

WINNING FOR NW OHIO

 METROPARKS
TOLEDO

2022



WINNING FOR YOU





Who doesn't like to win?

Metroparks has received numerous awards in recent years – more than any other Ohio park system. The latest are two first place awards from the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association for the new addition to Howard Marsh and a nighttime outdoor expo called Glow-tacular. A member of our team, LaRae Sprow, also received OPRA's Jack Hanna Resource Conservation Award – the fourth member of the Metroparks staff to be selected for the prestigious honor.

Winning the Gold Medal as the best large park system in the nation in 2020 was the greatest award we could receive in our industry.

As nice as it is to be recognized for our work, what's more important is that we are winning for our community, because of our community.

Twenty years ago, Lucas County voters approved a levy that allowed Metroparks to acquire additional land. Ten years ago, when that levy expired, voters approved a new levy that provided much of the funding to open 10 new parks in eight years. In November 2022, voters again approved a renewal of that levy.

Every step of the way, this community has supported conservation. Because of that support, we now have 19 Metroparks, and nobody in the county lives more than five miles from at least one of them.

That is a big win for our environment, our property values, our health and our overall quality of life.

HOWARD MARSH PHASE 2

Fulfills 20-Year Vision





The dedication of phase 2 at Howard Marsh in October marked the realization of a vision more than two decades in the making.

In 2008, Metroparks was able to purchase 987 acres near Lake Erie in Jerusalem Township with funding from its land acquisition fund and grants from the Ohio Division of Wildlife and the Clean Ohio Fund. After an extensive public planning process with project partners Ohio Division of Wildlife, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Ducks Unlimited, in March 2018 the first 700 acres opened to the public. It provided miles of hiking trails, a water trail, observation decks and a boardwalk.

It was the largest wetland restoration project completed under the federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and the largest project in Metroparks history.

Since opening in spring 2018, Phase 1 has attracted thousands of birders drawn by a wide array of shorebirds and waterfowl, especially during spring and fall migration. It has also become a popular destination for kayaking as well as hiking and biking on the stone-surfaced dike top trails.

Soon after completion of Phase 1 construction, with additional grant funding from the Ohio Division of Wildlife and NOAA, Metroparks began working with project partners on Phase 2 to restore the remaining 243-acres. The new area, which is now open, includes more miles for hiking and paddling, and another boardwalk extending into the marsh.

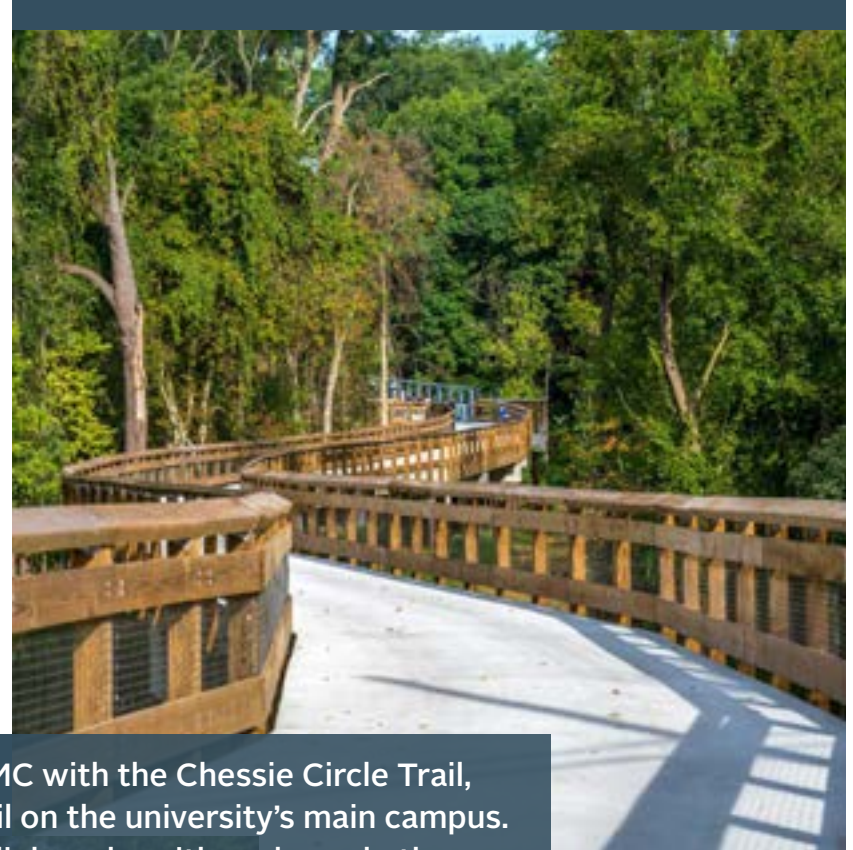
As part of Phase 2 construction, Metroparks also replaced more than 0.5 miles of failing flood control levies with new dikes, reducing the risk of flooding to more than 70 adjacent residences. The project also enhances water quality by eliminating drainage from 243 acres of agricultural land into Lake Erie's Western Basin.

