

Discover your Outdoor Experience at

Richfield HERITAGE PRESERVE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY eNEWSLETTER



A Message from Your Park Director David Green

Welcome! This year the Richfield Heritage Preserve eNewsletter is coming to you as a bi-monthly eNewsletter starting with this January/February issue. We are a park largely run by volunteers who generously give their time and talents in helping me and the community of Richfield move the park forward. Many individuals have invested their time and personal resources to this venture and the eNewsletter is no exception. This bi-monthly approach will allow us to open up new opportunities for the individuals who have invested so much to bring you this timely and informative resource.

[READ MORE](#)



A COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER

By Bobbie Beshara

Richfield's hidden treasure. That is our beautiful 336-acre parcel on the north side of Richfield adjacent to Giant Eagle. This property is rich in history and preserving it became our number one goal in 2014.

[READ MORE](#)



FRIENDS OF CROWELL HILAKA Leads Effort to Save Girl Scout Camp

By Lynn Scholle Richardson

2013 was a pivotal time for the Friends of Crowell Hilaka (FoCH). The old Girl Scout camp had been closed and put up for sale.

[READ MORE](#)



OVIATT HOUSE Honor, Preserve & Inspire

By Judy Makowski

A little house with an inspiring story stands at West Streetsboro and Oviatt roads in Richfield Heritage Preserve. Built in 1836 by Mason Oviatt and his wife Fanny, Oviatt House is one of the oldest homes in Richfield with ties to the Underground Railroad and the American abolitionist John Brown.

[READ MORE](#)



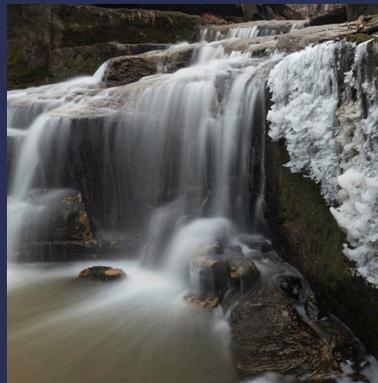
Western Reserve Land Conservancy PLAYS IMPORTANT ROLE IN PRESERVING RHP

The Western Reserve Land Conservancy preserves natural areas and farmland in northern and eastern Ohio, and helps revitalize cities statewide by helping projects across Ohio go from vacancy to vitality.

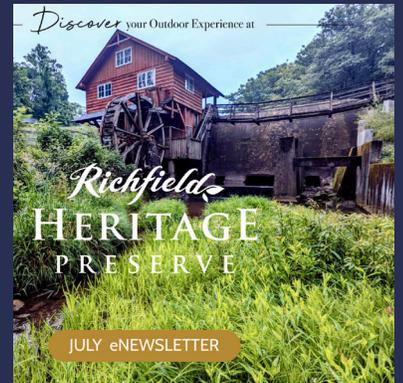
[READ MORE](#)



THANK YOU
for being
A Trail Steward!



WINTERTIME FUN!
#DiscoverYourOutdoor
ExperienceAtRHP



Richfield Heritage
Preserve
eNEWSLETTER EDITOR



WINTER EVENTS IN
FULL SWING
At The LODGE



RICHFIELD CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE
HONORS
Richfield Joint
Recreation District



NATURE CAN HEAL
HIKE
Wednesday, January 5th
11:00a.m.

A Message from Your Park Director David Green



Welcome!

This year the Richfield Heritage Preserve eNewsletter is coming to you as a bi-monthly eNewsletter starting with this January/February issue. We are a park largely run by volunteers who generously give their time and talents in helping me and the community of Richfield move the park forward. Many individuals have invested their time and personal resources to this venture and the eNewsletter is no exception. This bi-monthly approach will allow us to open up new opportunities for the individuals who have invested so much to bring you this timely and informative resource.

This past November marked my first full year as park director for RHP. It is an atypical journey

being the first RHP director for a park that has been open and operating without anyone in this role since the people of Richfield saved this amazing property by successfully passing a levy and a bond issue in 2014. Since that time, the park was led by the Richfield Joint Recreation District which served as both a working and governing board.

