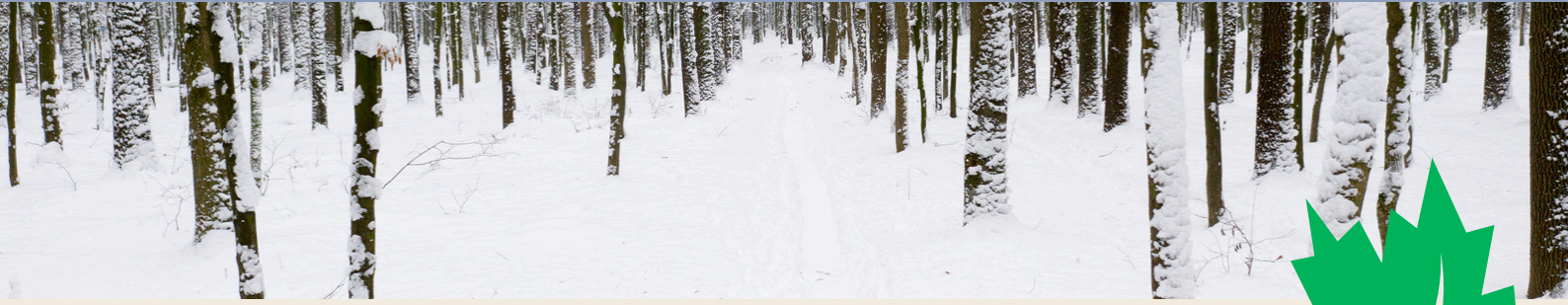




— Winter 2025 / Spring 2026 —

The Pathfinder

A newsletter from Greene County Parks & Trails



From the (new!) Director's Desk

Richard Kharman



Hello, neighbor!

I'm honored and excited to introduce myself as the new Director for Greene County Parks & Trails.

As I write this, it's a beautiful day to reflect on how we become who we are. I'm sure many of you would like to know a little about me. My family moved to western Ohio from the Washington D.C. metro area this past June. I have spent two-thirds of my life in the Parks and Recreation industry. I began my career in the recreation industry as a seasonal staff member in the late 90s, working at an ice rink. In 2005, I decided that a career in the Parks and Recreation field was for me, and I started as an entry-level maintenance worker with a large park district in the region.

I slowly made my way through the maintenance ranks, gradually taking on roles from maintenance worker to Playground Inspector to Park Manager to Senior Manager in Montgomery County, Maryland. With over twenty years dedicated to serving diverse communities and supporting environmental stewardship, my work has consistently centered on helping people enjoy the outdoors. To say it is a huge part of my life would be an understatement.

I am quite passionate about sports and being outdoors. These passions are what drove me into the parks and recreation lifestyle. Being out in nature is good for the soul. I am fortunate to be a steward of parklands, and it is a great honor that I do not take lightly. Whether it's fighting for the conservation of our precious lands or developing spaces for the public to enjoy, serving the public in this manner brings me immense joy. The sight of families using our lands every day brings a lot of pride.

I thrived in my role as Senior Manager for the last seven years. Though I loved everything about Maryland, it was never going to be my final destination. My wife and I always planned to retire in another part of the country. We also wanted a place we could raise our young family, travel, and spend time outdoors. Western Ohio kept drawing our attention, checking all the boxes. We have had numerous people tell us how Ohio was a wonderful place to raise children. The location would get us closer to some family and friends. Additionally, there are many nearby destinations to explore.

These days, I am an avid cyclist and spend most of my time out in nature. We were already eyeing a move to western Ohio, and when a position opened up with Greene County Parks & Trails, I jumped at the opportunity to join such a wonderful park system and community. This feels like where I am meant to be.

I look forward to continuing to grow and build upon programs and amenities for the

people of Greene County and beyond.

Conservation and recreation are two pillars we can build on. Balancing these two won't be easy. However, by recognizing the effects of recreational activities and involving the community in conservation efforts, neighborhoods can guarantee both ecological well-being and ongoing enjoyment of natural areas for generations to come. We'll continue designating parks for various purposes, encouraging responsible visitor conduct such as remaining on designated paths and reducing environmental impacts, and cultivating public stewardship to establish a collective dedication to environmental conservation. This is a role I take seriously and with pride. After all, it all belongs to you!

So, welcome to your backyard! It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood. Won't you be my neighbor?

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It's ParkLights Season!

To learn more about GCP&T, visit www.gcparkstrails.com or give us a call at 937-562-6440



We're Bringing Back History this Christmas!

For generations in Xenia, Christmas didn't truly begin until Santa moved into his little house on the Greene County Courthouse lawn. Starting in the 1950s, families would bundle up and head downtown just to see Santa, tucked inside his house at the foot of the courthouse. Kids waited their turn in wool hats and mittens, eager to climb inside and tell Santa exactly what they hoped to find under the tree. The entire square was wrapped in holiday magic, and a visit to Santa's house became a cherished tradition.

