

Foundation for Geauga Parks

The Foundation for All Parks in Geauga County– 2020-2021 Report

to the Community

Message from the President

As the President of your Foundation for Geauga Parks, I can say with confidence that our Board of Trustees has much to be grateful for this year. We are pleased with our growth in 2020 regardless of the barriers created by a global pandemic.

It continues to be my honor to serve alongside a very dedicated and hard-working board and our stellar staff, Gretchen Faro and Paige Orvis. That is why it's with mixed emotions that we congratulate Gretchen for a job well done and say goodbye as she officially steps down as the Foundation's Executive Director to embark on a new journey in retirement. The Board is grateful for all that Gretchen has done to build a strong foundation for our organization, and for keeping the Foundation active in the community.

At the same time, I am excited to share with you that Paige Orvis has taken the Foundation's helm as Interim Executive Director. She brings with her a deep understanding of Geauga County's conservation history and the people behind the properties which have been preserved for the benefit of our community. Paige has a long history of service to the parks in Geauga County, and the Board is excited about the momentum she brings to her new role.

We are also grateful to our many community partners who have invited us to their tables (or Zoom meetings) to collaborate on projects and programs that benefit our parks. We continue to welcome opportunities to lend our service to conservation and



education efforts throughout Geauga, be they county, township, or municipal park projects. We welcome every opportunity to serve, so please keep your Foundation Trustees informed as opportunities arise.

I look forward to seeing you in the parks.

ADAM HENRY Board President

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Adam Henry - President Matthew Burnham - Vice President Jonathan Green - Treasurer Carl Langer - Secretary Linda Brown Sue Lundstrom Barbara McCullough Mary Beth O'Neill Marcia Owen Jennifer Salo Sheryl Vernon Richard Frenchie - Emeritus Trustee

The Board of Trustees extends gratitude to Heidi O'Neill and Claudia Toth, who completed their Board terms in 2020. Their contributions have been immeasurable.

Staff

Paige Orvis - Interim Executive Director

Gretchen Faro - Consultant

Our Mission

The Foundation for Geauga Parks is an independent, non-profit organization created to raise money to fund community engagement with nature through education, preservation, conservation, and appreciation of the unique natural character of Geauga County.

A Year to Remember

Across the planet, a simple mention of the year 2020 conjures a multitude of emotions, from sorrow, frustration and grief to hope and gratitude. Because of the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19, families, businesses and individuals have had to reinvent themselves and their ways of functioning in the world. Globally we have been shaken to the core.

The most positive outcomes of the pandemic are connected to resilience, creativity, and the ability to adapt to this uncontrollable challenge. The one place where people are universally finding solace and revival is in nature. This year, more than any other time, our parks and preserves are critical to the health and well-being of our communities. Parks across Geauga County are no longer a "best kept secret." Our parks are a refuge in the storm, reaching record visitation.

Because of this, the work of the Foundation for Geauga Parks (FGP) is more relevant than ever. For 30 years it has been the purpose and pleasure of the FGP, its staff and trustees to carry on a mission to fund community engagement with nature. Because of the continued support of individuals and corporate donors, FGP continues to fund park improvements, projects and nature education programs for all parks in Geauga, be they county, township or municipal.

Throughout this report, we will illustrate the ways the Foundation has demonstrated adaptability and resilience and, with your help, has continued to support the projects and programs so important to our communities. You will learn how our parks have continued to serve and how park and Foundation staff have adapted to health and safety restrictions and barely miss a beat in caring for the natural features that make Geauga County special.



Statement of Financial Position (as of December 31, 2020)

Support & Revenue	2020 Unaudited	2019 Audited
Contributions & Other Income	140,371	160,861
Investment Income (Loss)	83,033	95,776
Total Revenue	223,404	256,637
Expenses		
Program	31,422	30,222
General & Administrative	62,978	52,975
Fundraising	31,994	18,787
Total Expenses	126,394	101,984
Net Assets		
Change in Net Assets	97,010	154,653
Beginning Net Assets	932,104	777,451
Ending Net Assets	1,029,114	932,104

Assets	2020 Unaudited	2019 Audited
Current Assets	162,180	153,064
Other Assets	12,976	13,946
Marketable Securities	854,041	760,874
Total Assets	1,029,197	927,884
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities	83	5,780
Net Assets		
Unrestricted Net Assets	236,201	240,845
Restricted Net Assets	792,913	691,259
Total Net Assets	1,029,114	932,104
Total Net Assets & Liabilities	1,029,197	937,884



Supporting Nature Education is central to the Foundation's mission. The nature education fund underwrites costs for Geauga Park District's Nature Scopes program, supplies, transportation for schools, and scholarships.

