

# You are Invited to Adopt-A-Park!

By Mike Barhorst

I recently wrote a guest editorial on Sidney's tremendous system of parks, and last year, another on Sidney's Adopt-A-Park program. As a result of the Adopt-A-Park piece, a number of groups stepped forward to assist the City. As a result of the success of that article, I want to again encourage community groups to consider adopting one of the remaining parks.

Sidney's park system includes more than 450 acres – including the 226 acre nature preserve known as Tawawa Park. Tawawa, the crown jewel of our park system, provides opportunities for people of all ages to enjoy nature. Sidney's 18 neighborhood parks, all of them within ¼ mile walk of most residences, adds to Sidney's impressive park system.

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 several hours. In addition, the park system includes fields for organized soccer, baseball, and softball. There are also 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 provides the opportunity for those in the community who of their time and talent to make the community a better place.

Adopters are asked 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 seven 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 and Columbia Parks have both been 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 on County Road 25-A and considered the entryway into Sidney for visitors from the south.

Ross Casting and Innovation (RCI) 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.

RCI, in collaboration with Ferguson Construction, replaced the restroom and storage room steel doors (3) on the block building at Deam Park on April 13. The RCI crew returned the following Saturday to paint, pick-up trash and spread new mulch under the play equipment.

Julia Lamb Field has been adopted by the Kiwanis Club and their affiliates, the Aktion Club and the Key Club. Julia Lamb Field is the former site of the football stadium, and is named for Julia Lamb, who donated the property for recreational use. Ms. Lamb helped to organize more than seventy ladies who formed the Ladies Christian Commission Aid Society to purchase supplies for Union soldiers during the Civil War.

The Kiwanis, Aktion, and Key Club members will be working together at Julia Lamb Field on Saturday, April 16. They will be trimming shrubs, picking up trash and mulching trees and shrubs.

Bon Air Park has been adopted by the Buckeye Fermentation Club. The small park is located at the intersection of Bon Air Drive, Port Jefferson Road and Norwood Drive.

Berger Park, located at the south end of Sidney near the Great Miami River, has been adopted by Girl Scout Troop #20690. The park is named for Carl Berger, a philanthropist and industrialist who died in 1949.

The Girl Scouts will be at the park on Saturday, April 30, completing a general clean-up of the park. They will return later to mulch the trees and paint the park's shelter.

The Temperance Masonic Lodge #73 will be working on the second Wednesday evening of each month around the grounds of the Sidney-Shelby County Senior Center. Although not a City park, the Senior Center is maintained by the City. They are scheduled to begin their work on May 11.

While not park adopters, Christian Academy's volleyball team will be cleaning up McMillan Park. Although the date has not yet been set, they will pick up trash, sweep out the shelter, paint the shelter, picnic tables and some of the play equipment. When they finish their work, they plan to offer free popcorn, water and other items to those from the neighborhood who visit the park that evening.

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. Adopters provide their own tools and supplies.

The needs of each park vary. 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.

Adopters 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](mailto: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.