



2023

 METROPARKS
TOLEDO

THE NEXT CHAPTER

Metroparks history is written in chapters.

The story begins in 1928 with a decree by the Lucas County Probate Court that established the regional park district, finding it “necessary to conserve the natural resources” of the county. While that mission has not waivered, the places Metroparks preserves and the ways in which people engage with nature has evolved over the last 95 years.

Chapter 1 was the first decade of Metroparks, including the leasing of former canal lands and construction by Depression era work programs. These federal workers created the earliest parks along the Maumee River – Side Cut, Farnsworth, Bend View and Providence -- as well as Pearson and Oak Openings Preserve.

The latest chapter takes us back to the river.

Glass City Metropark fully opened in June, and more than 200,000 people visited the riverfront park in just the first three months. Almost overnight, it became the most visited of the 19 Metroparks and one of the region's top attractions.

Starting with the new park, the next decade will see Glass City Riverwalk develop on both sides of the mighty Maumee, connecting neighborhoods and transforming the core of our region – our riverfront.

Stay connected with Metroparks as the rest of the story unfolds. It will be a page-turner.







GLASS CITY BRINGS LIFE BACK TO THE RIVERFRONT

Kids flipped a giant light switch at the Grand Opening of Glass City, June 9, symbolically “turning on” the newest Metropark.

Water poured into the Mini Maumee water play area and sprinkled onto Rain Towers Plaza. Mist sprayed from boulders. The 40-foot-tall Grosbeak Tower and nearby Prairie and Pollinator play areas were already buzzing with activity. Inside Market Hall, the aroma of pizza baking drifted from The Garden by Poco Piatti. More kids, on roller skates, took a first spin around a 1,000-foot-long skating trail called The Ribbon.

“Community leader after community leader got behind this big idea, momentum continued to build and what you see here today is the result of one of the most inspired, collaborative efforts we have seen in this region in a long time,” said Chrys Peterson, the first speaker at the grand opening and an early champion of the riverside park.

Phase 1 of Glass City, including the Pavilion, adjacent amphitheater and a sledding hill, opened in late 2020, breathing life into a former industrial landscape across the Maumee River from downtown Toledo. The opening of phase 2 marked the completion of the year round destination and the unique features it brings to the community.

After a busy first summer of parties, concerts and other events, The Ribbon is now open for its first ice-skating season through February 19.

RIVERWALK WILL KEEP REVITALIZATION GOING

On the downtown and East Toledo sides of the big river, more changes are in progress. Heavy equipment behind One Seagate and at International Park began to reshape and reinvigorate one of northwest Ohio's greatest assets: the Maumee River waterfront.

Glass City Metropark includes the first leg of Glass City Riverwalk, a decade-long project that will eventually stretch from the Veterans Glass City Skyway to the Anthony Wayne Bridge, connecting six neighborhoods with a continuous, five-mile, multi-use trail on both sides of the river. The project will incorporate a renovated International Park, which will become part of Glass City Metropark.

Construction on the next phases of Riverwalk, from the Martin Luther King Bridge upriver to The Docks restaurant complex on the East Side, and from the bridge to Fort Industry Square downtown, will continue through 2024, opening in the first half of 2025. Meanwhile, planning is underway for the final section through the Vistula neighborhood.









THOUSANDS PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAMS & EVENTS

The new Glass City Metropark was the venue for numerous events in 2023, including three concerts, one of them during the city's Fourth of July fireworks, which drew the largest crowd to date. The second annual Glowtacular, an outdoor expo after dark, and a book giveaway were among the events that drew crowds of people, many of whom experienced Glass City for the first time.

Across the park system, hundreds of children attended summer camps, while preschoolers explored nature during monthly Toledo Tree Tots meetups.

Besides dozens of public programs per month, the Programs Department staff visited classrooms, brought kayaks to swimming pools and set up a portable climbing wall at festivals across Lucas County as part of ongoing outreach efforts that bring people into nature, or take nature to the neighborhoods.

PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Park improvements are a constant across the park system, with the goal of maintaining clean, safe and natural parks.



PICKLEBALL COMES TO PEARSON

Metroparks and MercyHealth cut the ribbon in September on the fifth FitPark. Existing tennis courts at Pearson were renovated into four pickleball and two tennis courts. Pickleball is the fastest growing sport in America.

In 2017, MercyHealth announced a major financial gift to create the five FitParks. They include an outdoor gym at Wildwood Preserve, a kayak concession at Farnsworth and self-serve kayak shares at three other parks, a mountain bike skills course at Oak Openings and a mobile climbing wall used at special events.



FACILITY REFRESH, FUN DISPLAY AT THE GARDEN

Celebrations in the Conference Center at Toledo Botanical Garden will be a little brighter with a new wall of windows overlooking the scenic surroundings. Fresh paint and other interior renovations spruced up the popular facility this summer.

On the Bancroft Street side of TBG, a fun addition to the horticultural displays was a first-place winner in a Landscape Design Challenge by All-America Selections, which tasked participants with creating a “whimsical garden.”

The TBG staff brought the whimsy by flipping three downed trees upside down to create planters, and filled the root flares of the trees with flowering annuals, including AAS winners. A topiary dragon was a bonus.

Their creation was the winner in a category for gardens with more than 100,000 visitors per year. All-America Selections is a non-profit organization that tests new plants for home gardening.



A FIFTH OVERNIGHT TREEHOUSE

The roving construction crew, which built the Cannaley Treehouse Village at Oak Openings, returned this year to convert a day use treehouse into a fifth overnight option. The newly remodeled Canopy Loft is the second, six-person treehouse and the second accessible treehouse with a ramp. The village, which also includes a four-person and a pair of two-person treehouses, remains popular year round.



A HIGHER, DRIER BOARDWALK

The Blue Trail boardwalk at Wildwood Preserve fully reopened at the end of the summer after the park's maintenance staff rebuilt 200 feet of the elevated boardwalk as part of a multi-year replacement project.

