

# Tuscarawas County Park Department

## 2007 YEAR IN REVIEW

- **Leadership Changes**

Al Fearon took over as Chairman in May 2007. Dick Lebold and Todd Little were elected as Co-Vice Chairman, and Belle Everett was elected as Secretary. Jon Elsasser was the previous Chairman.

- **Trenton Heritage Park Declared a Public Park/Rules Set**

The Tuscarawas County Commissioners declared the Trenton Heritage Park a public park and approved the rules governing the use of the park on May 31, 2007. A permit is required for access. Permits will only be granted to utilize the area in accordance with the mission which is to conserve the natural and historic features of this area and to promote education, preservation and conservation. There is a verbal agreement with Matt Durbin to maintain and monitor this area. The Warwick Township Trustees have erected a gate to control access. Thanks to the collaboration of the Township, Matt and the Commissioners this area is now a safe place for classrooms to utilize in accordance to the mission.

- **Norma Johnson Center**

The word is getting out! The Norma Johnson Center (NJC) is the place to visit and make a part of your weekly routine. The trails give options of different terrains and scenery to explore while hiking at the NJC. If you want a hilly work out the preservation and Johnson Loop offers nice size hills to get your cardio workout. The Conservation loop is a great place to slow down and explore all of nature's offerings. Don't forget to bring along your family dog to enjoy the peace and solitude of the Norma Johnson Center.

Signs of wildlife can be found throughout the centers boundaries. This fall Pheasants Forever released 2 male and 2 female pheasants on the Conservation side. We are hoping the birds find habitat that will invite them to stay so guests can hear or see them along the trails. Thanks to the Roudebush family we have an up to date report of the comings and goings of our bluebird population this summer. Keep a look out for the resident hawks, barn owl, fox, turkeys and deer.

2007 was a great year for the Norma Johnson Center. Not only did we make huge strides with our \$82,000 restroom project campaign by raising \$ 61,273.78. We are hoping to break ground in the spring of 2008. We have also increased the number of visitors to our center as well. Over the past year around 7,000 visitors have been recorded utilizing the summer offerings, trails, special events and staff led programs on and off site. This year we hosted a fair booth and were able to talk to Tuscarawas County residents about the NJC and its strengths in the community. Monthly sign in sheets have shown several individuals passing through the area and stopping at the NJC to stretch their legs. Staff members have also observed several visitors that may not have signed it. Regardless, we

are proud to have touched so many lives with our wonderful resource in Tuscarawas County.

- **Canal Lands**

The Canal Lands Committee made good progress in 2007. Plans have been drawn up and a contractor has been hired to construct a boardwalk around the large railroad abutment on the Northern section of the trail between Zoar and Bolivar. Construction is to begin in the Spring of 2008 as weather permits. The Canal Lands Committee is also working on some additional trail connections into Zoar and to State Route #800. There has also been considerable discussion regarding some additional loop trails for educational and recreational purposes. During late Canal Lands Committee members worked on a project which will facilitate the connection to State Route #800 as well as provide a place for an additional parking/trailhead area on that road. Once the connection has been made to State Route #800 the Canal Lands Committee intends to address improvements to the Southern section of the trail from Zoar to State Route #800.

- **I-77 Bridge**

The multi-purpose trail system in Tuscarawas County has reached a new milestone with the dedication of the Towpath Trail Bridge over I-77 near Bolivar in October, 2007. This is an important connection from Bolivar to Zoar on the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail and will help trail system visitors discover the many opportunities that are available in the county. This trail is open for hikers, bicyclist, and for equestrian use.

- **Zoarville Station Bridge**

In September, 2007, the historic Zoarville Station Bridge was dedicated. This bridge was refurbished to its original condition through the efforts of Camp Tuscazoar Foundation, ODOT, and the Commissioners.

