

## The Good Things Surrounding Us

It's easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the holiday season – buying gifts, planning menus, running to the store, creating a festive table, and don't forget the cooking and the baking and the cleaning! Oof! Taking time to pause and give thanks for the many blessings in our lives can be difficult during this busy time of the year. However, when we do, so many things become unimportant as we realize all the good that surrounds us.

One of the good things that touches each and every one of us is the passion we have for the public lands we all help to protect. All of us working side-by-side to meet Great Parks' mission and vision is what makes this agency such a special place. It's definitely something to be grateful for! Together we create a more stable and sustainable organization, a more diverse workforce, and we get lots of work done! Here are just a few things volunteers and staff accomplished this year, working together:

- Removed at least 868 bags of trash, 133 bags of recycling, and 40 tires from park lands and around waterways, which positively affects the water quality not only in our parks, but also all the streams and rivers which make their way to the Mississippi River and down to the Gulf of Mexico! Never forget, it's all connected!
- Planted 375 trees, leading to better habitat for local wildlife, increased shaded areas for park guests, and less mowing for staff which means saving funds, using less gas, and less warming for the entire PLANET!!
- Walked, monitored and improved almost 105 miles of trail by removing 86 water bars and installing other sustainable measures. This means less erosion on the trails, less maintenance for our staff and safer trails for guests.
- Removed almost 29 acres of invasive plants, making room for native plants to grow which results in better food sources and overall habitat for native wildlife.
- Harvested buckets and buckets of native seeds at the Shaker Trace Nursery, so that we can continue to create new habitats and sustain the old with local plant genotypes.
- Spread 32 cubic yards of mulch, which helps plants retain moisture, contributes to our water conservation efforts and provides appealing outdoor spaces for park guests to enjoy.
- Installed a really cool bio swale at Avoca Park, which captures water runoff from the parking lot and filters pollutants, mitigates flooding and erosion, and leads to cleaner waterways.
- Saw the return of some of our Special Events and Interpreter Programs. Many of you stepped up to help connect thousands of guests to nature and our native habitats and wildlife.
- Welcomed back 23 volunteers to Parky's Farm to help care for all of our animals at the Riding Center and Barnyard.
- And despite another crazy year that 2021 turned out to be, you all contributed over 26,000 thousand hours of service to Great Parks!




So yes, even with all the ups and downs we've all experienced this year, there are plenty of things to be grateful for. Thank you for all that you have done to support Great Parks throughout 2021! We hope that you all have a safe and happy holiday season and a wonderful 2022!

Sincerely,  
Kris, Niki, and Lauren

### THIS MONTH'S BLOG

January Blog—Duck, Duck, Grebe!  
<https://blog.greatparks.org/2021/11/duck-duck-grebe/>

### CONNECT WITH GREAT PARKS

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# January Volunteer Opportunities

Interpreter programs are back! Check out what's coming up and join in on the fun.

For all Stew Crew projects - participants should bring work gloves, a facemask (to be worn if 6-foot physical distance cannot be maintained), hand sanitizer, insect repellent, water, snacks and wear long pants, boots or sturdy shoes. It's getting cold so make sure you dress for the weather! Tools will be provided.

Link to parks and park maps—<https://www.greatparks.org/parks>

Link to record your service hours—<https://app.betterimpact.com/Login/Login>

## VOLUNTEER MEETINGS

Join us from the comfort of your couch and learn something interesting from an exciting lineup of guest speakers. Meetings start at 6 p.m. and will remain virtual until further notice. No need to RSVP, just log on and enjoy!

**Jan 18**— Todd Palmeter, Great Parks Chief Executive Officer, will take a look back at 2021 and provide some insight on 2022 and the future. Stay in tune with what's going on in the park district and bring your questions for Todd. You won't want to miss this opportunity.

**Mar 15** —Stay tuned!

When recording your hours in MIP for volunteer meetings, log them under [Volunteer Meeting—Training \[Volunteer Services\]](#). Training hours may be doubled.

## Annual Winter Hike Series

Sat 1/8, 1/15, 1/22, 1/29, 2/5, 9:30 a.m.

The Annual Winter Hike Series is back for 2022! We'd love to have your help for one, several or the whole series. Whether you are interested in leading a group, being follow-up support, or lending a hand serving soup, we need you! Please note that this is an entirely outdoor event, and hikes range between 4-5.5 miles over uneven terrain. Some hikes are more challenging than others and are almost never canceled due to the weather, so be prepared for cold, snow, and rain. Hikes start at 10 a.m. Volunteers must be present for a 9:30 pre-hike meeting.