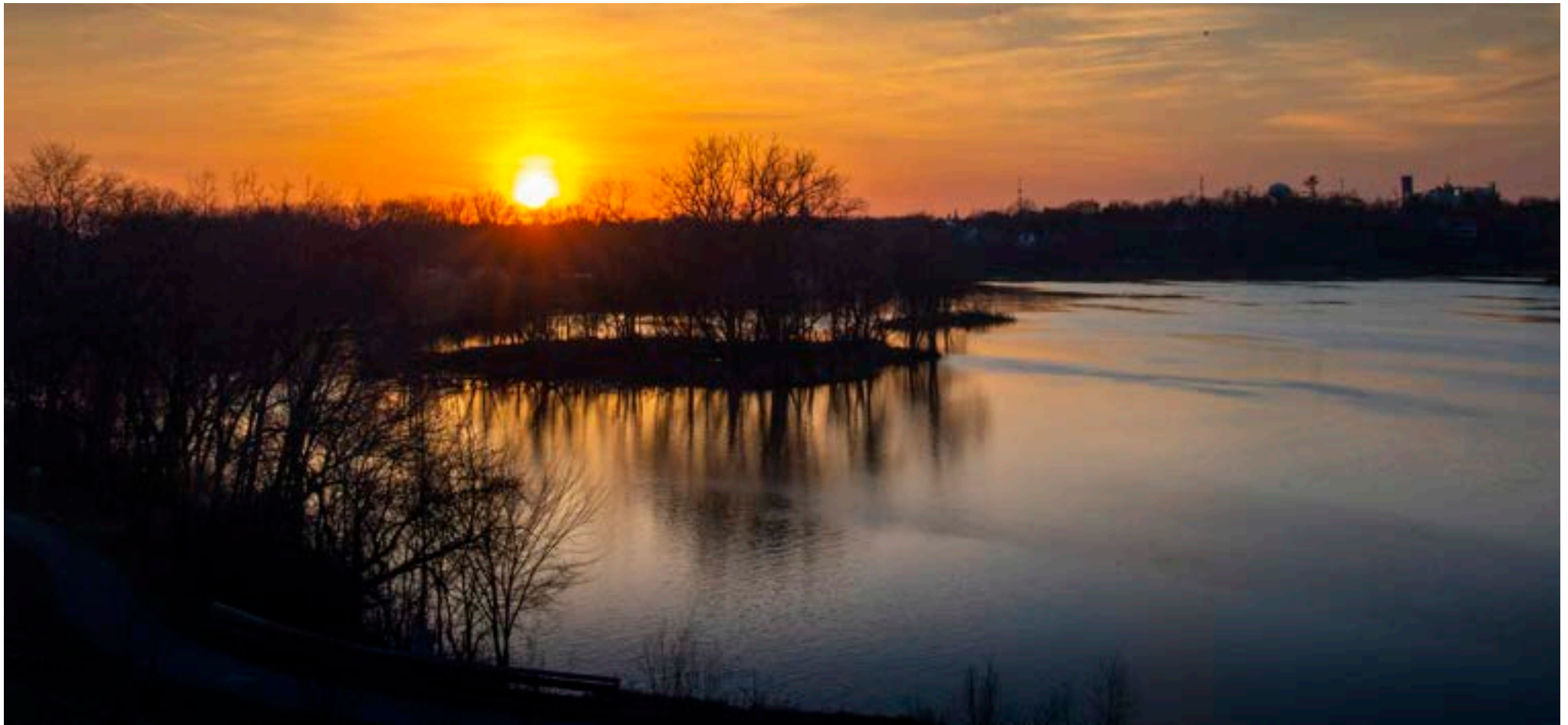
New sections of the scenic boardwalk along the Ottawa River that have been rebuilt over the past four years were widened to make pedestrian traffic more comfortable, and raised to help avoid future closures due to flooding.



CORRIDOR GROWS IN THE RARE OAK OPENINGS

Three land acquisition resolutions on the Board of Park Commissioners agenda in September increased the Oak Openings Corridor by more than 81 acres. The properties, on Waterville-Swanton Road, Eber Road and Dorr Street, include high quality flatwoods and remnant savanna habitat.

The acquisitions, paid for with more than \$1 million in Clean Ohio Fund grants, are a continuation of Metroparks ongoing efforts to preserve land in a corridor in the Oak Openings Region. The initiative began more than 20 years ago when voters overwhelmingly backed a plan to increase the amount of protected land in Lucas County, with the highest priority being the corridor between Secor and Oak Openings Preserve Metroparks.



CARING FOR OUR RIVER

Two public open houses, in July and October, informed the community about a major restoration planned for an island complex in the Maumee River between Maumee and Perrysburg.

Audubon Islands, managed as part of Side Cut, is designated a State Nature Preserve. Metroparks received a \$3.6 million Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant to fund engineering, design, permitting and restoration construction on and near the islands as part of a broader effort to restore the lower Maumee River, which is listed as a federal Great Lakes Area of Concern because of a legacy of pollution.

The restoration, which will begin early in 2024, will focus on stemming erosion of the island riverbanks and improving habitat for fish and benthos (small organisms that live on the river bottom).



THE GREEN TEAM IN ACTION

SeaBins now collect trash from Glass City Metropark Marina thanks to a grant secured by Keep Toledo Lucas County Beautiful, which is also partnering with the City of Toledo and Metroparks to place compostable food waste collection containers in Swan Creek Preserve, Toledo Botanical Garden and Glass City Metroparks. Visitors will notice blue receptacles throughout the Metroparks with stickers featuring mascot Boggs the leopard frog to collect bottles and cans for recycling.

These and other projects were spearheaded by the Metroparks Green Team, an interdepartmental task force focused on environmental stewardship.



VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHTS

40,000 BOOKS FOR KIDS

Nearly 50 volunteers assisted each day to prepare for Reading Opens the World this spring, where 40,000 free books were given away to families, students and teachers. Volunteers organized and helped distribute valuable reading material, helping to make reading fun and books more accessible. The initiative of the National and Toledo Federations of Teachers gives parents and educators the resources to help kids learn to read so they can read to learn.

BLOOD DRIVE

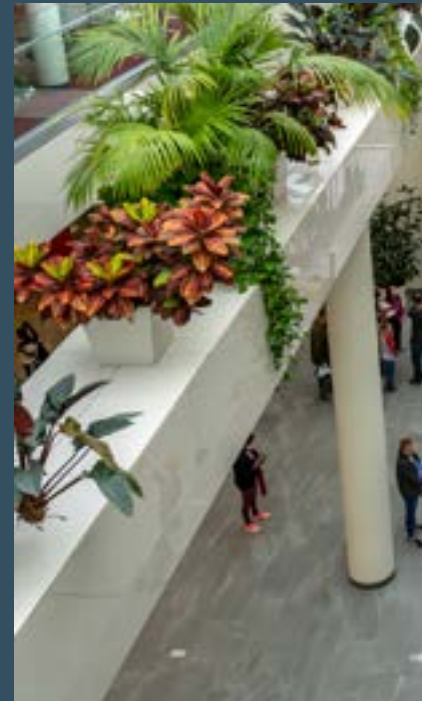
Volunteers also answered the call to assist at a Metroparks Blood Drive. Not only did they donate the life-saving gift of blood, they helped in the registration and canteen area, ensuring a smooth and positive experience for those who participated in the community drive.

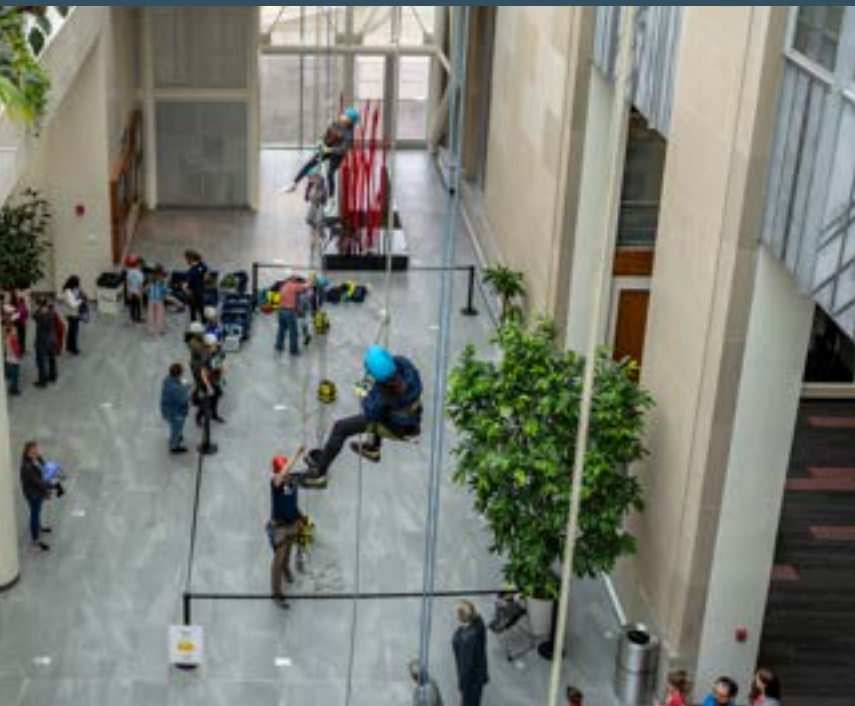
LIBRARY TAKEOVER

Metroparks again “took over” Main Branch Library in April. Volunteers jumped at the opportunity, assisting with climbing, archery and environmental education. Some even brought Metroparks pride by volunteering as ‘hoppy’ mascot, Boggs.

