



DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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A. Community Special Events

Pictures with the Bunny

On Tuesday, April 12 from 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm and 6:30 pm – 7:30 pm we held a new, free event Pictures with the Bunny. Families could come to the gazebo in Bicentennial Park where the Bunny was waiting to take pictures with them. The weather was beautiful, 115 children and 4 dogs came to have their picture taken with the Bunny. Each child went home with a candy bag. This will become an annual event due to the response received by the community.

Summer Concert Series

The Friday Night Concerts were held on each Friday in June and July for a total of 9 concerts. Various types of musical entertainers performed in Bicentennial Park, with each group performing from 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm. Diverse styles of music were heard including, oldies, country, acoustic guitar and polka. Local Cub Scout Pack 3300 sold refreshments and we had the Café Arnone truck at 4 of the concerts selling gelato and coffee.

At the concerts this year, we set up a table and had the leftover shirts from the 50th celebration available for anyone to take. With the okay from Mayor Roth, we put a donation jar out that gave any monies contributed to Cub Scout Pack 3300. At the end of the summer, we presented them with a check for \$906.15.

Independence Day Celebration

The City celebrated Independence Day on Monday, July 4 at Bicentennial Park. The Fairlawn Area Chamber of Commerce handled the sale of beer and seltzer provided by Brighten Brewery. Beginning at 5:00 pm, food trucks and alcohol sales took place while Doug Kaufman entertained the growing crowd until 7:30. Then Cleveland's Breakfast Club took the stage at 8:00 pm and played until the fireworks began at 10:00 pm. The fireworks show was a 20 minute spectacular display from American Fireworks, based in Hudson.

Barktoberfest

On October 29th, 2022 from 11:00 am - 2:00 pm at Bicentennial Park was our first Barktoberfest. The schedule for the day was:

- 11:00 am Arrival of participants
- 11:15 am Parade Lineup
- 11:30 am Start Parade
- 11:45 am Photographer take pictures in the Gazebo
- 12:00 pm Announce costume winner
- 12:30 pm Sit Means Sit Demonstration
- 1:00 pm Boy Scouts food and mingle

Local Cub Scout Pack 3300 sold the food and beverages: hot dogs, chips, cupcake and a drink. Some of our Park Board members volunteered to be judges for the costume contest. After all of the participants walked around Bicentennial Park, our judges were able to come

to a decision for the judged categories – Best Dog Costume, Best Owner and Dog, and Best Group and Dog. Each winner won a gift card to Pet Supplies Plus, a travel water bowl, and a flashlight doggie bag holder. There was a photographer taking pictures throughout the parade and there was a spot to take pictures in the gazebo. Each participant received a goodie bag of a small dog toy and dog treats. To end the event, we had local Sit Means Sit Dog Training Company volunteer their time to do a 30-minute training demonstration.

Gingerbread House Kit

This year's Gingerbread House Kit event was not as successful as in the past. Only about 10 families chose to purchase the kits. This shows us that people are ready for in person events again and we will change this event back to in person for 2023.

B. Recreation Activities

Sports Programs

We continue to utilize outside groups to provide quality sports instruction to our residents and those of our surrounding communities. All of these groups charge their fees directly to the participants and no fees are charged to the City. Some of the groups donate a portion of the proceeds back to the City. Jump Start Sports and Towpath Tennis are the groups that currently provide the following sports instruction to our participants:

T-Ball: Jump Start Sports provided children aged 3 and 4 the opportunity to learn the basics of T-ball on Tuesday evenings at Croghan Park. Each child has practices and games and comes away with an MLB hat, team shirt, and award.

Hummingbird Soccer: Jump Start Sports came to the parks to provide basic soccer instruction to children ages 3, 4 and 5. The camp meets on Saturday mornings for an eight week session. Each child comes away from the camp with knowledge of dribbling, passing, trapping, shooting and positioning as well as a t-shirt and trophy.

Lacrosse: Jump Start Sports lacrosse is an eight week camp designed to give elementary school age children a positive introduction to the sport of lacrosse. They met at Croghan Park on Tuesday evenings.

Tennis: Towpath Tennis Center again provided two tennis sessions at both Croghan and Griffiths Parks. They offer classes to both children and adults.

Pickleball Courts

Two of the tennis courts at Fort Island Park were resealed and striped to create the option for four pickleball courts. The courts opened in June and are getting quite a bit of use. Just as the tennis courts work, pickleball players bring their own equipment and balls and use the courts freely. The pickleball nets are on wheels and can be moved to the side when tennis is being played or moved onto the courts for pickleball.

