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# Richfield HERITAGE PRESERVE

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER eNEWSLETTER

Photograph taken by  
Kathy Donchess



Garfield Hall

## A Message from Mark Robeson

*Park Board Member*

Since our last issue of the Richfield Heritage Preserve eNews, we have had several important developments with respect to the management of the park. First, and perhaps most importantly, we have hired a new park director, John Piepsny. We welcomed John on August 8th. With his extensive background in park administration he fills a newly-created joint position between Richfield Heritage Preserve and the Richfield Village Park system.

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Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve

## “ONE IN A MILL-ION” CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

The Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve (Friends) are holding a “One in a MILL-ion Centennial Celebration” on Sunday, October 16, 2022, from 2:30-7:30 p.m., in The Lodge at Richfield Heritage Preserve. The celebration is to honor the legacy of well-known inventor James Kirby---who held over 150 patents and resided on the property in the early 1900s---to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the mill he built there to generate electricity for his home and workshop,

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## Eagle Scouts Make a Significant Difference at Richfield Heritage Preserve!

By Susan Czaplicki, RHP Volunteer Coordinator

Over the past eight years, 25 Eagle Scout projects have been completed at Richfield Heritage Preserve. The projects impacted multiple areas of the park and have helped improve park amenities, visitor experience as well as protect natural resources and wildlife, all while developing the scout’s leadership and problem-solving skills.

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BLUEBIRDS



INVASIVES



NEW PARK DIRECTOR



WINTER WONDERS



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FROM THE PARK



THE LODGE

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**RICHFIELD**  
Joint Recreation District

# A Message from Your RJRD Board Member Mark Robeson

Since our last issue of the Richfield Heritage Preserve eNews, we have had several important developments with respect to the management of the park. First, and perhaps most importantly, we have hired a new park director, John Piepsny. We welcomed John on August 8th. With his extensive background in park administration he fills a newly-created joint position between Richfield Heritage Preserve and the Richfield Village Park system. This position allowed us to make our compensation package more competitive and created budget savings which we can apply to other much needed areas of park administration. We are thrilled to have John on board and are confident he will provide excellent leadership for the park.

Second, our strategic planning initiative facilitated by Kelly Coffman from Cleveland Metroparks continued with a community survey. The results, shared for the first time at the August board meeting, provided important feedback from the public that will guide the park's future development. Responses from both residents and regional non-residents were consistent – the most popular uses of the park included hiking and other passive recreational activities, nature education, and rentals of The LODGE for events. There will be a special RHP Strategic Planning Workshop on Tuesday, September 13th at 6 p.m. at The LODGE. I encourage everyone in the community to attend, as your participation and feedback are vital to the overall success of the plan. This process will continue throughout the fall with a final report expected to be released in December.

Also, if you have taken a recent hike on our portion of the Buckeye Trail, you may have noticed changes in the area behind Garfield Hall. Volunteers from CESO, an Akron-based environmental design and civil engineering firm, chose our park for their annual Community Impact Day. Volunteers removed exterior siding, hundreds of nails, and assisted in the demo and initial clean-up of the old, dilapidated addition behind Garfield Hall. RHP volunteers, assisted by the park's maintenance technician

Chris Moore, then worked for several weeks after CESO to finish removing wood and debris from the site. As a result of these efforts, visitors can now see the back wall of the original structure, with its beautiful two-story stone fireplace. The clean-up is yet another of the many volunteer-based projects led by RHP Volunteer Coordinator Susan Czaplicki. I encourage you to hike the trail soon and check out the new area. And if you or your employer are interested in volunteering at the park you can contact Susan at [volunteer-info@rjrd.org](mailto:volunteer-info@rjrd.org)

Rentals of The LODGE continue to increase since many improvements and enhancements were made, making it a more attractive venue. A recent Open House, hosted by the park's event coordinator Shari Green, showcased the many new features that make this building an ideal location for events and special occasions of every kind. Many thanks to our event-related partners, including Olesia's Taverne of Richfield, who participated and provided refreshments. I invite you to consider The LODGE if you're planning an important event – Shari would be glad to assist you. You may get in touch with her at [TheLodge@rjrd.org](mailto:TheLodge@rjrd.org)

The Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve continue their support of the park through their many events, curated tours and hard work. You may have seen them working, often under a very hot sun, clearing invasive species at the upstream end of the lower lake. In addition to removing invasive species, they discovered valuable natives that had not been seen in the park previously coming back in areas that have been reclaimed from the invasives. What a wonderful payoff to all their hard work!

