



# Great Parks of Hamilton County **RANGER DEPARTMENT**



## MISSION STATEMENT

"To provide a safe and pleasant atmosphere for family recreation;  
To protect and preserve life and property within the parks;  
To inform and assist the public;  
And to provide these services in a courteous and professional manner."

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2020

# Contents

Year in Review.....	4-6
Hiring & Promotions.....	8-9
Retirements & Resignations.....	10
Service Awards.....	11
Professional Recognition.....	12-13
District Summaries.....	15-22
Investigations.....	23-28
Specialized Assignments.....	30-36
Committees.....	37-40
Community Involvement.....	41-42
Department Training.....	44-46
Statistics.....	47-52

ANNUAL REPORT

2020

Year  
In  
Review

2020

17,742

Acres

~

21

Parks & Preserves

~

24 Hours a Day

365 Days a Year

Patrol



An  
Unprecedented  
Year





Our 2020 began enthusiastically with Colonel Scott Snow sworn in as our new Chief on January 6. Chief Snow came to Great Parks with over thirty years of law enforcement experience, with the last twelve years serving as the Chief of the Reading Police Department. To learn the lay of the land, he worked with the retiring Chief, Colonel Rick Spreckelmeier, until Spreckelmeier's retirement after 33 years of service on February 29.

Chief Snow hit the ground running only to have to come to a screeching halt and reverse course within weeks. Our first Great Parks communication with the dreaded C word (yes, COVID-19) was sent out March 9 with changes and updates following daily. By March 19, all Great Parks' facilities, campgrounds, golf courses, playgrounds and picnic shelters were closed to the public. All events and reservations were cancelled and a scramble was on to find an ample supply of PPE, hand sanitizer, and disinfecting wipes for all essential employees. Chief Snow issued his first directive outlining his COVID-19 Contingency & Safety Plan for the Ranger Division.

The next several months were taxing to say the least, but the Ranger Division rose to the challenge all while serving a record number of people using our Parks. Our department fielded numerous calls concerning Park visitors not socially distancing, visitors gathering in groups of more than ten, and visitors using golf courses and playground equipment closed to the public.

Our Rangers walked a fine line between handling these calls, realizing the Parks were an escape for county residents dealing with quarantine and lost jobs, and trying to limit their own exposure to the virus.

WE SURVIVED 2020!



Closed Shelter and Playground in Sharon Woods

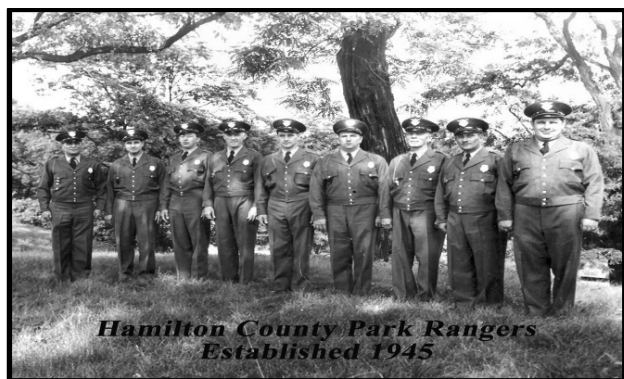
2020 also marked the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Great Parks of Hamilton County Ranger Division. Chief Snow had plans to mark this major milestone with a celebration but COVID-19 put the kibosh on that! Instead, he commissioned the design of a commemorative 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Badge that Ranger staff could then purchase and wear for the remainder of 2020 and all of 2021.



A poker chip was also designed to commemorate the anniversary.

Our Agency began in 1945 when the Hamilton County Park District Ranger Department was established by the Hamilton County Board of Park Commissioners. Prior to that, night watchmen deputized by the County Sheriff provided Park security and maintenance. The first Ranger Department was led by Captain Ed Kaucher and his two lieutenants, part-time employees Norman Kusal and Jesse Swisher, both local high school coaches. The Rangers

attended a 4-week FBI school at the County Courthouse sponsored by the County Sheriff.



For several years, the Rangers also provided educational programming for the parks. Then in the 1950s, the Park District started hiring Naturalists and the Rangers main focus became the security of our parks and the safety of our visitors.

Seventy-five years later the Great Parks of Hamilton County Ranger Division, led by Chief Snow, is comprised of a Captain, a Patrol Lieutenant, an Investigative Lieutenant, five District Sergeants, twenty-three full-time Patrol Officers, and eleven part-time Patrol Officers. All who are Ohio Certified Law Enforcement Officers. Support staff consists of two full-time Clerks and four part-time Dispatchers. The Ranger Division has five districts with a Ranger station at each district: Miami Whitewater Forest, Sharon Woods, Shawnee Lookout, Winton Woods (Ranger Headquarters) and Woodland Mound. These districts are spread out across three regions in the county, East, Central, and West, and encompass 21 parks and preserves and over 17,000 acres. Our Rangers patrol 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by car, ATV, bike, boat and foot. Our dispatch office, located in Ranger Headquarters, is open from 7:00a.m. to 10:00p.m. every day except Christmas and New Year's.



*Ranger checking on a Reserve Group in Winton Woods circa 1950s.*

*Cruiser  
circa 1953*



*Ranger  
Nature  
Program circa  
1950s*



*Cruiser Circa 2020*

In 2020, Great Parks Rangers continued their voluntary participation in the Ohio Collaborative Law Enforcement Certification program. The Ohio Collaborative standards reflect best practices in law enforcement and are aimed at maintaining professionalism and increasing public trust.

The certification process is overseen by the Ohio Criminal Justice Services. Like other certification programs; the process consists of two major components:

1. Establishing professional standards for law enforcement to meet.
2. Administering a voluntary assessment process by which law enforcement departments can be recognized for meeting best practices

Currently there are standards in eight areas of policy and operations that were organized into four groups. Having been certified in Group One prior; The Great Parks Ranger Division was certified in Group 2, Group 3 and Group 4 in 2020.

The areas of policy and operations included in those three groups are:

1. Agency Body Worn Cameras.
2. Agency Community Engagement.
3. Bias Free Policing.
4. Investigation of Employee Misconduct.
5. Vehicular Pursuits.
6. Tele Communicator Training. (Received a waiver for this standard as it was not applicable to our agency)



**Ohio Collaborative  
Community-Police Advisory Board**

For more information on the Ohio Collaborative, visit [ocjs.ohio.gov/collaborative/](https://ocjs.ohio.gov/collaborative/)

In February of 2020, Sergeant Dan Hodapp attended Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training presented by the Southwest Ohio Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). According to NAMI's website, *"The lack of mental health crisis services across the U.S. has resulted in law enforcement officers serving as first responders to most crises. A Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program is an innovative, community-based approach to improve the outcomes of these encounters."* After Sgt. Hodapp attended this extensive forty-hour training and provided feedback to our Administrative staff, the decision was made to send all Ranger personnel to this critical training. The goal was set to have all staff through Crisis Intervention Team training over the next three years. Even with most of our scheduled trainings cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19, our department was able to have a total of eleven Rangers complete this invaluable training.

## 2020

### Grants and Major Equipment Purchases:

1. The Ranger Department purchased two Ford Explorers to replace two patrol vehicles that were involved in accidents and totaled in 2020.
2. We received a grant to purchase new property room management software.
3. We received a grant to go towards the purchase of 12 sets of body armor. This grant covered the purchase of new body armor for all of our new hires and for those Rangers whose body armor was set to expire.
4. We purchased new, more functional uniform pants for all of the Rangers.
5. Continuing from December of 2019; during the first 6 months of 2020, the new Body Worn Cameras were implemented and the In-Car Cameras were installed and placed in to service.



2020

Hiring & Promotions

Retirements & Resignations

"Years of Service" Awards

Professional Recognition

**REWARD**  
**\$10,000.00**

**Wanted** - FLEEING after 33 years of service  
**The Notorious Outlaw**



Last seen riding off into the sunset from 10245 Wi

**IMMEDIATELY CONTACT**

Great Parks of Hamilton County  
 Ranger Department



**Colonel Scott Snow was sworn in as our new Chief on January 6.**



**Ranger Alecia Kammer sworn in as part-time on February 5 and promoted to full-time on May 28.**



**Ranger Jamie Jones sworn in as full-time on March 4.**



**Ranger Andrew Quine sworn in as part-time on April 8 and promoted to full-time on December 24.**



**Clerk Kait Reno was hired as a full-time Ranger Clerk on April 8.**



**Ranger John LaGory sworn in  
as part-time on April 1.**



**Ranger Jeff Larsh sworn in  
as part-time on April 1.**



**Ranger Ken Grubbs sworn in  
as part-time on May 21.**



**Ranger Zach Philibin sworn in  
as part-time on July 22.**

**We also welcomed part-time dispatcher Diane Tolle on  
June 30. Picture not Available.**



After 33 years of dedicated service to Great Parks and the citizens of Hamilton County, Colonel Rick Spreckelmeier retired February 29, 2020. He earned many promotions over the years, culminating in his promotion to Chief in 2017.

