



FRIENDS OF WOOSTER MEMORIAL PARK

P.O. Box 1776, Wooster, OH 44691
www.friendsofwmp.com

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2014



A runner on the farm field trail during a Wooster Unplugged 5k Cross Country race. Photo by Jason Burgett

GREAT YEAR OF FUN & PROGRESS AT THE PARK

This was a great year of both work and play in Wooster Memorial Park (WMP). Friends of Wooster Memorial Park (FWMP) members and volunteers, in partnership with the City, did an outstanding job of keeping the park in shape. And generous donations of time and resources from the community resulted in many improvements in WMP and the new Kenwood Parcel.

FWMP offered several public events throughout the season for the enjoyment and education of park users, with a well-attended finale

geology hike led by FWMP member and College of Wooster Geology Professor Greg Wiles. Also back were several very popular trail running events sponsored by Vertical Runner of Wooster and the Wooster Sweaters Running Club. Please read on for more highlights from 2014.

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2015

Your continued membership is essential to the success of FWMP. Whether you are an active member or quiet supporter, your renewal will help care for WMP, and shows that you value this wonderful natural area. *Included is a renewal form for your convenience* (or you can download a renewal form at www.friendsofwmp.com). As you read on, you will learn about some of the ways FWMP worked in 2014 to benefit the park.

* TRAILS ON THE KENWOOD PARCEL NOW MARKED

The first two trails on the Kenwood Parcel are now marked. The Hartman and Kenwood Trails connect with WMP's Trillium and Outer Trails, respectively, and add some nice hiking alternatives. FWMP volunteers cleared the trails earlier this year, and trail signs were installed during a COW workday in August. Some remaining signs and trail blazes were installed in October. Thank you to the City of Wooster for donating the trail signs. *Note: The sections of the Kenwood Trail that follow the field border are not signed.*



Draft of a future WMP trail map showing the Kenwood Parcel Trails. Map by Jay Mosley.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Cathy Herms, 330-465-2725 ♦ Vice President: Shelley Schrier, 330-262-9307

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*** OCTOBER’S GEOLOGY WALK IN WMP A BIG HIT**

Our season finale event was a Geology Walk on October 12 led by FWMP member and COW Geology Professor Greg Wiles. An enthusiastic crowd of 44 attended, with ages ranging from 4 to 80 years old. In this 3-hour walk, Greg led participants across the Rathburn Run valley to the Little Killbuck Creek drainage on the north side of the park. Participants saw the dramatic erosion of the Little Killbuck, which is similar to that of Rathburn Run. But Greg pointed out that, because the Little Killbuck is “managed” and not allowed to meander freely across the valley, recent erosion in some areas has been greater than in the Run.



Geology walkers cross the Run. Photo by Edith Swank.



Greg Wiles explains about increased erosion in the Little Killbuck Creek drainage. Photo by Edith Swank.

In general, geological evidence indicates that erosion by both streams is greater now than over the last several millennia, and may be attributed to increased precipitation events, as well as changing land use. Participants also discussed the presence of several oil and gas wells that have been drilled in the park and what they tell us about the geology. Most of these wells were “dry” and have been plugged.

*** FWMP VOLUNTEERS GO NUTTY TO HELP RESTORE TREES ON THE KENWOOD PARCEL**



Kris Hawke, Harry Hoitink, and Harry’s dog Kobe. Photo by Gary Bickel.

A priority for the Kenwood Parcel is to restore much of its previously-farmed fields to native forest. Typically, Mother Nature and squirrels take care of this, but the process is unpredictable and can take many years, especially over a large area. Two FWMP members, Harry Hoitink and Kris Hawke, got an idea that if they mimicked WMP’s acorn-caching squirrels, but on a grand scale across several acres, they could help the forest appear much quicker.

In late summer, Harry and Kris began the painstaking process of collecting tree seeds in the park, including oak acorns and hickory nuts, and they kept collecting through the fall as seeds of the different tree species matured. They had some help from FWMP volunteers, Jeff and Lisa Aultz and their kids, who collected acorns from under white oak trees in their neighborhood on Buchholz Drive, and Tim

Zuercher, who collected and cleaned Ohio buckeyes from a tree on Silver Road. Once collected, all the seeds had to be kept cool and moist to stay healthy.

In early November, Harry and Kris started planting, using a hand-operated gadget they borrowed from the Wayne County Soil & Water Conservation District. In all, the “nutty” duo planted around 3170 acorns (2500 red oak, 500 white oak, 150 black oak, 20 pin oak), 100 Ohio buckeye nuts, and 215 hickory nuts (200 shellbark, 15 mockernut) over 11 acres on the Kenwood Parcel. Many volunteer hours went into this amazing project, including 54 hours spent by Harry and Kris collecting, cleaning and planting the acorns and nuts! We are extremely appreciative for everyone who helped, and can’t wait to see what grows next year.