Geauga Park District Nature Scopes

The 2019-2020 school year started off like any other for the Nature Scopes binocular program, offered to all fifth-grade classes in Geauga County. Then all education models shifted in March 2020 when there was a state-wide shutdown of schools and businesses. Geauga Park District quickly rebounded. Where in-person training was no longer feasible, the curriculum was fulfilled through virtual and video classes.

Fifth-grade classes in the 2020-2021 school year are participating in revised Nature Scopes offerings, including virtual programs and optional schoolyard explorations. All 13 schools opted in, and this extraordinary program continues. Every participating student will receive a pair of Celestron 7X35 Binoculars, a Night Sky guide and Geauga County Plants & Animals guide compliments of the Foundation.



789 Students awarded binoculars and field guides for 2019-20 school year

10,000+ Students completed Nature Scopes training 2003-2020

School Program Supplies for Virtual Classrooms

In 2020, FGP provided funds to purchase supplies to equip 14 themed program tubs, which are loaned to classrooms in advance of scheduled classes to enhance student learning.

Teachers select the program theme they would like a naturalist to conduct. The teacher is provided the appropriately themed supplies in advance so students have direct access to items discussed during their naturalist-led inperson or virtual programs.

Themed programs with coordinating supplies include: Amphibian Awakening Feathered Friends Geauga's History: Written in Rock Geauga's Wildlife Past & Present Insect Extravaganza Weather Wizardry Wildlife Detective Training



Program supplies for Wildlife Detective Training Photo: Karie Wheaton

Chip Henry Institute – Outdoor Adventure Camp



What was not common in the summer of 2020 were traditional summer day camps for kids in varying age groups. But what we did see were lots of families spending time in their parks. Since traditional day camps were not feasible, Geauga Park District adapted by hosting small-group themed Family Camp Days.

Groups were limited to a maximum of 10 attendees, including parent and child(ren). Multiple sessions of each themed day were held throughout July 2020 to accommodate more people. The days were themed: Rocket Day, Stream Hike, Kayak Day, Pond Dipping Day, Fishing Day, and Insect Day.

"Dottie was wonderful on our kayak float today as was her volunteer, Mike. It was an absolutely fantastic program and a great break for our social-distancing family to get out and do something safe, educational, and fun. Thank you!"

—ANONYMOUS Family Camp Days, Kayaking

Nature Education Scholarships

In the interest of preparing the next generation of conservationists, the Foundation collaborated with Protect Geauga Parks in 2020, providing \$1,000 to fund one of three \$1,000 scholarships awarded to students entering college for studies in natural or environmental sciences.



Scholarship winners, left to right:

Alexa Busby and Kegan Sheely, Kenston High School;

Ryan McMullen, Hawken School

School Field Trips

The Foundation awards field trip transportation grants to schools traveling to and from parks for school field visits with a naturalist. In 2020, all field trips were cancelled, but the FGP stands ready to fulfill those needs when opportunities open in the future.





3000 Attendance of children and adults for 2020 Geauga Skywatchers programs A team of collaborating organizations formed the Geauga Skywatchers Club in 2019 with the goal to inspire and encourage learning about and engaging with the night sky. Momentum grew as the group provided hands-on astronomy education at monthly meetups around the county.

After the March 2020 statewide quarantine, Skywatchers programs were "blacked out" in April, May and June, resuming through Zoom for the remainder of the year. Some program titles included Exploring our Solar System; Hubble at 28: Answers (and Questions) from the Hubble Space Telescope; Astrolabes: Learn about the oldest multifunction computer; The Moon Teacher; and Why Mars? Discover the Red Planet.

Virtual programs continue into 2021 until a return to in-person experiential learning is deemed safe. Meanwhile, if you don't have your own telescope, night sky viewing is still accessible to all. The Foundation donated high-quality telescopes to each of the Geauga libraries, where they are available to check out for free.