*Thank you for  
your Service!*

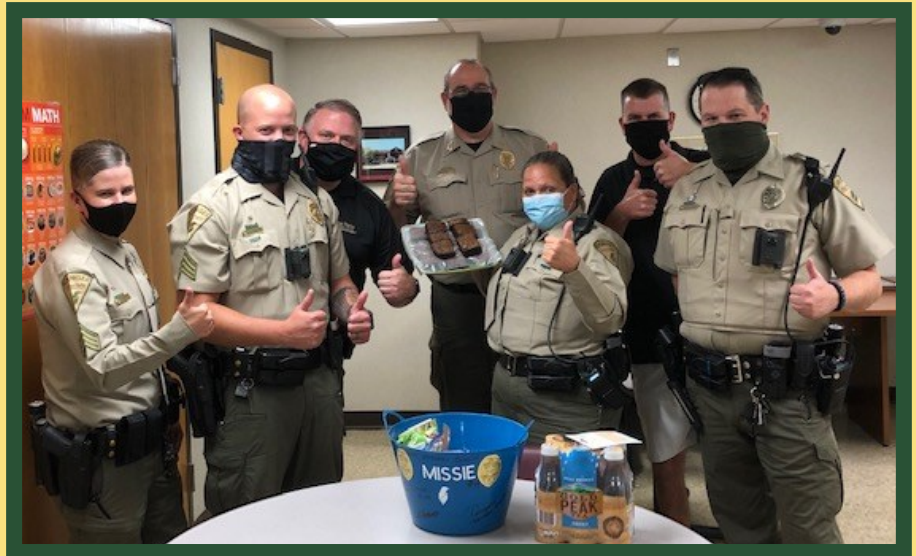
We said good-bye and best wishes to Sergeant Alex Stephens who resigned as the Winton Woods District Supervisor in November to go work for the Hamilton Township Police Department. We also said goodbye to full-time Rangers Jocelyn Binkley and Matt Randolph. Ranger Binkley resigned in May to move to Texas and Ranger Randolph resigned in October to join the Woodlawn Police Department.

Part-time Rangers Mike Long, Andrew Mueller, Ryland Reed and Chris Weed all resigned from Great Parks in 2020.

We wish them all the best!



Service Award Presentations looked a little differently in 2020. Clockwise from upper left: Ranger Jeff Tremain celebrates 30 years of service with Great Parks; Ranger Missie Shannon celebrates 20 years; Clerk Cathy Yohey celebrates 15 years; Ranger Eric Gregory celebrates 15 years.





Ranger Shawn Wright received a Letter of Commendation at the February 12 Ranger Meeting for the assistance he provided to a suicidal young man in Winton Woods the night of January 7.

Park visitors had reported to the Rangers that there was a man sitting in a tree at approximately 12-15 feet off the ground along the Great Oaks Trail. Once on scene, Ranger Wright saw where the man had a noose around his neck with the other end tied to the tree.

Ranger Wright spent the next hour talking with the man and finally convinced him to come down and get the help he needed. Ranger Wright's command of the situation that evening reflects a high commitment to his oath to *"protect life and property and to do so with a professional demeanor."*

On August 23, Ranger McCoy Lambing was dispatched to a report of a "smash and grab" at Mitchell Memorial Forest. The caller stated when she returned to her vehicle after walking a trail, her side door window was shattered and her purse stowed under the seat was missing. After calling her credit card company, she discovered several of her cards had already been used. The situation was frightening to both her and her children.

When Ranger Lambing arrived on scene, he provided the victim with information on identity theft, patiently answered questions, completed his report and made conversation with the children as a reassuring presence. Taking service to the next level, Ranger Lambing had the victim follow him to the park maintenance facility where he vacuumed the broken glass from her vehicle.

Ranger Lambing's caring demeanor and focus on the safety of the children prompted the victim to phone Ranger Headquarters to express her gratitude. Job well done Ranger Lambing!



Ranger Andrew Nealan (left) and Ranger Alecia Kammer (right) received a "Thanks" via Great Parks Facebook for their assistance given to these Park Visitors and their mom and grandmother at Sharon Woods on August 19.

The Rangers had tended to the grandmother who had been injured in a fall and assisted EMS with transporting her from the creek to the squad. Rangers Nealan and Kammer provided a calming presence to the concerned grandchildren. The mother was thankful for the distraction and impressed by the caring and professionalism demonstrated by these Rangers.

Guest Services alerted Ranger Dispatch that FedEx would be delivering a package after hours for a camper staying at the Winton Woods campground on November 5. The camper was anxious to get the package which contained a replacement credit card since he had lost his. Once the package arrived, Ranger John Patterson delivered the package directly to the camper at his campsite. When this information was relayed to Guest Services the next day, they were impressed and said Ranger Patterson went above and beyond.

Mariemont Police Chief Rick Hines extended his sincere appreciation to Sgt. Biaglow and the Great Parks of Hamilton County for their assistance during a large protest in their village on June 14. The event went off without incident and the Chief received much feedback commending the professionalism of all the Police Officers involved.

Sgt. Hodapp and his team received a note of thanks and a donation to the Great Parks Foundation for their assistance given to two Park Visitors who had lost their keys in a field at Mitchell Memorial Forest. The guests were thankful that we have *"caring & proactive people like you looking out for us."* They were also very happy they found their keys!

The Ranger Department received a letter of commendation referencing Ranger Gregory's assistance with providing tactical security as a member of the Hamilton County Police Association's SWAT Team for Hamilton County properties, protesters, and fellow officers.

The letter speaks of Ranger Gregory's undaunted courage, selfless sacrifice, and unwavering devotion to duty.



The Ranger Department was provided a sweet treat in a sour year when One Kind Cookie provided a variety of cookies for each district for the annual Cookies for a Cop campaign in October. Here Ranger Staff accept the cookies from two of their greatest supporters.

A regular Park Walker was thankful for the aid Ranger John LaGory gave to her after she suffered from light-headedness and chest pains while walking a trail at Winton Woods. She called a few weeks later to thank us and let us know that she was back walking the trail!



2020

# District Summaries & Investigations



## Sharon Woods District – East Region

Parks in this District: *Sharon Woods, Francis RecreAcres, and Lake Isabella*

Submitted by Sergeant Katie Lake,  
District Supervisor



*Waterfall at Sharon Woods. Photo Courtesy of Captain Dale Steele*

To say 2020 was an interesting year would be an understatement. It was a year unlike any other we've ever experienced in the past, and if a pandemic wasn't enough, we also endured some other pretty crazy things. We had unusual weather this spring, an increase in visitation (but a decrease in revenue – we'll talk about that more later), some creative ideas to get through challenging times, lots of closures and much more.

To start it off, let's briefly talk about the unpredictable weather that struck Sharon Woods this year. We received quite a bit of rain in the early spring which led to flooding in most



Spring flooding issues in  
Sharon Woods

of the park. Sharon Lake rose into the boat house and water from Rocky Creek made its way over the bridge leading to the main entrance of the Sharon Centre making transportation in the area a little murky. For the first time I can recall, water came up so fast it literally went everywhere; including up to the undercarriage of our cruisers parked behind the Ranger Station.

The summer was very hot and humid but it didn't keep our guests from visiting. It also kept us busy with calls for service; 2020 was one of our busiest years for reports. This year we took a couple assault reports, had several auto accidents, had a report of a person shot (which later turned into a "making a false police report" arrest), took several criminal damaging reports, and unfortunately fourteen theft from motor vehicle reports. It definitely was not a boring year.

Even though the weather was unpredictable and there was a Stay-at-Home order in place from the Governor for what felt like forever, it didn't keep people from wanting to still safely get out of their homes and enjoy their days. For a while it seemed like the parks were the only gig in town where people could go to enjoy some time outside of their homes. Even though our recreational activities were suspended most of the year we still had guests arriving every day to go for walks, runs, hikes, bike rides, etc. To help alleviate some of the hardships the pandemic was having on our community, Great Parks was kind enough to waive our motor vehicle permit requirement for much of the year and offer everyone some outdoor enjoyment at no cost. We had to get a little creative too with visitation on the rise, so, we developed a plan to make 'more trails'. It was decided that since our reserve areas were closed at Sharon Woods that our reserve loop would be opened up to foot and bike traffic since our other trails were becoming over crowded with guests. This idea was a huge success and appreciated greatly by our visitors. It seemed like every time we had a solution in place for a new guideline or order

from the state that another would come up and more creative solutions were developed.



Road closed to vehicle traffic to allow its use as a walking trail.

We weren't, however, the only ones that had to get more creative. One of our fellow neighboring communities also got more imaginative this year in trying to help give people some fun during a difficult time. One Park neighbor in particular, Blue Ash Police Department, came up with an idea to help kids and adults celebrate their birthdays in style through

a pandemic with birthday drive-bys. The drive-bys were a celebration in which police cruisers, fire trucks, squads, etc. would line up and down the street of the



birthday boy or girl and use their lights and sirens to help let everyone around know it was someone's special day. Many Rangers from Sharon Woods assisted with these parades and took great pride in knowing they helped bring so much joy to those who had to celebrate their birthday



under a Stay-at-Home order. Sharonville Police Department also was able to creatively come up with some ideas and helped local kids celebrate Halloween with a drive-up Trunk or Treat and a social distancing Meet Santa event, both in which Rangers also assisted.