A mixture of white, red, black and swamp oak acorns collected by Harry Hoitink in 2014.

*** 2014 RUNNING EVENTS BENEFIT FWMP & WMP**



2014 Kids Running Camp. Photo by Brian Polen.

WMP has become an increasingly popular destination for trail running. Local runners have used the park informally for years. But with rising public interest in combining physical fitness and the outdoors, Jason Burgett (Wooster Sweaters Running Club) and Brian Polen (Vertical Runner of Wooster) had a hunch that WMP would be a great spot for organized running. The first trail running event, dubbed the Wooster Unplugged 5k Cross Country Series, was launched by Wooster Sweaters in 2012, and more events were soon to follow in 2013 by Vertical Runner.

The 2014 Unplugged 5k Series was the best in its three-year history. The four June races averaged 50 runners each, and featured team competition and lots of prizes. Vertical Runner had over 100 runners for their second Stamp Out ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) run in June and the 15k Trail Monster Mini Series run in July. And back was the popular Kids Running Camp for 5 to 12 year olds. Seventy seven of the 80 Camp kids ran in Buehler’s Heart & Sole Walk/Run in August.



Runners line up for the 2014 Wooster Unplugged 5k Series at WMP. Photo by Jason Burgett.

The running events are a benefit for WMP, FWMP and the community. They help increase awareness about the park, with no negative impact on its natural resources. And Jason and Brian, with the help of event supporters, were able to raise \$860 and \$1,000, respectively, in 2014 for FWMP to aid with trail maintenance and infrastructure projects. Thank you to Jason and Brian, and look for more running fun in 2015!



Left: A runner heads through the WMP farm field during a 2014 Wooster Unplugged 5k race. Photo by Jason Burgett.



Right: They’re off! The starting line of the 2nd Annual Stamp Out ALS race. Photo by Brian Polen.

*** MIXED PRAIRIE TO BE SEEDED ON THE KENWOOD THIS WINTER**



A young girl gazes at the Education Area prairie during the Fall Prairie Walk. Prior to the 1700's, Ohio supported ~300 prairie openings that covered over 1,000 square miles. Photo by Edith Swank.

Another key goal for the Kenwood Parcel is to convert 7 acres of the previously-farmed corn field to an Ohio mixed prairie. This native grass and wildflower habitat provides valuable nesting and food resources for insects, birds, mammals and other creatures, and provides humans with a spectacular visual display in summer through fall. Several acres of prairie were established in WMP's Education Area by Don Beam a few years ago, and it attracts visitors of all species. It's true that, *if you plant it, they will come.*

Ohio Prairie Nursery in Hiram, Ohio will plant the prairie seed mix this winter. Plant species of short and medium height were selected for the mix, and include grasses such as little bluestem, nodding wild rye and side-oats grama, and wildflowers such as butterfly weed, grey-headed coneflower, lance-leaf coreopsis, rattlesnake master, New England aster and Virginia mountain mint.

FWMP received funding through a grant from the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)

program. It will take about 3 years for the prairie plants to establish and come into their own, and the successional process will be exciting to watch.

*** COW STUDENTS USE WMP FOR EDUCATION & RESEARCH**

The park is an important educational and natural resource for the students and teachers at the College of Wooster. Board member and COW Geology Professor Greg Wiles brought two of his classes out to WMP this spring. His Geomorphology class investigated the role of snow and ice in stream processes in Rathburn Run, and his Environmental Geology class looked at the geologic evolution of the gorge and Run.



COW Environmental Geology class. Photo by Greg Wiles.



COW students measure goldenrod galls. Photo by Laura Sirot.

Two biology professors at COW also used the park this year. Lyn Loveless and her Conservation Biology class took an instructional hike on the new Kenwood Parcel with FWMP's John Abt this spring. And this fall, Laura Sirot and her Biology Lab students collected and measured goldenrod galls in WMP's old farm field as part of a

community ecology lab. COW senior, Liz Ross, who is conducting her Independent Study project with Dr. Sirot, set up experimental bird feeders at the park in October and November as part of a project to explore the possible differences in boldness and aggression between urban and rural chickadee flocks.



Chickadee study feeder in WMP. Photo by Liz Ross.

*** HE LENDS A HAND, AS WELL AS HIS EYES, EARS & EXPRESSIONS, TO THE PARK**

Thank you to Gary Bickel for his 2014 efforts to control the pesky burdock and multiflora rose growing along trails in the park. Gary worked on four different days from mid-May until August to control the invasive plants. He has essentially taken this responsibility over from Harry Hoitink, so that Harry can focus on tree seed plantings for the Kenwood Parcel (above). Gary also opens and closes the gate to the Education Area before and after each weekend, providing access to additional parking for WMP visitors.



Gary Bickel out in the park.
Photo by Harry Hoitink.