- **Buckhorn Creek**

The southern portion of the trail just north of Newcomerstown is the site of a "Clean Ohio" stream bank restoration project. With funding from "Clean Ohio", the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition is overseeing this project with the help of a local contractor, Tuscon, Inc., and local volunteers. Volunteers are helping to move the trail, plant native plantings to help prevent erosion, install benches and picnic tables, and provide trail maintenance. In March several days are planned for planting over 2500 tree stakes. This project will help stabilize the stream bank next to the trail and prevent erosion. The Buckhorn Creek Trail is an 8 mile trail running from Newcomerstown to Stone Creek. Anyone interested in volunteering can contact the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition.

- **Panhandle Passage**

A steering committee has organized and set goals for the Panhandle Passage area (formerly known as the Stillwater Creek Project). As a part of the Trail & Green Space Master Plan, this project was a bridge over the Stillwater Creek that would connect Dennison to Uhrichsville. However, through the efforts of this

committee the project is slated to encompass many other activities and opportunities for that area.

- **Port Washington Scenic Road**

A group of volunteers have raised funds to erect signs along the Historic Port Washington Road that is known as Ohio's First State Road. This road came into use during the Canal Era and was a quicker and easier route for farmers and others to get their products to market. The road is believed to be an old buffalo trail at one time. These volunteers would like to have a brochure created so visitors can travel back in time.

- **Bolivar Canal Park**

The Bolivar Canal Street Park is a one and one quarter area piece of land in the downtown section of Bolivar and is along side I-77 south bound. The North parking lot is paved and accommodates 30 cars and the underground wiring and the parking lot lights are completed. The park has a small building in the North section of the park named the "Santa Claus House". This building has had the interior remolded, a new roof was installed and a large treated wood deck with a handicap ramp was added. The electric panel in the building has been up-graded and serves as the electrical center for the park. The final design plan is in the progress of being completed. The park when complete will have a quarter mile walking path, benches, underground lighting, South parking lot, a miniature canal with gazebo, completely landscaped, and there will be direct access to the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail.

- **Dover Canal Park**

Dover's Canal Park project consists of the area extending east along the canal corridor to past the point where Poplar Street intersects Front Street, and plans call for the removal of the remainder of nuisance growth and scrub trees on the bank and along the river; currently about 70% of the clearing has been done with volunteer and donated labor; once the clearing is finished plans are to plant attractive varieties of trees that one could normally see along a riverbank in Ohio and to grade and plant grass on the riverbank side, then to plant hardy attractive groundcovers on the bank side. The main purpose of the lower area is to provide a recreational walking path easily accessible to local residents that would eventually become contiguous with the Ohio & Erie Towpath Trail; generally the area will become a well groomed, attractive area suitable for walking, picnicking and peaceful recreation activities. The upper area near Front Street and the historic marker will consist of a recreation of Dover's original toll booth with historically informative signs in the windows, a decorative fence and eventually a handicapped accessible ramp leading to the lower level; thus the two access points would be a trailhead at the former Bernhardt Brewery property (a canal era building and property that the City is in the process of acquiring) and off of the Front Street area; once the new bridge is constructed at Tuscarawas Avenue measures can be taken to provide a cultured stone stair from the path level to sidewalk level near the bridge, to provide additional access.

- **Southern Gateway Village**

During 2007, a Committee was formed, with representatives from Tuscarawas County government, City of Dover and City of New Philadelphia, to examine the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail connection from State Route 800 through Dover and New Philadelphia to the southern terminus at the Southern Gateway Village. This Steering Committee will examine potential routes and linkages to connect the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail in Tuscarawas County.

- **Strasburg Trail Network**

The Village of Strasburg has developed walking trails within their park. We will schedule a meeting with Council to see if they are interested in expanding the trail system in accordance to the Trail & Green Space Master Plan.

- **Map of project locations**

A map that shows the location of the early action projects was developed.

- **Committee Changes**

October – Dick Lebold resigned from the committee to focus more time to the Bolivar Canal Park. December – Ted Gerber was appointed to complete Dick Lebold's term on the committee.