



# FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS



**2012** ANNUAL REPORT  
*A Personal Connection*





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# OUR MISSION

Protect the region's natural heritage and provide outdoor experiences that inspire a personal connection with nature.

# OUR VISION

To be the conservation leader of a vital, active, nature-based community.

# OUR PURPOSE

To protect natural areas, parks and river corridors, and to promote the conservation and use of these lands and waterways for the ongoing benefit of the people in the region.

# OUR ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

EXCELLENCE  COMMUNITY  INNOVATION  FUN  INTEGRITY

COMMITMENT  FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY  RESPECT  COLLABORATION

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH  DIVERSITY  SUSTAINABILITY





# CELEBRATING A VITAL COMMUNITY

## 2012 Year in Review

A review of 2012 gives us many reasons to celebrate people who have contributed to the vitality of Five Rivers MetroParks. The actions taken by volunteers, staff, sponsors, benefactors and millions of visitors last year confirm the appeal and value of our park system. They also breathe new life into our parks and community.

Grass roots community support was a key factor in the birth of MetroParks in 1963. Today we view it as a measure of success. Land and waterway conservation remains a fundamental value. It comes to life in our parks as people benefit from the rich, diverse experiences and natural beauty. Local involvement also ensures our parks stay relevant and accessible to everyone across the Miami Valley.

Our mission speaks of providing *outdoor experiences that inspire a personal connection with nature*. At MetroParks we're expanding the personal connection concept to benefit our community. This includes a commitment to innovative outreach and collaboration, as well as fiscal responsibility. While we look within to make improvements, we also look outside ourselves for inspiration. We see it in our parks and in a vital, active, nature-based community. That's something everyone can celebrate.

