



# Handbook for Volunteers





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**Stark Parks Volunteer Program**

***Building a Community of Park Stewards Dedicated to Promoting Passive Recreation, Conservation, Education, and Nature Appreciation***

**Welcome!**

Thank you for volunteering in the Stark County Park District, also known as Stark Parks. Volunteers are a crucial component in many areas of park operation. Our volunteers maintain our trail systems, rehabilitate wildlife, and help protect important natural, historic, and cultural resources. You are indispensable to educating and engaging our local community, and increasing support for the parks.

We are committed to helping you be successful and effective in your volunteer duties, so don't hesitate to ask questions. Please consult with the Volunteer Coordinator if you have suggestions for improvement of the program or have any questions. We consider every volunteer an essential member of our Stark Parks family.

This handbook is designed as a guide and reference to Stark Parks and our Volunteer Program. Please read it carefully before you begin volunteering and ask any questions that you might have – refer to it as needed. A handbook is a living document; there will occasionally be changes to the information provided. We will do our best to provide updates, but please check periodically with the Volunteer Coordinator for revisions.

We sincerely hope you will have a rewarding experience as a Stark Parks volunteer and deeply appreciate your contribution to our county and local community.

Respectfully,

Daniel J. Moeglin, P.E.  
Executive Director, Stark County Park District



## The Stark County Park District General History

The Stark County Park District (Stark Parks) was formed by the County Commissioners in 1967. At that time the District was given responsibility for two parks totaling 31.5 acres: Faircrest Park in Canton Township and Lock 4 Park in Lawrence Township.

### Stark Parks has continued to expand and grow!

- 1977, Sippo Lake and 100 surrounding acres were purchased with a Community Development Block Grant creating **Sippo Lake Park and Marina**.
- 1980 – 1987, the **Sanders Wildlife Center** opened and started the parks education/wildlife rehabilitation program, with a donation from the J. S. Sanders Wildlife and Conservation Foundation. During this time period, the Park District also added **Devonshire Park, Petros Lake Park**, and 5 miles of the **Ohio and Erie Canal**, totaling nearly 400 acres.
- 1988, the support continued to grow for a county wide park system that was enriching the community by providing areas for families, fishing, boating, green space preservation, and an appreciation for wildlife, with the passing of a 0.2 mil. property tax levy.
- 1989 – 1996, the Park District saw an era of growth based on public-private partnerships that were fueled by enthusiasm for the development of the Congressionally-designated Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor. The community again supported Stark Parks by passing a property tax levy increase of 0.5 mil in 1997.
- 1997, the community again came together and voters supported an increase in the Park District's levy. This has provided funds needed to match state and local grants
- 2007, the **Exploration Gateway**, a joint partnership of the Stark County Library and the Stark County Park District, opened at Sippo Lake.
- 2012, the community again approved an 8 year levy providing the park much needed funding to continue its mission.
- 2015 – 2016, the Park District took over managing the **Sippo Valley Trail** in Massillon as well as **Quail Hollow Park** in Hartville.
- 2017, **Fry Family Park** opened in Magnolia
- 2018 – 2019, Tam O' Shanter, a former golf course, was purchased using Clean Ohio funds featuring four miles of hiking trails using portions of the cart path.
- Today, Stark Parks offers:
  - 125+ miles of walking/bicycling trails, including 25 miles of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail
  - 15 parks
  - Over 8,000 acres of land
- Stark Parks has presented 800+ educational programs and events for more than 36,000 participants and 30 Distance Learning programs for 1,079 students across the U.S.

Stark Parks continues to acquire land where appropriate and funds allow, expand programming, and enrich the lives of Stark County residents. Stark Parks has been consistently voted "Best Park" or "Best Place to Spend Time with Your Family" in the Best of Stark County Awards, sponsored by the Stark County Convention and Visitors Bureau. The Park District's growth has been honored with awards from the Ohio Parks & Recreation Association, the American Society for Landscape Architects and most recently the Canton Area Chamber of Commerce.





## Stark Parks Mission Statement

**Our Mission:** Stark Parks mission is to preserve, manage, and connect natural areas to serve the community through recreation, conservation and education.

**Our Vision:** Stark Parks will be recognized as an essential community asset.

### Our Values:

1. Integrity/Trust
2. Teamwork
3. Customer Service
4. Environmental Stewardship
5. Work Ethic
6. Respect for Each Other
7. Community Partnerships
8. We have fun!

## You are the Eyes, Ears, and FACE of Stark Parks

*Presented by our Marketing Department*

As volunteers and staff **we all have an unwritten job description:** be an **advocate for Stark Parks**. Some people understand the **importance of a smile and positive attitude** and some just may not realize how much of **an impact they may have**.