Even though Sharon Woods probably underwent the most changes in the East Region this year, it doesn't mean the others went untouched. Lake Isabella and Francis RecreAcres both had some major changes themselves. During a typical spring, summer, and fall, you will find many soccer games being played at Francis RecreAcres. However, this year due to limitations on sporting events, spectators, and groups of 10 or more, soccer was nearly nonexistent. Tournaments usually fill every weekend for almost 9 months out of the year but only a few very small games were able to be held. Even though the fields and bleachers were closed a majority of 2020, we still had dedicated guests that came and used the paved trail at Francis RecreAcres.

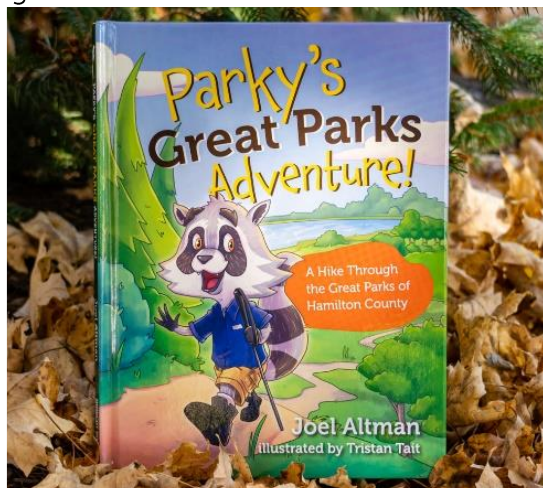
Lake Isabella is normally home to "All Night Fishing" in the summer but due to limited staff and COVID-19 concerns, the latest we allowed fishing this year was until midnight. We also usually offer camping throughout the season, but that was halted very early on and did not resume until September. It ended by November 1<sup>st</sup>. Fishermen in the area were thankful; they appreciated that we were allowing some fishing and we even held a couple of tournaments. Though Francis RecreAcres and Lake Isabella had a challenging year they were fortunately able to remain open during most of the crisis.

However, as I mentioned before, Sharon Woods in all it has to offer was not entirely as fortunate. The Sharon Centre, one of our most frequented buildings used for programs, birthday parties, events, meetings and Santa Land was hit the hardest by the pandemic and never opened. Sadly, due to safety concerns and restrictions it was decided to have the building remain closed throughout the year. The play area, classrooms, Nature's Niche and auditorium were made inaccessible to the public. Currently, the only area of the building open to the public is the

restrooms. It's been most unusual to see, especially during the winter months when Santa Land is normally set up and the Centre is teeming with kids and families.

Even though Santa Land did not occur this year, we were still thankful to have "Holiday in Lights" at Sharon Woods. The event started November 21<sup>st</sup> and ended January 2, 2021 and was as popular as usual, if not more so. With continued restrictions from the Governor, "Holiday in Lights" was one of the safest seasonal festivities to attend and people definitely took advantage of being able to get out of the house with family and friends to celebrate the holidays with one another. We also offered "Calls with Santa", which still allowed kids to have that special time with Santa but from the safety of their own home.

Lastly, to wrap things up for our District in 2020, I will say that although it was a challenging year, it was also rewarding. Despite all that we've been through as Rangers, as a department, and an agency, we made it! We worked tirelessly through all the changes, scares, obstacles, etc. We were able to still provide a level of service to our community that was appreciated and at times above the standard I think people expected during a pandemic. It's something our Rangers are honored to do and take pride in providing. We'll have to wait and see what 2021 brings.



The Children's book *Parky's Great Parks Adventure* written by Ranger Joel Altman hit the bookshelves in 2020.

## Woodland Mound District – East Region

Parks in this District: *Woodland Mound, Withrow Nature Preserve, Little Miami Golf Center, Kroger Hills, Otto Armleder Memorial Park and Little Miami Scenic Trailheads Avoca and Bass Island*

Submitted by Sergeant Tim Biaglow,  
District Supervisor



*View of the Ohio River at Woodland Mound.  
Photo Courtesy of Captain Dale Steele*

The Woodland Mound Rangers for 2020 include full time Rangers Kelly Williford, Matt Siry, Jordan Batts, Nathan Zimmerman, Kendra Keuffer and part time Ranger Craig Nance.

Through a park wide attempt to reduce theft from motor vehicles, the Rangers distributed safety tips, placed signage reminding patrons to secure their belongings and increased patrol in key areas. While vehicle break-ins remain the most troublesome crime in our District, we strive to educate the patrons to not become victims and to report suspicious activity immediately.

**PREVENT THEFT  
PREVENIR EL ROBO**



**LEAVE IT AT HOME  
DÉJALO EN CASA**



**TAKE IT WITH YOU  
LLÉVATELO CONTIGO**



**GREAT PARKS RANGER DEPARTMENT**

While crime prevention is one of our main duties we are also responsible for the protection of Wildlife. We often get calls about injured animals. In this case the call was in reference to a Great Horned Owl. It's great to get the opportunity to help out our animal friends and get such a close look at nature. This guy was caught accidentally in one of the soccer nets at Otto Armleder Park. Ranger Keuffer was the responding officer when the animal was originally caught in the net. She can be seen releasing the owl after a short rehab with Raptors Inc.



Another notable incident this year would include an auto accident on the hill exiting Woodland Mound Park towards Old Kellogg Road. A patron lost control of her vehicle and hit the guard rail. The rail had to be subsequently replaced. While no parties were injured, the guard rail prevented what could have been a serious injury as the drop off is rather steep in the area.

Another challenge we often face in our parks is rising flood waters. A lot of parks border water and flash floods can present a danger to people. Being diligent and keeping an eye out for rising flood waters to keep park patrons safe is a priority.



A patron at Otto Armleder taking advantage of the receding flood waters to get in a bit of fishing on a soccer field.

The boat ramp to the Ohio River had to be closed due to erosion issues. The river washed out the foundation to the ramp and sidewalk.



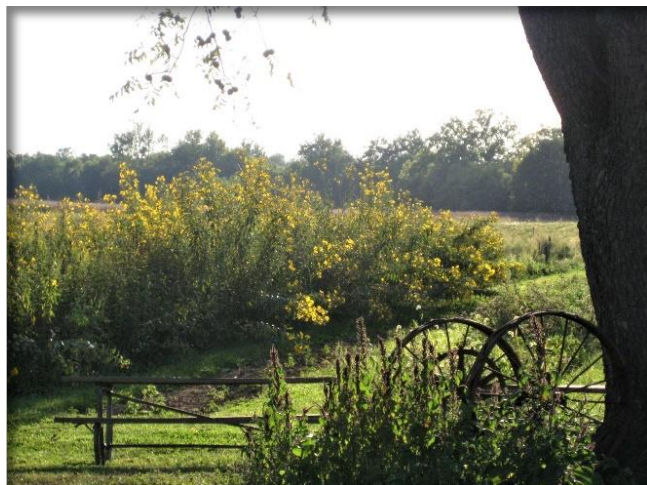
Here you can see the upheaval of the sidewalk and the ramp itself. The area is currently being assessed for future use.

2020 proved to be a challenging year for all of us. The parks became a go to solution for many and the increased visitation kept us busy. The trailheads were packed with patrons here to hike, bike and explore. There were more people fishing and kayaking on our rivers than we have seen in years. The Rangers were here through it all to provide a safe environment for all to enjoy.

## Miami Whitewater Forest District – West Region

Parks in this district: *Miami Whitewater Forest, Mitchell Memorial Forest, Campbell Lakes Preserve, and Oak Glen Nature Preserve*

Submitted by Sergeant Dan Hodapp,  
District Supervisor



*Shaker Trace Nursery at Miami Whitewater Forest.  
Photo Courtesy of Captain Dale Steele*

This year, we were back to five full-time Rangers and one District Sergeant. Ranger Missie Shannon celebrated her 20<sup>th</sup> year as a Park Ranger! This year was also by far the highest attendance we saw in a long time due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. All officers were required to continue to show up for duty every day and work through it all. Trying to keep the parks, patrons, and our own staff safe and healthy was a challenge. Taking reports at a distance and having a mindset of only dealing with serious infractions was hard to adjust to. Complaints increased due to the fact, we believe, that all



*Socially distanced wedding at Miami Whitewater Forest (bride is Ranger Jocelyn Binkley)*

playgrounds and picnic areas were closed off. An all-time high attendance and less areas for large group gatherings brought more complaints from concerned Patrons.

One of our biggest challenges this year was the closing of Buffalo Ridge Road along Mitchell Memorial Forest Park. Then shortly after, they closed Gum Run, and eventually the bridge on Harrison Avenue in Miamitown was closed for a month. This added a long detour for Rangers to respond to Mitchell Memorial Forest Park. Unfortunately during this time, we had a few vehicles broken into as well as subjects riding dirt bikes on our mountain bike trail and throughout the park.