Thanks to all of you who have come for a hike with your families or dogs, had a picnic in one of the pavilions, participated in one of our many programming activities, attended one of the tours offered by our Friends group, or did some horseback riding on one of the bridle trails. There are so many ways to enjoy Richfield Heritage Preserve. I hope that you will return soon!

As always, we look forward to hearing from you and hope to see you soon at RHP!

# “ONE IN A MILL-ION” Centennial Celebration October 16th

By Karen Smik, Vice President  
Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve

The Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve (Friends) are holding a “One in a MILL-ion Centennial Celebration” on Sunday, October 16, 2022, from 2:30-7:30 p.m., in The Lodge at Richfield Heritage Preserve. The celebration is to honor the legacy of well-known inventor James Kirby--- who held over 150 patents and resided on the property in the early 1900s---to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the mill he built there to generate electricity for his home and workshop, and to raise funds to help complete the restoration of the mill. In 1937, James Kirby sold his property--- including the mill---to the Cleveland Girl Scout Council, which converted the land into Camp Julia Crowell. For the next 70 years, the mill was a craft studio, history museum, gathering place and inspiration for young women. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Kirby’s Mill is a beloved fixture in Richfield Heritage Preserve.

The tailgate-themed, adults-only festivity will include Northcoast Americana band Hey Mavis, dinner catered by the renowned Hofbrauhaus, an open bar, Mill tours, and a live auction. Attire is casual. Event sponsorships are available. Visit <https://www.friendsofrhp.org/sponsor-one-in-a-mill-ion-celebration.html> for detailed information. Seating is limited. Tickets are \$100 each and may be purchased, beginning September 6, through the Friends website [friendsofrhp.org](https://www.friendsofrhp.org).



Photo credit: Shane Wynn

Thom and Lisa Mandel are the event honorary chairs. Thom is CEO of Akron’s Rubber City Radio Group and serves on the board of trustees for the Ohio Association



Photo credit: Rob Kazar

of Broadcasters. The Mandels were honored by several Akron area institutions for their dedication, leadership, and generosity to the community at the 2015 “Paradise Under the Stars” event hosted by the Jewish Akron Organization. They are also long-time advocates and have served as board chairs of United Way. In 2018, United Way named its Akron headquarters the Thomas and Lisa Mandel Community Center after receiving a significant gift from the Thomas and Lisa Mandel Fund of the Morton and Barbara Mandel Family Foundation. Lisa also volunteers for many other not-for-profit organizations including Bath Volunteers for Service and WITAN. We are thrilled to have them involved with our October 16 celebration and thank them for their dedication to our efforts.

A very important role of this event is to raise additional funds for the iconic Mill’s restoration. More than \$200,000 has already been spent on the rehabilitation---including a new roof and windows as well as reconstruction of the water wheel and concrete repair of the water wheel pit and supports---but an estimated \$300,000 is still needed to complete the effort. Our vision for the working Mill includes family gatherings, school field trips, university research projects, community leadership programs, and so much more---all devoted to utilizing the rich history of Kirby’s Mill and helping to make Richfield Heritage Preserve a top education and popular tourist destination.

According to Corey Ringle, Friends president, “We have had some wonderfully successful fundraisers in the past thanks to the community and the park’s supporters! We are excited for this next step in fundraising and restoring Kirby’s Mill to inspire young people and future solution finders!” When asked about the event, RJRD board chair Anita Gantner remarked that “Friends of RHP have an unparalleled commitment to and love for our park. Their work on, and dedication to, the Kirby’s Mill project is just the latest demonstration of that commitment. Please join us in our efforts to turn the Mill into an educational and multi-cultural destination.”

# Eagle Scouts Make a Significant Difference

By Susan Czaplicki  
RHP Volunteer Coordinator

Over the past eight years, 25 Eagle Scout projects have been completed at Richfield Heritage Preserve. The projects impacted multiple areas of the park and have helped improve park amenities, visitor experience as well as protect natural resources and wildlife, all while developing the scout's leadership and problem-solving skills.

Several Eagle Scout projects enhanced park amenities and improved visitor experience by the addition of four ADA and two standard picnic tables, installing trash can brackets, and installing dog waste bag holders. Park visitors can now enjoy the beautiful scenery at the Upper and Lower Lakes thanks to several wooden benches that were strategically placed to enhance lake views. The addition of five Adirondacks chairs that encircle a new fire pit at The LODGE greatly enhances the area. Trail improvements included building steps and improving drainage on the Story Book Forest Trail, as well as building and installing five bridges to protect the park's streams.