Geauga Skywatchers Club Partners









FUNDING *Natural Resources Conservation*



Habitat Restoration

The Foundation for Geauga Parks is committed to conserving the beautiful and diverse habitats of Geauga County. In 2020, we were able to provide funding for the materials and supplies necessary to conduct important natural resource management work in Frohring Meadows in Bainbridge and Observatory Park in Montville.

The scope of work conducted by Geauga Park District's Natural Resources staff included managing undesirable invasive plant species like Canada thistle, common teasel, multiflora rose and buckthorn in both parks by utilizing best practices of physical removal, chemical control and prescribed burns. Conversely, to continue to propagate desirable meadow plant species, staff and volunteers collected native seeds from both properties to be used in future meadow restoration projects and to contribute to a multistate pollinator initiative entitled Project Wingspan, which is part of The Pollinator Partnership.



Other important work included repairing damage to wetlands with the goal of restoring and creating habitats for waterfowl, and migrating and nesting bird species. This small but mighty department of three full time employees continues its work all year, to conserve and protect healthy, diverse habitats throughout the county parks.

Piloting the Pollinator Garden Program

With support from the Cleveland Foundation Lake-Geauga Fund, FGP launched the Pollinator Garden Program in 2020. The plan was to build a partnership of organizations in the county that are committed to raising awareness and encouraging practices that will stem pollinator habitat loss, plus provide educational opportunities for students and the general public.

Even in the climate of quarantines and social distance, FGP has been working with Geauga Park District to develop a demonstration garden plan for Frohring Meadows featuring a diverse selection of plants and habitats, which will serve a passive educational experience for

the public (through signage and other material) as well as a destination for school field trips and school projects.

Moving into 2021, community outreach will expand countywide to create more opportunities to raise awareness and create habitat for our valuable pollinator species.





REINVENTING *Fundraising Events*



Who didn't start 2020 with expectations to participate in all the parties, programs, events, and other gatherings that would be part of any "normal" year? Instead, we have all been challenged to reinvent how we do things, and this was true for nonprofits everywhere.

By the end of March, Foundation trustees realized that our annual Twilight Soiree fundraising event, so critical to sustaining operations, would not take place in August as planned. This was a disappointment, in no small part because we would miss gathering with like-minded people who love their parks. Regardless, creativity abounded and two new opportunities arose from the ashes of 2020.

Geauga Trail Challenge

Thank you to everyone who participated in the 2020 Geauga Trail Challenge peer-to-peer fundraising event. Individuals and small teams signed up during the month of October to explore their parks for the cause. Registrants challenged themselves with goals to walk, run, ride horses and bikes, or even kayak or canoe to raise money for the Foundation for Geauga Parks.



"Treasure Our Parks" Virtual Silent Auction

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The Foundation's annual Twilight Soiree always includes an in-person silent auction. Even without the large event, the Foundation went virtual to host the first-ever "Treasure Our Parks" silent auction in December 2020.

Thank you to all our winning bidders and all who donated goods and services (see page 10) to make this record-breaking silent auction a success.

We learned some things through this process, and you can be sure we will put those lessons into practice in 2021.



Making a Difference Together

The Board of Trustees offers its deepest thanks to those who supported our work during 2020. We appreciate your generous support through donations and sponsorships. Together we are supporting high quality parks, preserves and nature education.

\$10,000 +

Cleveland Foundation Lake-Geauga Fund Carol Donaldson William Ginn O'Neill Brothers Foundation Preston Superstore William O. and Gertrude Lewis Frohring Foundation, Inc.

\$1,000 - \$5,000

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lan Cooper Ron Hamilton Susan Krobusek Pat Stormer Sonny Williams

Nature Education

(including Nature Scopes) William Angstrom Dan Best Stephen Bloch Stacy Cook Robert Diehl Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation Michael Doudican Joan Fath Bonnie Fish Kathryn Flynn Joan Francis **Richard Frenchie** Emilie Gottsegen Merrl Gray John Hellman Ruth Holm Kathy Leavenworth Donna Martin Mary McDonald Elaine Mraz Steve Mraz Donna Murphy Carol Owens Bonnie Pearce Wendy Radtke Michael Runion William O. and Gertrude Lewis Frohring Foundation, Inc. Sonny Williams

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Pollinator Program

The Cleveland Foundation Lake-Geauga Fund

Geauga Trail Challenge

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2020 Business Partners

Preservation Partner Auxin Group Wealth Management

Conservation Partner The Lubrizol Corporation

Sustainability Partners Kinetico Incorporated

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We are pleased to announce Preston Superstore as 2021 Lead Business Partner.



