

# Get Outside Yourself

2017 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



**METROPARKS  
TOLEDO**



**5** million visits

**75%** approval  
(Renewal levy)

**12,000** acres  
*of land preserved*

Guinness Book of World Records  
for number of people simultaneously  
cooking s'mores

**566** people

# Access, Connectivity, Experiences

Metroparks Toledo provided the canvas for nearly 5 million visitors in 2017 to create their own adventures. Places to Get Outside Yourself at your own speed and make memories to treasure.

In every corner of Lucas County – from the Oak Openings to the Downtown Toledo riverfront to the Lake Erie coast – the regional park district is making life better in our region by providing access, connectivity and new experiences.

## ACCESS

With the support of the community, Metroparks continued to protect Lucas County's treasured natural areas. The park system has assembled the land to open a park within five miles of every resident of Lucas County, bringing nature close to home for all of us.

## CONNECTIVITY

Connecting parks to parks, and people to parks has been another priority. A section of the Chessie Circle Trail is now open from the Maumee River to Glanzman Road, and will eventually intersect the existing University/Parks Trail.

By the close of 2017, Metroparks maintained 172 miles of trails, with plans to surpass 200 miles in the next two years, plus a 100-mile water trail on the Maumee River.

## EXPERIENCES

Providing healthy, engaging ways for people to enjoy their parks is paramount to the Metroparks experience. Following are just some of the new experiences the park district provided to enrich the region's quality of life in 2017.

- New reasons to roam the beautiful grounds of Wildwood Preserve during an extended Holidays in the Manor House event
- Tree climbing, the newest addition to a lineup of outdoor skills programming that also includes activities such as kayaking, archery and snowshoeing
- Opportunities to volunteer in every way imaginable, from children's programs and summer camps to Trail Patrol, Garden Keepers and natural areas stewardship projects
- Zimbabwean sculpture exhibited in the idyllic setting of Toledo Botanical Garden. It was one of just two stops in the United States

Thanks to the support of the citizens of Lucas County, new parks, connections and experiences are making it more inviting than ever before to

# *Get Outside Yourself*



Denis Franklin, a crew leader in the Natural Resources Dept., was the recipient of the Ohio Parks & Recreation Association's Jack Hanna Conservation Award. It was the second year in a row that a member of the Metroparks staff received the honor.



## Section of Chessie Circle Trail Opens

A 1.4 mile section of the Chessie Circle Trail, owned by Metroparks and opened in 2017, is the start of an important link in the region's trail system.

Eventually, the 11-mile, former railroad corridor will connect north and south Toledo, Lucas and Wood counties, all three campuses of the University of Toledo as well as numerous schools, public places and neighborhoods. It will be an important north-south route for walking, running and cycling. And it will intersect an important east-west route – the University/Parks Trail.

The rail corridor extends from Laskey Road to River Road in Toledo and from River Road (State Route 65) to Bates Road in Wood County. Metroparks portion of the trail, from the Maumee River to Glanzman Road, was the first section to be paved. The northern section, owned by the City of Toledo, is also open. The University of Toledo and Wood County Port Authority are additional partners in the trail.

The trail demonstrates the power of partnerships, both among the local agencies who are developing it as well as the state and federal grants used to fund the acquisition and development.

# Natural Resources Division

## MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES

- The Natural Resources Division managed 2,793 acres of land in 2017, eradicating invasive plant species and restoring or enhancing high quality habitat for native wildlife species across Lucas County.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Prescribed burns conducted on 260 acres to recharge the eliminated woody plants and recharge the soils so native species can thrive
- Reforested 28 acres of land with 7,500 trees across the park district, with a emphasis on reforesting Fallen Timbers Battlefield Metropark
- Seven acres of globally rare Oak Openings wet prairie habitat restored in the Oak Openings Corridor by eliminating invasive trees and shrubs

## BLUE CREEK NATIVE NURSERY 2017 STATS

- 15,000 plant plugs were produced in the greenhouses
- 3,300 herbaceous landscape plants came out of the nursery and were planted at various parks
- 2,100 pounds of seeds were harvested from the propagation fields or collected from the wild, representing 301 total plant species
- 1,300 new trees and shrubs went into production at the nursery
- 428 trees and shrubs came out of the nursery and were planted at various parks
- 199 acres of new prairies were planted in former agricultural fields
- 46 acres of existing natural areas were enhanced with seeds and plugs from the nursery

## RESEARCH AND MONITORING

- Five new populations of rare plants were discovered at Oak Openings Preserve, in the Oak Openings Corridor and at Blue Creek Metropark
- A new species of butterfly, the common ringlet, was discovered at Wiregrass Lake Metropark. It was the first time this species had been documented in Lucas County
- A breeding population of Henslow's Sparrows (an Ohio species of concern) was observed at Oak Openings Preserve for the first time in at least three decades. The species requires large tracks of open grasslands for nesting and rearing its young
- Major research findings from a long-term study conducted by Dr. Scott Abella were published in the Journal, Biological Conservation. The findings demonstrate the critical value of restored Oak Openings prairies and savannas to many species of plants and animals including insect pollinators required by humans for food production.

## LAND ACQUISITION

71 additional acres of parkland acquired by Metroparks (an area larger than Toledo Botanical Garden). They include:

- 50 acres of high quality natural areas in the Oak Openings Corridor (all acquired with outside grant funds)
- 21 acres at Manhattan Marsh transferred from the Lucas County Land Bank

A park ranger in a dark green uniform, cap, and sunglasses stands in a field with a white fence. The background shows bare trees and a clear sky.