ONE MANOR HOUSE, MANY FACES

Volunteers have been decorating the Wildwood Manor House for the holidays for nearly 50 years as a thank you to the community for its ongoing support. Holidays at the Manor House is now a Toledo tradition and part of many families’ annual celebration of the season. For the last two years, volunteers have also decorated the mansion in Halloween themes for free Eerie Manor Tours and Zombie Prom. The events require hundreds of talented volunteers to decorate the house and guide thousands of visitors.





HERE FOR EVERYONE

Inclusion is a journey worth taking because public parks are for everyone, regardless of background, appearance or identity. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion goals infuse the Metroparks Toledo strategic plan to ensure that the agency is meeting the needs of its staff and the community it serves.

The park system has developed its first DEI plan to create an inclusive environment. A DEI team, LEAF (Leaders in Equity Action Forum), works with the director of DEI to implement strategies that align with the mission and vision.

A Youth Professional Development Program, in partnership with Scott High School, is a summer initiative aimed at creating awareness of jobs in the natural sciences and other professions in the field of outdoor recreation. The Metroparks Toledo Foundation fully funds the program, providing a platform to nurture the next generation of conservation and recreation professionals.

Metroparks is a winner of the Buyers Award by the Ohio Supplier Development for its intentional strategies to increase work with minority businesses. The park system hosts monthly roundtable meetings with community leaders to share future projects and connect project managers to qualified minority companies. Quarterly workshops create opportunities for staff and minority-owned businesses to connect.

Accessible kayak launches, adapted programs and wheelchairs specially designed for exploring the outdoors are ways Metroparks are becoming more accessible to people of all abilities.



METROPARKS TOLEDO FOUNDATION

Grassroots Philanthropy

The Citizens for Metroparks Foundation began in the 1970s to secure private funding as a supplement to tax dollars as Wildwood Preserve was being established. The Metroparks Toledo Foundation relaunched with its new name in 2017 with the intent to reignite that spirit of public-private partnership and philanthropy in support of the growing park system. Since then, the Foundation has evolved into a vibrant fundraising arm of Metroparks Toledo. The Foundation has played a pivotal role in ensuring our parks continue to rank among the best in the nation.

MEMBERSHIP

Members of Metroparks Toledo join because they want to share their love for the parks with others. They believe that, together, they ensure the parks remain clean, safe, natural spaces for all to enjoy today, tomorrow and forever. Membership gifts provide support for a variety of Metroparks programs and projects.



CONNECTIONS CAMP

Last year more than 700 children participated in a free week of nature camp in Metroparks, while hundreds more participated in off-site programming with support from Fifth Third Bank and Metroparks Members.



EAST TOLEDO FAMILY CENTER MINI EXPO

The East Toledo Family Center was treated to a gift of family memberships for its staff and preschool families by FocusCFO. Families enjoyed a climbing wall and other programming fun that day while exploring all the amenities that Glass City Metropark has to offer.



METROBARKS PROGRAM

Metrobarks is an add-on to a Metroparks membership for furry friends. Pet Supplies Plus is a sponsor of the program and co-host of a series of Metrobarks Meetups for pups and their people to gather and enjoy each other's company.



BLUE CREEK GLADE RESTORATION

Members support also helps sustain natural areas. A current project is restoring the Blue Creek Glade, a rare natural area that was recently designated as a State Nature Preserve.



GOOD NATURED

Good Natured began in 2023 as a Members affinity group to help break down barriers that prevent historically underserved individuals, groups and communities from experiencing and benefiting from natural resources.

RAVINE PARK

Funds raised by Good Natured in its inaugural year enabled Metroparks to overhaul a playground in the Garfield neighborhood of East Toledo. Formerly known as Ravine Park, the area is part of a greenway that will become part of Glass City Metropark. Thanks to the group's support and gifts from PNC Bank, the Lucy Killam Memorial Fund and many others, the new, accessible playground will be installed in spring 2024.