Saturday, January 8—Winton Woods

Saturday, Jan 15—Sharon Woods

Saturday, Jan 22—Woodland Mound

Saturday, Jan 29—Shawnee Lookout

Saturday, Feb 5—Miami Whitewater Forest

To volunteer, contact Suzanne Roth at [sroth@greatparks.org](mailto:sroth@greatparks.org) or phone 513-385-0075. For volunteers ages 18 and up. [Winter Hike—Park Name \[Edu & Events\]](#)

## Honeysuckle Smackdown at Winton Woods

Sat 1/1, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Let's start the New Year off right! As a product of our control efforts, there is standing dead honeysuckle blocking our view of the beautiful woods in this area. Let's open up the view and create space for native growth. Meet at the Great Blue Heron Shelter. To volunteer, contact Jaimie Martin at [jmartin@greatparks.org](mailto:jmartin@greatparks.org) or phone 631-334-3876. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Stew Crew—Winton Woods \[C&P/Central\]](#)

## Honeysuckle Removal at Shawnee Lookout

Sun 1/2, 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Now is a great time to tackle the seemingly ever-present bush honeysuckle. Help us remove this invasive plant to make room for natives! Trained herbicide applicators a plus but not required. Meet at the Water-hole Meadow Shelter parking lot. To volunteer, contact Adam McCosham at [amccosham@greatparks.org](mailto:amccosham@greatparks.org) or phone 513-978-7198. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Stew Crew—Shawnee Lookout \[C&P/West\]](#)

## Scenic Trail Trash Pickup at Little Miami

Tue 1/11, 9 a.m. – noon

Come help the Little Miami Crew clean up the Little Miami Scenic Trail along Route 32/Batavia Road. Bring your favorite trash picker/tool or just bring yourself and one will be provided for you! Mild to moderate inclines, but very short in distance, are to be expected.

Meet at Clear Creek Park (6200 Batavia Road, Cincinnati, 45244), just around the corner from the Little Miami Golf Course. To volunteer, contact Thomas Yee at [tyee@greatparks.org](mailto:tyee@greatparks.org) or phone 513-470-9969. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Stew Crew–Little Miami \[C&P/East\]](#)

### **Invasive Removal at Triple Creek**

**Tue 1/11, 9 a.m. – noon**

Come to one of our lesser known parks to assist in removing invasive species. Triple Creek is mostly known for its four manicured softball fields, but there are some great natural spaces and a fishing pond to enjoy as well! Meet at the parking lot by the lake. To volunteer, contact Paul Steuer at [psteuer@greatparks.org](mailto:psteuer@greatparks.org) or phone 513-260-1124. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Stew Crew–Triple Creek \[C&P/Central\]](#)

### **Kilby Road Cleanup at Campbell Lakes**

**Tue 1/11, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.**

Our Conservation and Parks crew is looking for help picking up litter along Kilby Rd! Come out to Campbell Lakes to enjoy the beautiful scenery of this unique park and help protect the wildlife that call this area home. Wear warm clothing, sturdy boots, and warm gloves. Meet at the Campbell Lakes parking lot. To volunteer, contact Alex Hearing at [ahearing@greatparks.org](mailto:ahearing@greatparks.org) or phone 513-646-4217. For volunteers ages 16 and up. [Stew Crew–Campbell Lakes \[C&P/West\]](#)

### **Invasive Plant ID and Control at Woodland Mound**

**Tue 1/11, 1 – 3 p.m.**

Want some tips on identifying invasive plants in the winter? Join us as we seek out honeysuckle, Asian bittersweet, tree of heaven, and more and look at some characteristics of these plants that stand naked in the forest. We will also discuss methods of control. Be sure to dress for the weather and fill your thermos with hot cocoa! Meet at the Juneberry shelter. To volunteer, contact Dan Hart at [dhart@greatparks.org](mailto:dhart@greatparks.org) or phone 513-250-0925. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Stew Crew–Training \[C&P/East\]](#)

### **Invasive Removal at Sharon Woods**

**Wed 1/12, 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.**

Come out to Sharon Woods to help remove invasive shrub species along the Sharon Creek riparian area. Learn what invasive plants could be present in your backyards and how to properly remove them. Meet at the Sharon Center parking lot. To volunteer, contact Jeremy Barkley at [jbarkley@greatparks.org](mailto:jbarkley@greatparks.org) or phone 724-814-1008. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Stew Crew–Sharon Woods \[C&P/East\]](#)