### What you do and say DOES matter

You are the face of Stark Parks. You may be the first person someone meets from Stark Parks and you now have the responsibility of making a good first impression. You never know who is paying attention at any given time, so choose your words and actions wisely. Foul and condescending language and actions are not acceptable in any situation.



### When NOT to answer a question

We all want to make park users happy. If approached by someone with a question that you do not know the answer to – **please do not fake it!** Be honest and say you don't know that answer, but will get the information to the right contact for follow up. There is no shame in not knowing and no one wants to be given wrong information. Use the comment forms supplied by the park. If you don't have the forms or anything to write on, have them call into the **main office (330.477.3552)** for the right contact or direct them to the website for contact information.

### How to give us your feedback

Everyone is entitled to his/her opinion – and it doesn't have to be the same as other volunteers or employees of Stark Parks. However, there is a time and place for everything. Speak with the Volunteer Coordinator at an appropriate time if you disagree with something or if you have an idea about how things could be done differently. We can solve problems if we work together and avoid escalating issues.

### Stay positive

It can be frustrating to hear a patron complaint especially when you don't know why it hasn't been solved. Keep in mind there may be a logical reason the situation exists and it's up to all of us to educate users about the park processes. Apologize for the dissatisfaction and take the complaint to the Volunteer Coordinator. **Be a promoter of the benefits of the Park System** and work toward understanding the reasons behind situations so you can give an informed and positive answer next time.

### You are us!

When speaking to park users and other volunteers and employees, remember You are Us! Using the terms "us" and "we" as opposed to "them" and "they" when referring to Stark Parks reminds everyone that you represent the Park District and are part of our team.

**Consider the difference:** "I'm not sure what THEY are planning for the future expansion."

**Instead, consider:** "Right now it's unclear what the future expansion will include."



## Stay up-to-date on parks, trails, and events

The Stark Parks Marketing Team will do as much as possible to get information out to staff and volunteers, so please take advantage of the media available:

1. [www.StarkParks.com](http://www.StarkParks.com) offers trail updates and all upcoming programs
2. A monthly volunteer e-blast will be sent to the email you provide
3. Follow us on Social Media!
  - a. Facebook.com/StarkParks
  - b. Twitter.com/StarkParks
  - c. Instagram.com/StarkParks
  - d. Youtube.com/StarkParks
  - e. Pinterest.com/StarkParks
  - f. Plus.google.com/+StarkParks
  - g. Flickr.com/photos/StarkParks
4. When in doubt, please don't hesitate to call the Volunteer Coordinator.

## Volunteer Social Media Policy

### Purpose:

Stark Parks encourages the responsible use of social media. The purpose of this policy is to set out what Stark Parks expects from our volunteers when using social media. It is important to remember that we are all ambassadors for the Stark Park's vision and mission, and that information shared or put on social media is rarely private. This policy is for volunteers and aims to:

- Give guidelines on what Stark Park volunteers should and should not post on social media as it pertains to Stark Parks
- Help volunteers draw a line between their private lives and their volunteering
- Be clear about sensitive issues such as the rehabilitation of wildlife and vulnerable populations we may serve (children, elderly, etc.)

### Policy:

- We utilize our volunteers to help with a variety of duties including working closely with them to ensure the Parks has a great image in the community. We are aware our volunteers help to protect our relationship with the residents of Stark County. Because our volunteers are influential in the community, we ask that they not post disparaging or defamatory statements about Stark Parks including but not limited to, staff; other volunteers; other members past or present; suppliers and vendors; and other affiliates and stakeholders. You are encouraged to speak with your volunteer coordinator to solve issues as they arise.
- Volunteers should avoid social communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage our reputation, even indirectly.
- Remember that what you publish might be available to be read by the masses; including colleagues, other volunteers, current and future employers, and social acquaintances for a long time. Please keep this in mind before you post any online content relating to Stark Parks.
- Volunteers are not permitted to set up social media accounts on behalf of Stark Parks without prior consultation with their volunteer coordinator.
- While Stark Parks is a public firm, not all information is public at all times. We ask that you please respect confidentiality at all times and protect any information you may come in contact with as a volunteer of Stark Parks. Confidential information may include things such as unpublished details about our work, details of current projects, future projects, financial information or information held on our supporters, staff or volunteers. Should you have any questions about what is or isn't confidential, please speak with your volunteer coordinator.
- If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, please refrain from making the communication until you discuss it with your volunteer coordinator.
- **Wildlife Conservation Center (WCC)** Volunteers have the unique privilege of working with native wild animals. We ask that WCC volunteers do not discuss the behavior, medical condition, behavioral status, or euthanasia status of any animal in our care.
- WCC rehabilitation animals currently undergoing care in our facility should remain private as per Federal, State, and local permitting guidelines. Therefore we ask that you not post pictures or information about these animals on any personal social media accounts. If you would like to share an animal success story please speak with the wildlife care supervisor and/or your volunteer coordinator as they will be able to help guide you in the right direction.
- WCC educational animals available for public viewing may be publicized. However, we ask that volunteers make it clear in their posts that wildlife animals are not pets and should not be handled in the same way as pets are.