At Miami Whitewater Forest the biggest challenge we faced was the increase of patrons. This also brought more people out to try their hand at geocaching. A business in the city of Harrison also started a treasure hunt with clues to find real gold. Both of these activities brought a lot of attention due to patrons venturing off of the authorized trails, as well as looking suspicious. Thankfully, everything went well and nothing serious happened. We experienced a slight uptick with dog versus dog issues, along with some injuries.

The encroachment issues continue to rise as well as littering from the new construction bordering our park prairies and wetlands. Thefts from motor vehicles rose this year. Fortunately, we identified two suspects and assisted a few other agencies in other states with their cases. Our cases resulted in the filing of felony warrants on two suspects. We also had a unique experience in our campground. We discovered a stolen car, stolen camper, and three sets of stolen license plates. This resulted with warrants filed on two suspects. Both were caught and are currently locked up and awaiting trial.

## Shawnee Lookout District – West Region

Parks in this District: *Shawnee Lookout, Embshoff Woods, and Fernbank Park*

Submitted by Sergeant Todd Williams,  
District Supervisor



*Overlook at Shawnee Lookout. Photo courtesy of Captain Dale Steele*

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Park visitation had dramatically increased. Patrons, who had never visited before, flocked to these parks. It was not uncommon to hear a patron say that they had never been to this park before the COVID-19 Pandemic hit. On warmer days, many of the trailhead parking lots were filled to capacity.

Even with the threat of the COVID-19 Pandemic, rangers continued to patrol and respond to calls of service. Rangers also kept in contact with visitors from a safe distance; welcoming patrons to the Great Parks.

In 2020, Shawnee Lookout School House had two separate criminal damaging instances. Both were minor damage done by an unknown person trying to look inside the closed schoolhouse, damaging shutters and windows in the process.

In October, there were two reports of thefts from motor vehicles at Fernbank Park. Rangers are still investigating.

Rangers are accustomed to responding to animal complaints: a dog off-leash or an injured

animal etc. But in September, Ranger Rieskamp responded to Fernbank Park for an animal complaint that was like no other complaint he had received in his 28 years of service. The



animal, found near the lower gravel parking lot, was a Timber Rattlesnake. The Timber Rattlesnake, one of three venomous snakes native to Ohio, is on Ohio's Endangered Species List (see Ohio Administrative Code

<http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/1501:31-23-01v1>) and not normally found this far west in Ohio. Upon arrival, Ranger Rieskamp discovered the rattlesnake was already deceased. He collected the deceased snake and contacted the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). An ODNR Wildlife Officer took the snake to Ohio University to examine possible DNA markers to determine its origin.

Speaking of snakes, a black snake infiltrated the Shawnee Lookout Ranger Station. The snake eluded capture by rangers for two days. The "fugitive" was finally located under a desk in the ranger duty room by Sgt. Williams who then set up a perimeter and called for "back up" to assist in catching it.

Ranger Jeff Larsh responded with a pillowcase and twine in his gloved hands to help apprehend the snake. After several minutes, the snake finally "gave up" and curled up in the cubical wall in front of the computer. Ranger Larsh was then able to place the large (approximately 3 foot long) snake in the pillowcase and secure it with the twine. The snake was released with the promise not to return to the Ranger Station! No ranger or snake were harmed in this incident.



## Winton Woods District – Central Region

Parks in this district: *Winton Woods, Glenwood Gardens, Triple Creek, Farbach-Werner Nature Preserve, Richardson Nature Preserve, Newberry Wildlife Sanctuary*

Submitted by Sergeant Edwin McFadden,  
District Supervisor



Mill Race Golf Course at Winton Woods Photo courtesy of Captain Dale Steele

Since indoor businesses were shut down due to the pandemic, including common meeting places such as restaurants, bars, movie theaters, gyms, even amusement parks, the Great Parks of Hamilton County waived Motor Vehicle Permits for most of the spring and summer to provide people a place to socialize safely and to sustain their physical and mental well-being. This gave Winton Woods Rangers opportunities to engage with visitors who live in the area but never visited the parks before and improve community relations.

There was a significant increase in activity on Winton Lake and in the Campground once it reopened and with people using the trails. This increase in Park patronage also came with an increase in crimes normally not encountered in the Park, such as someone shooting at another person over a parking dispute in the Harbor; luckily no one was injured and the suspect was arrested without incident.

With people stuck at home during the pandemic, many turned to home improvement projects previously put off; this in turn led to an

increase in the number of dumping reports in Winton Woods of construction material, yard waste and old furniture and appliances.

COVID-19 led to a decrease in other crimes, though. Peace disturbance reports at the campground were down this year, not just due to a shorter season, but because the deluxe cabins were only rented on the weekends and this is where many of the complaints come from; 2020 is also the last year that they will be offered for rent. Winton Woods also had some unique investigations during this time, including assisting Springfield Township Police in the recovery of a murder weapon from Winton Lake and providing surveillance video of the suspect on scene, and the discovery of human remains in the park.

While this district normally issues the most citations in the park, our traffic and misdemeanor citations, as well as arrests, decreased due to a directive from the Chief to limit unnecessary public contact whenever possible. The heavy use of the Parks created a challenge to Rangers to enforce the law and deter crime while also protecting themselves from contracting the virus; through the course of their duties, some Rangers were exposed to COVID-19 positive individuals. Thankfully, none of the Rangers became seriously ill. However, exposure to the virus often meant Rangers would have to quarantine for weeks at a time, meaning shifts and districts were often covered at the last minute.

Part-time Ranger Andrew Quine became full-time here at Winton Woods in December. Sergeant Alex Stephens left the park in November, leaving the position open and the hunt for a new leader of the district will begin in January 2021.

## Ranger Dispatch Submitted by Ranger Clerk Cathy Yohey

The Ranger Dispatch Office is located in the Ranger Station or Ranger Headquarters in the Winton Centre at Winton Woods. Our civilian staff, which consists of two full-time clerks and four part-time dispatchers offer non-emergency dispatch service and clerical support to the Ranger Division.

Due to retirements near the end of 2019, a full-time clerk position and a part-time dispatcher position were posted and filled in 2020 which resulted in these new employees being trained in a year like no other. Our usual slate of phone calls from Park Visitors with questions regarding reservations, or camping issues, or motor vehicle permits etc. was replaced with callers asking if one, the parks were open, and two, if so, are restrooms open. Our pat answer for several months was "yes the parks are open but all facilities including restrooms, playgrounds, and shelters are closed and MVPs have been waived during this timeframe." Also, since the Winton Centre was closed to the public and visitors could no longer access the Ranger Dispatch Office, we had a wireless doorbell with speaker installed on the locked front doors. That way anyone needing Ranger assistance would still be able to reach us.

Since going to a park was about the only thing to do and the Governor was advising people during the stay-at-home order to use their local parks, Great Parks were extremely busy. This increase in visitors also brought a slew of phone call complaints about people not wearing masks and not social distancing.

With a new Chief on board, Clerks kept busy updating forms and transforming a lot of our law enforcement paperwork into electronic fillable formats. This move has enabled our department to do their part in living up to the Great Parks mission of "preserving.....natural resources," and our Core Value of "Sustainability."

## 2020 INVESTIGATIONS

Submitted by Lieutenant Ali Bird  
Investigative Lieutenant

CONTINUED from 2019....On March 3, 2020 we were contacted by the Dearborn County, IN Sheriff's Office that they had recovered one of our golf carts (stolen from Shawnee Lookout on September 30, 2019). During a search warrant they executed on a suspected member of a theft ring, several stolen items were recovered from the residence including one of our stolen golf carts. The golf cart was still in good shape and was able to be returned to the fleet. That individual was charged and is paying us restitution for our stolen golf carts.

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, Rangers were dispatched to Fernbank Park on a report of a subject in an inappropriate sexual conversation with a minor. When officers arrived, they were able to locate the subject in question and speak with him and also the complainant. After further investigation, a felony warrant was filed on the subject for Importuning. He was picked up, indicted by the Grand Jury, and awaits further court appearances and the conclusion of the case from within the Hamilton County Justice Center.

On Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, Five Rivers MetroParks Rangers shared vehicle and suspect descriptions for subjects that were involved in theft from motor vehicle reports that had just occurred within their jurisdiction. On March 29<sup>th</sup>, a Ranger at Miami Whitewater Forest stopped a vehicle with a warrant attached. During the traffic stop, he discovered that the vehicle was a rental and that none of the individuals in the vehicle were on the rental contract so he had the vehicle towed. The individuals were also released since none of them were associated with the attached warrant either. Shortly after, the Ranger was provided the description information from Five Rivers, which matched the rental vehicle and subjects he had just released. The Ranger was able to locate the subjects

walking away from the Park. They were taken into custody, transported and handed off to a Five River MetroParks Ranger, where they were subsequently charged for the theft offenses.

On May 6<sup>th</sup> the Sharon Woods District Sergeant received a phone call from a Sharonville Police Department Detective who stated he was at Bethesda North Hospital with a gunshot wound victim who was claiming the shooting occurred at Sharon Woods earlier that same day. Lt. Bird and Sgt. Lake responded to the hospital to interview the victim. During that interview, the victim told us that he went from the Kroger at Harpers Point to the Doubletree Hotel where he was staying, and then to Sharon Woods. He was on foot because, according to him, his vehicle didn't have enough gas in it to drive and so he had left it at the hotel. He was heading to Sharon Woods because a friend had called, stating that he had just been 'jumped' and needed help.