One of my many roles as the park's first director was to learn about and get up to speed with all that took place in the six years prior to my arrival while paving a path for the park to move forward. It's taken me much of the year to peel back the layers, and understand the history and decisions made by previous boards and board members. With so many dedicated and passionate individuals wanting this park to succeed there were bound to be challenges along the way especially without the consistent leadership from a park director. It is the role of the director to forge connections and lead conversations, in order to move the park forward.

In this issue, we take a look back to the beginning of how a passionate grassroots effort to save and preserve a community asset, and by doing so, how it can truly lead to amazing results with so many wonderful returns.

I hope that you'll read the articles in this eNewsletter with interest, knowing the dedicated work taken on by so many individuals has reaped one of the most amazing assets for any community and an incredibly diverse group of stakeholders. We've come a long way from the early beginnings in 2013 to today in 2022.

I look forward to sharing future eNewsletter issues with you that will delve deeper into all the interesting facets of RHP and demonstrate how far we've come. We have an exciting future and I am very proud to be a part of what is still to come.

A COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER

By Bobbie Beshara



Richfield's hidden treasure. That is our beautiful 336-acre parcel on the north side of Richfield adjacent to Giant Eagle. This property is rich in history and

preserving it became our number one goal in 2014. What a wonderful asset this property is to our Township and Village, residents and visitors from all over!

When I was approached about saving this property and serving as co-chair of the campaign, I knew that with hard work and perseverance we could do it. But, how do we convince the voters to pass a levy to purchase and to operate what we now affectionately and proudly call Richfield Heritage Preserve? Our approach was a grassroots effort paid off big dividends by protecting this property, and our community, from development.

Working with the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, the Friends of Crowell Hilaka, co-chair Sandy Apidone and so many others, was purely magical. We collaborated on fundraisers, held open houses on the property, sent letters to the editors, conducted interviews with local and regional newspapers, and most importantly went door-to-door speaking with voters. What a labor of love. It wasn't always easy and we worked very hard to ensure that we would have this property as a part of Richfield's heritage forever and we did it! Our campaign was called "Richfield Together", and today our community is stronger and more vibrant because of this effort.



FRIENDS OF CROWELL HILAKA Leads Effort to Save Girl Scout Camp

By Lynn Scholle Richardson

2013 was a pivotal time for the Friends of Crowell Hilaka (FoCH). The old Girl Scout camp had been closed and put up for sale.

Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC) submitted the highest bid, but until they took full possession, FoCH's on-site activity was halted. Even "off-the-record" visits were impeded by the tall, barbed perimeter fence surrounding the property.

Halfway through 2013, FoCH learned that WRLC's high bid was only a purchase option. WRLC was actually looking for an as-yet-identified "end user" who would agree to environmental protections of the land and buy it from them after WRLC bought it from the Girl Scouts. None of the entities WRLC approached—including Richfield and the Metroparks (both Akron and Cleveland) were interested. With WRLC's option about to expire and no other end users in sight, FoCH offered to raise the purchase funds through a pledge campaign. They would have six weeks to raise over four million dollars. Not a terribly realistic goal—but, with no other choice, what did anyone have to lose?

FoCH's business proposal was to operate an independent, outdoor recreation area that included family camping, zip lines, a spa, a water park, and event rentals. The primary goals were to preserve the land, repurpose the historic structures, and promote the story of Jim Kirby as an inventor who loved nature. To give the venture some credibility, FoCH asked the Richfield Historical Society, Richfield Village Council, and Richfield Township Trustees to endorse their purchase. All were willing, but the officials had never seen the place and asked to visit it. When they got beyond the fence, most expressed surprise and awe:

"I had no idea that there was anything like this in Richfield!"



More tours were requested. WRLC obtained the necessary permissions from the Girl Scout administration. FoCH made themselves available to show visitors around. They also printed up fliers and brochures, distributed press releases, and talked up the place and campaign to anyone who would listen. FoCH president Corey Ringle gave a tour to members of the Buckeye Trail Association, who came back with a pledge of \$100 per acre. That kind of serious money got attention and drew more support. Girl Scouts gave permission for a public open house of the property. Pledges poured in. Even so, the total raised by the deadline was nowhere near enough.

