METROPARKS YOUTH VOLUNTEER EARNS TOP HONOR
FROM THE OHIO PARKS AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION

Five Rivers MetroParks also recognized in two other award categories.

**DAYTON, OH (Jan. 9, 2017)** — Dayton resident and long-time [Five Rivers MetroParks](http://www.metroparks.org) volunteer Douglas May was selected to receive the [Ohio Parks and Recreation Association](https://netforum.avectra.com/eWeb/StartPage.aspx?Site=OPRA)’s (OPRA) [Award of Excellence](https://netforum.avectra.com/eweb/DynamicPage.aspx?Site=opra&WebCode=awards) for Outstanding Youth Leadership. May’s is one of three [OPRA Awards of Excellence](https://netforum.avectra.com/eweb/DynamicPage.aspx?Site=opra&WebCode=awards) MetroParks earned in 2016.

May, 18, is currently a student at the [Ponitz Career Technology Center](http://ponitzctc.org/). He began his relationship with Five Rivers MetroParks at age 9 through a program called [Adventure Central](http://www.metroparks.org/adventure-central/), which provides students living in one of Dayton’s most under-served communities with after-school programming that develops both academic and life skills. The program also fosters environmental stewardship through outdoor education.

“Doug is such an integral member of our team,” said Nate Arnett, director of Adventure Central. “He is the first to step up and help out, whether it’s working in the kitchen, supporting younger youth in the garden, caring for growing trees or taking care of animals.”

May celebrated his 750th hour of service in 2016, the highlight being a reforestation project in which he led a group of peer-volunteers in the propagation of 3,000 native trees and shrubs. As a part of MetroParks’ reforestation efforts, these trees and shrubs were planted in [Wesleyan MetroPark](http://www.metroparks.org/places-to-go/wesleyan/) and the [Great Miami Mitigation Bank](http://www.metroparks.org/what-we-do/conservation-leadership/what-we-protect/).

May was inspired to tackle this significant conservation project after he participated in MetroParks’ “Go Nuts!” campaign, when more than 90,000 seeds were collected by the public for reforestation purposes. He and his peers then took a portion of the viable seeds to grow Adventure Central basement. Saplings were then propagated using donated grow lights that had been reused after being confiscated by local law enforcement.

Though May is described as shy and reserved by his volunteer supervisors, his ability to transition into a leadership role when tackling nature-based projects made him a stand-out when MetroParks began the OPRA Awards of Excellence nomination process.

“Doug is one of our great success stories,” said Arnett. “He serves as a great role model, and watching him grow into service-driven citizen is inspiring.”

May’s accomplishments do not come without hurdles, as he is challenged with autism. His dedication to conservation and ability to overcome obstacles has garnered him the respect of his peers, admiration of the Five Rivers MetroParks staff and now one of the state’s most coveted nature-focused accolades.

“These individuals really represent some of the best in parks and recreation, past, present and future,” noted OPRA executive director Woody Woodward in the 2016 Leadership Awards announcement.

May will travel to Sandusky with his mother, Marqueitta Captain, to receive his award on Feb. 14, 2017, during the 2016 OPRA Awards Dinner. Representatives from Five Rivers MetroParks will also be in attendance.

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**Additional Awards**

MetroParks’ newly re-designed [website](http://www.metroparks.org) placed third in the OPRA Awards of Excellence “Marketing Innovation” category. Launched in May 2016, the new website is streamlined, mobile-friendly, and allows users to [register for programs](http://www.metroparks.org/programs-events-finder/) and [book reservations](http://www.metroparks.org/rentals-permits/reserve-a-shelter/) easily. Website visitors now spend 41 percent more time exploring the site, and online permit applications have increased by 71 percent since its launch.

[Cox Arboretum MetroPark](http://www.metroparks.org/places-to-go/cox-arboretum/)’s [Barbara Cox Center for Sustainable Horticulture](http://www.metroparks.org/sustainability-center/) was also recognized, placing third in the “Capital Improvements” category. The Barbara Cox Center was created from existing facilities at Cox Arboretum MetroPark that were repurposed and retrofitted to include more energy-efficient and sustainable features. The primary location for Five Rivers MetroParks’ tree and woodland wild flower propagation, the Barbara Cox Center helps fulfill MetroParks’ mission to protect the region’s natural heritage. Since its opening in May 2016, volunteers and staff at the Barbara Cox Center have produced more than 4,000 trees to support local reforestation efforts.

Visit [www.opraonline.org](http://www.opraonline.org) to learn more about the 2016 OPRA Awards of Excellence winners.

**ABOUT FIVE RIVERS METROPARKS**

[Celebrating more than 50 years](http://www.metroparks.org/about/history/) of preserving green space and natural areas, [Five Rivers MetroParks](http://www.metroparks.org) is a nationally renowned [park system](http://www.metroparks.org/interactive-parks-map/) composed of natural area parks, [gardens](http://www.metroparks.org/things-to-do/gardening/), high-quality [river corridors](http://www.metroparks.org/places-to-go/water-trails/), urban parks and a network of [recreation trails.](http://www.metroparks.org/things-to-do/hiking/) Five Rivers MetroParks [protects](http://www.metroparks.org/what-we-do/conservation-leadership/what-we-protect/) the region’s natural heritage and provides [outdoor experiences](http://www.metroparks.org/programs-events-finder/) that inspire a personal connection with nature. [Educational](http://www.metroparks.org/what-we-do/connecting-people-with-nature/programs/) programs and [recreational](http://www.metroparks.org/things-to-do/active-outdoors/) opportunities are offered year-round for all ages. Five Rivers MetroParks is accredited by the [Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies](http://www.nrpa.org/CAPRA/). To learn more [about](http://www.metroparks.org/about/) Five Rivers MetroParks, log onto [www.metroparks.org](http://www.metroparks.org) or call 937-275-PARK (7275).

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