Visit Santa on the Courthouse Lawn!

Two Weekends of Holiday Magic:

12/12 Or 12/19
12/13 12/20

6-8 PM each night!

Then, over the decades, the tradition faded. The little house found a new home, and "remember when Santa was at the courthouse?" became something people said with a nostalgic sigh. But not anymore!

Greene County Parks & Trails is bringing Santa on the Courthouse back!

Jump in the car and bring the kids to downtown Xenia on **December 12th, 13th, 19th, or 20th** to meet Santa, receive a commemorative gift, and make new lifelong memories.

Welcoming New Employees!

We're excited to welcome several new faces to the Greene County Parks & Trails team, including additions to both our Ranger and Maintenance divisions!

Our Park Rangers take on a dynamic and meaningful role; enforcing rules, keeping the peace, investigating incidents, and educating the public. Their work is essential to keeping our parks and trails safe and enjoyable for everyone.

Our Maintenance team members are just as vital, working hard behind the scenes to keep our facilities, trails, and natural spaces looking their best! Their dedication helps ensure that every visitor enjoys a clean, beautiful, and welcoming environment.

We also want to thank park visitors and community members for their patience as we worked to fill these important positions. Your understanding and support this year has meant so much to us.

Next time you see a new (or familiar!) GCP&T employee working hard in our parks, feel free to say hi!



Gearing up for Maple Sugaring

When winter weather hits that magical mix when it's below freezing at night and above freezing during the day, something sweet starts happening in the woods at The Narrows Reserve – the sugar maples wake up, and so do we!

Armed with taps, buckets, tubing, and a lot of enthusiasm, our naturalist team and maple sugaring participants drill small spouts into sugar maples and watch the sap start to drip. It looks like plain water, but it's liquid potential! The real excitement kicks in at the evaporator, where that sap is boiled down for hours. And here's the head-turning part: it takes about 40 gallons of sap to make just ONE gallon of syrup!

Last year, GCP&T produced three gallons of pure maple syrup, which means we collected and processed well over 100 gallons of sap. That's a whole lot of dripping buckets, steaming kettles, and evaporation!

It's more than a tradition—it's an adventure in patience, science, and sticky-fingered reward. Stay tuned on our socials for more to come about the 2026 Maple Sugaring programs!

Interested in joining the Greene County Team?
Visit governmentjobs.com/careers/greeneoh

Wellness Walkers in the News

We're thrilled to share that our Wellness Walkers program was recently featured in the Dayton Daily News! The article highlighted the heart of what makes this group so special—people of all ages and abilities coming together each week to explore local parks, stay active, and build community. From paved paths to wooded trails, every walk offers something new, and participants are encouraged to go at their own pace.

Wellness Walkers is a collaborative effort between the City of Beavercreek, the City of Fairborn, the Beavercreek Wetlands Association, and Greene County Parks & Trails. This partnership allows the walks to rotate across multiple communities and park sites, keeping the experience fresh and accessible year-round.

Want to join in? Weekly walk locations and difficulty ratings are posted on the Greene County Parks & Trails website and shared through our social media pages. It's free, fun, and a great way to stay moving. Come walk with us!

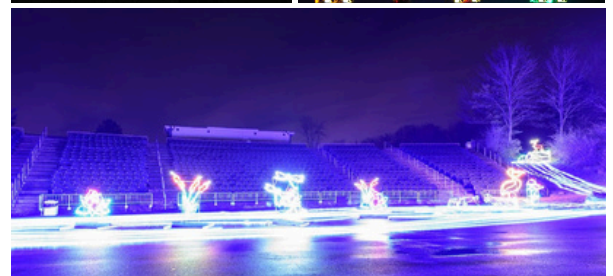
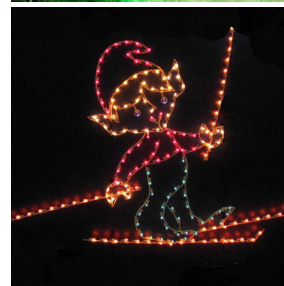


It's Season! AT CAESAR FORD

ParkLights at Caesar Ford Park is back for the entire month of December, lighting up the season from **December 1 through December 31. Every evening from 6 to 9 p.m.**, visitors can drive through a glowing landscape of holiday scenes that wind through the park's grounds. Families, friends, and anyone looking for a festive outing can enjoy the experience from the comfort of their vehicles, making it an easy and accessible tradition for all ages.

This year brings something extra special. Thanks to the generous donations collected in previous seasons, Greene County Parks & Trails is adding more than 20 brand-new characters and light displays to the route. These new features will blend seamlessly with the beloved scenes returning from previous years, creating an even more memorable experience!

Admission is free, and no registration is required, though donations are welcomed to help the event continue to grow. Visitors are encouraged to take their time, enjoy the lights, and make ParkLights a part of their holiday tradition.



Welcome to your Backyard!

To learn more about GCP&T, volunteer opportunities, or programs, visit www.gcparkstrails.com or give us a call at 937-562-6440