



**John Pribonic, Mayor**

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## **2018 YEAR IN REVIEW**

### **OVERVIEW**

Our Parks & Recreation department offers a wide variety of programs and we maintain diverse facilities for outdoor recreation. With our broad range of programs, events and activities, as well as our many facilities, local residents find no shortage of recreational opportunities in Stow.

” Did you know that on average, 30% of our time is spent on leisure/recreational activities?

And, as a community, we are rich with an abundance of recreational amenities. There are 10 parks in our community, encompassing over 400 acres of parkland. This network of parkland offers up quite a variety of recreational opportunities for local residents. These amenities include fishing lakes, ballfields, miles of hiking trails, four lit tennis courts, four basketball courts, six-to-eight soccer fields. In our PREVIEW booklet, one will find a detailed list of our parks and their locations.

The Stow park system also features playgrounds in nine parks, picnic tables in all ten parks, two rental picnic shelters, two rental lodges, a 27-site campground, a 200-plot community garden, a nationally recognized dog park, lots of woods as well as plenty of open space for throw-together games, and more.

## **CAMPGROUND**

Silver Springs Campground is one of only a few municipally operated campgrounds in Ohio. 2018 marked the 43rd year of operation. The last five years have been the top busiest years in our campground history boasting 2,326 campsite rentals for 2018, down from 2,960. We had a delayed opening by three weeks, with April being one of the rainiest starts to a camping season.

In 2018, 34% of all campers were Stow residents, and another 31% were nonresidents within an hour's drive. The balance was comprised of non-residents visiting from adjacent communities, and visitors from across the U.S. (as well as from Australia, Brazil, Canada, England, France).

## **BOW WOW BEACH**

The twelve-year-old Bow Wow Beach dog park continues to be visited by large numbers of pets and owners from all over the area. It has often been rated among the "Top Ten Dog Parks in the U.S." (*Dog Fancy* magazine), listed in the "Top Ten Must-See Dog Parks in the U.S." (*Everydog* magazine), as well as being the Number One pick of *Dogster* Magazine (September 2017 issue). Thank you to the following businesses for sponsoring our dog park: StowNut Donut & Diner, Camp Bow Wow, Pet Supplies Plus, Stow Smiles Family Dental, Wiggle Butt Inn, Sit Means Sit, and Metropolitan Veterinary Hospital.

Our mission over these last few years remains the same: Keep it simple, as in, just one or two events at the park. The rest of the season is low key and meant for the enjoyment of our canine friends and their owners. Water quality was not an issue in 2018, even with above average warm temperatures. This was due to preemptive lake water treatment, and the addition of an aeration system in 2016.

## **PROGRAM PARTICIPATION**

We strive to offer fun and interesting programs to a wide audience, programs that improve the quality of life for our residents and promote physical health. In all, 2018 Program participation totaled over 6,300 registrations for over 221 programs and events. Below, are some of those programs.

## **SENIOR PROGRAMS**

Did you know that almost 30% of Stow's population is comprised of Senior adults age 55+? Seniors were the focus of over 1,100 hours of recreational programming by the parks & recreation department in 2018. Many of our senior programs were held at the Stow Senior Center and include ongoing activities, special events, outdoor activities, bus trips, fitness, educational programs and more.

Our Senior Newsletter is published by our department every two months and goes out to a mailing list of hundreds of senior households. When that newsletter hits those mailboxes, we see an immediate uptick in registrations for senior Programs. Many of these programs will sell out, and our customers just want to make sure they get in!

Senior special events are also very popular, with the Price is Right Luncheon, the Spring Fling & the Fall Fling Dances, monthly movie night with dinner, and a few seasonal decorating and craft events to name a few. Our Senior Recreation Programs are the envy of many other communities. Kathy McConnell from the staff is routinely contacted by other communities that wish to start or strengthen senior programs.

## **COMMUNITY BUS TRIPS**

The Parks & Recreation Department bus logged Over 5,000 miles in the past year. It was used for 60+ Community Bus Trips (including a variety of museums and tours including historic homes with lunch stops at a local restaurant, Amish country, Playhouse Square, Porthouse Theatre, Cleveland Botanical Gardens, Severance Hall and the IX Center Home & Garden Show). Our Lunch Bunch program, which is also well-liked by senior adults who travel out of town each month on the bus for a destination lunch. More than 1,750 registrations were taken this past year for bus trips alone, bringing in revenue of over \$45,000.

## **YOUTH PROGRAMS**

Our popular youth Summer Day Camp program provides an active, fun, diverse opportunity for children to spend their summer days. A well-trained staff of counselors that are teachers and/or education majors provides a structured, safe environment for youth campers. Last year, close to 600 registrations were taken for this program over the course of the summer.

Another youth program that is well-received is our youth basketball program. It remains central to our youth sports programming. Over 400 grade school boys & girls participated in the traditional seasonal Fall program, which saw the addition of a kindergarten through second grade training program that was very well received. Our Outdoor Summer basketball program was also well-received by boys and girls alike, with more than 80 registrations.