But Gary is also an important “lookout” for WMP. He and his dogs walk the park virtually every day, sometimes a couple times a day. And if something needs attention, Gary lets someone know right away...usually with his fantastic sense of humor in high gear.

*** OCTOBER TRAIL WORK ON THE KENWOOD PARCEL**



Paint donated by Sherwin Williams. Photo by Shelley Schrier,

On October 11, volunteers spent a busy morning installing two remaining sign posts on the Kenwood Trail. Rocky soil and unsure footing made the work a little adventurous, but they persevered. Volunteers returned in the afternoon to paint blazes on both the Hartman and Kenwood Trails. Thank you to volunteers Rob Brown, Bob Haugh, Jay Mosley and Shelley Schrier for their help. Also, a huge thank you to Assistant Manager Cheryl Zajackowski of the Sherwin Williams store on Burbank Road in Wooster. Cheryl secured a store donation of 2 gallons of paint and provided additional paint at a considerable discount for the trail blazes.

OTHER 2014 HIGHLIGHTS

- **14TH ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING OF FWMP** – The 14th Annual Meeting of FWMP was held at the Freedlander Park Chalet on Wednesday, April 9, 2014. FWMP members elected the 2014-15 Board of Directors, and were treated to a fascinating talk, “Is Wooster Memorial Park eroding at greater rates now than it has over the past several thousand years?”, by guest speaker, Greg Wiles, Professor of Geology at the College of Wooster.
- **SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC PROGRAMS** – The Education & Public Awareness Committee (Edith Swank and Marty Griffith, co-chairs) offered many exciting public programs, including a frog and toad walk (April), a spring wildflower walk (May), a hike on the new Kenwood Parcel (June), a walk *in* Rathburn Run (July), a prairie flower walk (August) and a geology hike (October). Also, two ‘Members & Friends Only’ events were hosted in the Education Area: a moon watch and cookout in June and a Perseid meteor watch in August.
- **BUSY TRAIL MAINTENANCE SEASON** – Some things in WMP never change – trees fall, blazes fade and vegetation overgrows. The Trail Committee (Shelley Schrier and Jay Mosley, co-chairs), in cooperation with Daryl Decker and Andrew Guidetti of Public Properties and FWMP



August prairie walk (E. Swank).



Tree blaze (S. Schrier).

volunteers, accomplished many projects this year, donating over 60 hours to reinstall vandalized sign posts, repaint trail blazes on trees, repair bridges, install trail reinforcements and keep the trails cleared of downed trees and overrun vegetation. Also, thank you to the City for printing more WMP trail maps this season.

- **GREAT PROGRESS AGAINST PESKY PLANTS** – The Plant Committee (Cathy Herms and Fritz Schmitthenner, co-chairs) and their hardy volunteers spent over 15 hours this summer controlling common burdock and multiflora rose along trail edges. During a COW work day in August, FWMP and student crews cleared many fast-growing sprouts of the invasive Northern catalpa tree in the old farm field.



COW students clear catalpa trees (E. Swank).

- **FWMP’S UPGRADED WEBSITE & NEW FACEBOOK PAGE** – Website designer and FWMP member, Jennifer Hugon, put many volunteer hours into redesigning FWMP’s website (www.friendsofwmp.com) this year. And FWMP’s John Abt volunteered to keep the website up-to-date. Also, FWMP now has a basic Facebook page (www.facebook.com/friendswmp), where you can provide comments and view the Dave Taggart photo collection of WMP.

- **PROGRESS ON THE KENWOOD PARCEL’S ENTRANCE & FIELDS** – The Board acquired funds (private, state and federal) and in-kind donations for improvements on the Kenwood Parcel. A *\$10,900 Moving Ohio Forward grant*, obtained by the Plain Township Trustees on behalf of FWMP, paid for the demolition of the dilapidated farmhouse in July, taking the first steps to create an additional WMP parking lot on Silver Road. A *\$28,000 USDA NRCS EQIP grant, along with private donations*, will fund the planting of native prairie seeds on the Parcel’s former 18-acre corn field this winter and the planting of ~8,000 native tree seedlings in April 2015.



Kenwood Parcel farm house being torn down (J. Parker).

- **OUR TRAIL MONITORS** – Throughout the season, FWMP trail monitors John Parker and Marty Griffith kept the City informed about downed trees and trail problems and the map box filled. In addition, FWMP volunteer Gary Bickel opened and closed the Education Area gate each weekend, providing access to additional parking for park users.
- **FINALLY, THE FWMP BOARD OF DIRECTORS IS WORKING...** to keep this organization strong, so that we can continue to work with the City as an advocate for Wooster Memorial Park.



Rathburn Run in winter (E. Swank).

Your membership is important to WMP. PLEASE RENEW.

Thank you, FWMP Board of Directors

IMPROMPTU WINTER HIKES

*When WMP’s landscapes are blanketed with snow, there’s no better time to take a hike! Check your **email for impromptu winter hikes in the park.***