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METROPARKS' GWYN PROGRAM LANDS \$10K GRANT YOUTH GARDENING INITIATIVES TARGETED FOR INVESTMENTS

DAYTON – Five Rivers MetroParks was recently awarded a \$10,000 grant by the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA's) *Grow Your Park* program—made possible through a gift from the J.R. Albert Foundation—to support the agency's Grow With Your Neighbors (GWYN) program. MetroParks is one of just 10 organizations in the country to receive a 2011 NRPA *Grow Your Park* grant.

Since 1986, GWYN has been helping Miami Valley residents grow their own vegetables and herbs. "Growing your own produce not only encourages healthy eating habits, it helps you become self-sufficient," says GWYN Manager Luci Beachdell. "We provide instruction and support for community gardens. They're a great way to enhance your neighborhood or to meet your neighbors and learn to garden at the same time. Many of our gardeners donate excess produce to local food banks, which nourishes the community. We're excited to put this grant to good use for kids in Montgomery County."

Now in its second year, NRPA's *Grow Your Park* program supports park and recreation agencies in creating and expanding community garden operations and activities, with a goal of increasing participation among children and teens. Far from the common garden rental plots, these public growing spaces teach children about food origin, proper nutrition, team work, and hands-on skills, while providing intergenerational connections.

The 2011 *Grow Your Park* grant will provide much-needed physical support for ten youth gardening programs in Dayton and Trotwood. MetroParks will partner with four groups with a new focus on gardening, six existing groups, OSU Extension, Master Gardeners, and several schools and religious groups to facilitate youth gardening throughout the region.

Each of the ten groups will receive garden supplies: tools, lockable storage chests, irrigation, compost, plants and compost bins. The Boonshoft School of Medicine at Wright State University will help analyze the nutrition surveys from all participating youth. "Our goal is to increase access to nutritious food—and we hope to see our youth respond by demanding and eating fresh, delicious food," Beachdell explains. "This grant will allow us to double the number of youth GWYN/MetroParks and partners were working with last year. We'll be able to increase partners' chances of successful, fun—and productive—gardens with the right tools."

"The 2011 *Grow Your Park* program provides a creative way for young people to grow—both in the garden, and in the community," said Barbara Tulipane, CEO of NRPA. "We congratulate our 2011 *Grow Your Park* grantees, whose programs will—for our nation's youth—contribute to a healthy sense of self, good nutrition, and a connection to the outdoors."

To learn more about GWYN, visit metroarks.org/GWYN or call (937)





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(937) 276-7053. Get the latest information about gardening, including upcoming programs and helpful hints at metroparks.org/gardening.

ABOUT FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS

Established in 1963 through the efforts of forward-thinking citizens concerned about preserving green space and natural areas, Five Rivers MetroParks has grown to a nationally renowned park system composed of natural area parks, gardens, high-quality river corridors, urban parks and a network of recreation trails. Five Rivers MetroParks focuses on three areas – conservation, recreation and education – as a steward of greater Dayton’s public lands. Educational programs and recreational opportunities are offered year-round for all ages, and diverse natural habitats are being protected and cared for today to ensure their future existence. To learn more about Five Rivers MetroParks, log onto www.metro parks.org or call (937) 275-PARK.

The National Recreation and Park Association is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing park, recreation and conservation efforts that enhance quality of life for all people. Through its network of 20,000 recreation and park professionals and citizens, NRPA encourages the promotion of healthy lifestyles, recreation initiatives, and conservation of natural and cultural resources. For more information, visit www.NRPA.org. For digital access to NRPA’s flagship publication, *Parks & Recreation*, visit www.parksandrec-magazine.org.

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