## Handbook for Stark Parks Volunteers



**Stark Parks prioritizes safety and privacy of our vulnerable populations including but not limited to children and/or the elderly. We ask that volunteers refrain from posting any information on social media or take photographs of these populations at any point in time while volunteering for Stark Parks.**

## Organizational Structure

The Stark County Park District is an independent political subdivision created and governed by Section 1545 of the Ohio Revised Code.



A five member, volunteer **Board of Park Commissioners**, appointed to three-year terms by the Stark County Probate Judge, governs the park district. The Park Commissioners provide guidance and oversight. Their meetings are held monthly at Sippo Lake Park and at other locations several times annually. Visitors are always welcome. (More information available online: <https://starkparks.com/board-of-commissioners/>)

In addition to the Board of Park Commissioners, another group of volunteers works to support the mission of the Stark County Park District: the **Friends of Stark Parks** is a non-profit 501c3, volunteer organization dedicated to the development and use of Stark County Park District parks, trails, facilities, programs, and events. The Friends group was started in 1997 during a levy campaign. Its Board is made up of up to 20 volunteers. The Friends of Stark Parks sponsor fundraisers throughout the year. Other projects have included the installation of sandstone benches along the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, planting of trees in many parks, purchasing the costume for the park district's frog mascot, FeLeap, and contributing funds to the Exploration Gateway and wildlife rehabilitation caging and food storage buildings. It is also supported by individual, family and corporate memberships. (More information available online: <http://www.starkparks.com/friends/>)



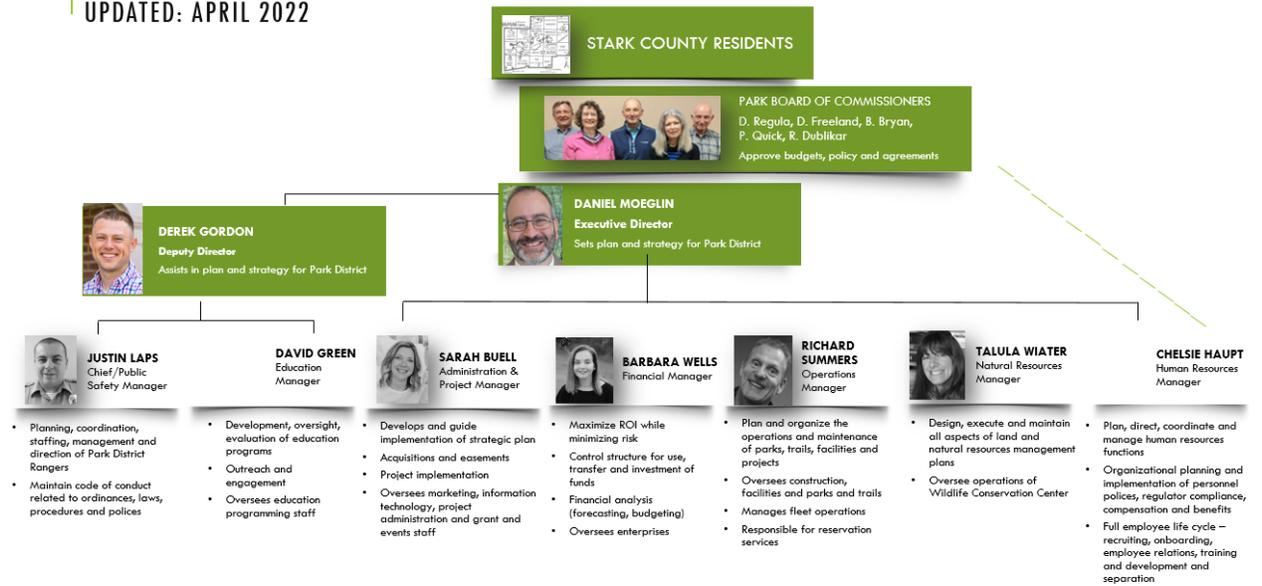
**Your Stark Parks** is a grassroots committee dedicated to assuring the long-term viability of the Stark County Park District is met through annual fundraisers and the passage of levy initiatives. Volunteers help run the campaign by organizing events, placing levy signage around the county, participating in community outreach events like the County Fair, and making presentations to community groups on behalf of Stark Parks. Your Stark Parks sponsors two annual fundraisers; a Chicken Dinner in June and a Golf Outing in September. (More information available online: <http://www.yourstarkparks.com/>)