### **Prescribed Burn Prep at Glenwood Gardens**

**Thu 1/20, 9 a.m. – noon**

Each spring Great Parks staff conduct a number of controlled burns throughout our parks to help maintain the health of some of our ecosystems, specifically prairies. We'll be picking up cut wood in the burn breaks to prep for burns in the spring. Fire helps to prevent brush and trees from overtaking prairie habitats and also encourages new growth. Meet at the Glenwood Gardens Maintenance Building (377 Sheffield Rd). To volunteer, contact Shaun McClary at [smcclary@greatparks.org](mailto:smcclary@greatparks.org) or phone 513-869-9525. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Stew Crew–Glenwood Gardens \[C&P/Central\]](#)

### **Bugcicles: Discovering Hibernating Insects at Sharon Woods**

**Fri 1/21, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

Come out to Sharon Woods and discover our local hibernating insects and where you can find them during the winter months. Help our guests discover how insects survive the winter! Many think insects die off when the snow hits, but think again! During this program, volunteers will help pass out activity sheets and assist with monitoring guests to ensure they stay on the path provided for them. Meet at the Sharon Center. To volunteer, contact James Harris at [jharris@greatparks.org](mailto:jharris@greatparks.org) or phone 216-702-1766. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Interpreter Programs–Sharon Woods \[Edu & Events/East\]](#)

### **Honeysuckle Removal at Shawnee Lookout**

**Sat 1/22, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

Now is a great time to tackle the seemingly ever-present bush honeysuckle. Help us remove this invasive plant to make room for natives! Trained herbicide applicators a plus but not required. Meet at the Maintenance Building parking lot. To volunteer, contact Adam McCosham at [amccosham@greatparks.org](mailto:amccosham@greatparks.org) or phone 513-978-7198. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Stew Crew–Shawnee Lookout \[C&P/West\]](#)

### **Invasive Removal Sharon Woods**

**Wed 1/26, 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.**

Come out to Sharon Woods to help remove invasive shrub species along the Hike-Bike Trail. Learn what invasive plants could be present in your backyards and how to properly remove them. Meet at the Lakeside Lodge parking lot. To volunteer, contact Jeremy Barkley at [jbarkley@greatparks.org](mailto:jbarkley@greatparks.org) or phone 724-814-1008. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Stew Crew–Sharon Woods \[C&P/East\]](#)

## Volunteer Spotlight



### Diana D'Amico Years of Service—3

#### What is my specialty dish?

One that I had recently learned to make was Lobster Ravioli with a White Wine Beurre Blanc Sauce at a cooking class at Sur La Table. So of course, I had to buy the pasta attachments for my mixer and give it a try. I have made the dish several time since, but the best was when my granddaughter Kaira decided to treat her mom, brother and Grandpa to a special meal. This is what really makes the specialty dish into a special meal.

#### Who in the world would you like to share a meal with?

My dad. Unfortunately, he passed over 23 years ago and I feel that I was cheated on a lifetime of more memories. Dad loved to cook. When our family of 6 kids were growing up, he was the one who prepared most of the dinners. When I was old enough to start cooking, he handed over the oven mitts and mixing bowls and taught me more than measurements and proper cooking temperatures. He taught me the measurements of good values, morals, love and a good life. I would love to just sit down with him over a bowl of homemade white chicken chili and then say again THANK YOU... for everything.

## A Very Powerful Experience- St. Vincent de Paul Poverty Simulation

### Kris Roselle, Volunteer Resources Manager

DYK...according to the 2018 U.S. Census Bureau website, the number of people living in poverty in Hamilton County was 15.4 % of a population of 816,684, including nearly 1 in 4 children. The 2019 Federal poverty level for a family of four was \$25,750 per year according to Health & Human Services. Many more have incomes above the poverty line, but their incomes are still low enough to qualify for programs like Food Stamps and Medicaid.

These are troubling statistics and unfortunately, the reality of many living in Hamilton County. What can we, as an organization, do about it? We can work to increase our awareness of what may be going on in the lives of those we serve, so we can meet them where they are and provide them with the best experiences possible while visiting the parks. That's why Great Parks recently hosted another St. Vincent de Paul Poverty Simulation, only this time it was for volunteers.

The objective of the simulation is to help people in our community better understand the realities of living in poverty, to grow in solidarity and to take action on behalf of our neighbors in need. It challenges participants to walk in the shoes of our neighbors in need – to explore poverty experientially, because it is difficult for those of us who have enough, to truly understand the situations that families living in poverty experience every day.