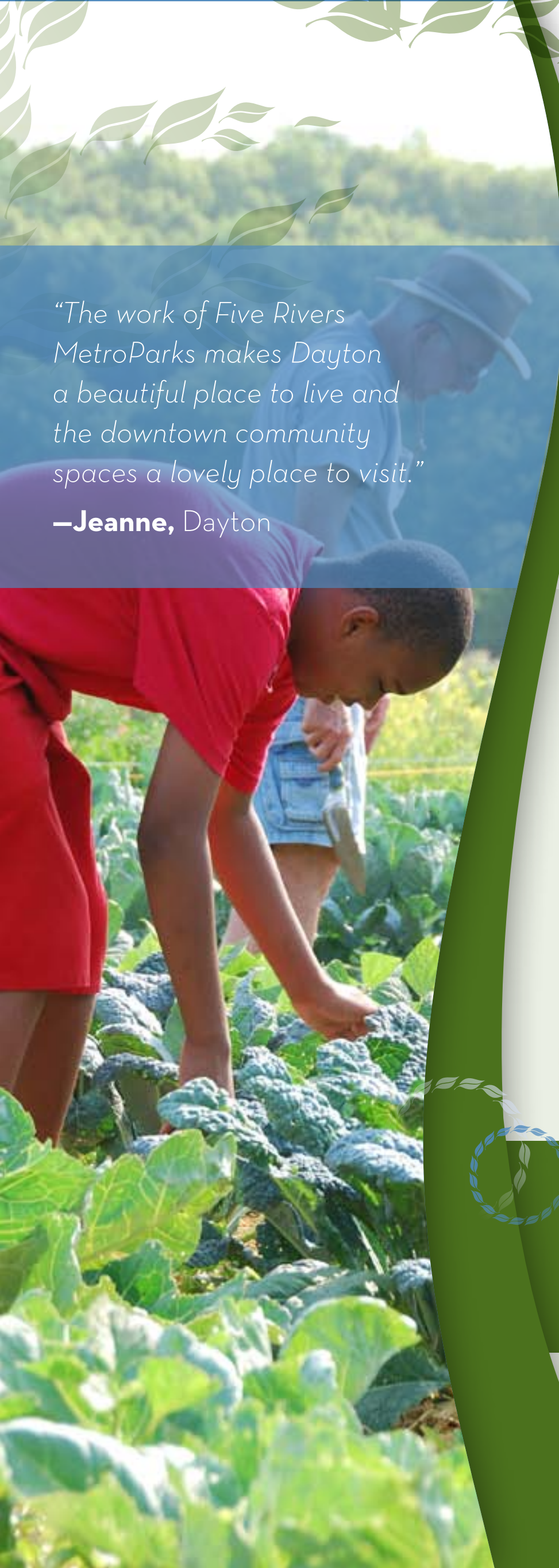


**Rebecca A. Benná**

Executive Director







*“The work of Five Rivers MetroParks makes Dayton a beautiful place to live and the downtown community spaces a lovely place to visit.”*

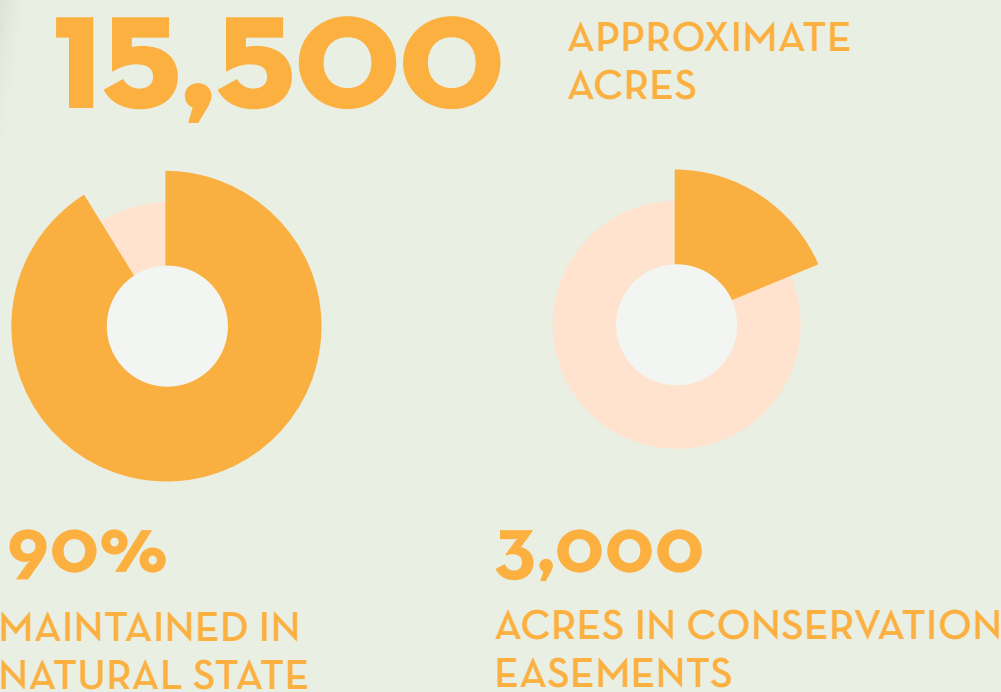
—**Jeanne**, Dayton

# OUR PARKS

## *The Gift of Visionaries*

It started in 1963 with a group of citizens concerned about the rapid sprawl of our urban areas. Thanks to their efforts, Five Rivers MetroParks has been able to maintain forests, prairies, and wetlands where wildlife thrives and people can make personal connections with nature. Nearly fifty years later Five Rivers MetroParks encompasses nearly 16,000 acres located throughout our county. From these visionaries and their dedicated efforts, millions of people have been delighted, entertained, refreshed, educated and inspired by nature-filled experiences.

### FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS



### YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHT

*Dayton Business Journal* named Five Rivers MetroParks the second most visited attraction in the Dayton region, 2nd Street Market the seventh.