Projects that improved the park's shelters included reroofing and repainting Windy Hill Shelter, building steps and an access ramp at Mable Smith Shelter, building three wooden trash can boxes to deter animals from getting in the trash, and a firewood storage structure. Eagle Scout projects also included refurbishing two latrines and the removal of two latrines beyond repair.

A new self-guided orienteering course allows park visitors the opportunity to test their navigation skills thanks to an Eagle Scout who designed and installed the course. Thanks to a new entrance sign on Oviatt Road, park visitors are easily able to locate the Summer Barn entrance.



In addition, three Eagle Scouts projects helped to preserve and protect the park's wildlife by building and installing bat boxes, bluebird boxes, a chimney swift tower, wood duck boxes, and planting of two pollinator gardens to attract bees.

Scouts chose RHP for their Eagle Scout project for a variety of reasons. Several of the scouts wanted to give back to the community, and help the community more easily enjoy their local park while doing something to help the park. For some, their previous camping experience at RHP played an important role in selecting their Eagle Scout project. Other reasons include their past experiences at RHP completing service projects, working with other Eagle Scouts on their projects, or just hearing good things about working with people at RHP on Eagle Scout Projects. One scout stated he wanted to do a project to help an organization that had similar views as his on protecting nature.

RHP is extremely grateful for the difference Eagles Scouts have made to the park! We invite you to visit the park to view the impact Eagle Scouts have made.

If you are interested in learning more about the Eagle Scout program at RHP, please contact the RHP Volunteer Coordinator at [volunteer-info@rjrd.org](mailto:volunteer-info@rjrd.org).



# Bluebird Monitoring Program at Richfield Heritage Preserve

By Sheri Scott  
RHP Bluebird Coordinator



If you enjoy hiking at RHP, you may have noticed nest boxes mounted on poles throughout the property. A total of 17 boxes have been constructed and installed since 2018, thanks to the work of local Scouts. A bluebird monitoring program at the park was initiated last year.

The bluebird has always been a favorite among bird lovers, and the decline of their population in the early 20th century became a source of concern. Causative factors included loss of habitat due to urbanization, and competition with non-native House Sparrows and Starlings for appropriate nesting sites. Bluebirds are cavity-nesting birds, preferring natural cavities in trees as well as holes made by woodpeckers.

Dr. Thomas E. Musselman, of Illinois, is credited with the birth of the “Bluebird Trail” movement in the 1930’s, erecting over one hundred of his own boxes along country roads. Nature enthusiasts and scientists have continued the practice, effectively boosting bluebird populations to healthy levels.

The open areas at RHP, surrounded by trees, are ideal habitat for bluebirds. During mating season, their diet consists mainly of caterpillars, beetles, crickets, grasshoppers, and spiders. They eat berries of native trees and shrubs during the Fall and Winter, and may be attracted to dried mealworms offered at feeders.

The monitoring season runs from March to late August/September. Volunteer bluebird monitors check their assigned boxes at least weekly, to log nesting activity and identify problems such as predation and repair needs. Monitors enter information into NestWatch, a nationwide citizen science database created by The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. NestWatch data is used to study the condition of breeding bird populations and how they may be changing over time.

Over the past two seasons of monitoring at RHP, there have been many successful broods of bluebird offspring, as well as tree swallows and house wrens. Many thanks are due to our trained volunteers, who help maintain safe habitat for these native cavity-nesting birds. In support of our efforts, we respectfully ask guests to not approach or open nest boxes.

If you are interested in joining next year’s Bluebird Monitoring crew, please contact Susan at [volunteer-info@rjrd.org](mailto:volunteer-info@rjrd.org).

# THE THRILL OF THE HUNT

By Lynn Scholle Richardson, Secretary/Historian  
Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve

Richfield Heritage Preserve has been open to the public for seven years, but it is still revealing hidden treasures. Native wildflowers, not previously known in the park, have been found hiding beneath the briars of invasive plants.

The Invasive Species Crew has been spending most of the summer battling the multiflora rose that covers much of the park. One day this past July, we were working on a removal project when we came across a small patch of different roses. They had pink flowers in full bloom instead of the white, June-blooming flowers of a multiflora. They had only three leaflets per leaf instead of the seven that grow on multiflora roses. We left them untouched except for a sample branch we took to research. It turned out to be prairie rose (*Rosa setigera*), a species native to Ohio. Halleluja! A good guy holding its own amid the baddies!