During our investigation, we were unable to locate the victim on the surveillance cameras at Kroger and we discovered that the Doubletree had been temporarily closed and they were no guests nor vehicles. Multiple attempts were made to establish contact with the victim, all to no avail.

On June 11<sup>th</sup>, the same Sharonville PD Detective called to let us know he had discovered that the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office was carrying a shooting report that had occurred on May 6<sup>th</sup>, in the same apartment complex that our victim lived. He stated that, at that time, they had the shooter but not the victim and only knew of the victim's first name, which did match our victim. He also advised that they had a snapchat video showing the shooting and that the Sheriff's Office had discovered that the shooter had been paid, by the victim, to commit the crime. Based on the video, the Sharonville Detective believed it to be our same victim. We received the report and video and were able to ascertain that the video was not taken at a park. A warrant was

then filed on the victim for Making False Alarms, a misdemeanor of the first degree.

In the early morning hours of June 9<sup>th</sup>, the Ranger working the night shift at Miami Whitewater Forest had several separate interactions with two individuals in the campground. These interactions culminated in a request at 1:15a.m. to escort the female out of the campground at her request due to on-going arguments with her boyfriend. After the female left, there were some additional custody issues regarding the child also on-scene being released to a grandparent. It was during that situation, that Rangers discovered the vehicle being driven by these individuals and still in the campground was coming back as a stolen vehicle out of Fairfield. The male subject stated that his girlfriend had picked him up in that vehicle and there was no proof of who actually had driven the vehicle.

The male subject had a warrant out of Butler County but they wouldn't pick him up due to it not being felony status so he was advised to turn himself in to Butler County. Also discovered (and confiscated) were additional license plates in the vehicle but neither those plates nor the plates on the camper were alerting as stolen so the male subject was released.

We contacted the Fairfield Police Department who confirmed the vehicle theft and notified the owner of the vehicle. We were advised that the owner of the stolen vehicle would be responding to retrieve the vehicle so the Ranger went back to the campsite to await them and at this time found that the male subject had taken off on foot, leaving behind both the vehicle and camper. The Ranger then found the VIN on the camper and after running that information, discovered that the camper had also been stolen out of Sevierville, Tennessee. Sevierville Police Department was contacted; they confirmed the camper theft and advised that the owner's insurance company would have it towed.

As for the additional plates discovered in the vehicle, we sent an officer to the residences listed for the plates and in one instance, the individuals were not even aware that their plates had been stolen off their camper due to it being in storage. They subsequently filed a theft report with the agency having jurisdiction where the storage facility was located. The second set of plates had just been discovered as stolen that same day and a report had been filed with that agency as well. The amount of stolen items lead us to file five Receiving Stolen Property warrants, all felonies, on both individuals occupying the campsite that night. The individuals were both picked up on those warrants in November and are currently waiting for their case to continue through the court system.

On November 29<sup>th</sup> we received information from a Park Visitor that there were what appeared to be human skeletal remains in the woods near Elmridge Shelter in Winton Woods. The coroner's office confirmed the remains to be human and eventually they were also able to positively identify the individual. The investigation into the manner of death is still pending at this time.

#### **Theft from Motor Vehicle Investigations:**

Theft from motor vehicles is, unfortunately, one of our most common criminal offenses. In the era of mask wearing, it has been quite challenging to identify the suspects that appear on surveillance footage from the businesses where fraudulent activity occurs. There are, on occasion, instances where we are able to determine a viable suspect and press forward with the appropriate charges.

On September 1<sup>st</sup>, we took a theft from motor vehicle report at Avoca Park in which the victim had her vehicle window broken and her purses stolen from within. The parking lot camera footage was reviewed and a vehicle was observed parking near the victim's vehicle and then unlawfully striking the vehicle to gain entry.

We were able to obtain a license plate from the suspect vehicle as it exited the park. That vehicle was an Enterprise rental car, which was scheduled to be returned locally the very next day. One of our Rangers was at Enterprise the next day when the vehicle was returned. The subject returning the vehicle was questioned regarding the activities that had occurred yesterday involving the vehicle. Recovered from that interaction at Enterprise was one of the victim's purses.

After conferring with the prosecutor's office, it was determined we had enough evidence to charge the driver returning the vehicle with warrants for both Criminal Damaging and Receiving Stolen Property. In an interesting turn of events, we were later contacted by a separate individual who wanted to confess to the theft from motor vehicle and clear the other subject involved. This second individual came in to the station, made a statement confessing to the crimes involved and was immediately charged and taken to Hamilton County Justice center. At the advice of the prosecutor's office, we kept the warrants on the original individual as well. Currently both subjects are still waiting for their cases to conclude within the Hamilton County court system.

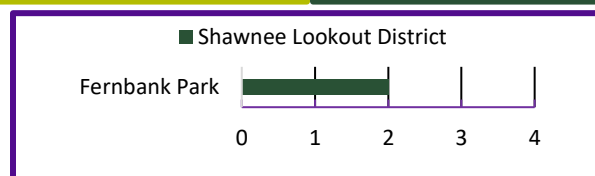
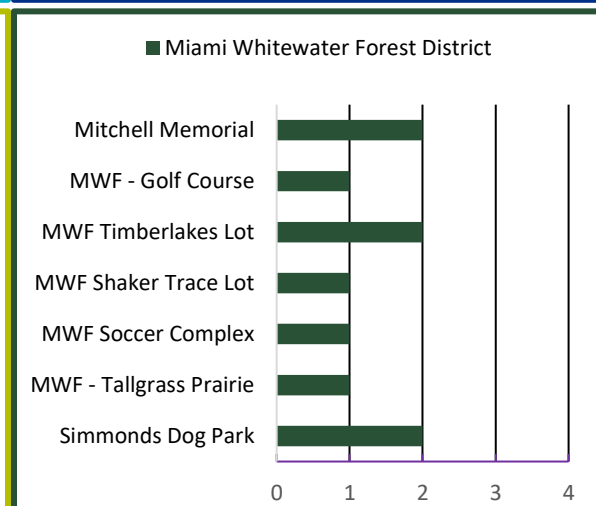
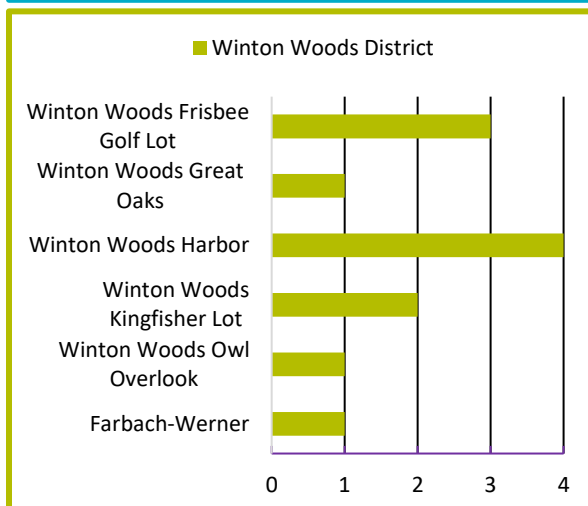
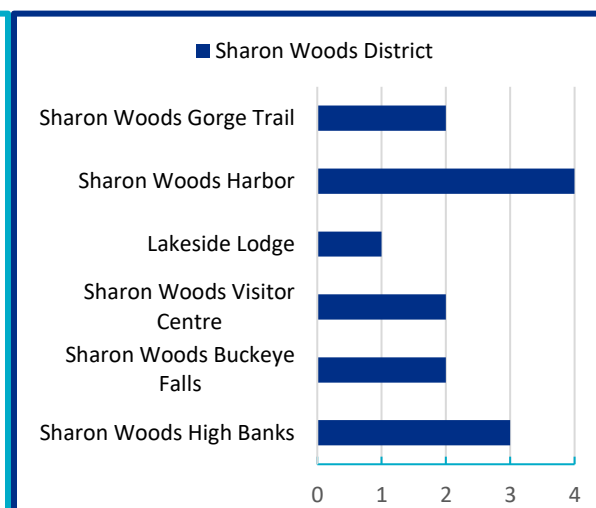
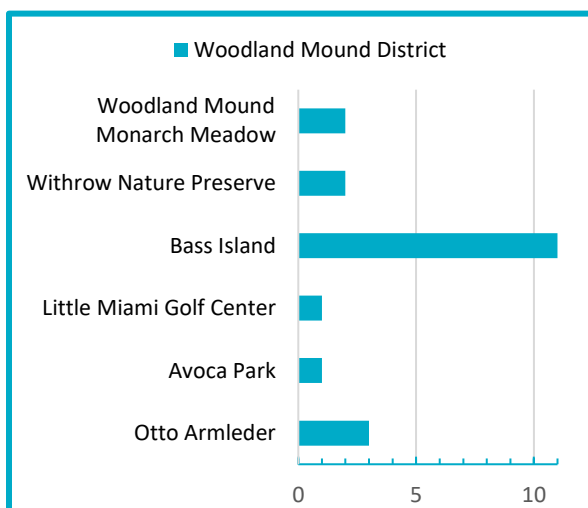
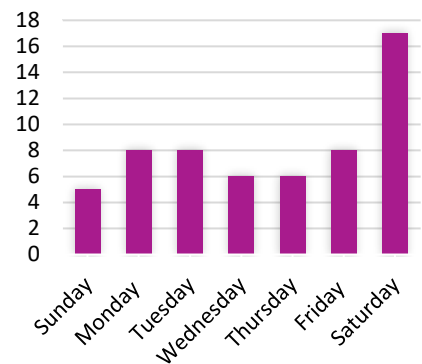
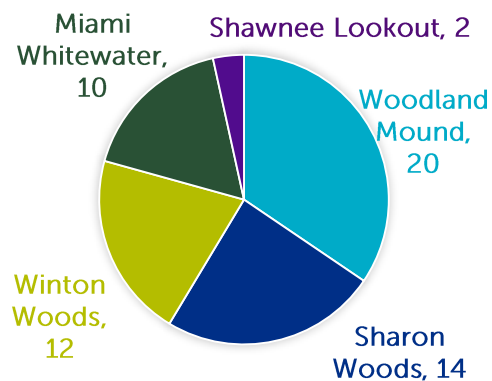
On September 2<sup>nd</sup>, we took a theft from motor vehicle report at Miami Whitewater Simmonds Family Dog Park in which the victim had her vehicle window broken and her wallet stolen from within. While still on-scene taking the report, the victim was able to relay fraudulent activity that had occurred nearby on her credit card(s). We responded to two local Dollar General stores in which charges were successful at one store but declined at the other. Store surveillance footage provided us an image of the