**29,778**  
hours of ranger patrol

**Park Visitor interactions**

**54,409**

50% patrol hours out of their vehicles  
to interact with park visitors

## **Enforcing the Law**

Rangers are certified peace officers who enforce state and local laws as well as park district rules and regulations. In 2017, the Ranger staff worked with a consortium of law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute members of a gang responsible for vehicle break-ins and identity theft in numerous states.



## NEW PLAYGROUNDS

*Swan Creek, Oak Openings, Wildwood*



**172** *miles*  
*of trails*





## Park Improvements

Highlights from a year of aggressive capital improvements to maintain the parks and deliver additional visitor services.

- Blue Creek perimeter trail – phase 1
- Chessie Circle Trail
- Swan Creek Glendale Ave. trailhead improvements
- Swan Creek playground
- Single track trail at Oak Openings
- Pine Ridge Chalet
- Brookwood interior and site improvements
- Soften Side Cut entry experience along River Road & improve parking and river access
- Improvements to Isaac Ludwig Mill tail race
- Repair canal inlet gates at Providence
- TBG Restroom renovation
- Oak Openings parking lot paving
- Renovations & repairs to the Johlin Cabin at Pearson
- Improved accessibility at Wildwood playground
- Lone Oak shelter renovation



**55,060**  
VOLUNTEER HOURS

**172** Community  
Events

**2,100** *members*



## Engaging The Community

### 2017 VOLUNTEERS

- 4,355 volunteers donated 55,060 hours.
- 113 volunteer groups assist with park clean ups including
  - Corporations such as Apple, Jeep, JCPenney, Owens Corning, Shumaker, Loop and Kendrick, SSOE Group and UPS
  - Local schools and universities
  - Religious organizations such as the Buddhist Temple and Cornerstone Church
  - Numerous other community organizations
- Volunteer Trail Patrol begins its fifteenth year of patrol with 291 trained volunteers.
- 7,000 trees planted with volunteers at Fallen Timbers.
- Singletrack bike trail at Oak Openings created with the power of over 2,000 volunteer hours.
- Welcomed 15 resident organizations as volunteers from Toledo Botanical Garden.
- Volunteers are a key component to Holidays in the Manor House which started 40 years ago with a small group of volunteers. Today, 28,000 visitors walk through the front door. Volunteers decorate

rooms, act as guides throughout the house, make s'mores, provide parking assistance and drive curtesy carts. All three seatings of the Cup of Christmas Tea were sold out. Over 7,000 volunteer hours contribute to the success of this event.

- Metroparks summer camp program was supported by CITs -Counselors In Training, a teen volunteer program. CITs donated 3,000 hours while building leadership skills, gaining outdoor skill experience and creating a few hundred smiles along the way.
- Programs and special events, such as nighttime 5Ks, the Glass City Marathon, Outdoor Expo, Waterfowl Festival and the record breaking simultaneous eating of s'mores at Blue Creek, all occur with the involvement of volunteers.
- Volunteers assist Natural Resources with controlling invasive plants, assisting at the Blue Creek Nursery and monitoring what calls Metroparks home: bats, raptors, butterflies, birds, frogs, plants, vernal pools and more! Oh my! Using citizen science, water quality monitors help determine the health of local rivers and streams.
- Volunteers assist with historical interpretation at the Issacc Ludwig Mill, Johlin Cabin and the Oak Grove School House.



28,000

people toured Holidays in the Manor House



95,882

people attended a program



## Programs and Special Events

This year, visitors to Metroparks could participate in engaging, exhilarating and educational programs. From the widely popular “escape” programs to tree climbing to eco-tours, there was something new and exciting for everyone in 2017. For those seeking to reinvigorate themselves programs such as forest bathing, good health walks and nature hikes soothes the soul, while Behind The Scenes tours, Canal Experience rides, and Fallen Timbers hikes reconnects us all of the impressive history that happened all around us. But programming’s greatest achieve-

ment is always in reaching out to children and forging those lifelong connections. When spring and fall arrive at the parks so to do the children. Programmers can be seen leading long lines of children on nature walks, or through Oak Grove School, or even onto the banks of the Maumee River. These school field trips help introduce children to the wonder of the outdoors, while teaching important lessons on habitats, history or water quality. Over 110 schools use Metroparks program department to deliver high quality field trip experiences.

## **METROPARKS TOLEDO**

### **BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**

**Scott J. Savage**  
President

**Lera Doneghy**  
Vice-President

**Fritz Byers**  
Vice-President

### **METROPARKS ADMINISTRATION**

**Dave Zenk**  
Executive Director

**Matt Cleland**  
Deputy Director/Treasurer

# *Financials*

## **OPERATING EXPENSES**

### **2017 REVENUES**

Local Property Taxes	\$ 14.2 M
Donations, Federal/State Grants	\$ 8.6 M
Income From Fees	\$ 0.7 M
	<u>\$23.6 M</u>

### **2017 EXPENSES**

Salaries/Personnel	\$ 9.2 M
Park Development/Major Maintenance	\$ 3.0 M
Park Operations, Utilities, Materials, etc.	\$ 5.2 M
Other	\$ 0.3 M
	<u>\$ 17.7 M</u>

## **LAND ACQUISITION FUND**

Land Acquisition Capital Outlay	\$ 6.4 M
	<u>\$ 6.4 M</u>



*Get Outside Yourself*



**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES**

5100 West Central Avenue,  
Toledo, Ohio 43615  
419-407-9700