Only a few days later we came across a thriving colony of strange looking yellow and orange flowers that looked like small, exploded daffodils. Praying that they were not some new, exotic problem, we took pictures and a sample. Thankfully, it was another native species: Shrubby St. John's Wort (*Hypericum prolificum*). This species was not included on either of the two wildlife studies of the park that were commissioned by the Western Reserve Land Conservancy in 2014. They may have gone unnoticed at the time (easy to do when they are not in bloom) or they have arrived since then. Either way, they belong in Ohio.

Sometimes these "discoveries" are well known inhabitants of the park, but we are always happy to come across survivors persisting in spite of the invasives. Studies have shown that when invasives are removed, native plants that have endured in the seed bank are able to reemerge.

As I write, our work has focused on the shoreline of the recently restored Lake Jinelle. We have cleared a large swath of invasives from the head of the lake and are anxious to see what will come back on its own. So far, we've been happy to find natives great lobelia, jewelweed, and fringed yellow loosestrife. The orange stuff that looks like silly string on the edge of the lake is a native form of dodder. Swamp milkweed is beginning to thrive there, interspersed among stands of goldenrod and common milkweed. The spectacularly beautiful swamp rose mallow has returned.



# Meet John Piepsny

## RHP's NEW Park Director

Early last month, John Piepsny was named Richfield Heritage Preserve's new park director. He comes to us with more than 26 years of experience in parks and recreation. A native of Parma, John earned his masters degree from Cleveland State University. His work experience includes parks and recreation for the City of Brunswick as well as the Lorain County Metroparks. Most recently, he was the director of parks & recreation for Cheltenham Township in Pennsylvania. While there he was able to bring Cheltenham's parks and recreation department into a new vision to meet the needs of young families.

When asked what interested him in this combined Richfield Joint Recreation District and Richfield Village park director position, John said, "The park's backstory, its historic structures, lakes, varied terrain and the unique potential for programming opportunities to complement them is exciting."

In addition to stepping into the day-to-day responsibilities of operating Richfield's 336-acre historic preserve, John is looking ahead to RHP's upcoming levy. "It is vital to the future of this property that we speak with residents and supporters so that we continue to grow in a way that is meaningful and impactful not only for this generation but for future generations as well."

When not working, John enjoys playing guitar, and attending concerts and live music. He is happy to return to northeast Ohio with his wife and three sons close to family.

John can be reached by email at [park-director@rjrd.org](mailto:park-director@rjrd.org)



Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve

# WINTER WONDERS 2022

## Saturday, December 3rd



Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve will be hosting “Winter Wonders” in The Lodge on Saturday, December 3, 2022, 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Homemade Christmas cookies will be available for purchase and several vendors will be offering their handcrafted items. Horse-drawn carriage rides (\$10 for adults, \$5 for children ages 2-12, and free for children under 2) will take place from 12-2 p.m. and photo ops with Sunny the Reindeer Horse from 11 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Father Christmas and his elves will be riding the trails and handing out candy canes to park visitors between 2-4 p.m. Free nature crafts, cookie decorating, face painting and storytelling will be available for our younger guests. Friends merchandise will be sold, and refreshments will be offered. For detailed information, visit [friendsofrhp.org](http://friendsofrhp.org).

# PHOTOS from THE PRESERVE

Images shared on our Facebook page from the past several months. THANK YOU to our RHP Volunteers for making our park a beautiful and fun place to be!



*Photos from RHP's Facebook Page:  
Nicole Farley & Susan Czaplicki*

# The LODGE

## Versatile Venue for your Special Occasion

The Lodge at Richfield Heritage Preserve was decorated quite eerily for a recent Friday the 13th wedding. A coffin arch, spider webs, vintage horror film posters and skeletons helped to create the spooky wedding ambience. Ty and Ashley Morgan have always had a love for vintage horror films and Halloween, so they decided to incorporate the creepy theme into their nuptials. The bridal party and all guests dressed up for the fun occasion and the Richfield Heritage Preserve was the perfect backdrop for all of the bridal portraits. Ty and Ashley were very happy with their wedding experience at The Lodge at Richfield Heritage Preserve and look forward to referring others to The Lodge.

The Lodge is perfect for all types of events and weddings. For more information about renting The Lodge for your next event, contact Shari Green at [thelodge@rjrd.org](mailto:thelodge@rjrd.org)