For a detailed history, click [here.](#)



# PARKS IN OUR BACKYARD

## *When Nature Gets Personal*

Through years of conservation leadership, MetroParks created access to amazing open outdoor spaces. Today, wherever you are in Montgomery County, you're never more than 10 minutes drive time from a MetroPark. Millions of visitors embrace the parks and our programs for their own personal reasons. For some, the parks represent an opportunity for outdoor adventure. For others, the parks are respite from the stress of modern life. Still others value their parks as places where they can share experiences with their children or grandchildren.

**3.2** MILLION PARK VISITORS

**1,874** SHELTER & CAMPING PERMITS

**4%** GROWTH IN ATTENDANCE OVER 2011

**12%** GROWTH IN SHELTER RESERVATIONS

## YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHT

The hugely popular Tree Tower at Cox Arboretum MetroPark opened in October 2012 after more than 10 years of community support and funding from the James M. Cox Jr. Arboretum Foundation.

Click [here](#) for a complete list of parks and amenities with mapped locations.



ANDY SNOW



# EDUCATION, RECREATION, SPECIAL EVENTS

## *Providing Rewarding Outdoor Experiences*

MetroParks' programs help participants gain new insights into the world, connect with nature, learn new skills or just enjoy being outdoors. From school tours to horse camps, gardening classes to backpacking trips, farm demonstrations to concerts and festivals, more than 118,000 participants enjoyed their pick of over 1,800 public programs in 2012.

To see the wide range of available activities, click [here](#).

**1,800** PUBLIC  
PROGRAMS

**6,500** CHILDREN SERVED  
THROUGH SUMMER TOURS

**118,000** PROGRAM AND  
EVENT PARTICIPANTS

**122,000** PUBLIC CONTACT  
HOURS

## YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

Two programs positively impacted urban Dayton youth and the community. For children 5 to 18, Adventure Central provided over 60,000 contact hours of programming focused on creating caring, capable, and contributing citizens of tomorrow while getting children outdoors and connecting them to nature. Our CityBeets program helped 12- to 15-year-old youth learn leadership and job skills by growing vegetables and selling them at 2nd Street Market.

With 15,000 visitors, the Midwest Outdoor Experience at Eastwood MetroPark became one of the largest festivals celebrating the outdoor lifestyle in the country.





# FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

## To the Health and Benefit of Our Community

"I love spreading the word of all that MetroParks does in my community! I have been a Dayton local for 12 years and keep finding new things in MetroParks each year."

—Danette,  
Oakwood

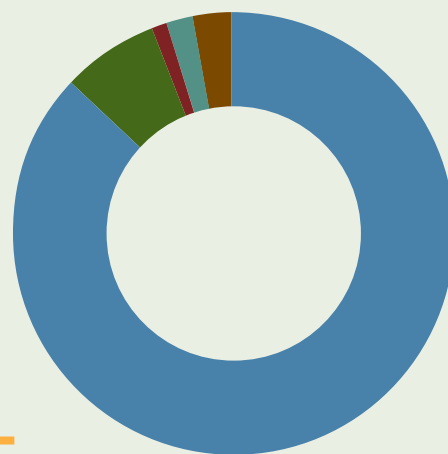
The bottom line at MetroParks involves much more than a balanced budget. With a majority of funding provided by a citizen-approved levy, we focus on returning value to the community. A healthy return on investment results from the way we improve our parks, encourage participation and enrich people's lives, as well as manage funds. We build value and public trust through collaboration, demonstrating that our parks exist for the benefit of the community.

Learn more about the MetroParks public funding by clicking [here](#).