## **COMMUNITY GARDENS**

The Community Gardens at Silver Springs Park offers more than 170 garden plots to local children and adults, and is one of the largest community garden programs in northeast Ohio. This program not only provides users with education and recreation benefits associated with gardening, but many gardeners contribute locally grown produce to area food banks.

## **OTHER PROGRAMS**

Other programs worth noting include our fitness classes, ballroom dance, Men's Softball, Pickleball, Astronomy, Youth Volleyball, Adult and Youth Tennis, and Instructional Golf.

## **EVENTS**

The Parks & Recreation Department offers both small and large community events for our residents to participate in. We excel at providing this type of recreational opportunity. A few examples include:

**Fishing Derby:** More than 200 children and 150 adults participated in last year's 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Fishing Derby. In cooperation with the Summit Sportsman's Association, area youth have the opportunity to come out to Heritage Lake and receive instruction on how to fish. Snacks, bait, tackle are provided. And, there is a good chance that a participant will walk from the prize drawing with a rod and reel! Thank you to local business, EnviroScience for sponsoring the derby, and for providing an onsite educational fish display for the participants.

**Stow Firecracker Run:** 2018 marked the 40th running of this event. There were almost 400 participants in last year's annual Firecracker Run. This event is steeped in tradition in our community, taking place the same day as our parade. Thank you to FOGG Corporate Properties, AudioTechnica, Marhofer Chevrolet, Floor Coverings International, Hope Homes Foundation, and Robeks for sponsoring the run this year.

The **annual Stow Fourth of July Parade** celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> year with the 2018 marching, featuring 130 entries including music, floats, marching units, and much more. In all, approximately 2,000 people participated in having a unit in the parade, and the parade route was lined by tens of thousands of spectators. The theme was "Welcome to the Sixties". Thank you to the following sponsors for supporting our parade: Struktol Company, StowNut Donut & Diner, Marhofer Chevrolet, Mickey Thompson Tires, REdmon Funeral Home, Audio Technica, Tri State Tool and Die, and NMG Aerospace.

**Stow Summer Sunset Blast:** The twelfth year of this event featured a refreshed itinerary of activities and entertainment, including a DJ Party, a rockin' performance by the Grand Avenue Band, Bubble Soccer, a petting zoo, rock climbing wall, and of course inflatables galore, food trucks, community groups and other vendors. The great fireworks show was once again the cornerstone of the event. Thank you to the following sponsors for supporting this event: Struktol Company, EnviroScience, AudioTechnica, Marhofer Chevrolet.

Our Annual **Trick or Treat Street** Halloween event at City Hall has grown in popularity. This program offers the opportunity for very young kids to come to city hall after school and trick or treat in the warmth of the indoors. In 2018, the weather was decent, and the crowd was able to move outside somewhat and enjoy sidewalk chalk art, fire trucks and police vehicles. Inside, there was a meet & greet with characters, lots of trick or treating, a pumpkin craft, and more.

The City, as well as the Parks & Recreation Department are in partnership with, and provide support for numerous community events that are brought forth by outside entities and community organizations. In 2018, some of those events included:

- Stow Harvest Festival – Stow Historical Society
- PawFest – Stow-Munroe Falls Lions Club
- Junior Firefighter Obstacle Course – Stow Safety Forces Relay for Life Team
- Family Movie Night – Stow-Munroe Falls Community Foundation
- Regional Cross Country Meet – Stow-Munroe Falls High School
- Various road races – Raccoon Run, Mummy Run, Great New Year's Eve Race, Holy Family 5K
- Kandy Kane Express Holiday Festival

## **FACILITY USAGE**

Parks & Recreation rental facilities are always well-used. Lakeview Shelter and Oak Tree Shelter at Silver Springs Park had almost 200 bookings during their 26-week warm-weather season last year. Silver Springs Lodge and Heritage Barn accounted for almost 500 bookings during the year. The indoor lodges are used for wedding receptions, school reunions, anniversary/graduation parties, theatre productions, company meetings and more, plus our recreation programs. The facilities are heavily used by community organizations for a variety of events.

## **MARKETING**

The department continues to utilize Facebook, our Preview booklet, Senior Newsletter, local newspaper, regional newspaper, and our website to promote our programs, events and activities to the community.

## **STAFF**

All of these programs, events and activities are organized and implemented by the department's small but mighty staff. The full time staff (four of us) is supplemented by part-time staff that are committed, motivated and talented individuals that provide support to the work of our department. Three of the full time staff, including myself, are professional programmers. Each of us has a four year degree in Recreation, and combined possess more than 90 years of experience.

## **LOOKING FORWARD**

2019 promises to be a vibrant, energized year with Mayor John Pribonic at the helm of our organization. We look forward to well-planned, well-organized and well-attended programs, events and facilities; continued upsurge in energy for Stow Summer Sunset Blast, a wonderful parade with the theme of "Freedom is...", celebration of the 41<sup>th</sup> running of our Firecracker Run, increased partnerships with outside entities and organizations, and potentially a few new program offerings.