TRAIL CONNECTS PARK

With the Community

A new Swan Creek Connector Trail, opened in September, added 1.5 miles of trail leading through a 200-acre area of Swan Creek Preserve that was previously inaccessible to park visitors. It includes 580 feet of concrete “boardwalk” and two steel truss bridges over the creek.

The trail meets the Blue Trail inside the park near the parking lot at the Airport Highway entrance. It ends at Byrne Road, where it links with the Arlington Avenue bike/pedestrian path, which continues to the University of Toledo Health Science campus and Bowsher High School.



In the future, plans call for connecting UTMC with the Chessie Circle Trail, which will intersect the University/Parks Trail on the university’s main campus. It’s part of a regional connectivity plan to link parks with parks and other destinations to make northwest Ohio more pedestrian and bicycle friendly.



The city of Toledo made improvements along Byrne Road to connect the new trail with the Arlington Avenue path. A federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality grant secured by the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments funded 80 percent of the project cost.



NEW BRIDGE

An Important Link in Future Riverwalk

A new bike/foot bridge connecting Glass City Metropark and International Park over Main Street in East Toledo is an important link in the future Glass City Riverwalk. The bridge connects six individual neighborhoods in East Toledo, and provides a safe path over Main Street to Glass City Metropark.

The see-through steel bridge is 110 feet long and 20 feet wide. It is in the location of a former railroad bridge and lines up with an existing path through International Park that continues for the length of the park to Navarre Avenue. The project includes a 0.7-mile-long, 12-foot-wide asphalt bike path from Main Street to Marina Drive as part of the trail system within Glass City Metropark.



GLASS CITY SPARKLES

Even as construction continued on Glass City, the riverfront Metropark in East Toledo came to life in 2022 with several memorable events.

This year's concert series, Music in Green Spaces, began with The Accidentals from Traverse City and concluded with the unique guitar stylings of young recording artist Yasmin Williams, both on the event lawn at Glass City.

SNOW Place Like Metroparks, a drive-through display of snow people artistically designed by volunteers, returned to Glass City for a second year last winter. The event moves to Secor Metropark for the winter of 2022-2023. And Snowmageddon, a pop-up program following a snowstorm, brought out an estimated 400 people on short notice to enjoy sledding and s'mores around a fire.

The future Glass City Enrichment Center on Front Street was the venue for another extraordinary event, Reading Opens the World. The Toledo Federation of Teachers partnered with Metroparks to give away 40,000 books – most of them in one day – to families and teachers. The books were supplied by the national program to open new worlds for young readers.



GLASS CITY PHASE II

Opening in Spring 2023

Phase 2 of Glass City, set to open in the spring, will be twice the size of phase 1 and include several features unique to our region. They include an ice skating ribbon and the first restaurant in a Metropark.

