



green SPACE

Spring 2018
Issue 1 of 2

the bi-annual newsletter of the Ottawa County Parks Foundation

IDEMA EXPLORERS TRAIL

We are pleased to announce a landmark \$2 million gift from the Bill and Bea Idema Foundation for the Grand River Greenway Campaign! In recognition for this incredible gift, the central feature of the Greenway—the trail completing a connection from Grand Rapids to Grand Haven—will be named in honor of Bill and Bea Idema.

Two major gifts totaling \$860,000 from the Wege and Frey Foundations, \$50,000 granted from The Consumers Energy Foundation, and \$10,000 granted by the Hudsonville-Jenison Community Foundation further boosted our fundraising efforts for the greenway.

In total, the Grand River Greenway campaign has raised \$5.5 million of the \$7.2 million needed for its completion.



The Idema Explorers Trail along the river at Grand Ravines Park
Photo by Lee Koets

NEW BOARD MEMBER

This year we welcome Pete Esser to the Ottawa County Foundation Board of Directors. Pete is the former publisher of the Holland Sentinel, retiring in 2014 after 38 years working for newspapers and media outlets throughout the midwest. Pete and his wife, Kathy, live in Park Township and have four grown children and three grandchildren. Pete has volunteered with Ottawa County Parks since retiring along with serving in several other volunteer roles in the community.

invest in parks

The Ottawa County Parks Foundation will be in the news throughout the spring and summer - keep an eye out for us and please share the stories! The focus is to help raise awareness for the work we do and its importance to the community. The series *Invest in Parks* will be featured in local newspapers, online, and on social media.

stories from the greenway

Board member and local historian Marjorie Viveen will be presenting stories from the Grand River Greenway throughout 2018.

Old Times, Places, and Faces along the Grand River Greenway

Immerse yourself in local history by joining us for this free series at the Nature Education Center at Hemlock Crossing County Park, 8115 West Olive Road, West Olive, 49460.

April 21
July 14
October 13
10:00 am

get involved

- **Sign up for a parks program!** These low-cost and often free programs will help you learn about the natural features and wildlife in Ottawa County. Programs for adults and children: miOttawa.org/OCPEvents
- **Summer camps for kids!** Help the children in your life become better acquainted with the outdoors by signing them up for a summer camp: miOttawa.org/OCPEvents
- **Become a volunteer!** No matter your skill set, there's a way for you to get involved: bit.ly/ocparks-volunteer



signs of spring

We encourage you to explore the outdoors all year long, but spring is a particularly special time in our parks.

Here are some sure signs of spring to look (and listen) for as you enjoy the parks on your own or with your family. *This is a great way to engage children on a walk!*



Spring beauty is a woodland wildflower that grows in late March to April.

Look for spring beauty at Hager Park, Grose Park, & Tunnel Park.

Photo by Mike Lozon

Skunk cabbage

is the earliest sign of spring. Creating its own heat, it can grow in temperatures below freezing. Look for these weird wildflowers at Pigeon Creek, Grand Ravines, and Hemlock Crossing in February in wetland areas.



Bloodroot blooms

in late March in woodlands. There was a small patch found growing in Eastmanville Bayou in an area where parks volunteers have been pulling garlic mustard for multiple years! You'll also find it at Hager Park, Grose Park, and Tunnel Park.



Sandhill cranes

are tall and majestic and can be spotted in wetland and marsh areas at Grand Ravines and Grand River Park, Eastmanville Farm, Connor Bayou, and Upper Macatawa Natural Area.



Spring peepers & wood frogs sing in the spring. Wood frogs are larger and easier to spot. Port Sheldon Natural Area, Upper Macatawa Natural Area, Connor Bayou, Hemlock Crossing, and Crockery Creek are great places for herping.



We need your support

celebrate with us

Our spring breakfast events are coming up! Support the Parks Foundation by becoming a table host or event sponsor. Sponsors help cover the cost of necessary fundraising events and outreach.

Contact us to learn more about hosting a table or sponsoring an event: parksfoundation@miottawa.org

make a gift

We accept gifts of all sizes! Mail a check to the address below, or visit our website to make a safe and secure online donation.

employer match

When you make a gift, don't forget to check to see if your employer will match it. It's an easy way to maximize the impact of your donation!

What's herping?

Herping is the act of searching for amphibians or reptiles. The term, comes from the Greek root herpet-, meaning "creeping".

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