This month's blog
4 Trails Where You Can Take a Time Out—
https://blog.greatparks.org/2021/02/4-trails-where-you-can-take-a-time-out/

Happy National Volunteer Week!
April 18–20

Volunteer Spotlight

HANISHA GALI
Years of Service – 4 months

What is your favorite volunteer activity? I have lots of favorite volunteer activities such as meadow management, native plant relocation, and honeysuckle control at Hedgeapple trail. Amongst them all, my favorite is honeysuckle removal. A key trick I learned to recognizing honeysuckle is identifying how the leaves grow on the stem. If the leaves are in the opposite direction, that indicates it is a honeysuckle plant. I also enjoy taking care of the trails and help reducing the amount of invasive plants.

What might we be surprised to know about you? I am currently a sophomore at Mason High School and a red belt in “BUDO Taijutsu” Martial arts. I have been a Martial Arts Student since 2018 and hope to earn my black belt.

What is your life motto? “Time is precious, spend it wisely.” This motto serves an important message that everyone should take note of. Time flies by in a blink of an eye and it is important to be present in the moment and enjoy life.

Skyward Academy Launch Pad returns to Highfield Discovery Garden!

Doug Stevenson, Highfield Discovery Manager

Last August, I was approached by a teacher from Skyward Academy’s Launch Pad program about possible volunteer opportunities for their teens and young adults at Highfield Discovery Garden. Having previous experience working with similar agencies in the past, and knowing that there is always work that needs to be done around the garden, I did not hesitate to start this mutually beneficial relationship.

Skyward Academy is a full time, customized school program for students with various learning challenges starting from age 10 through high school diploma and graduation. The Launch Pad is a transition-to-adulthood program for students who are 18 to 22 years old. The students in this program have completed their Ohio graduation requirements to obtain a high school diploma, but before graduating, have chosen to continue getting experience in real-life activities, daily living skills, and employment opportunities.

Despite moving into the colder months, not to mention the challenges that COVID-19 had introduced, we were all excited to get started. Since most of the gardens around Highfield were beginning their phase of winter dormancy, we decided to start with invasive species removal in our wooded areas, specifically bush or Amur honeysuckle. The students were happy to meet us and get started learning the skills needed for their new adventure. Since then, the students have not only made an impact on our natural areas by removing invasive species, but have helped in other beneficial tasks such as picking up litter and removing old or unused tree tubes.

I recently received the call that the Launch Pad participants would be returning to Highfield in 2021. Both myself and the other staff members who have had the privilege of helping these students were glad to hear that we would be working together again to make a positive impact on the park and hopefully, enrich their lives in the process. Thanks Skyward Launch Pad! We are looking forward to another great year!
April Volunteer Opportunities

*If you would like to participate in any of the below opportunities, but have not yet completed the COVID-19 training, contact Lauren McClure at lmcclure@greatparks.org.

For all Stew Crew projects – participants should bring work gloves, a facemask (to be worn if 6-feet physical distance cannot be maintained), hand sanitizer, insect repellent, water, snacks and wear long pants, boots or sturdy shoes. Tools will be provided.

Don’t forget to RSVP – Due to COVID-19 health and safety protocols, we are limiting group sizes for volunteer projects. Drop-ins are no longer permitted.

Link to parks and park maps – https://www.greatparks.org/parks
Link to record your service hours – https://app.betterimpact.com/Login/Login

**Invasive Plant Removal at Mitchell Memorial**
Thu 4/1, 9–11 a.m.
Volunteers and staff will be removing invasive plant species from Mitchell Memorial Forest. The main focus will be working on invasive plants in higher quality natural areas near the Mountain Bike Trail to help preserve the natural beauty of these forested hills. Meet at the Mitchell Memorial Maintenance Building. To volunteer, contact Ben Braeutigam at bbraeutigam@greatparks.org or phone 937-405-6212. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Stew Crew-Mitchell Memorial Forest [C&P/West]]

**A Weekend Opportunity! Preserving Natural Areas at Winton Woods**
Sat 4/3, 11 a.m.–2 p.m.
The focus of this project will be removing invasive honeysuckle in the woods behind the youth camp. The Winton Woods team has been working to restore over a hundred acres to its natural state. We need your help to find honeysuckle that might have been missed in areas we have worked in. So far we have restored over forty acres, and with your help we can clear even more and create a more natural habitat for our plants and animals. Meet at Possum Run Youth Camp across from The Mill on Sharon Road. To volunteer, contact Jaimie Martin at jmartin@greatparks.org or phone 631-334-3876. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Stew Crew-Winton Woods [C&P/Central]]