**All three organizations have volunteer opportunities available!**

Organizational Chart

Stark County Park District

**STARK COUNTY PARK DISTRICT**  
**ORGANIZATION CHART: MANAGEMENT TEAM**  
UPDATED: APRIL 2022



**PARKER SPENCER**  
Volunteer Coordinator

- Main point of contact for all volunteers
- Group projects



## Volunteer Eligibility

The Stark Parks Volunteer Program welcomes individuals, community and civic groups, scouts, school and church groups, and families as volunteers. Stark Parks also has options for single **Day of Service** volunteers.

### Individual Volunteers

Stark Parks Volunteer Program is for anyone 16 years or older (with a parent if younger, in certain pre-approved circumstances), from all backgrounds and with a variety of skills. Volunteer efforts add support for Stark Parks departments and enhance the services we provide to the public. Stark Parks defines a volunteer as “any person who donates approved service without pay or reimbursement.”

It is the policy of the Stark County Park District to ensure equal opportunity without discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, disability or any other characteristics protected by law. All persons are encouraged to apply for volunteer opportunities.

### Who qualifies as a volunteer?

- persons who are age 16 or older
- persons who are in unpaid job experience programs
- Stark County Park District employees helping off hours or in a capacity unrelated to their job duties

### Who does not qualify as a volunteer?

- inmate workers
- community restitution clients
- individuals completing job coaching requirements or similar work rehabilitation program hours
- Stark County Park District employees, who are carrying out job duties

*Volunteers are considered “unpaid staff” and will, from time to time, be offered access to orientation and training. Volunteers are a valued resource who enable paid staff to expand the services and programs (we) offer to the community!*

### Volunteer Requirements

- Complete Stark Parks volunteer application.
- Attend scheduled interview.
- Meet minimum qualifications for the volunteer job requested (knowledge, skills, abilities, etc.) or be willing to explore other volunteer opportunities.
- Pass a background check which includes a criminal history investigation, following national guidelines. Please note that the information received can disqualify you from our volunteer program. If you have any questions about our background check process, please review our Guidelines for Disqualification and/or contact the Volunteer Coordinator.
- Work in a drug and alcohol free environment, as Stark Parks is a Drug Free Work Place.
- Have a willingness to attend required training sessions.
- Follow all Park District policies and procedures on and off duty.

### Community, Civic, and Days of Service Groups

Stark Parks has volunteer opportunities designed for groups wishing to provide ongoing volunteer help or select one single day of service. We have options for corporate teams, community and civic organizations, school groups, scouts, and church groups. We will work to match your group’s skills and desired locations.

The group representative should contact the Volunteer Coordinator (at least 6 weeks in advance), by calling 330.409.8993, to discuss the volunteer options.

## Overview of Volunteer Positions

### Scheduled Volunteer Opportunities

#### **Administration**

Volunteers interested in general office and administrative duties help with data entry, document scanning, filing, and computer work using Microsoft Office. These volunteer opportunities are “as needed” or for special projects.

#### **Education Program Assistant**

Help our education programmers and staff to sign in program participants, assist with room setup and activities, pass out educational materials, assist with crafts and games, and help with clean up. Assist as a trail sweep on hikes, bike rides or with our many summer aquatics programs.

#### **Docent**

Docents are specially trained volunteers that conduct guided tours and programs through the Quail Hollow Manor House.

#### **Enterprise**

Provide customer service in the Stark Parks concession trailer at large park events, or at the marinas. With specialized training you can captain the pontoon boat on Sippo Lake or Walborn Reservoir. Pontoon captains must be 21 years of age – *special training is required*

#### **FeLeap or FeLeap Assistant**

Meet and greet park patrons while portraying the park’s official mascot “FeLeap”. Volunteers will portray FeLeap during park events, parades, or community events. FeLeap does not speak, but does share hugs, high fives, and handshakes with young and old. The FeLeap Assistant accompanies FeLeap at events, greeting guests and handing out park brochures.

#### **Natural Resources/Operations**

Assist park staff with litter control efforts, landscaping, and invasive species control.

