

John Storch – Sprinkle’s Serenity Park Manager
Chuck Manders – Hurdle Waterfowl Park Manager

Welcome to the first in a series of personal profiles highlighting our individual park managers. These men and women come from many backgrounds; have established their homes and raised families in our area; some are retired; some maintain active employment; but all have a common denominator, love of the outdoors and maintaining it for future generations.

To begin, it should be stated that these individuals are all volunteers. Volunteers are the heart of the Park District and provide the labor necessary to maintain the parks and put on the programs. The definition of a volunteer, according to Webster’s College Dictionary is:
Vol-un-teer noun

1. A person who performs a service willingly and without pay

That being said, you may ask what would prompt an individual to give of their free time? Time they could be spending pursuing hobbies, travel, or simply relaxing in the comfort of their home.

The easiest way to explain that is to introduce you to some of our Ashland County Parks’ volunteer managers.

John Storch is a Sullivan native, retired in 2005, after serving 24 years in the United States navy as a specialist in battle group air defense. An outdoorsman by nature, his association with a local conservation group led to his involvement with the park district. A long time friend and member of the conservation group convinced him that his knowledge and talents could be utilized in a proactive approach to land conservation in the area. He is presently park manager for Sprinkle’s Serenity, located on Township Road 581 in Sullivan Township. Established in 2013, this 103 acre park contains 15 acres of woods, an abandoned apple orchard, and grasslands. Sixty acres of former cropland has been naturalized and a 22-acre marsh created. With grants obtained through wildlife services, 125 wood duck boxes and 25 blue bird houses have been built and installed. John began his time with the parks developing another Ashland County Park, Hurdle Waterfowl Park established in 2010, also located on Township Road 581. At this 66-acre park, he cleared overgrown brush, cut and groomed two miles of walking trails through the woods, cleared downed trees, and was an integral part in designing a 19-acre wetlands and shallow pond complex to attract waterfowl. John used his personal equipment to perform all the necessary tasks maintaining the parks. However, he was instrumental in obtaining a grant to purchase a tractor for use at Hurdle and Sprinkle. John’s goal at Sprinkle’s Serenity is to make a wildlife habitat that is “people accessible”.

Now, our park managers are not super human. It is a huge undertaking to manage one park, let alone two. As John had been introduced to our park system by a friend, he brought his friend and neighbor, Chuck Manders, on board. Chuck volunteered many hours helping John at both parks. Together, they opened the orchard, installed tile for overflow, removed invasive brush, planted trees, built and installed birdhouses and duck boxes, developed the parking lots, and installed guard rails.

Chuck, originally a Huron County resident for 35 years, has lived in Sullivan the past five years. He retired in 1996 from Rockwell-Boeing and was a self-employed machinist for 26 years. Through his friendship with John, Chuck became active in the conservation group and the park district. Chuck's goal is to maintain and keep Hurdle Waterfowl Park people and dog friendly. Long term, he simply wants the park to be a place where people can come to fish and enjoy walking. To accomplish this, he finds that one tractor cannot do everything needed. Very often, Chuck finds it necessary to bring his own equipment in to get the job done. Equipment such as a bush hog, post hole digger, backhoe, and box scraper. Through the transition of the parks, Chuck has taken on the responsibility of park manager at Hurdle Waterfowl Park.

Each of these men will volunteer at other Ashland County Parks when a group effort is required to get the job done. With 16 parks, there is always something that to do.

Currently the Park District is funded totally through donations, grants, endowments, and fundraisers. If you wish to become a volunteer and help with park maintenance or programming, please consider becoming a member of the Friends of the Ashland County Park District, or just show up at a Park Board meeting which is generally held on the first Monday of the month. More information can be found at our website: www.ashlandcountyparks.com.



John Storch

Chuck Manders

Written by Karen Leonetti for the Ashland Times Gazette