We are considering having Towpath Tennis Center, who provides our tennis camp, provide a pickleball camp for 2023.

Community Gardens

This is the twelfth year for the Community Gardens located at Fairlawn Park. Garden plots are available to both residents and non-residents of Fairlawn. The request for gardens was in such demand this year that we are at full capacity with a waiting list. The gardeners plant vegetables, berries, flowers, bulbs and herbs in both above ground boxes and in the soil.

The gardeners have created their own community, giving advice to each other and mentoring new gardeners. They welcome the public to come look at their gardens and ask questions.

Soccer Fields

All of our leagues were back this year, using the fields each weeknight and both Saturday and Sunday mornings. Some of the games spilled over to the weekend afternoons when they couldn't find times due to usage, or had to reschedule games. We had elementary through adult soccer teams and elementary and high school lacrosse teams using the fields.

Many of our residents took advantage of the fields when there were not teams on the fields. They held family and neighborhood pick up games of soccer and frisbee.

C. LRC/Naturalist Programs

During the 2022 calendar year the Learning Resource Center at Fort Island Park has seen a good post-COVID-19 recovery with daily, monthly, and annual visitor counts increasing to near pre-pandemic levels. Our annual visitor totals nearly doubled from 2021 counts to 2022 counts. Our summer programs were very successful and many programs filled up quickly with waiting lists. During the 2022 calendar year staff at the LRC offered **129** individual programs /classes (some of which were either canceled or had no registrations) with a total of **1,146** people participating in those programs. Our final annual visitor count for the calendar year 2022 totaled **10,730** visitors to the Learning Resource Center. Parks staff were very pleased with this year's turnout for programs and nature center visits.

We had an opening for an assistant naturalist in 2022, after Dominic Restivo turned in his notice to take an internship at the Akron Zoo, and hired Bekah Simon in April. She resigned her position in November. That position is currently posted, and we hope to fill it early in the new year 2023. Naturalist Troy Dunn is currently the only staff member at the LRC.

We continued to utilize Sportsman, social media and other outlets to engage the public as to our programs and events as well as general posts of interest to the public about the natural world. We were able to renew our Division of Wildlife permit, USDA Animal Welfare permit, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife permit. We postponed applying for a new permit from the Division of Wildlife that will allow us to rehabilitate select species of small mammal wildlife at our location until sometime in 2023. That will give us time to comply with permitting requirements before inspection. We are still pending our annual USDA inspection.

Ongoing conservation and tracking efforts continued throughout 2022. During the spring and fall migration periods we documented 94 different species of birds at Fort Island and Fairlawn Parks. This year's Christmas Bird Count in December 2022, in conjunction with the local Audubon Society, yielded 30 species and a total of about 500 individual birds. Other projects include conservation of Blue Birds, local Bat species, and beneficial Bee populations. The LRC pollinator garden has now fully filled in and we use this educational resource for several programs and to engage visitors outdoors regarding native plants and beneficial insect pollinators. In spring of 2023 we intend to thin out the overgrowth in this garden to maintain it as best as possible for continued use, especially since it has two official designations as both a Monarch Weigh Station and a Wild School Site. We replaced several of the blue bird boxes throughout the park that were falling apart, and a local boy scout made several new ones to replace in the park and within the LRC pollinator garden.

Troy brought to the attention of Mayor Roth and Service Director, Ernie Staten, that Beech Leaf Disease has been observed on the Beech trees on Beech Island at Fort Island Park. We discussed the eventual outcome of this new disease that is currently under research and the efforts of the Naturalist with the Service Director to both monitor the progression of the disease that will result in the senescence of the Beech trees and future steps to take to reforest/replace trees at the mound area of Fort Island Park.

The Park Director and Naturalist discussed with the Mayor and Service Director about tearing out the old asphalt that was previously used for Safety Town at Fort Island Park and returning that space back to green space with the possibility of planting some additional trees there. We also discussed combining the two sheds at the park for common storage thereby eliminating the smaller shed. The smaller shed sits on the asphalt pending tear-out. This has not yet been decided.