A water play area called the Mini Maumee will be one of three nature themed playscapes kids will love. The 40-foot play tower, with its colorful wings inspired by a blue grosbeak, plus a large slide down the middle, already has kids of all ages excited for the opening.

This fall, the public brought family heirlooms to be photographed and scanned for inclusion in “Field of Histories,” one of several art installations planned for the park. The walk-through sculpture will feature 175 glass orbs on pedestals, and it will light up at night.

About the time Glass City Phase 2 opens, the first legs of Glass City Riverwalk will be under construction on both sides of the Maumee River. Starting at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Bridge, Riverwalk will stretch to The Docks restaurant complex on the east side, and to Fort Industry Square in downtown.

Riverwalk will eventually be a five-mile, multi-use path on both sides of the river, with 300 acres of greenspace, including a re-imagined International Park. The first phase of the multi-year project is expected to be complete in 2024.





Donors Lead Region's Transformation

Inspired to help transform Toledo through the Glass City Metropark and Riverwalk Project, Metroparks has received leadership support from ProMedica, Owens Corning, Dana Incorporated, Mercy Health, the Hylant Family Foundation, Bob and Sue Savage and the Carson Family

Foundation. These leadership commitments along with support from many other donors and partners will provide for construction, maintenance and long-term operations of what will surely be the country's #1 Riverwalk.

HEAVY

Wheelhouse

HEAVY Beer Company is heavy into active, engaged lifestyles, just the right fit for the Beach Ridge Area at Oak Openings, home of the Beach Ridge Singletrack mountain bike trail and FitPark: Ride mountain bike skills course.

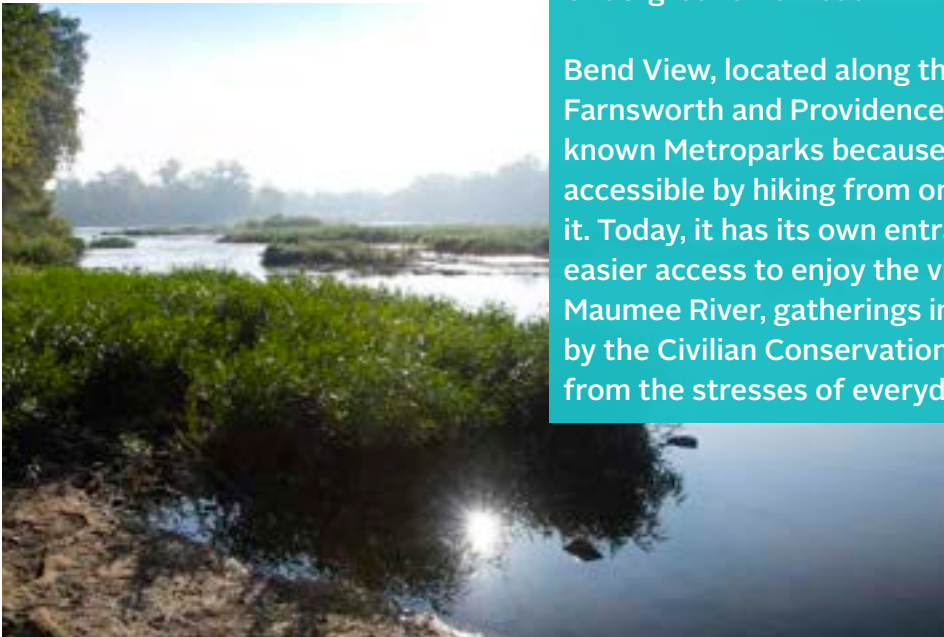
Along with providing a source of earned revenue, HEAVY Wheelhouse is a convenient and welcoming nano-brewery and coffeehouse where guests of the nearby Cannaley Treehouse Village, friends gathering after a hard ride on the trail and other park visitors relax in the beautiful surroundings of our largest Metropark.