**Garlic Mustard Pull at Withrow Nature Preserve**
Tue 4/6, 9–11 a.m.
Garlic mustard, a biennial plant, was introduced in the 1800s as a cooking herb. This out-of-control plant is outcompeting our natives by colonizing areas of our forests. The seeds remain viable for up to 10 years. Join the Woodland Mound Conservation & Parks team in the ongoing fight against garlic mustard. These plants are easily pulled before going to seed, and we need your help removing these invasive plants to give our native woodland flowers a chance to grow. Meet at the Withrow Nature Preserve parking lot. To volunteer, contact Dan Hart at dhart@greatparks.org or phone 513-250-0925. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Stew Crew-Woodland Mound Park [C&P/East]]

**Inner Loop Hike/Bike Trail and Campground Cleanup at Miami Whitewater Forest**
Tue 4/6, 9:30–11:30 a.m.
The Miami Whitewater Forest Conservation & Parks team is looking for volunteers to help clean up areas off the beaten paths on our hike/bike trail and at the campground to help prepare for the upcoming busy season. Meet at the Miami Whitewater Maintenance Building. To volunteer, contact Alex Hearing at ahearing@greatparks.org or phone 513-646-4217. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Stew Crew-Miami Whitewater [C&P/West]]

**Invasive Removal at Kroger Hill**
Wed 4/7, 8–11 a.m.
Come out to Kroger Hill and help staff with removing invasive shrubs from the woods on the hill. We will be cutting and spraying the stumps so herbicide applicators are a plus but not a requirement. Meet at the entrance to the northern portion of the property. To volunteer, contact John Walker at jwalker@greatparks.org or phone 937-302-7717. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Stew Crew-Kroger Hills [C&P/East]]

**Invasive Removal at Sharon Woods**
Wed 4/7, 9 a.m.–noon
Come to Sharon Woods to help remove invasive shrub species here in Ohio. Volunteers will assist in the removal of invasive plant species, creating better habitat for our native plants and wildlife. Learn about what invasive plants could be present in your backyards and how to properly remove them. Meet at the Lakeside Lodge parking lot. To volunteer, contact Jeremy Barkley at jbankley@greatparks.org or phone 724-814-1008. For volunteers ages 14 and up. [Stew Crew-Sharon Woods [C&P East]]
Winton Woods Clean Up
Sat 4/10, 9 a.m.–noon
Join the community cleanup that has been making a difference for over 30 years! Bring a group, your family, friends, or work solo. Removing litter from around Winton Woods Lake requires all the hands we can get. This year, litter pickup will be mini-projects of 20 or fewer participants designated at 11 sites throughout the park. To volunteer, contact Niki Marengo at nmarengo@greatparks.org or phone 513-245-7471. For volunteers of all ages. Community Projects-Winton Woods Cleanup

An Evening Opportunity! Ohio Valley Forestry Fellowship Tree Bagging Event
Wed 4/14, 3–5 p.m. and 6–8 p.m.
Ohio Valley Forestry Fellowship is teaming up with Great Parks and Taking Root for the 2021 Hamilton County Schools Tree Giveaway. Join us as we bag and box tree seedlings that will later be distributed to school students across Hamilton County and inspire the next generation to plant trees! Meet at the Glenwood Gardens Tech Center (detailed instructions on how to locate this location will be sent to you following your RSVP). To volunteer, contact Niki Marengo at nmarengo@greatparks.org or phone 513-245-7471. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Reforestation-Glenwood Gardens [Natural Resources/Central]

Invasive Plant Removal at Mitchell Memorial
Thu 4/15, 9–11 a.m.
Volunteers and staff will be removing invasive plant species from Mitchell Memorial Forest. The main focus will be working on invasive plants in higher quality natural areas near the Mountain Bike Trail to help preserve the natural beauty of these forested hills. Meet at the Mitchell Memorial Maintenance Building. To volunteer, contact Ben Braeutigam at bbraeutigam@greatparks.org or phone 937-405-6212. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Stew Crew-Mitchell Memorial Forest [C&P/West]

Garlic Mustard Pull at Glenwood Gardens
Thu 4/15, 9 a.m.–noon
We will be pulling up and bagging garlic mustard, a common invasive plant found in this area. Meet at the parking lot by the service drive gate. To volunteer, contact Shaun McClary at smccclary@greatparks.org or phone 513-869-9525. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Stew Crew-Glenwood Gardens [C&P/Central]

An Evening Opportunity! Garlic Mustard Removal at Shawnee Lookout
Thu 4/15, 6–7:30 p.m.
Garlic mustard is in full bloom, and we need your help to tackle this unwanted plant. It’s easy to identify and easy to pull, so get off that couch and get some steps in. Meet at the Miami Fort Trail. To volunteer, contact Adam McCosham at amccosham@greatparks.org or phone 513-978-7198. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Stew Crew-Shawnee Lookout [C&P/West]