Troy has plotted out a 30 foot by 50 foot area on the opposite side of Schocalog Run at Fort Island Park to establish a teaching native meadow/prairie. This area was tilled in the late fall of 2022 and will be seeded beginning in the spring of 2023. We will also look into placing signage near the trail on that side as an educational board for public informational purposes. Another exciting project that the Naturalist and Parks Director are included in is the Rosemont Preserve restoration. We have now sat in on several meetings with the Mayor, Service Director, and the Environmental Design Group that the city is working with on this project. Troy will begin a monitoring program for this site to document ecological and species development going forward as was done with the Oxbow site at Fairlawn Park, which determined that that Oxbow is working as expected with well over 100 fauna and flora species documented expected to be found utilizing the ecosystem of a wetland area. We expect to see the similar results with the development of the Rosemont Preserve. Troy began collaborating with the representative of the Environmental Design Group in relation to discussion, preservation, and planting of native trees, shrubs, and meadow plants. Seed banks are being collected to aid in some aspects of this endeavor.

We had 15 volunteers this year at the LRC during 2022, some for only the summer months and others have stayed on as volunteers throughout the school year.

In last year's report, we reported that since the Naturalist is a certified Local Phenology Leader, and able to utilize a resource called Nature's Notebook, which adds to a nation-wide collection of data on natural flora and fauna and its various stages throughout the seasons, there was originally a plan in 2022 to create a Phenology Walk, recruit volunteer observers, and provide this special

walk to visitors in the form of a phenology hike as well as contribute important data to the nationwide database putting our location here at Fort Island Park on the map as a monitoring site. This project has been delayed due to timing and staffing issues as well as difficulty recruiting volunteers. We hope to revisit this project in 2023.

Current live animals housed at the LRC include:

1 European Starling, 1 Jenday Conure, 1 Cockatiel, 4 Eastern Box Turtles, 1 Ferrets, 1 Chinchilla, 1 Chilean Rose-haired Tarantula, 2 Garter Snakes, 1 Dekay's Brown Snake, 1 Louisiana Milk Snake, 1 Northern Water Snake, 1 Green Anole, 1 Bearded Dragon, 1 Uromastyx, 2 Brown Bats, 1 Virginia Opossum, 4 Red-eared Sliders, various Koi and other fish. Animal losses in 2022: 1 Rock Dove, 1 Ferret, 1 Musk Turtle, 1 Painted Turtle, 1 Bearded Dragon

D. Fairlawn-Kiwanis Community Center

Ongoing rentals and Civic meetings:

- Every Monday evening, the lower level is rented for a Tai Chi class
- Every Wednesday morning, our Naturalist hosts a Yoga class
- Fairlawn City Women's Club holds their general meeting on the first Friday of each month and their Board meetings on the third Friday of each month
- VFW post #349 holds their meetings on the fourth Monday of each month
- World War II/Korean and Vietnam Wars Roundtable holds their meetings on the fourth Wednesday of each month
- Fairlawn Toastmasters holds their meetings on the first, third and fifth Tuesdays of each month
- Fairlawn Seniors meet to plan on the third Monday of each month and then hold their events on the first Monday of each month.
- Epilepsy Support Group meets on the third Wednesday of each month.
- A Fairlawn Area Chamber of Commerce member, Isaac Wheeler, holds a business meeting every Tuesday morning
- The Fairlawn Area Chamber of Commerce is using the building on a regular basis for Speed Session meetings, Board meetings and planning meetings for event that they sponsor for the City

E. Staff Training

Laurie:

Ohio Parks and Recreation Association (OPRA) Conference – February 6-9, 2022, Sandusky, OH

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Conference – September 19-23, 2022, Phoenix, AZ

Laurie and Katie:

Eastside Roundtables 2022: February 16, May 4, September 14 and December 7

OPRA Region 2 Fall Event - October 21, 2022 Brecksville Nature Center

Troy:

Woodland, Water and Wildlife Conference – March 2, 2022

Wildlife Diversity Conference – May 11, 2022

Ohio Wildlife Rehabilitator's Association Conference – Nov. 4-6, 2022

Others:

Piping Plover Recovery efforts

Yoga teaching techniques

Symposium on Forests and Pollinators: Sustaining a Close-knit Ecosystem

Native Grasslands and Pollinators: Habitat for Wildlife

Escape to the Forest Webinar

A six-week series Bumble Bee webinar

Eastern Bluebirds webinar

Spiders of our Forests webinar

Bumblebee Surveys webinar

Dealing with Wildlife Conflict

Beneath the Maple Tree

Webinar on Whip-poor-wills

Zoom into Nature

2 Woodland Fungi workshops

5-week webinar series on Pollinator Habitats