### 2012 REVENUE

Levy Income	\$16,576,074
State Income	\$1,271,779
Grants, Donations & Sponsorships	\$121,636
Program/Facility Fees & Charges	\$446,789
Other Income	\$561,960

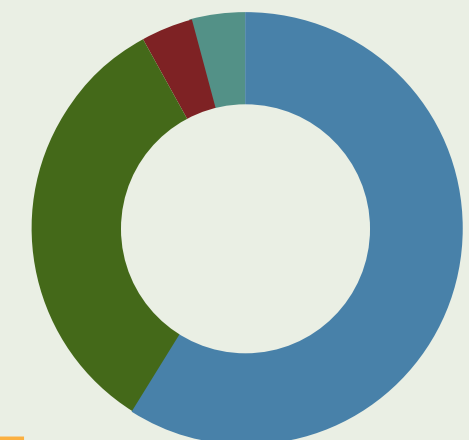
**Total** **\$18,978,238**



### 2012 EXPENSE

Personnel	\$11,848,528
Operating	\$6,692,507
Capital Improvements & Equipment	\$716,847
Grant	\$(829,775)

**Total** **\$18,428,107**



## YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

*Grant dollars were leveraged for several key initiatives in the agency:*

- A Transportation Enhancement (TE) grant was awarded to Five Rivers MetroParks by the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission that funded 80% of the cost of pavement repairs to the Upper portion of the Wolf Creek Recreation Trail (\$248,628).
- A grant from the Ohio Environmental Education Fund (OEEF) funded the MetroParks Inquiry Adventures Boxes (IA) program and teacher trainings designed to help teachers bring nature into their curriculum.

- A 4-H Teens Teaching Youth about Biotechnology grant of \$30,000 offset expenses for the Adventure Central Job Experience and Training (JET) Program.
- An Ohio Department of Natural Resources Watercraft Boating Education grant was received to purchase new kayaks, lifejackets and misc. associated equipment for our outdoor recreation program.
- A grant-funded program from the Jane B. and Horace M. Huffman Jr. Trees for the Rivers Endowment Fund allowed MetroParks to plant trees at Huffman and Eastwood MetroParks.
- A \$197,000 grant from the Clean Ohio Fund underwrote the agency-wide reforestation initiative.



# AGENCY FUNDING




## *Changing Times Require Innovative Thinking*

In recent years Five Rivers MetroParks has experienced new financial challenges to continue to provide the high-quality services and amenities due to the loss of revenue from our major funding sources. This revenue comes from local property taxes and state funding, such as local government funds and tangible personal property tax reimbursements. As a result of the reductions, we have lost millions of dollars in revenue annually since 2011. This trend is expected to continue.

Despite these challenges, we managed to balance our budget in 2012, through identifying creative opportunities to become more efficient, reduce expenses and develop new revenue opportunities.

## 2011 & 2012 REVENUE COMPARISON

MetroParks pursues a range of funding sources to offset decreases in levy income due to the challenging economic climate.

2011 REVENUE		\$22,296,513
2012 REVENUE		\$18,978,238
DIFFERENCE		\$3,318,275

## YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

MetroParks increased the use of volunteers across the agency by training and utilizing volunteers to organize deer and wildlife management projects, lead reforestation projects, compile organization data, and assist in native plant propagation, greatly increasing the reach of these projects and reducing costs.

The Business Finance Department expanded MetroParks' use of cooperative purchasing contracts to purchase goods and services estimated to save MetroParks more than \$55,000, the majority of which will be an annual savings for the near future.

The Great Miami Wetland Mitigation Bank brought in \$138,000 in credit sales and farm rent in 2012.

*"The MetroParks have earned a great reputation for stretching our hard-earned tax dollars."*

**—AFL-CIO**





# PARTNERS IN COMMUNITY

## *Joining Forces for Excellence, Innovation and Fun*

Fiscal responsibility compels us to leverage resources. MetroParks and our partners benefit by sharing expertise, facilities, volunteers and enthusiasm for our community. One group of partners helps protect, restore, preserve and promote our region's environmental and agricultural resources. Others focus on building healthy, active communities and promoting positive youth development and leadership skills. We also work with businesses, outdoor clubs and civic organizations to enrich our program offering. View recent program partners [here](#).

## YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

Subaru Partnership: Received 1-year use of 2 Vehicles (\$158,000 value)

Lowe's Home Improvement Stores and Wegerzyn Gardens volunteers joined forces to renovate the Gift and Garden Shop located at the Second St. Market. Free labor from Lowe's staff and monies donated (\$3,200) from the Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation created a brand new look for the Gift Shop, increasing gross sales 4% for 2012.

*"We believe that our park system is an important part of the fabric of our community and a vital element of our collective sense of place."*

**—Charles A Jones**

Former chair of the  
Dayton Foundation  
Governing Board





# FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS

## Community Partners

### OBJECTIVES

Protect, restore, preserve and promote the region's environmental and agricultural resources

Build healthy, active communities

Improve economic standing of the region by improving the quality of life

Promote positive youth development education and leadership skills

### SOME OF OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Partners for the Environment, Ohio State University Extension, Montgomery County Solid Waste District, Miami Conservancy District, Dayton Regional Green 3 (DRG3)

Greater Dayton RTA, Greater Dayton Rowing Association, City of Dayton, YMCA of Greater Dayton, Wright State University, Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission

Dayton Development Coalition, updayton, Downtown Dayton Partnership, Dayton Montgomery County CVB

Adventure Central, The Ohio State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development, University of Dayton

*"The YMCA of Greater Dayton establishes strong kids, strong families and strong communities through programming that builds a healthy mind, spirit and body. It's a public duty and sentiment Five Rivers MetroParks also shares, providing educational and recreational opportunities to Miami Valley families as well as protecting our natural heritage for generations to come."*

**—YMCA of Greater Dayton**





# VOLUNTEERS

## *Gifts of Exceptional Value and Kindness*

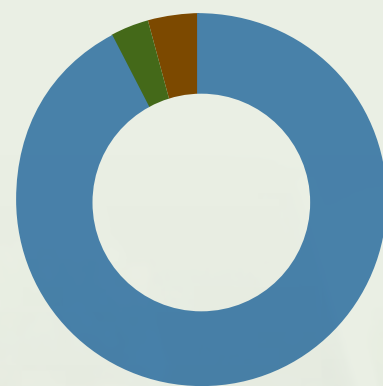
Volunteers are the lifeblood of MetroParks. For these volunteers, making a difference in the world starts in their own community. And they do it with passion and enthusiasm. Whether sharing in conservation, organization, education or beautification, their gifts bring deeper meaning to themselves and others. They also brighten the financial outlook and enhance our range of offerings. To get involved, click [here](#).

## STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

1,749 volunteers

139 non-full time staff

167 year-round full-time staff



**55,729** VOLUNTEER  
HOURS IN 2012

**\$800,000** VALUE OF  
VOLUNTEER HOURS\*

*\*Source: PROS Consulting LLC*

## YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHT

Over 2,000 participants volunteered at 37 sites at the agency's Annual Adopt-a-Park event. These volunteers removed trash and invasive species, maintained trails, and prepared garden beds. Roughly 28,000 pounds of litter and 300 tires were removed, 13,500 pounds of recyclable materials were collected, and 6,000 trees were planted.



*"I often wonder who receives the most benefits from my volunteering, the community or my well being, which includes self satisfaction, physical and mental activity, personal contact with coworkers and the public."*

**—Kenneth, Miamisburg**





# FOUNDATION SUPPORT

## *Sustaining Our Parks through Private Donations*

*"It is beautiful to see everyone work together for the purpose of helping these kids we all care so much about."*

—Karen

Sustainability at MetroParks is not just about reforestation. People also sustain our parks financially through individual donations, sponsorships, memorial gifts and foundations. These Foundations and Friends are appointed volunteer organizations whose purpose is to support our educational & environmental programs and guide continued development.

