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Spring at the Parks

Well! We certainly cannot complain about the winter we've had, that's for sure! There were many great days to walk the park trails and enjoy the winter beauty. But, spring is just a few days away and presents an opportunity to experience the rebirth of nature at its best. Wildflowers will be popping up and trees will be budding, both ready to explode in a painter's palette of color. Shed the winter coats for lighter layers and check the tread on your walking shoes to begin your exploration.

Begin by visiting our website, ashlandcountyparks.com for a complete listing and description of parks, park maps, and upcoming events. Make the decision to visit a different park each week. Map out your journey. Sixteen parks over sixteen weeks breaks the adventure down into bite size accomplishments. Plan to spend a few hours at each park and take a close up look at the diversity each has to offer, from plants and flowers to insects and animals. Make it a family affair. This is a hands-on learning environment, fun for children of all ages. Also, the parks are pet friendly. We simply ask that you clean up after your pet.

If you live in Ashland, begin at a park near to home such as Freer Field, Audubon Wetlands, or the Fire Nature Cabin. Each of these beautiful parks offer a unique experience. Freer Field has paved trails making it more accessible for those who may be mobility challenged.

Perhaps you are interested in accepting the Walk for Wellness Challenge sponsored in part by Kingston of Ashland. These are monthly walks to get you out and in shape. Benefits of walking include lowering the rate of weight gain, staves off dips in energy, lifts your spirits, strengthens memory, protects you from heart disease and may decrease your risk of some cancers. Attend all the sessions and get your name entered in a drawing for a fit bit! Walk locations and times are: Saturday April 16, 2:00 p.m. at Freer Field (a little under one mile), Saturday, May 21, 2:00 p.m. at Byers Woods (about 2 miles), Saturday, June 18, 10:00 a.m. at Audubon Wetlands (2.4 miles), Saturday, July 16, 10:00 a.m. at

Sandusky Hollow (1.4 miles), Saturday, August 20, 10:00 a.m. at Hurdle Water Fowl (about 1 mile), and Saturday, September 17, 2:00 p.m. at Pine Hill Crall Woods (about 1 ½ miles). Maps of the trail will be available at each walk and participants will walk as a group. Directions to the county parks may be found at: www.ashlandcountyparks.com. If you are unable to attend one of the walks you can join Krissy Hickey for Tai Chi in the park. Tai Chi will be offered on Saturday, June 25, 10:00 a.m. at Freer Field and on Saturday, September 10, 10:00 a.m. at Freer Field. Tai Chi has been called a “moving meditation” that originated in ancient China. Not only has it been proven via scientific study to increase flexibility, muscular strength and fitness, it also has many other advantages. Tai Chi is practiced in most every corner of the world. It is one of the most popular exercises today with more than 300 million participants. In addition to all the benefits, you may make a new friend or two along the way!

Spring also presents the park’s annual spring turkey lottery for the current hunting season. Parks included in this year’s lottery are Black Fork Bottoms, Cooke Family Park, Cool Springs, Esbenshade Wetlands, Gilliom-Cherp, and Sprinkle’s Serenity. This year’s lottery will be held on Saturday, April 9 at 3:00 p.m. at the Ashland County Conservation League, 1930 County Road 1035. This will be in conjunction with the Conservation League’s annual fish fry. For a \$10.00 fee, you can put your name in the lottery. Winning lottery hunters will be able to pick the park and day they want to hunt and will be allowed one hunting partner each day. You must be present at the lottery to secure your hunting dates. There will be a Youth Only lottery drawing, also. This will be held at no charge. If you are the parent or guardian of a youth that is unable to attend the lottery, the parent or guardian may enter the youth in the youth lottery ONLY. The parent or guardian needs to bring proof of youth’s hunting license (hunting license or copy). No exceptions. If the youth wants to be entered in the general lottery, they must be present. Any questions concerning the lottery, please contact Tim McMillen at 567-215-3548 or e-mail at tmcmillen@zoominternet.net.

If you want to hear first-hand how the park operates, attend one of the park meetings. The next meeting is on Monday, March 7, 6:30 p.m. at Trinity Lutheran Church, 147 W. Walnut Street in rooms A & B. You will meet many of the park manager and commissioners. The Friends of the Ashland County Parks meet on the third Monday of each month at the same location. Their meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. The Friends of the ACPD offer memberships at different levels. In addition, your membership offers discounts at several Ashland businesses. For more information regarding membership, contact Kim Calhoon by e-mail at kimcal@zoominternet.net or go to the park website for a membership description and application.

The parks are free to enjoy, dawn to dusk, seven days a week. Parks are taken care of solely by volunteers, generous men and women giving their time and efforts making these a safe and worthwhile destination for you and your families.

Please do your part by picking up after your pets and taking your trash with you when you leave.

With sixteen parks, we are always in need of more volunteers. If you want more information about being a volunteer, contact us, parks@ashlandcounty.org or any of the park managers or commissioners listed at our website www.ashlandcountyparks.com. All ages are welcome, individual or groups, and all ability levels. There is something for everyone.

Looking forward to seeing you at our parks!