A Weekend Opportunity! Garlic Mustard Pull at Withrow Nature Preserve
Sat 4/17 9 a.m.–noon
Garlic mustard, a biennial plant, was introduced in the 1800s as a cooking herb. This out-of-control plant is outcompeting our natives by colonizing areas of our forests. The seeds remain viable for up to 10 years. Join the Woodland Mound Conservation & Parks team in the ongoing fight against garlic mustard. These plants are easily pulled before going to seed and we need your help removing these invasive plants to give our native woodland flowers a chance to grow. Meet at the Withrow Nature Preserve parking lot. To volunteer, contact Dan Hart at dhart@greatparks.org or phone 513-250-0925. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Stew Crew-Withrow [C&P/East]

A Weekend Opportunity! Garlic Mustard Removal at Shawnee Lookout
Sat 4/17, 1–3 p.m.
Garlic mustard is in full bloom, and we need your help to tackle this unwanted plant. It’s easy to identify and easy to pull, so get off that couch and get some steps in. Meet at the Miami Fort Trail. To volunteer, contact Adam McCosham at amccosham@greatparks.org or phone 513-978-7198. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Stew Crew-Shawnee Lookout [C&P/West]

Invasive Removal at Francis RecreAcres
Wed 4/21, 9 a.m.–noon
Come out to the Francis Homestead to help control the invasive species found there. Volunteers will assist in the removal and treatment of invasive plant species, creating better habitat for our native plants and wildlife. Learn about what invasive plants could be present in your backyards and how to properly remove them. Meet at the Francis RecreAcres parking lot. To volunteer, contact Jeremy Barkley at j barkley@greatparks.org or phone 724-814-1008. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Stew Crew-Francis RecreAcres [C&P/East]

Fernbank Park Invasive Plant Removal
Thu, 4/22 8 a.m.–noon
Areas of Fernbank been overtaken by invasive plants. Our native plants and flowers are being smothered out and cannot flourish in this environment. Come out to help bring back our native flowers and plants! Volunteers will clear space by removing small invasive trees and
plants with hand saws and pruners around the perimeter of Fernbank. Meet at Riverview Shelter. To volunteer, contact Harry Perry at hperry@greatparks.org or phone 513-344-6102. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Stew Crew-Fernbank [C&P/West]

Ridge Access Road at Miami Whitewater Forest
Thu 4/22, 9:30–11:30 a.m.
The Miami Whitewater Forest Conservation & Parks team is looking for volunteers to help spread gravel on the access road to the scenic “Ridge” natural area. This will help make the service road more accessible for our staff when conducting natural resources work such as invasive removal. Meet at the Miami Whitewater Maintenance Building. To volunteer, contact Alex Hearing at ahearing@greatparks.org or phone 513-646-4217. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Stew Crew-Miami Whitewater [C&P/West]

Earth Day Tree Planting
Sat 4/24, 9 a.m.—noon
Join us this Earth Day as we dig into three Great Parks locations- Mitchell Memorial Forest, Withrow Nature Preserve, and Triple Creek in an effort to plant more trees! Bring a group, your family, friends or work solo. To volunteer, contact Niki Marengo at nmarengo@greatparks.org or phone 513-245-7471. For volunteers of all ages. Community Projects-Earth Day Project

A Weekend Opportunity! River Cleanup at Shawnee Lookout
Sat 4/24, 1–3 p.m.
With river levels typically a touch lower than the later winter, now is a good time to hit the river. Celebrate the earth and give it some love with an old fashioned river cleanup. Join us as we perform some much needed TLC of our bottomlands as we pick up as much garbage as we can. Meet at the boat ramp parking lot. To volunteer, contact Adam McCosham at amccosham@greatparks.org or phone 513-978-7198. For volunteers ages 14 and up. Stew Crew-Shawnee Lookout [C&P/West]

Families can Experience Highfield Discovery Garden Free through the EBT/SNAP Program

Highfield Discovery Garden in Glenwood Gardens is an oasis for children to discover, play and learn about nature. Great Parks recognizes that the cost of admission to the garden can create a barrier for families. That is why Great Parks is now offering Ohio EBT/SNAP cardholders free admission, for up to four individuals per visit, to Highfield Discovery Garden. Park guests can simply show their card with a valid ID at the Glenwood Gardens Cotswold Visitor Centre upon arrival.

The garden is designed to encourage exploration of the natural world in a fun, engaging environment. Along with an interactive 25-foot Discovery Tree, there are seven smaller gardens to explore, including Frog & Toad, Wizard and Butterfly Gardens, and a Garden Workshop. To learn more about Highfield Discovery Garden, visit https://www.greatparks.org/parks/glenwood-gardens/the-highfield-discovery-garden.

The Ohio Direction Card program allows for food assistance and free access to cultural and educational facilities with the use of the EBT/SNAP card. Cards are distributed by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services to qualifying residents. To learn more about the Ohio Direction Card program, visit https://www.connectebt.com/ebtcard/ohebt/index.jsp.

Great Parks also offers other free entry options, including free Motor Vehicle Permits for those with an Ohio EBT card and for those who served in the Armed Forces. Visit https://www.greatparks.org/about/free-entry for more information.