

You Are Invited to Adopt-A-Park!

By Mike Barhorst

If you enjoy outdoor activity, Sidney is a great place to call home. With 18 neighborhood parks, all of them within ¼ mile walk of most residences, Sidney's park system is impressive. I have taken many first-time visitors on a tour of the community, and they marvel at both the number of parks and the amenities each of them offers.

The park system includes more than 450 acres – including the 226 acre nature preserve known as Tawawa Park. Tawawa, the crown jewel of our parks, provides opportunities for people of all ages to enjoy nature.

Spring, summer, winter or fall, walking, running or biking the roughly 16 miles of dual use and nature trails throughout the parks system is a fabulous way to spend even several hours. In addition, the park system includes fields for organized soccer, baseball, and softball. There are courts for tennis and basketball.

As you might imagine, maintaining this extensive park system is no easy task. That's why in May 2014, upon the recommendation of the Recreation Commission, City Council approved the Adopt-A-Park program.

The city-wide program was designed to encourage groups to "adopt" one of the City's parks. As a part of the program, "adopters" volunteer their time and resources to provide general care and maintenance of these parks. The program engages those in the community that want to give back by helping with maintaining the safety and appearance of the city parks.

Adopt-A-Park is a citywide program that elicits support for the City's vast park system. Individuals or groups interested in adopting a park are welcome to participate in the program. Schools, neighborhood members, faith-based organizations, individuals or families, corporations or community groups are all eligible to adopt-a-park.

While there is no charge to participate, adopters are required to provide their own equipment and supplies. A standardized recognition sign will be provided to post in the park with the adopters name and/or logo. In addition, adopters are recognized for their commitment to the community on the City's Facebook and web pages.

The City currently has four parks that have been adopted. Robert O. New Park has been adopted by the Stone Bridge Neighbors. They are a group in the Plum Ridge Development who want to take care of the park in their neighborhood.

Schultz's Battery Park and Columbia Parks were both adopted by the Sidney First United Methodist Church. Both of these parks are located at the confluence of Main Street, Ohio and Miami Avenues. The parks are just north of the Big Four Bridge, and are considered the entryway into Sidney for visitors from the south.

Ross Casting and Innovation employees have adopted the highly used and highly visible Deam Park. Deam Park, named for former Mayor Emerson Deam, is located between Main and Broadway Avenues on the north end of Sidney.

What exactly does it take to adopt-a-park? Adopters make a commitment to maintain a specific park for a minimum of one year. The agreement automatically renews annually unless the adopter or the City cancels the agreement. Needs of each park vary, but the adopters typically monitor the park weekly, water any new plants (trees, shrubs, flowers) as needed, review trees for die back, disease, and large hanging limbs and edge sidewalks and keep them clear of debris and weeds. They also paint over or remove graffiti (in this case, the Parks Department will provide the needed materials), keep park signs clear and visible (again the Parks Department will provide needed materials), pick up litter regularly and

place in park trash cans or remove it from the site for disposal. Volunteers are also asked to pile downed limbs in parking lots for staff to remove, and rake safety surfaces under swings and slides.

If this sounds like something that would interest you or a group to which you belong, I would encourage you to consider adopting one of Sidney's fine parks. Additional information about the Adopt-a-Park program and the names of parks waiting for adoption is available by contacting Parks and Recreation Director Duane Gaier either by phone (937.498.8105) or email (dgaier@sidneyoh.com).

Those who adopt a park enjoy a tremendous sense of satisfaction. They know that they are not only contributing to the betterment of the community, but personally helping to save tax dollars.