RENDERING

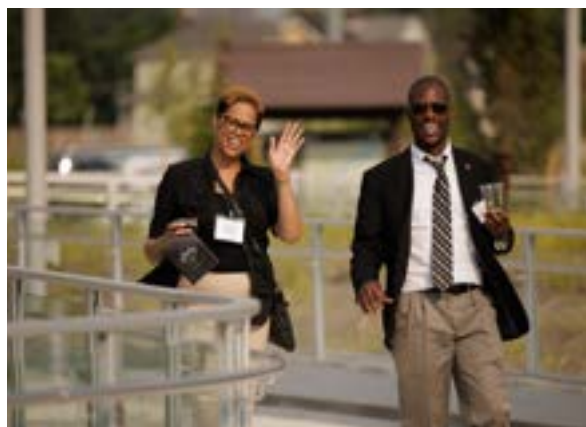


LEGACY 1928 SOCIETY

Membership in the Legacy 1928 Society is open to anyone who includes Metroparks in their estate plan or will. Individuals may designate gifts for a specific purpose or offer broad support.

BAUMANN GIFT

Siblings Ruth and James Baumann loved Metroparks, especially Toledo Botanical Garden. With the help of executors Brian and Melanie Stretchbery, the estate fully funded significant renovations to the Crosby Conference Center, hosta garden and Stable Room. A beautiful hosta sculpture will be placed in the garden, where recognition of their support will be featured. The final phase of the gift will include a wooden arch, pergola and benches, and other work.



GLASS CITY METROPARK & RIVERWALK CAMPAIGN

Founding Supporters

An unprecedented public-private initiative is building a landmark waterfront Metropark and world-class Riverwalk along the banks of the Maumee River. Phase 2 of Glass City Metropark opened in June with substantial help from Founding Supporters, who were among the first to make a gift to the latest phase of the campaign.



MEMORIALS

Memorial donations are a meaningful way to honor a loved one who loved the Metroparks. Commemorative benches and bricks with inscribed names are one form of tribute. Gifts can also fund park needs, such as a recent gift of \$20,000 to renovate a scenic overlook at Farnsworth Metropark.

ROCHE DE BOUT OVERLOOK

The Roche de Bout overlook will receive a facelift thanks to the gift from a donor in honor of his late wife. The result will be something the entire community will be able to enjoy.

TRIBUTE TREE PHOTOS

During Tribute Tree ceremonies, families and friends work with the Natural Resources Dept. to select a tree in memory of a loved one. They are invited to help plant the tree, and some use the occasion to recite a poem or share their own words about their friend or relative. This new memorial option is one way to be part of Metroparks reforestation and sustainability efforts.

CORPORATE GIVING

Corporations play important roles in creating an exceptional place where people work, play and live. These companies lead the way for others to follow, and become strong advocates for the park district, conservation and our region.

SUSTAINING OUR WORLD

The first two editions of this year's Sustaining Our World speaker series presented by Dana Incorporated were held at Imagination Station's KeyBank Theater. They included films dealing with topics of local and global environmental issues.

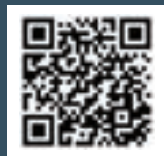
FITPARK PICKLEBALL

In 2017, MercyHealth pledged a major gift to create five FitParks across the Metroparks. The latest, FitPark: Pickleball, is a renovated tennis complex at Pearson with four pickleball and two tennis courts. A team made up of Metroparks staff played a friendly game with Mercy staff during a ribbon cutting event.

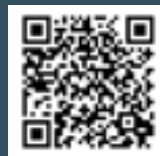


Learn more about how you can help the Metroparks you love grow above and beyond. Scan the QR Codes below.

METROPARKS MEMBERSHIP



GOOD NATURED



GLASS CITY RIVERWALK





LET'S CONNECT



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