#### **Special Events and Marketing**

Provide information to visitors at public events, assist with crafts, games, and activities at special events (e.g. Family Fall Fest). You may also assist the marketing department at community events to help promote Stark Parks, parks, trails and events.

#### **Wildlife Rehabilitation/ Program Animal Assistant**

Provide animal husbandry for wildlife and program animals. Wildlife Center volunteers must be at least 16 years old. *Special training required.*

#### **Quail Hollow Park Unique Opportunities**

- **Cross-Country Ski Rental** – must be able to come to the park on weekends during the winter months. Assist visitors with fitting ski equipment (training provided) (Sat. 10a-4p; Sun noon-4p),
- **Gardening** – there are many areas around the buildings that require ongoing maintenance throughout the growing season.

### On Your Own Volunteer Opportunities

#### **Citizen Scientist**

Projects include inventory and monitoring surveys for birds, butterflies, deer, bees, amphibians, plants, moths, and aquatic resources. Work may involve hiking off trail and using a variety of scientific equipment to record data and observations. No specific knowledge or skills are required, but field identification skills are helpful. *Special training may be required.*

#### **Trail Patrol**

Become a Trailblazer and combine your love of the outdoors with walking, hiking, biking and horseback riding. Stark Parks provides training in park history, First Aid, and customer service – [\*special training is required.\*](#)



## General Considerations

Many of our volunteer opportunities take place outdoors in all seasons and may be physically demanding. All individuals are encouraged to ask questions about the physical demands of the volunteer position or positions of interest when applying to the volunteer program opportunities. This will help make sure that your volunteer expectations and our requirements are clearly understood.

## Getting Started

- **Application: Complete a VIP (Volunteer in Parks) application**

You can apply online by visiting [www.StarkParks.com](http://www.StarkParks.com). Click on *Get Involved*, click *Volunteer Program*. Submit the application to the Volunteer Coordinator and you will be contacted to discuss volunteer options.

- **Interview and Background Screening**

Prospective long term volunteers will attend an interview and submit information for a background screening, which includes a criminal history background check. Upon clearance of the background check and acceptance into the Volunteer Program, volunteers will be eligible to begin their volunteer orientation and service with Stark Parks. If you have any questions about the background check process, review our Guidelines for Disqualifications and/or contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

- **General Orientation**

All volunteers must attend a general volunteer orientation. The orientation is presented by the Volunteer Coordinator and conducted following the volunteer interview.

## Volunteer Education

- Several volunteer positions require training sessions. The training sessions can be held classroom style or as a field training. Length of training varies from program to program.

- **First Aid and CPR or Civilian CPR**

Some volunteer positions require First Aid training and CPR or Civilian CPR (compression only). Stark Parks provides the training and certification at no cost to the volunteer.

- **Volunteer Enrichment**

All volunteers may attend any enrichment class offered by Stark Parks. Offsite classes can be included as enrichment hours if accepted by the Volunteer Coordinator. Enrichment classes provide instruction in a variety of areas and prepare the volunteer to help with a specific activity, utilizing a skill set not present in the general volunteer pool.



## Volunteer Updates

- Stark Parks holds updates for veteran volunteers to learn of programming changes. Volunteers are required to attend any program updates.

## Volunteer Dress Code

- Volunteers are asked to arrive at their assigned event dressed appropriately. Many events take place outdoors and it is important to dress for the weather. Sunscreen and insect repellent may be necessary. Sometimes special attire is necessary and you will be advised.

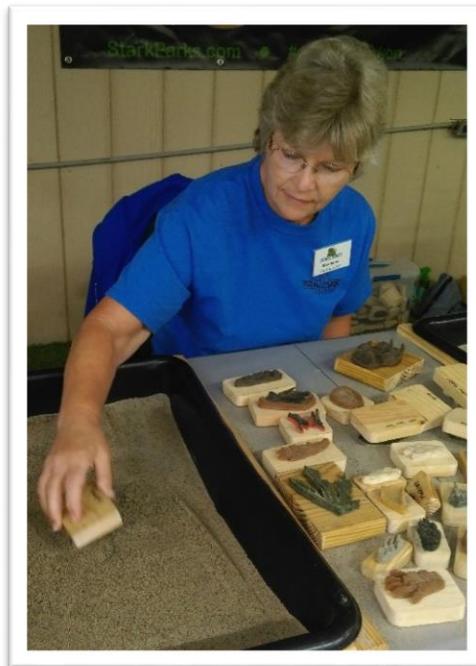
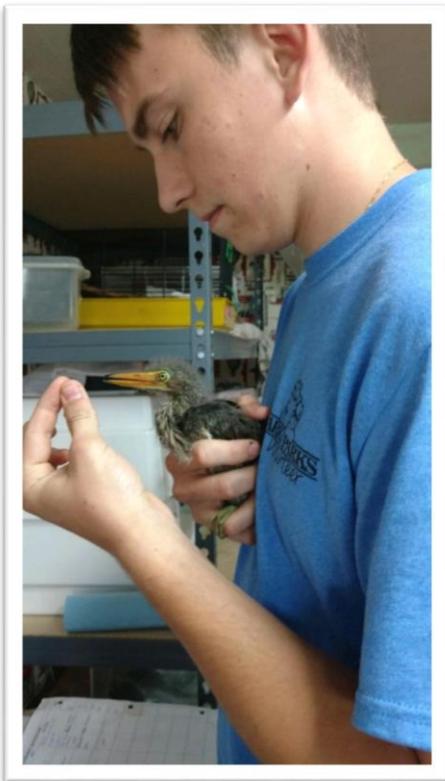
## General Guidelines:

- Wear unprinted/non-slogan shirts with sleeves. Avoid clothing inappropriate for public/family viewing.
- Khaki or denim pants, long shorts, or capris.
- Closed toe shoes are recommended
- Always wear your Stark Parks' nametag/volunteer nametag when volunteering.

Upon completion of your orientation you are eligible to receive a Stark Parks volunteer t-shirt and nametag at your orientation. Plan to wear your Stark Parks volunteer shirt and nametag while volunteering.

Please remember whenever and wherever you are wearing your park t-shirt and/or nametag you are representing Stark Parks!

**Name tag, t-shirts, and any other attire provided by the park is Stark Parks property and is to be returned when your commitment ends.**



## Communication with Volunteers and Park Staff

- Most communication occurs via email. Email is the quickest, most efficient method to get opportunities out to multiple volunteers. All Stark Parks staff email addresses use the first initial of their first name and their last name@starkparks.com. Example; John Doe's email address is; [jd@starkparks.com](mailto:jd@starkparks.com).
- You may also contact the Volunteer Coordinator on the park office line 330-409-8993 during office hours. Normal office hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday – Friday. The Volunteer Coordinator attends many park events and may not be available so please leave a voicemail message.

## Volunteer Requests

- Volunteer requests are compiled monthly and as needed. They are sent via email each month by the Volunteer Coordinator.
- Stark Parks utilizes a program called SmartSheets, which allows individuals to view and sign up for volunteer positions that are available.
- To view volunteer requests click on the View Schedule link below. The volunteer opportunities are sorted by date. Please note that the programmer's name will not be listed for liability and safety reasons.  
<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/publish?EQBCT=300eb124074c4649a350b7ca9d9d1794>
- Requests outline the volunteer requirements and duties, dates, times, and locations. The volunteer request opportunities are filled based on two criteria; availability of the volunteer and suitability to the task.
- Review the requests carefully, noticing the date, time, and location. Park programs and volunteer requests cover all of Stark County, so take your mileage and time into consideration when responding to volunteer requests. Also consider your physical capabilities and general interest. Do not respond for things you would not enjoy.
- Once you have found a program/event you would like to sign up for click the Volunteer Form link.  
<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/c8bc2c0c88874cd4bd0b6f7e1c4505e4>
- Each volunteer opportunity is assigned a slot number. Select the corresponding time slot from the schedule you'd like to volunteer for and fill out your information.
- After signing up, you will receive a confirmation email with all of the program/programmers information. The programmer associated with the event also gets an email letting them know you signed up for the event. The email you receive will come from smartsheets [automation@app.smartsheet.com](mailto:automation@app.smartsheet.com).
- Generally assignments are made on a first come/first served basis. The first volunteer responding to a particular request receives the assignment as long as they are suitable for the task.
- Some programs require volunteers with special skills or training, stated on the request form. If you do not have the skills or have not received the special training, please do not volunteer for that opportunity.
- Once you receive the confirmation email the volunteer opportunity will disappear from the list so nobody else can sign up for it. Please note that some programs may ask for multiple people to help with the same task and therefore there may be rows with the same position.
- If a volunteer position does not fill immediately, you may receive another request (or even another) until that position is filled.

## Service Hours

- All volunteer service hours are tracked and entered into the volunteer database. Any volunteer wishing to know their total service hours may contact the Volunteer Coordinator during regular office hours.
- Stark Parks' staff will report hours for program events. Special Events may have sign in sheets or you may check in with the Volunteer Coordinator at the site. Non park volunteer events/community events require you to email/phone your service hours after the event to the Volunteer Coordinator.