During the simulation, I took on the persona of Carl – I was having difficulty coming up with my rent money, paying the Duke Energy bill and putting enough food on the table for my family, despite having a full time job. My supervisor would not flex my work schedule and threatened to fire me if I showed up late, so it was very difficult, if not impossible, to make my appointment times that I had set up to apply for benefits. Often, when I was able to get off work for appointments, the bus was late or I didn't have enough bus fare. It was so frustrating! And exhausting! On top of that, I really wanted to apply to community college so I could get a better job and provide for my family, but money was tight and it was difficult to get over to the college to sign up. Most days my life was so chaotic I couldn't think straight, but I kept trying.

The poverty simulation had a profound effect on me. Navigating our fragmented social services system was very frustrating, and it was easy to understand why some people might make choices other than what you or I would make while living such a stressful and chaotic life. It opened my eyes and increased my understanding and empathy for those living in poverty. It also reminded me to never assume you know what is going on in someone else's life, and to always be kind.

## Volunteer Spotlight



### Diana D'Amico Cont. from page 4

**What is your favorite volunteer activity?** One that touches my heart is working with the Special Riders Program. From the moment the riders mount their horse, take off to the ring, ride through the woods, their SMILES are wide and full of excitement.

**What is your favorite park & why?** Many years ago, I was dating this wonderful man (who later became my husband). On one of our early dates, I took him to Mitchell Memorial. Since that day, we have spent many dates walking the trails, sitting at "our" picnic table and resting on a blanket reading a book. We now have a tradition on New Year's Day to take a walk in one of the parks. Many years our walk is at Mitchell, drinking hot chocolate and nibbling on homemade cookies.

**What is your favorite outdoor activity?** At home, I really enjoy working outdoors like mowing grass, landscaping, gardening, and cutting & splitting firewood. I even have my own chainsaw. When we are not at home, our outdoor adventures takes us camping. We love to venture to new parks, walk the trails, horseback ride and recently we went kayaking.

## A Very Powerful Experience- St. Vincent de Paul Poverty Simulation (cont.)

### Kris Roselle, Volunteer Resources Manager

Many volunteers that attended the simulation walked away with a greater appreciation of what it is like to live in poverty:

"Thank you for offering the poverty simulation this week. Chris Lottman and I really appreciated the poverty simulation you offered this week. As you know we are both retired social workers with a heart for such issues. The presenters did a wonderful job of presenting the material and fielding questions/remarks. I also really liked the one set of slides that compared the mentality of different classes. It is always good to step back and see yourself in context." – Kate Cantlon

"Kris, we [Kathy and Tom Turan] signed up for the poverty simulation not knowing what to expect and were so glad we did. Thanks to you and the St. Vincent de Paul workers, we have a new awareness of some of the problems faced by the poor. Even though I was both a social worker and a paralegal, "living" their problems was eye opening." – Kathy Turan

A special shout out to Adam McCosham, Jessica Spencer, Ben Braeutigam, Lisa Herring and Lauren McClure for their help implementing the simulation. They took on the roles and personas of different government and non-profit agencies that those living in poverty have to navigate and connect with to survive. They did a great job melding into their roles. Some of them were so good it was a bit scary!

For more information about the SVDP poverty simulation, click here <https://www.svdpcincinnati.org/retreats-service-learning/programs-offerings-retreats/>





## January Shout Outs!

Thank you so much to everyone who came out to help us get 4000 invitations ready to mail out for Great Parks Forever year-end fund-raising initiative! We couldn't have accomplished this great feat without all of you. - Alicia Culman, Chief of Philanthropy

Thanks to John Martens, Mike Fehring, Chris Blanck, Matthew Shelton, Greg Voorhies, Angie Wasson, Steve Hochwalt, Erik Brueggemann, Gary Bourgraff, we were able to finish the area we had been working on at the Sharon Center on 12/1. Also, a shout out to Sharon Laughlin, Hanisha Gali, and Brittney Feichtner who helped out on other work days in the same area! Across all the events we cleared 1.1 acres of honeysuckle from this location!- Jeremy Barkley, C&P Technician at Sharon Woods



Thank you to Kate & Rob Cantlon and Chris Lottman for the excellent care you provide to our animals at Farbach-Werner! On two separate occasions Kate, Rob and Chris have filled in for each other without even having to go through me. I get a call from one saying they can't make it then I get a call from the other and they say "I'll be there!" This makes my job way easier! – Paul SeEVERS, Interpreter at Farbach-Werner

Thank you for volunteering with Great Parks on November 18th at Glenwood Gardens, cutting and pulling honeysuckle- Shaun McClary, C&P Technician at Glenwood Gardens