suspect involved. The victim called us the next day to report additional activity on one of her credit cards at a pawn and bond shop. It was discovered after contacting the shop that this activity was related to paying a bond by a female subject (as stated) for herself in Missouri, and an attempt, which was declined by shop staff, to pay a larger bond for a male subject currently incarcerated in Missouri.

The next day we heard from the victim again, she had been notified that her identification had been used at a PNC Bank in West Chester. We were able to obtain both suspect and vehicle images from the bank video surveillance. In the meantime, we made additional contact with the pawn and bond shop and discovered that the same female subject was still trying to pay bond for the same incarcerated male subject but using a different credit card that belonged to someone also from the Cincinnati area who had reported their credit card stolen. This same pawn shop employee reached out to his contacts and was able to determine an additional female associate of the female attempting to pay bond and believes it could be our suspect based on images we provided.

During the follow-up investigation with the bond shop, we discovered additional stolen credit cards were also involved, some from as far away as North Carolina. We finally caught a break when we made contact with the Springfield, Missouri Police Department who had both females in custody on pending theft charges. The Investigator with Springfield PD looked at our images and confirmed both subjects who are residents of Missouri. Felony Receiving Stolen Property and Misuse of a Credit Card warrants were filed on both individuals.

In 2020, we took 58 theft from motor vehicle and/or related criminal damage reports, an increase over the 47 reports we had in 2019. Here are the breakdowns by District, Days of the Week, and Locations by Park:



Please remember it is always our advice that you should not bring anything valuable or seemingly valuable to the park with you. Hiding items or assuming that the gym bag/ diaper bag/ camera bag, etc won't draw attention does not work. We'd like everyone to remember to take it with you when you park your vehicle or to simply leave it at home. And last but certainly not least, please report suspicious activity to us by either calling

Ranger Dispatch 513-521-3980 or simply 911.



## EVIDENCE ROOM

Submitted by Lieutenant Ali Bird

In March, we received two major upgrades to our evidentiary property systems. The first being a grant that we were awarded for evidence management software.

Great Parks Ranger Department is unique to most small agencies in that it is split up into regions and has officers all over the county. Prior to late 2019, our evidence recording process utilized both a paper logbook and an outdated in-house made Access program that was built for maintenance records, not for evidence management. In the fall of 2019, we made the transition to utilizing our current records management system for property but we were still using the Access program as well. Neither were user friendly or very efficient when conducting an inventory of all

items or even just a small sampling of the contents in the evidence room.

There were still many items listed in the logbook that have yet to be recorded into the in-house computer program, which make simple searches a large chore. We are fortunate to have a secure property room at Ranger Headquarters, but since we have multiple districts, some pieces of property have to go through multiple steps before it enters the property room. It takes about 10 minutes for the officers to enter the property themselves, then the property is transferred to the Investigative Lieutenant. She must repeat the process to review and update the entry, which takes additional time.

We are dedicated to following strict guidelines for all property that enters the evidence room and ensuring evidentiary property has a clear

chain of custody from the moment it is taken off a defendant. However, our system at that time was not efficient in clearly tracking chain of custody and the information was not readily available to the officers when they needed it. Not only that, but the process was also very time consuming and exhaustive. For example, the Investigative Lieutenant recently created two separate destruction orders that had almost 200 items. The process took many days to complete because each item had to be pulled from the shelf to look up.

Without an updated electronic system, we were unable to easily perform a random spot audit or distinguish trends in the type of items we are taking in. The countless hours spent working through this outdated system could be used on other tasks beneficial to the safety of the park district.

A software system specifically designed to log, track and manage evidence would dramatically improve the way in which we handle evidence. A new system would involve the officer logging into the system, entering the property information, printing a label and immediately starting an electronic chain of custody. By entering the property into the system and instantly tracking it, we will be doing a better job of keeping the evidentiary property safe and regulated.

The new electronic system is web based and therefore easily accessible at any location throughout the district, allowing the Investigative Lieutenant to know instantly what property is where, and when it was obtained just by looking it up digitally. Officers will then be able to log in and view details of where the property is that relates to their case and be able to communicate that with prosecutors without having to take the time to call around to each region. For reporting purposes, Rangers will be able to quickly search the system to see what kind of trends we are experiencing and determine the most

common items by park, region, time of year, etc. In addition, with the new software system, auditing the property room will be much more manageable and will ensure we are maintaining proper records.

We began the import process of all our historical data into the new system in May. This was a tedious process because we had to pull from two different systems, translate the data so it worked within the new system and then import all. By September the first trial import was complete and Lt. Bird began training on the system, working out any issues that were discovered along the way. In October Lt. Bird began training each district sergeant in the hopes that they could then train their staff. In November, label printers were installed in each district and officers were given training instructions and the freedom to use the system for training purposes. Our officers have been doing a tremendous job testing out the system and making sure they understand how it works prior to going live. We will do one final data import just prior to our selected date of utilizing the system in place of any others. We anticipate a first quarter 2021 live date as we have been waiting in the hopes we can time the evidence management software to begin with our new records management system so they are being utilized together.

The second upgrade was a capital renovation project that expanded the space of our property room. Prior to the project, our secure property room was not conducive to the space needed to properly record and maintain property for the required amount of time. The expansion allowed us to almost double the size of our space and allowed for a better flow when accepting property into the room. At some point, we'd like to complete the upgrade with new, better shelving and storage options within the room itself.

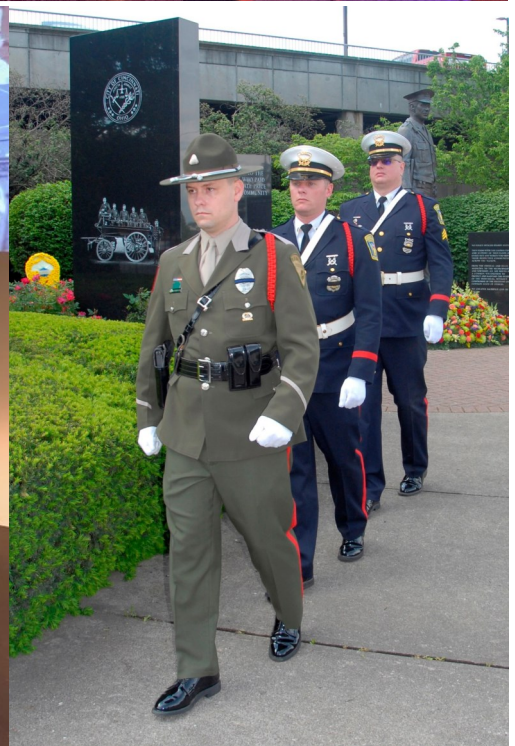


2020

Specialized  
Assignments

Committees

Community  
Involvement



## Hamilton County Police Association (HCPA) Specialized Assignments

### HCPA Dive Team

Ranger Kelly Williford is a member of the HCPA Underwater Search and Recovery Unit (USRU). This dive team provides law enforcement agencies in and around Hamilton County with underwater police assistance in recovering property and evidence to aid in criminal investigations. Members are highly trained in underwater search and recovery and specialize in techniques designed to reduce risks law enforcement personnel are exposed to when diving in highly hazardous underwater conditions. Ranger Williford has been on the team for the past 10 years and was recently selected to be the Assistant Commander. The HCPA USRU/Dive Team conducted twelve trainings, seven critical service calls and three non-critical calls for service in 2020.