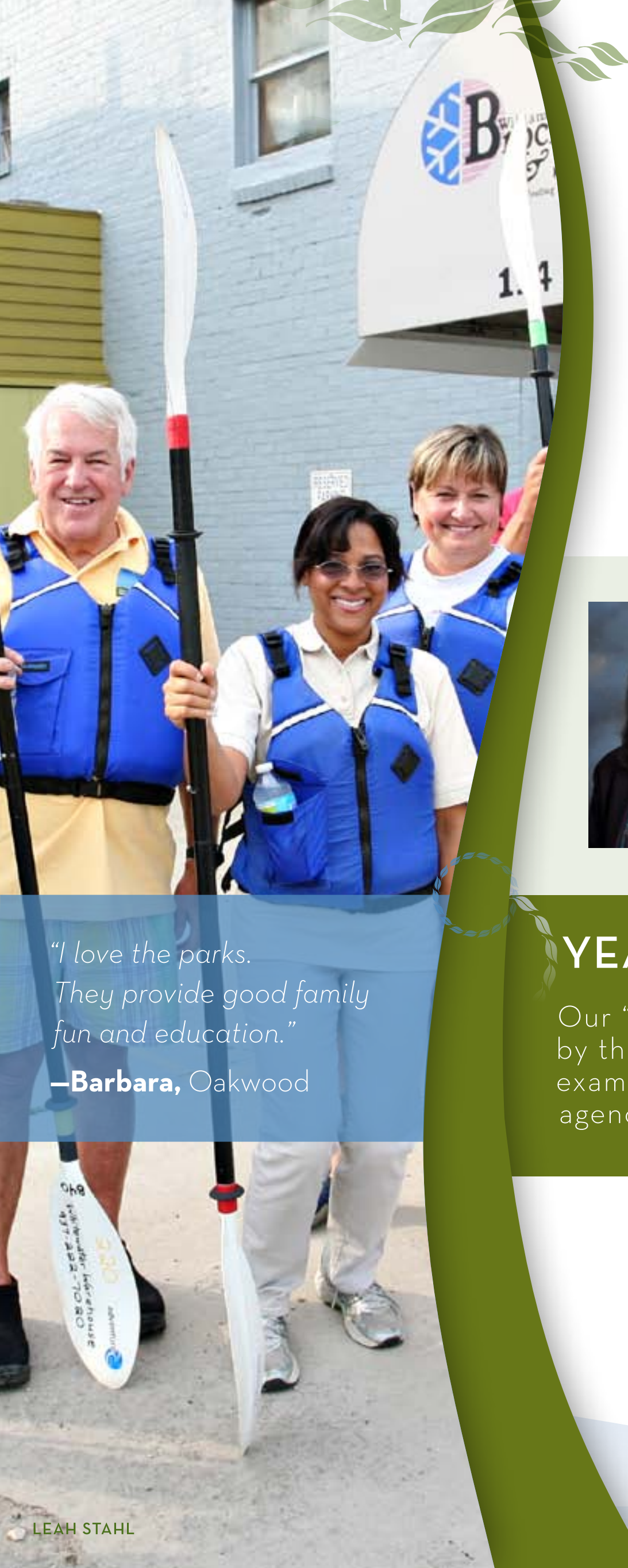
Along with the individual donors, many area organizations and businesses partner with us to provide gifts, sponsorships and in-kind services and programming. For more information on giving, click [here](#).

## YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHT

A combined total of \$489,000 in funding was raised to support Five Rivers MetroParks through the Cox Arboretum Foundation, Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation and the Friends of Carriage Hill Farm.







# BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

## *Volunteer Professionals with an Outside Perspective*

By Ohio law, Five Rivers MetroParks is governed by a three-member volunteer Board of Park Commissioners that are appointed by the Probate Judge of Montgomery County. The Board establishes all policies and rules, approves developments and land acquisition, and controls all funds. Each Commissioner serves without pay for a three-year term with one member's term expiring each year.



**PRESIDENT**  
Karen L. Davis is a health care professional, community volunteer and family advocate.



**VICE PRESIDENT**  
Irvin G. Bieser, Jr., is an attorney, supporter of the arts and nature-lover.



**COMMISSIONER AT LARGE**  
Alan F. Pippenger is a local business-man, supporter of open-space preservation and community leader.

