

Fall 2016

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Dear Friend of the Parks:

The Hamilton Parks Conservancy is now two years into its mission to make your city parks safe, clean, fun, and accessible.

To be honest, it seems as though we've been "playing catch-up" from the beginning, and while we've made great progress toward our goals, it's a constant juggling act between keeping the parks up to snuff and moving forward with a vision of a larger, more equitable park system.

Our first summer was dominated by cleaning up—spreading gallon after gallon of paint while removing dead trees, repairing and replacing dilapidated and burned-out picnic shelters, building six new shelters, and removing deteriorating playground equipment. At the same time, we implemented a plan for an efficient system of routine maintenance, including mowing over 800 acres of grass.

This year, we opened two new spraygrounds, one in Crawford Woods and one in Millikin Woods. Attendance at these two parks has tripled. In 2017, Hamilton's crown jewel Marcum Park will open adjacent to RiversEdge Amphitheater, along with the game-oriented Civic Park at Second and High streets.

One of our goals was to leverage our funds and form partnerships, which resulted in a NatureWorks grant to replace the playscape at the Booker T. Washington Community Center and a Community Development Block Grant to replace the playscape at Millikin Woods. We also received a grant from the Fitton Family Foundation to construct an addition to the RiversEdge building and entered into an

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Groundbreaking at Marcum Park

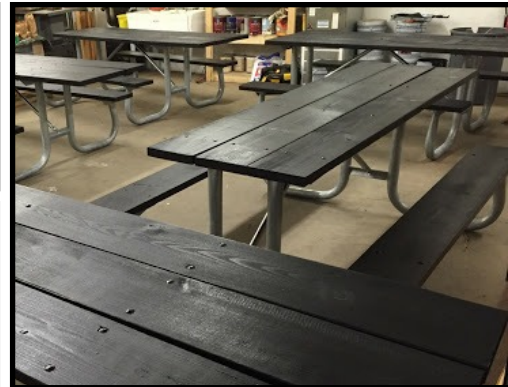


Trudy Marcum, Project Manager Doug Rack, Parks Conservancy Vice Chair Gerry Hammond, Steve Marcum, and Mayor Pat Moeller break ground on Marcum Park in April.





A Year of Hard Work...



Some of the improvements we made in 2016 included replacing some of the dilapidated park benches across the system, new metal benches in Campbell Avenue Park, and a complete renovation of the concession stand at L.J. Smith Park. We also took control over trash pick-up, a move that will generate funds for capital improvements.



agreement with MetroParks in the development of a master plan for Combs Park and trail-building at Miami Woods. The Parks Conservancy has also become a part of the Hamilton Community Foundation's Strategic Plan, which provides us with \$125,000 for three years for capital improvements. The carpentry class at Hamilton High constructed three of our new shelters. We were able to put new parking lots at Millikin Woods and Crawford Woods as a result of a partnership with the City's Public Works Department, who provided the labor while we paid for materials.

We learned that getting more done through partnerships works!

We have increased our efficiencies behind the scenes by implementing a new mowing routine that cuts down on travel time. We purchased a garbage truck to have better control over trash pick-up, which results not only in cleaner parks, but also provides additional revenue for capital improvements.

We feel like we are on the right track, and offer as evidence the increased use of the parks. Specifically, we can point to Millikin Woods as a prime example. Anecdotally, people have been telling us how much better the park is with the sprayground, the new and renovated shelters, and enhanced security. Thanks to a partnership with some dedicated citizens, and start-up funding from Jim and Emily Fuhrman, we have a nine-hole disc golf course with a second nine holes in the planning stage. We can verify the increased use of Millikin Woods by the numbers: Almost every shelter was rented every weekend, and Millikin Woods surpassed Joyce Park as the leader in shelter rentals.

It's been an extremely productive two years, and we've accomplished a lot, but there is still a long way to go.

For 2017, I am going to put some emphasis on the playgrounds around the city. Many of them are old and outdated, and we need to bring all of those—as much as 90 percent of our playgrounds—up to modern safety standards.

While we do this, we will continue to look at existing playgrounds to make sure there is proper safety, including fall protection, and move toward bringing all the playgrounds up to ADA compliance.

We will also begin an initiative to enhance the park and ball fields at the Booker T. Washington Community Center. We will be adding a new sprayground there, bringing the total to six spraygrounds in strategic locations across the city.

We have a growing list of projects and goals that we would like to accomplish as funds become available.

When we replaced the nets at the tennis courts at Officer Bob Gentry Park this summer—the only public tennis courts in the parks system presently—we noticed how badly the court surface has deteriorated. It needs a total rehabilitation.

We need a neighborhood park on the southwest side of the city and we have great potential in Beeler Park, South G Street and Ridgewood Avenue, near the site of the old Adams Elementary School, but right now, it is just 2.4 acres of grass that we need to keep mowed. We would love to develop that site into a park where children can play and adults socialize.

Indeed, now that we've got the ball rolling, we get a lot of requests for new amenities in your city parks, but it all comes down to having the financial resources to do them.


In order to continue the momentum, we need the assistance and generosity of our Friends of the Parks donors. Because we are a 501 (c) (3) agency, your donation will be tax deductible.

Last year, because of your generosity, we were able to create an endowment fund at the Hamilton Community Foundation. Twenty percent of all Friends of the Parks donations will go into the endowment fund so we will be able to properly maintain our improvements. We feel this is the fiscally responsible thing to do, and thanks to your contributions last year, the endowment fund now contains \$17,947.66.

It is our sincere hope that you will consider a donation to allow us to continue our mission of creating clean, safe, and fun outdoor entertainment for children and adults alike.

Please use the enclosed envelope to make your tax-deductible donation and become a part of the rejuvenation of our city parks system.

Sincerely,



Steve

... A Year of Fun Play



In 2016, we inaugurated the first Conservancy Series, which included performances by the Franz Klaber Big Band, the Hamilton Fairfield Symphony Orchestra, the Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, and (above) Signs of Life: The Essence of Pink Floyd. We saw increased use of Millikin Woods with the introduction of a new sprayground and a nine-hole disc golf course. The Blackbottom 9 chose Joyce Park as their new home field (below right), while people continued using our parks for their family gatherings, birthday parties and barbecues.



Photos by Lisa Scrimizzi Jones, Arvel "Jim" Hall, and Stuart Forsythe for Signs of Life