## Minimum Hours

- Stark Parks hopes you are able to find many volunteer opportunities within a 12 month period. To remain active in the program you must volunteer at least 10 hours annually from your start date or your volunteer information will be placed inactive.
- To reactivate your status you must sign another Release of Information Form for a background check and pass the background check.

## Recognition

- Stark Parks appreciates the many hours of service provided by volunteers. An annual dinner is held in the Fall to recognize and honor the volunteers who have given at least 10 hours of volunteer service for the given year. Family members or friends may also attend the annual Volunteer Appreciation dinner at the per person fee.

## Absences/Call-off

- Please make every effort to honor your volunteer commitment.
- If you are volunteering at the Wildlife Conservation Center please report off to 330.477.0448.
- If you are calling off for a specific program and have been given the programmer's contact information, please notify them directly; if not, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

## Leave of Absence

- Stark Parks recognizes you may need to take some time off. Please let the Volunteer Coordinator know if you will be scheduling time off for an extended period and provide the approximate dates.

## End of Volunteer Commitment

- If you have decided to end your volunteer commitment with Stark Parks, please tell the Volunteer Coordinator. You may do this in person, by phone, or via email. A short exit interview may be conducted. All responses are confidential and are used to strengthen our volunteer program.

## Volunteer Dismissal/Disciplinary Process

- Every volunteer has the status of "volunteer-at-will," meaning that no one has a contractual right to remain a volunteer for Stark Parks.
- **DISCIPLINARY PROCESS:** The disciplinary process and regulations provide typical penalties for offenses. However, a different penalty (either more or less severe than that which appears in the standard procedure) may be issued, if appropriate. This approach recognizes the impartiality of consistent application tempered with good judgment, and it prevents losing sight of the unique individual nature of each infraction.
- 1. Coaching/Verbal Warning: Coaching sessions between the volunteer and Volunteer Coordinator are used to bring a problem or behavior to the attention of the volunteer before it becomes serious in nature. The Volunteer Coordinator will document the conversation in the volunteer's file.
- 2. Written Warning: If the conduct addressed by a verbal warning is repeated or additional problems occur, the Volunteer Coordinator should follow up with a written warning. The written warning should describe the unacceptable behavior, outline expectations, and state what further disciplinary action will occur if the behavior is repeated. A record of the discussion should be recorded and should be placed in the volunteer's file.
- 3. Termination: A volunteer may be terminated based on progressive discipline or based on the severity of the rule violations. A single incident may be so severe as to warrant an immediate final warning or immediate termination (e.g. harassment, workplace violence, insubordination, etc.).

# Handbook for Stark Parks Volunteers



## Safety Services and Law Enforcement: Park Rangers

WEST Ranger: 330.353.2377, EAST Ranger: 330.353.2378, CENTRAL Ranger: 330.353.2372

- Stark Parks' Rangers are peace officers of Ohio. They are licensed to carry a gun and write citations.
- All volunteers must follow the posted speed limits, parking signs, and directional signs while in the parks.
- Volunteers may not remove county property from parks, including wildlife (not fish) or plant materials.
- Volunteers are not to possess weapons, firearms, or explosives while on park property or while volunteering.
- Being a Stark Parks volunteer does not place you above the law. Please follow the instructions provided by Stark Parks Rangers.



## Emergency Procedures

- Being able to respond quickly and appropriately may make a difference in the outcome during an emergency situation.
- If you are at an event, in a Stark Parks building, or on the trail, always be aware of your surroundings.
- Most often volunteers are working with Stark Parks staff. In case of emergency, when working with park staff, they will be advising you.
- Sometimes you may be working alone or in charge of a group of park visitors. Remember to remain calm, call for help, and know your location making it easier to request assistance.

## What to do for Injury or Illness

- **Check the scene** to make sure it is safe for you
- **Check the situation** to determine the nature of the problem
- **Call 911** to summon emergency assistance, if indicated
  - Stay on the line until told to hang up
  - Notify Stark Parks rangers
  - Care for the injured or ill person(s) and obtain identity and pertinent medical information for EMS
  - Notify the ranger when EMS arrives.

## Volunteer Injuries

- Stark Parks believes in maintaining a safe volunteer environment and realizes accidents, injuries, or illness may occur. All volunteers will be provided care, first aid, or emergency services.
- If you are volunteering and are involved in an accident, injured or become ill, please report to the Park staff person or phone 911 for emergency assistance.
- The volunteer will be asked to provide a report to the Park Ranger as soon as practically possible, ideally within 8 hours of the incident and let the Volunteer Coordinator know.