Charity Auction

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In-Kind Donations

Arborwear Artisan's Corner Gallery BellAmore Salon & Spa Bella's Homemade Dog **Biscuits** Dan Best Linda L. Brown John Buda Charles Dakota Photography **DERU** Landscape Architects **Casey Forbes** Evelyn Frohring Geauga Park District Geauga Soil & Water **Conservation District** Geauga Vision Adam Henry Hungry Bee Catery Laleure Vineyards Pat Leech Dave Misalko Jane Neubauer

Heidi O'Neill Mary Beth O'Neill Kevin O'Reilly Marcia Owen Rich Bradshaw Training Stables Salo Maple Products Spice Catering Company Jim Trombo Sheryl R. Vernon White House Chocolates

STAYING Connected



Explorers Series

The Foundation for Geauga Parks established its monthly Explorers Series as a way for like-minded individuals to connect while exploring a different park in Geauga County by boot, bike, paddle, or skis. Each experience provides a fun way to get outdoors, meet new people, and learn more about the natural, historic, and cultural beauty of our county.

The activities are geared for people of all ages and typically take about an hour to an hour and a half. Many are led by a park naturalist or knowledgeable individual who shares insights about the natural and historic aspects of the park.

Some hikes were cancelled in 2020 to follow statewide health orders. As we continue into 2021, we will keep groups small, wear masks and practice social distancing so we can continue hiking together.

2021 Dates

March 6	Swine Creek Reservation	August 7	Welton's Gorge
April 3	The West Woods' Affelder House	September 4	Frohring Meadows
May 1	The Rookery	October 2	Orchard Hills Park
June 5	The Maple Highlands Trail	November 6	Lucia Nash Preserve
July 3	Big Creek Park	December 4	Chickagami Park

Save the Dates 2021 EVENTS

2021 Trail Challenge (Virtual Triathlon)

Dates: June 5 - 20, 2021 Details to be announced

Twilight Soiree 2021

August, 2021 Final date, location & details TBA

Would you like to stay up to date on our Explorers Series and other Foundation events and activities? Complete our mailing list form on www.foundationforgeaugaparks.org/pages/explorers-series

Rallying Together

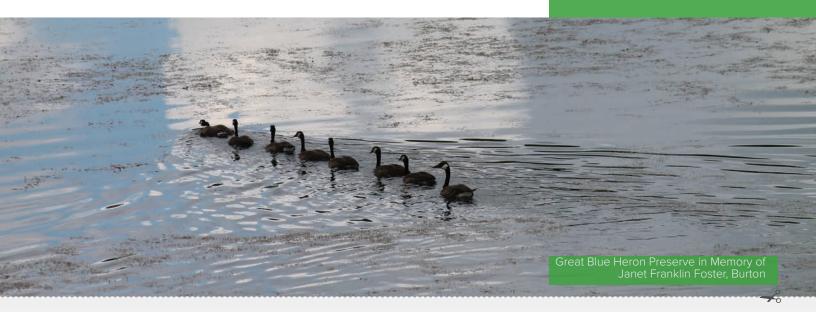
It has been a year to remember indeed. Yet despite the changes and challenges, we have rallied together to continue to support our parks, preserves and nature education programming throughout Geauga County. We have adapted our practices to keep park supporters safe. We have reinvented ways to connect with nature and with each other. And we have continued to build collaborations that benefit all parks in Geauga County.

The Trustees of the Foundation for Geauga Parks remain dedicated to being the fundraising organization on which park entities in Geauga can rely.

Join us in helping to ensure our communities have access to safe places for rest, relaxation and revitalization. Join us in supporting our efforts to raise money to fund community engagement with nature through education, preservation, conservation, and appreciation of the unique natural character of Geauga County. Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.

-RACHEL CARSON





Thank you for your support! Through your generosity, we can continue a legacy of education, preservation, and exploration in Geauga County through 2021.

Donation Amount: \$	Name:
	Street:
I would like my donation applied to:	
Greatest Need (Unrestricted)	City, State:
Park and Trail Enhancements	ZIP Code:
Nature Education	Phone:
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Prefer to donate online? Go to www.foundationforgeaugaparks.org/pages/donate

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