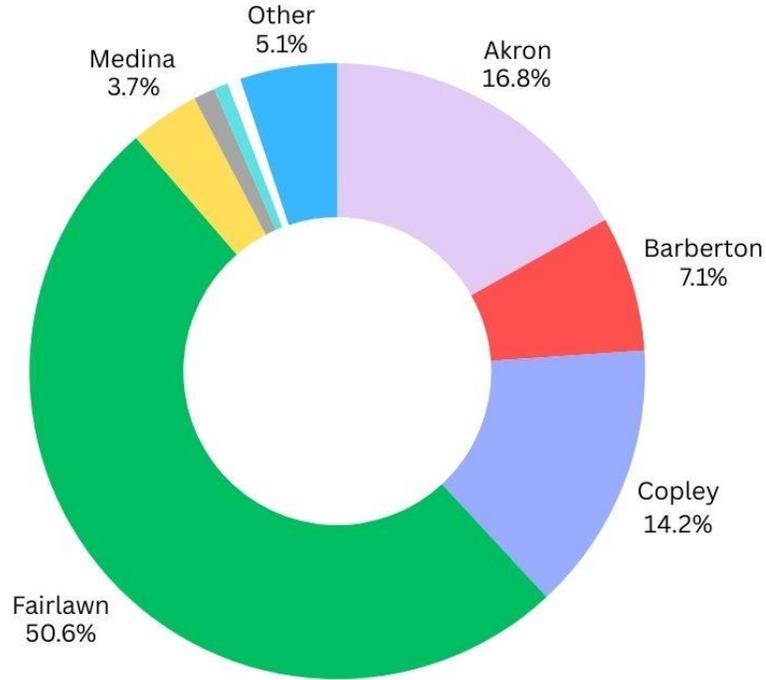
Colubridfest (Reptiles)

September 13-14, Fort Wayne, Indiana

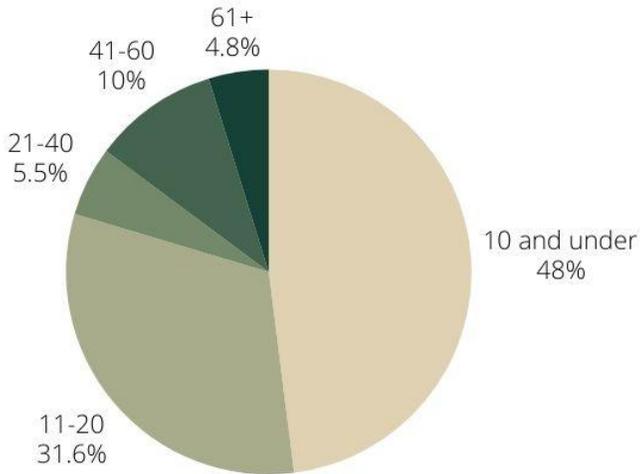
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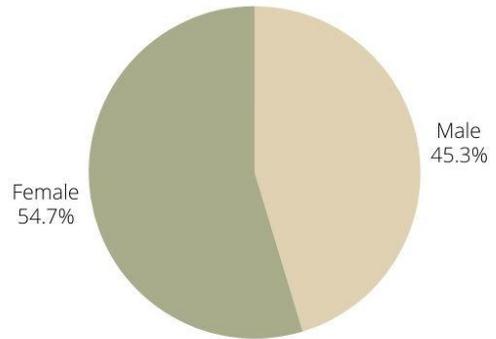
Residency of Participants



Ages of Participants



Gender of Participants



These graphs provide an overview of participants who register online for both special events and Nature programming. The information shown helps the Department better understand the demographics of program participants, identify trends, and plan future programming to meet the needs of our community.

Note: Bingo participants pay at the door, so information for those attendees is not available.