## Weather Related Emergencies

- Listen to weather alert reports, and check with staff before going out. When out Trailblazing, keep your cell phone on to receive severe weather warning and other messages from the rangers.

## Regulations, Policies, and Procedures

- You may view general park regulations from our website [www.starkparks.com](http://www.starkparks.com): Click; *explore the parks*, pull down to *park regulations*.
- You may download a PDF file of all park ordinances: click on *Stark County Park District Rules and Regulations*

## Stark Parks Ordinances

- An official copy of Stark County Park District ordinances may be obtained by logging onto [www.starkparks.com](http://www.starkparks.com). Pull down *explore the parks*. Click on *park regulations*. Click on *Stark County Park District rules and regulations (click to view comprehensive list)*.

## Smoking Policy

- Use of any tobacco product is prohibited inside any park building, structure, vehicle, or while on duty at an event.
  - The term “tobacco product” means any product made or derived from tobacco that is intended for human consumption. This includes, among other products, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigarette tobacco, roll-your-own tobacco, and smokeless tobacco.

## Drug and Alcohol Policy

- Stark Parks is committed to a drug-free workplace for both Volunteers and Staff. Volunteers and staff are prohibited from using, possessing, or being under the influence of any alcoholic beverage/drug, or illegal substance on park property or any park-sponsored event while volunteering/ working. Volunteers suspected of being under the influence will be removed from the volunteer site/event.
- Violations of this policy will result in being suspended or removed from the Stark Parks Volunteer Program.

## Respectful Workplace Policy

- Stark Parks is committed to a work environment in which all individuals (Volunteers and Staff) are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices, including harassment.
- Stark Parks expects that all relationships among persons in the workplace will be business-like and free of bias, prejudice, and harassment. If you feel like you have been in a situation that involved harassment or discrimination it is important to report the incident immediately to the Volunteer Coordinator or the Human Resources Administrator, who can be reached by calling the main park line at 330-477-3552.



## Guidelines for Disqualification of Volunteering

A person should be disqualified and prohibited from volunteering if the person has been found guilty of the following crimes:

- **Sex Offense**
  - All Sex Offenses – regardless of the amount of time since the offense.  
*Examples: child molestation, rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, sodomy, prostitution, solicitation, indecent exposure, etc.*
  
- **Felonies**
  - All Felony Violence – regardless of the amount of time since the offense.  
*Examples: murder, manslaughter, aggravated assault, kidnapping, robbery, aggravated burglary, etc.*
  
  - All Felony offenses other than violence or sex related within the past 7 years.  
*Examples: drug offenses, theft, embezzlement, fraud, child endangerment, etc.*
  
- **Misdemeanors**
  - All misdemeanor violence offenses within the past 7 years.  
*Examples: simple assault, battery, domestic violence, hit & run, etc.*
  
  - Any misdemeanor within the past 7 years that would be considered a potential danger to children/vulnerable adults or is directly related to the functions of that potential volunteer or employee.  
*Examples: simple drug possession, possession of paraphernalia, repeat DUIs, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, providing alcohol to minors, theft (if handling money), etc. Non-repeat alcohol offenses will be considered on a case-by-case basis.*

These guidelines come from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and apply to potential employees as well as volunteers. The Stark County Park District officials have final authority regarding decisions on accepting a volunteer.

## Stark County Park District (Stark Parks) Volunteer Waiver

In consideration of my participation in volunteer activities in and around Stark Parks, I do hereby declare myself to be medically able to participate in volunteer activities of Stark Parks.

I understand that there may be risks involved in all physical activities, and I agree to familiarize myself with all equipment, rules, and physical demands related to the activities that I undertake.

I agree to hold Stark Parks and the Stark County Board of Park Commissioners, employees, volunteers, and sponsors free from all liability and/or claims for injuries or damages to property or to person.

I hereby for myself, my heirs, executors, and administrators, waive, release, and forever discharge any and all rights and claims for damages which I have or which may hereafter accrue to me arising out of or connected with my participation in any of the activities of Stark Parks.

Volunteer's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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### Photo/Video Release Form

I hereby give permission of Stark County Park District and its related agencies (Friends of Stark Parks and Your Stark Parks) to utilize photographs or videos of me and/or my children or grandchildren, of which I am a legal guardian, on all media, including but not limited to, web site, social media sites, brochures, published advertisements, or promotional items. I understand these photos or video and information may also be shared with outside media such as newspapers and television outlets.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Volunteer

*(Please print or type)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Age

*(optional)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email address

*(if you would like an electronic copy)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE – Parent/Custodian if under 18years.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship

Volunteer's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_