The Dive Team had a busy year with some notable details. In July, the body of a boater who jumped in the river to cool off and was overcome by the current was recovered in the Ohio River close to Steamboat Bend. In September, a murder weapon was recovered from the lake at Winton Woods after an admission by the suspect on its location. The team worked with North Star International, a non-profit search and rescue group, to search for the body of a missing three year old in the river near downtown Cincinnati and at Fernbank Park, however it was unsuccessful.

The team was excited this year to decorate the boat for the holidays with garland and Christmas lights to participate in Operation Santa Sleigh. This parade involved around 80 different police and first responders escorting Santa to Cincinnati Children's Hospital, UC Medical Center and the Cincinnati VA Hospital. With COVID-19 restricting hospital visitors, it was especially meaningful to be able to bring some cheer to anyone in the hospital around the holidays this year.



*Dive Team Training at Steamboat Bend in Woodland Mound*

### HCPA S.W.A.T.

Ranger Eric Gregory joined the HCPA's Special Weapons and Tactics Team (S.W.A.T.) in 2011 as a tactical member and this is his 10<sup>th</sup> year on the team; in 2020, he participated in 18 trainings and 23 call outs. S.W.A.T. also does many community events with schools, orphanages and participate in parades; Ranger Gregory has been taking the "Polar Plunge" with members from the team each winter since 2014 to raise money for Special Olympics.



*Ranger Gregory (center) Taking the Plunge!*

The HCPA S.W.A.T. was formed in 1973 and is one of the oldest multi-jurisdictional teams in the nation. It currently consists of 54 members who provide service to over 40 jurisdictions in Hamilton County including agencies such as the Drug Abuse Reduction Taskforce, Drug Enforcement Administration, U.S. Marshals Service and Secret Service. The team is utilized

for high-risk search warrants; suicidal or barricaded subjects; hostage situations and to provide dignitary protection.

Ranger Gregory participated in several high profile incidents in 2020. In February, Cincinnati Police responded to a shots fired call and discovered a man with multiple gunshot wounds; the suspect barricaded himself in an apartment and after the suspect fired at emergency officials knocking on the door, S.W.A.T. was called, resulting in an hours-long standoff between S.W.A.T. and the suspect. Once S.W.A.T. was able to make entry into the apartment, they discovered the suspect had died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

In July, Mt. Healthy Police were responding to a call regarding a domestic situation and saw a male push a female to the ground before the two entered an apartment; when Mt. Healthy Police were denied entry to the apartment, S.W.A.T. was called. The team was able to make entry into the apartment approximately 5 hours after the incident began and discovered the female victim uninjured but held against her will; they were able to arrest the male suspect without incident.



A dangerous vehicle pursuit involving multiple jurisdictions was brought to an end in July thanks to the skills of the highly-trained S.W.A.T. sharp shooter. It began on I-75 with a driver calling 911 reporting a semi-truck driving erratically. The driver refused to pull over for State Highway Patrol Officers, initiating a chase that went all the way to downtown Cincinnati,

over to I-71 North and finally I-275 West near the Kellogg Avenue exit. During the chase, the driver was on the phone with 911 for over an hour; his wife could be heard asking for help and he was threatening suicide by cop. The driver stopped twice during the chase, once to unhitch the trailer from the cab and the second time to let his wife out who was taken to the hospital for a broken leg. I-275 was shut down and several stop sticks were deployed, flattening one tire, but he continued to flee. The pursuit was finally brought to an end when the S.W.A.T. sniper leader disabled the vehicle by firing well-placed rounds from a .50 caliber rifle into the engine block as it passed at 60-70 miles an hour. The driver held himself at knifepoint as officers approached the cab, but they were able to safely apprehend him using nonlethal rounds and a stun gun.

### HCPA Most Wanted Band

Ranger Missie Shannon is a member of the HCPA band, "Most Wanted." The purpose of "Most Wanted" is to present an anti-drug/alcohol message to students in the form of a rock concert. Since its inception in 1989, this band has been bringing its "Music with a Message" to area schools and events throughout the Greater Cincinnati area.

Unfortunately all but two of the band's scheduled 2020 events were cancelled due to COVID-19. They were able to perform at St. Clement and Cardinal Pacelli Schools for approximately seven-hundred students during Catholic Schools Week in January. These students learned it was ok to say no to drugs and to bullying, and it is ok to ask for help from teachers, police officers, and family members when faced with uncomfortable situations.

Most Wanted will not be scheduling any concerts in 2021 until there is a safe environment for everyone to enjoy the Music with a Message.

## HCPA Honor Guard

Submitted by Ranger Dave Spurgeon

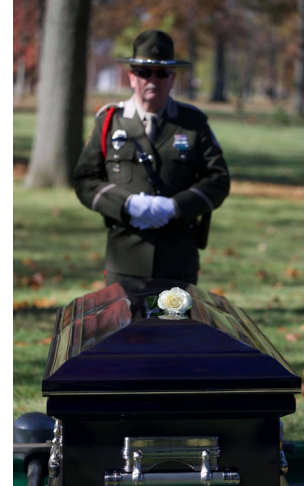
The HCPA Honor Guard (H.G.) has completed its eighteenth year, having originated in 2002. 2020 has been a very odd year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The H.G. team was curtailed from doing any details or training from March 2020 to basically August 2020 – six months. Even with the hiatus due to the virus, the unit had a total of forty-four detailed events; trainings, funeral services and vigils, color guards, and special events.

Sadly, two of our details lasted nine and ten days respectively; both were “Line of Duty Deaths.” Once an Officer is brought in and is thought to have non-survivable injuries, the H.G. team stays with them so that they are never left alone – 24/7. We are with / near them at the hospital; if they are taken into the O.R. we post outside the door. We accompany them to the morgue, and then to the funeral home. We stay with them at the funeral home, and accompany them to the visitation. And we participate in the actual funeral services and graveside services, giving them the honors they deserve. I am not sure that I understood when I first started with the Honor Guard how much the families appreciate the fact that their loved ones are never left alone during this heartbreaking time.

The first was for Officer Kaia Grant of the Springdale Police Department. On March 21<sup>st</sup>, Officer Grant was struck and killed during a vehicle pursuit. A subject wanted for felony crimes being chased on I-275 swerved his truck into Officer Grant and a second officer, who were both outside their vehicles alongside the road deploying stop sticks, trying to end the pursuit. Officer Grant was fatally wounded when she took the brunt of the vehicle strike; the second officer miraculously survived with serious but non-life-threatening injuries. The detail lasted from March 21<sup>st</sup>, when we responded to University of Cincinnati Hospital to be there when Officer Grant was brought in, and

it ended on March 29<sup>th</sup>, when she was laid to rest.

The second was for Deputy Adam McMillan of the Hamilton County Sheriff’s Office. On October 22nd, Deputy McMillan was fatally wounded in an automobile accident in Anderson Township when his cruiser struck a Metro bus head-on in an intersection. The H.G. team again responded to University of Cincinnati Hospital to be there when Deputy McMillan arrived and stayed with him until his funeral on October 31<sup>st</sup>.



I am one of two Great Parks Rangers assigned to the HCPA Honor Guard. The second is Ranger Edwin McFadden. The unit asks that officers try to have a participation rate of at least 50% throughout the year. Of the forty-four details in 2020, Ranger McFadden had a 55% participation rate, and I had an 82% participation rate. The difference in our participation is due to the fact that I am part-time and assigned to the unit as the department liaison while Ranger McFadden is full-time and responsible to work patrol shifts.



*Ranger McFadden (left) at Police Memorial Service*

## Great Parks of Hamilton County Rangers Specialized Assignments

### ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) Active Shooter Response Training Submitted by Captain Dale Steele

ALICE Training involves teaching Rangers the skills and knowledge on how to respond to active shooter situations based on new data that supports proactive strategies as opposed to traditional lockdown procedures used in the past. Sergeant Alex Stephens and Ranger Matt Randolph had completed instructor training in 2019, and together with Captain Dale made up the three certified instructors for the Great Parks in 2020. However, near the end of the year both Sergeant Stephens and Ranger Randolph resigned from their positions with Great Parks, currently leaving Captain Steele as the only ALICE instructor. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, there were no ALICE instructor training sessions conducted in 2020. The opportunity for this special assignment will be offered to any interested and qualified Rangers once training begins again.

### ATV Submitted by Ranger Sherry Garner

Sergeant Alex Stephens and Ranger Sherry Garner are the certified instructors for the American Safety Institute (ASI) *ATV RiderCourse*. The ATV can travel in heavy traffic and off-road, allowing us to use it for many different duties that are not suited to cruiser or foot patrols. The use of the ATV is to patrol paved trails, unpaved but public trails, park roads, and areas not accessible to other patrol vehicles. We also use the ATV during special events, parades and school programs; however, there were no parades or school programs this year due to COVID-19. The ATV was mainly used for off-road patrol and Holiday in Lights.

Three rangers were trained this year: Sergeant Katie Lake, Ranger Alecia Kammer and Ranger Andrew Nealan. These rangers learned the objectives of ATV patrol and ATV operation, as

well as ATV uniform and equipment requirements, prisoner transport, inspections, and transportation of the ATV via truck and trailer. We hope to get back to normal next year and attend many parades and special events.