*"I love the parks.  
They provide good family  
fun and education."*  
—**Barbara**, Oakwood

## YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHT

Our "Leaf a Legacy" reforestation campaign was recognized by the National Recreation and Parks Association as a leading example of conservation advocacy for park and recreation agencies across the country.





# LEADERSHIP

## Complemented by a Personal Connection

The directors of MetroParks are grateful for widespread community support over the years. A unique sense of responsibility and awe comes from hearing individual experiences and stories about our parks. They offer a glimpse of key elements that sustain MetroParks: respect, integrity and collaboration. They further remind us that, at the heart, it's about inspiring a personal connection with nature and each other. View one of many personal connections [here](#).

**Becky Benná**, *Executive Director*

**Carrie Scarff**, *Deputy Director*

**Trish Butler**, *Director of Marketing  
& Public Relations*

**Mark Hess**, *Chief of Rangers*

**Karen Hesser**, *Director of Parks  
& Legislative Services*

**Debra Jackson**, *Director of Human Resources*

**Robert L. Johnson**, *Director of Finance*

**Dave Nolin**, *Director of Conservation*

**Beth Redden**, *Director of Development*

## YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

MetroParks Rangers, the region's leader in Police Bicycle Patrol training, hosted its annual International Police Mountain Bike Association training school for Ranger staff and area police agencies.

MetroParks has demonstrated leadership with the development, programming and management of nature play sites and garnered interest on a national level.



*"Thank you for the opportunity to share the wonder of nature with others, and for all the behind the scenes things you do for the conservation of our beautiful Miami Valley."*

**—Amanda**, Dayton





## ***Letter to Executive Director of Five Rivers MetroParks***

Dear Ms. Benna:

Thank you for Hills and Dales MetroPark. Let me tell you about our relationship. Last spring and summer I was very ill. When I was able to ride in the car, my son drove me around west Kettering and always through Hills and Dales MetroPark. I was particularly attracted to the Dogwood Park area. My long-term goal was to walk through Dogwood, on my own. In August I was able to get in and out of a wheel chair and my son took me to Dogwood Park. I sat in my wheel chair on the first bridge and watched the water, enjoyed all my surroundings and thanked God for life.

Later, I walked part of the path with the help of my walker; my goal still was to walk the entire path. The day came when I made most of the path with my cane. Finally, I walked it on my own.

On Saturday, 3 December, we walked the whole park. No support for me except my son's arm now and then. This was my reward for working hard to get well. I'd love to go when there is snow, but I'm a little wobbly and I probably won't get to do that. So I will look forward to spring and all the beauties it will bring.

While in the park, we saw a young couple wearing Santa hats, making a heart with two candy canes and taking their own picture. Another couple was trying desperately to get their son, about 10, to cooperate and have his Christmas picture made with his sister. (My son said he would smile just before his mother gave up completely.) Another young couple was there with a beautiful big dog; we saw them later on the path in the woods.

What a day! Not only did we enjoy the beauty of the park and see others enjoying it, we could smell fall—the dying leaves, the stream—almost as good as the sights. I congratulate Five Rivers MetroParks on the Hills and Dales MetroPark. It is truly a wonderful park. I am blessed to live in a metropolitan area that treasures and cares for its natural beauties. Thank you, the commissioners, and all your staff for your efforts.

Sincerely,  
**Helen,** Kettering



A photograph of four children playing in a large, active fountain. The water is spraying upwards in multiple jets. The children are wearing swimwear: a red one-piece, a pink skirt, a yellow tank top with a red skirt, and a yellow tank top with blue pants. The scene is bright and sunny, with water droplets visible in the air.

*“The park system has created new ways to serve the community while always adhering to its mission of protecting our land, connecting the community with nature and conservation, enhancing quality of life, and increasing awareness of our rivers as recreational assets.”*

**—Alan Pippenger,** Board of Park Commissioner

LEAH STAHL

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