PLATFORM CABINS

Guests at the Liberty and Freedom platform cabins overlooking the Maumee River enjoy a quiet retreat in Bend View Metropark near Waterville. Funded with the support of Membership contributions, the rustic, treehouse-like cabins are named in honor of the riverside route used by fleeing slaves seeking freedom in the North on the Underground Railroad.



Bend View, located along the Towpath Trail between Farnsworth and Providence, is one of the older but lessor known Metroparks because until recent years it was only accessible by hiking from one of the parks on either side of it. Today, it has its own entrance and parking lot, providing easier access to enjoy the view of a 90-degree bend in the Maumee River, gatherings in a historical shelter constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps or an overnight respite from the stresses of everyday life.



PROGRAMMING THE PARKS





A lighted mountain bike course, a 30,000-square-foot mansion decorated for Halloween and the holidays, a glow-in-the-dark outdoor expo – even a zombie prom. Unforgettable special events this year introduced new activities and attracted new visitors to the Metroparks.

Summer camps, including Connections Camps for underserved youth, introduced kids to nature. Trips to the California redwoods, the Appalachian Trail and Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore provided opportunities for adults to test their outdoor skills.

Nature and history walks, tree climbs, paddling excursions, tours of conservation project sites and dozens of other programs kept people moving and learning outdoors throughout the year.



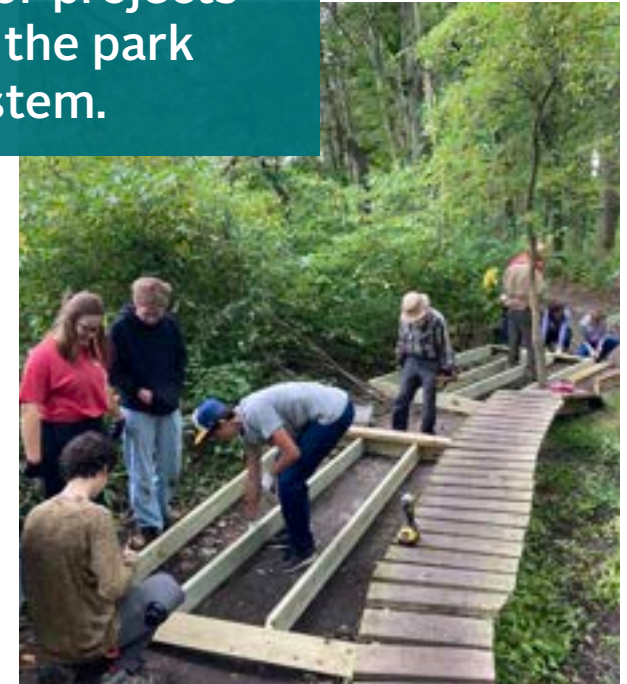
VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers contributed in excess of 300 hours of nearly non-stop service over four days for Reading Opens the World, a special event that distributed more than 40,000 books to local families. Many new volunteers rallied to produce two new Halloween events at Wildwood: Zombie Prom and Eerie Manor Tours.





Over **3,000 hours** were logged by **955 individuals** volunteering in **56 groups** for projects across the park system.



MEMBERS & DONORS

Go Above and Beyond



Lera Doneghy and Molly Luetke, members of the Board of Park Commissioners, and Ambrea Mikolajczyk, a member of the Metroparks Toledo Foundation Board, have launched a new women's affinity group called **Good Nutured** under the Metroparks Members program. Each year, funds raised through the Good Nutured initiative will assist Metroparks programming to create life-changing memories and connections to the parks. Participants will be invited to special events and experiences.





Members and donors help Metroparks Toledo go above and beyond what taxpayer dollars provide – programs, amenities, conservation and outreach that might not have been possible.