However, the people of Richfield had seen the gem in their midst. Many went to their government officials and asked what could be done. The Village Council asked WRLC if they could request an extension on their option from the Girl Scouts. Early in 2014, while waiting for the Girl Scout council to answer, FoCH had some soul-searching to do. They decided that even though they would not own the land, they would renew their commitment to preserving it. It was then that they developed a marketing strategy to turn the challenges of limited access and local unfamiliarity into a desirable attribute—and began describing the property as "Ohio's Hidden Treasure".

OVIATT HOUSE | Honor, Preserve & Inspire

By Judy Makowski

A little house with an inspiring story stands at West Streetsboro and Oviatt roads in Richfield Heritage Preserve. Built in 1836 by Mason Oviatt and his wife Fanny, Oviatt House is one of the oldest homes in Richfield with ties to the Underground Railroad and the American abolitionist John Brown. In November of 2019, the Richfield Joint Recreation District (RJRD) board voted six to one to raze the house due to its deteriorating condition, lack of funds for restoration and the belief it wasn't the original structure.

HONORING OUR HERITAGE

Ken Bowman, historic preservation carpenter for the National Park Service, found evidence that the house was built before the American Civil War and sits on its original sandstone foundation on the property, never moved or disassembled. All floor joists are original, hand-built with mortise and tenon joinery. Many of the interior walls have the original accordion lath and plaster, a folk technique used prior to 1850.

Based on this new information, the RJRD postponed demolition to give the group time to determine a use, create a budget and fundraising plan, and perform the necessary restoration work.

A COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER

In January 2021, the Save the Oviatt House group was formed. Within only a few short weeks, yard signs showing support appeared in front yards and the group raised \$103,000 in pledges toward restoration and ongoing maintenance. Volunteers covered the leaking roof, painted the exterior siding and removed materials such as carpeting, drywall and cabinets that posed a mold hazard.

Save the Oviatt House was incorporated as Oviatt House Inc. (OHI) in March 2021. In May, thanks to work done by the Richfield Historical Society, the site of the Oviatt House was added to the National Park Service's National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program. Listings included in this program "honor, preserve, and promote the history of resistance to enslavement through escape and flight."

With all requirements met, on July 26, 2021, RJRD voted unanimously to rescind its motion to raze the house and

granted OHI exclusive permission to restore and preserve the dwelling. The following week, OHI received its non-profit status enabling OHI to accept monetary donations that are fully tax-deductible. In addition, OHI is now eligible to apply for government and foundation grants, broadening its access to resources and enabling restoration work.

PRESERVING THE PAST

The Oviatt family owned the property until 1919 when inventor James Kirby, famous for inventing the Kirby vacuum, purchased the property for his estate. In 1937, the Cleveland Girl Scout Council bought the land and transformed it into Camp Crowell Hilaka, utilizing Oviatt House as the caretaker's residence. Generations of Girl Scouts camped in the park before Richfield purchased the property in 2014 for use as a public park.

INSPIRING FUTURE GENERATIONS

Once restored to its original appearance, OHI would like to turn Oviatt House into a welcome center and museum. This restoration not only adds character to the area, but can serve as a magnet for tourists who travel to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past.

Donations are being accepted to aid the restoration efforts. One hundred percent of the money collected goes towards OHI's efforts to preserve and restore this historic landmark. Please visit www.oviatthouse1836.com to donate and to learn more.



Western Reserve Land Conservancy PLAYS IMPORTANT ROLE IN PRESERVING RHP



The Western Reserve Land Conservancy preserves natural areas and farmland in northern and eastern Ohio, and helps revitalize cities statewide by helping projects across Ohio go from vacancy to vitality.

In 2013, the WRLC struck a deal to purchase the 336-acre property now known as Richfield Heritage Preserve from the Girl Scouts of North East Ohio who closed its former camp in 2011 and put it up for sale in 2012. The property, located mostly in Richfield Township, was in danger of being developed or timbered. That's when the land conservancy stepped in to work with the Village of Richfield, Richfield Township and a host of community groups to find a long-term owner aligned with its preservation mission.

In addition, the WRLC applied for a \$1.1 million Clean Ohio grant on behalf of Richfield Joint Recreation District, and the funding was approved by the Ohio Public Works Commission. As a result, the land conservancy holds a conservation easement on the property which is a legal document that permanently limits development on a parcel.

With the property safe from development, a very forward-thinking group of people (consisting of historians, civic boosters, outdoor enthusiasts, advertising

executives, artists and others) gathered, committed to explore all the possibilities for preserving this extraordinary property. Saving the property for future generations was the goal which came to fruition in November 2014 when voters in Richfield Village and Richfield Township approved the purchase of the property by the newly formed Richfield Joint Recreation District which would ultimately manage and safeguard it while encouraging recreational and educational opportunities to the community and the region.

Taking a little over a year, ownership of the property was formally transferred from the WRLC to the RJRD at a ceremony and ribbon cutting held on Monday, July 14th, 2015.

In the years since passage of the bond and levy issues, there have been a ground swell of support and interest in RHP from across Northeast Ohio and beyond. The Crowell Hilaka Historic District and the Mill's designation on the National Register of Historic Landmarks amid the pristine mature forest (is there more that is missing here?)

NOTE:

To date, the WRLC has permanently preserved and protected more than 800 properties, totaling more than 65,000 acres in northern Ohio. Richfield Heritage Preserve is one of those properties and has since served as a magnet for hiking and outdoor enthusiasts over the past seven years.

THANK YOU for being A Trail Steward!

Safety is a priority at Richfield Heritage Preserve. We want all our park guests to have a safe, enjoyable time while they visit and explore our beautiful property. That being said, we rely heavily on the observant eye of all who enjoy hiking RHP and ask that they share with us what they have observed and experienced.



Here are a few of the things we would appreciate being made aware of:

- Trees down across trails
- Downed electrical wires or trees leaning on electrical wires
- Damage to bridges/steps/buildings
- Vandalism

Please report these by calling OR texting RHP Park Director, David Green at 330-388-3095

WINTERTIME FUN! #DiscoverYourOutdoorExperienceAtRHP



plenty of new bird species, red fox and deer throughout the park evidenced by their tracks if not by sight.

Also, keep a keen eye for nature's beautiful icy puddles, icicles, as well as the freezing and thawing waterfalls.

We hope you'll share your experience with our hashtag #DiscoverYourOutdoorExperienceAtRHP

Winter is traditionally the time for warm sweaters, cozy blankets and hot chocolate. It's symbolic for the season and a way to keep warm and find comfort in the cold, oftentimes frigid temps. However, keeping warm AND enjoying the outdoors is worth the experience! Get up and get moving! Bundle up in layers, slip on some comfortable boots and come #DiscoverYourOutdoorExperienceAtRHP by taking a stroll through The Preserve.

If you're more adventurous, and hearty in the cold weather, take on a lengthier hike and observe the new sights and sounds of winter. Beaver are more active this time of year and are sometimes seen at the Upper Lake. There are also



Richfield Heritage Preserve eNEWSLETTER EDITOR

Richfield Heritage Preserve is looking for an editor for its bimonthly eNewsletter. The successful candidate will be responsible for all aspects of content, which includes: editorial calendar development, writing copy (stories, headlines, cut lines, bylines), managing edits from the editorial team, providing final copy and a rough layout for the graphic designer, as well as interfacing with the designer to complete the publication. Excellent writing and editing skills are a must, as well as an understanding the writing style and goals of this form of communication.

BASIC QUALIFICATIONS:

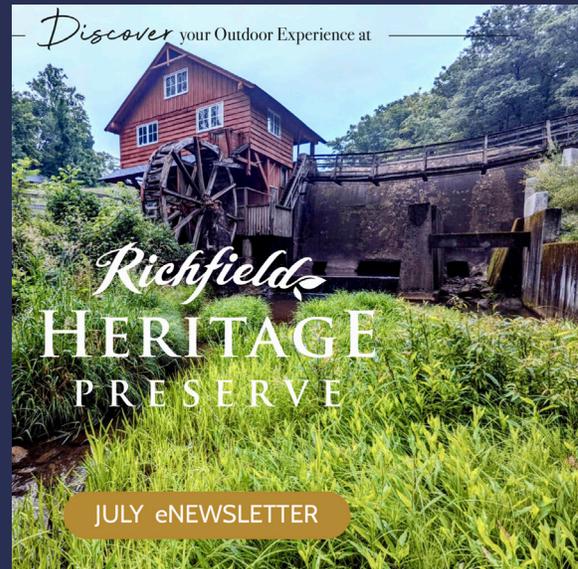
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Detail oriented & proactive
- Works independently
- Strong communicator with a can-do, positive attitude and a strong desire to get things done