The Metroparks Membership program is a community of 3,000 supporters who go above and beyond for the Metroparks. Thanks to the generosity of members and other loyal friends we continue to help expand the Metroparks preservation and educational activities. Each year members help support Metroparks initiatives that promote clean, safe, natural parks; access, diversity, equity and inclusion; natural resources; and park priorities and initiatives. A few of the special projects funded in 2022 include:

- Sending over 500 children from disadvantaged communities to nature camp—completely free of charge!
- Outreach activities such as an Outdoor Expo at Side Cut and the Connections Camp family expo at Glass City share the Metroparks mission and programs with thousands of people.
- Purchasing a GRIT Freedom Track Chair for Oak Openings to ensure those with mobility issues can set out on an adventure over all kinds of conditions, including snow and sand.
- Funding urban reforestation and the planting of over 24,000 trees, as well as expanding 229 acres of former golf course properties to make Secor Metropark the third largest Metropark.

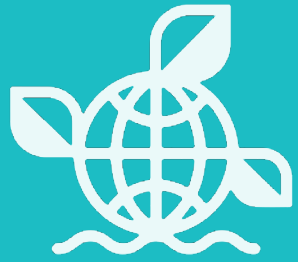


Cows for **CONSERVATION**

The Metroparks Natural Resources Dept. uses prescribed fire, helicopter surveys, heavy equipment and volunteer hands to restore natural areas to their full potential. This year, they added a new tool to their arsenal: Cows.

As part of a research project, cattle were released into a fenced area at Oak Openings Preserve where fire was used to help re-establish a prairie. The cattle, owned by Swan Creek Cattle Company, graze the area as bison once did, creating bare patches where native plants can thrive.





SUSTAINING OUR WORLD



The Sustaining Our World speakers' series presented by Dana Incorporated launched this year with discussions about restoring brownfields, engaging diverse audiences in the environment and the corporate sustainability practices of some of the region's largest companies. Each drew near-capacity audiences to the Glass City Pavilion.

One event in the series was held in the Imagination Station KeyBank Theater for a screening of the film, "The Erie Situation,"

followed by discussion moderated by Metroparks board vice-president Fritz Byers with a panel of experts that included the film's director, David Ruck.

The series presents speakers sharing the significance of northwest Ohio's natural resources, the importance of protecting and restoring ecosystems, and ways the community can make a positive impact on the environment. The next four sessions will be announced in 2023.



GIFT LINKS TWO OTHER GIFTS



One of the Anderson family's gifts to the community is its 90-acre farm in S. Toledo. Their neighbor just across Swan Creek, the late Virginia Belt, also gifted her scenic land and home to Metroparks. Known today as the Brookwood Area, piano instructor "Ginny" Belt's property is a special use area for musical performances and private gatherings, operated as a satellite to Swan Creek Preserve.

Now the Andersons property is connected with Brookwood via a third gift: a suspension bridge dedicated in November in honor of

local conservation and business leader Dick Anderson and his wife Fran Anderson.

Fundraising for the bridge was organized by Jim Findley, a long-time friend of the late Mr. Anderson, along with many other friends and donors. The bridge links the two remarkable pieces of property that will one day form a 144-acre Metropark along one of the region's primary stream corridors, enhancing people's access to and enjoyment of nature in the city.

Garden Beauty **GROWS**

Under Metroparks ownership, visitation to Toledo Botanical Garden has grown over the last few years, making the W. Toledo oasis the third most-visited of the 19 parks.

Today, visitors enjoy a collection of gardens cared for by a professional horticultural staff, a Secret Forest play area for kids and the Doneghy Inclusive Garden – an accessible, sensory garden where visitors can dig in the dirt and enjoy the aromas, textures and even tastes of nature.



Recent additions to the TBG experience include whimsical upside-down tree trunk planters on both the Elmer Drive and Bancroft Street sides of the park.

The Garden's extensive collection of public art also grew in 2022 with the addition of three sculptures gifted to Metroparks by Alex Demas in memory of his late wife, Anna. The pieces – “Mother's Love,” “Energy,” and “Blessings of Nature” – were first displayed at TBG as part of an international touring exhibition, ZimSculpt, in 2017, which featured stone sculptures by Zimbabwean artists. The donor purchased the pieces during the show, returning them to the Garden this year for the entire community to enjoy.