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Collaborate with RHP Park Director to brainstorm content topics.
- Write stories, blurbs and ghost write as needed.
- Delegate assignments to copywriters to create original content for upcoming issues.
- Create and follow development schedules for all assigned content, and track projects from conception through publication/release, providing updates to the park director as appropriate.
- Edit all content submissions for accuracy and cohesiveness of brand, style, tone, and voice.
- Edit and proofread content for spelling, grammar and punctuation
- Manage the content calendar
- Create and contribute content to increase and enhance social media presence on current and emerging platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

EDUCATION:

Bachelor's (or working toward degree preferred)



EXPERIENCE:

Previous as an editor, copywriter or content marketer preferred

WORK LOCATION:

- Fully Remote
- Work at your own pace to meet set deadlines

TO APPLY:

Please submit your cover letter and resume to RHP Park Director David Green at park-director@rjrd.org

WINTER EVENTS IN FULL SWING At The LODGE

The LODGE at Richfield Heritage Preserve is hosting events year around, including the winter months where our cozy, rustic venue can transform into a beautiful location for your next event.

For more information, please contact us by emailing us at thelodge@rjrd.org OR check out our website for information and available dates at <https://www.richfieldheritagepreserve.com/reserve-the-lodge.html>

PHOTO SHOOT with Our Dream Vendor Team:

Venue: @thelodgevenue

Mobile bar + inside bar + cocktails: @the_thirsty_goose

Custom wooden tables + backdrops: @vicarsbuiltrentals

Arches + backdrops: @andersonaestheticsdecor

Seating Lounge + tablescapes + design: @the_brass_poppy

Florals: @csideflorist

Custom Stationery + signage: @plumeandpaperweddings

Custom Calligraphy + signage: @brennaclairecalligraphy

Photography: @juliekruftphotography, @malloryannphotography_ @lilliantaylorphotography, @r.a.w_image_photography, @lightscamerajacksonphotography and @emilyreenephotography

Earrings: @buckeye_clay

MUA: @amandamakeupartistry

Models: @amybandwen, @shelley_bohrer, @kragmom, @catherine.chris, @hae_millz and @kevbrah

#holidayseason #thethirstygoose #christmasseason #thelodge #cocktailparties #parkvenue #lodgevenue #lodgeweddingvenue



RICHFIELD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HONORS Richfield Joint Recreation District



The Richfield Chamber of Commerce recognizes a business each year for beautification of their property. The board recently voted unanimously to honor the Richfield Joint Recreation District for continuous efforts since 2014 to improve Richfield Heritage Preserve for the enjoyment of all who visit.

One of the stated goals of the Richfield Chamber of Commerce is to bring all segments of the Richfield community together. We are hoping this recognition will serve that purpose.

Board members of the RJRD will be present to receive this recognition at the Chamber's annual recognition dinner which is being held this year on Wednesday, January 12th.

Use this link to sign up to attend!

<https://richfieldchamber.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Banquet-Invite-2022-PUBLIC.pdf>

NATURE CAN HEAL HIKES

Spending time in nature can have many health benefits, especially when you are more mindful of your surroundings. Dr. Joe Blanda, a recently retired physician, led two introductory mindful nature immersion walks this past year.

While on a slow slow pace, Blanda delves into a deeper discussion of its benefits. These popular hikes were followed by conversation and tea, allowing for questions to be answered and thoughts to be pondered.

“As a new park and a staff of one full-time employee, it is vital to develop partnerships with individuals, local park systems and universities,” states RHP Park Director David Green. “Programming and the desire to learn, brings many people to the park to enjoy it in a variety of ways.”