### Controlled Bow Hunting Program Submitted by Lieutenant Greg Grimm

COVID-19 had a significant impact on operations Park wide, including outdoor activities such as our controlled bow hunting program. The Conservation and Parks team worked closely with Rangers to update program rules to meet COVID-19 guidelines. A plan of action on how to safely and responsibly hold the annual controlled bow hunting qualification had to be made. It was decided that this was the first year that in-person qualifications would not be held; only participants in the 2019-2020 season would be eligible to hunt in the program in 2020-2021. Participants responded favorably to the changes and a large portion of the applicants elected to donate the application fee back to Great Parks, even if they were not eligible. Eligible hunters picked out their hunting packets through an online process or via phone and were asked to print off their own dash card and equipment labels.

Another COVID-19 adaptation for the program this year were two YouTube videos starring volunteer coordinator, Brian Barnard, and links were sent to all participants. The first video outlined the program, rules, when to contact a Ranger, etc. and can be used for future bow hunting seasons and new participants. The second video addressed the changes made due to COVID-19 for 2020-2021 as well as other season-specific updates to the program.

### CPR & First Aid Submitted by Ranger Missie Shannon

In February, the Ranger Department's three CPR and First Aid Instructors were recertified through the American Heart Association (AHA). Rangers Shannon, Garner, and Foley recertified in Basic Life Support and Heartsaver First Aid. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit and halted plans for

department wide training. New protocol and mandates were set by the American Heart Association before any further training could take place. Changes were also made in the field of CPR. The American Heart Association required mannequins be equipped with a monitor that measures chest and depth compressions as well as chest recoil. These monitors were purchased by the department and we were ready to move forward whenever AHA gave the all clear. Shortly after purchasing the monitors though, we received notice from AHA that a mandatory training session for instructors would be held in October. This needed completed before we could begin the departmental training. The instructors completed the additional training and have started scheduling the updated training for all Ranger personnel.



*Department Training in December*

### Defensive Tactics

Submitted by Sergeant Tim Biaglow

The Ranger department sent Sergeant Alex Stephens and Ranger Nathan Zimmerman to the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy to attend a course sponsored by Gracie University: Gracie Survival Tactics Level 1. The Gracie family is world renowned when it comes to training and combat sports. They are bringing that knowledge to law enforcement and have begun developing training specifically designed for law

enforcement. Sergeant Stephens and Ranger Zimmermann spent five grueling days training to be certified as instructors.

The Ranger Department had set up training to take place in March of 2020 before any COVID-19 restrictions were in place. Unfortunately, Sergeant Stephens was out sick this week so Sergeant Tim Biaglow along with Ranger Zimmerman began conducting the in service training for the department. The department was able to train roughly two-thirds of our staff before COVID-19 restrictions forced us to cancel the remaining classes.

We will make the necessary adjustments to the new normal and get back to training our staff in 2021.



*Striking Drill at March Training*

### Firearms

Submitted by Sergeant Tim Biaglow

The firearms instructors for the Ranger Department include Sergeant Tim Biaglow, Ranger Kelly Williford, Ranger Eric Gregory and retired Ranger Dave Spurgeon. Annually, the instructors run a requalification course for all sworn ranger personnel. Each officer must demonstrate their ability to use their handgun, shotgun and patrol rifle by qualifying with a passing score as mandated by the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy.

The department usually holds three different shoots over the year, a requalification course for all sworn officers and two additional trainings to work on specific trainings goals. This year COVID-19 forced us to limit to just the state mandated requalification shoot which all rangers attended.



*Test of Non-Dominant Hand during OPOTA Requalification*

Blast from the past! This year we began bringing back our retired Rangers to requalify them on an annual basis. It was great to see all the retired Rangers.

COVID restrictions put a limit on our training for 2020. We look forward to getting back to our normal training regimen for 2021.

### Field Training Program

Submitted by Sergeant Todd Williams

The Field Training Program had two significant challenges this year: COVID-19 and the conversion of our training forms and manual into a fillable digital format. Clerk Kait Reno played a key role in our paperwork conversion. She also trained all of the FTO's (Field Training Officers) on the use of the new format. Along with all of the usual training, each new Officer in Training (OIT) was also trained to disinfect workstations, cruisers and equipment at the end of their shift. Field Training Officers (FTO's) had to figure out how to train while also following protocols for social distancing, including riding in separate cruisers and very limited public

contact. There were two FTO meetings held in November to discuss ideas for changes to the program and additional updates that will benefit both trainers and trainees going forward such as consistency in training, creating district cheat sheets, and surveys for feedback on the program.

The Ranger Department currently has seven Field Training Officers: Rangers Kelly Williford, Jordan Batts, Eric Gregory, Donald Rieskamp, Sherry Garner, Edwin McFadden and our newest FTO, Shawn Wright. Ranger Wright completed FTO Training in November. Our FTO program is led by FTO Commander Captain Dale Steele, and FTO Supervisor Sergeant Todd Williams.

We added seven new Rangers to our roster in 2020 and had five complete field training. Three of our newest Rangers, Rangers Jeff Larsh, John LaGory and Ken Grubbs, are retired police officers from other agencies. Rangers Jamie Jones and Alecia Kammer completed field training in May and Ranger Andrew Quine completed his field training in August. Ranger Zach Philibin is currently in training and should be finished in early 2021. The total number of hours spent Field Training in 2020 is 1,740.

### Color Guard Team

Submitted by Lieutenant Ali Bird

The Ranger Color Guard handles any local, public ceremonial requests to present the flags. Our team is led by Lieutenant Alisha Bird and includes Rangers Eric Gregory, Michael Farmer, Edwin McFadden and Dave Spurgeon. Rangers Kelly Grogan and Matt Randolph were added to the team at the very end of 2019 but they didn't get to participate in any events or trainings until 2020. There were two trainings held in 2020, one in January and one in February. All subsequent trainings were cancelled for the year due to COVID-19.

Several events were planned for the team to attend in 2020, including the Reds Opening Day Parade on March 26<sup>th</sup>, the Cincinnati Police

Memorial on May 11<sup>th</sup>, and we had submitted availability to the Cincinnati Reds for games. The team was also excited for the opportunity to present the flags at their very first FC Cincinnati soccer game on July 25<sup>th</sup>. These were all cancelled due to COVID-19, with the exception of the Cincinnati Police Memorial. The parade format was changed to vehicles only except for the HCPA Honor Guard unit. Individual color guard units were not able to participate.

The Ranger Color Guard hopes to be able to get back to training in 2021 and possibly welcome additional new members. As far as events to participate in, that will be determined by COVID-19.

### **Verbal Defense and Influence (VDI) Submitted by Lieutenant Ali Bird**

In January 2020, we were approached to present Verbal Defense and Influence training at an employee (non-law enforcement) Lunch & Learn. We were excited about this opportunity as we'd been wanting to expand our reach to the rest of the GPHC staff as well as to our own division. We began to formulate a lesson plan for an anticipated date of April 23<sup>rd</sup>. We planned a meeting for the three instructors (myself and Rangers Edwin McFadden and Matt Siry) to meet in March to work on the lesson plan in person. Only a few days prior to our first scheduled meeting, the Lunch & Learn was cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

In June we were approached by Amy Roell, GPHC Director of Education & Events, to possibly present a Zoom training to the Interpreters as they prepared to bring back in-person programming. They were anticipating some push back from guests being asked to comply with COVID-19 precautions and she wanted her staff to have some verbal tools at their disposal for handling these situations. We were working through that project and presenting it virtually when a decision was made that it wasn't necessary after all since the guests

were being great about the precautions in place.

In July, I went to the Chief to request a recertification for the VDI instructors and a request that a higher priority was placed on this training moving forward with our agency. He agreed on both counts and we look forward to recertification when budget constraints have been lifted and likewise, hosting more department VDI training to place an emphasis on our own de-escalation training.

In August, a decision was made to transition the unit from myself to Sgt. Lake. This transition will take place once she is able to complete training to become a certified instructor.

## Great Parks of Hamilton County Committee Reports

### Accessibility Team Submitted by Lt. Greg Grimm

The Great Parks of Hamilton County Accessibility Management Team is comprised of park staff from every division within our organization. As a group, we oversee the practice and process of implementing Federal, State, and Local disability legislation to ensure people with disabilities will have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from all of our programs, services and activities. Whenever possible, the Accessibility Management Team promotes the concept of going above and beyond minimum compliance with accessibility regulations and standards, striving to achieve best practices that meet the unique needs of the widest spectrum of our users.

In 2020, we focused on improving accessibility in park district restrooms. In addition, as part of the Master Plan, the group proposed design changes to facilities as future upgrades occur. The Ranger Department worked with the Planning team in the placement of a new accessible canoe and kayak launch platform that will be installed at the Winton Woods Harbor next year similar to the one at Miami Whitewater Forest. It is a floating dock equipped with a "Universally Accessible Transfer System" that allows an unassisted individual with a physical disability to access a canoe or kayak. It consists of a bench that slides over onto a railing system that allows the individual to sit down into a canoe or kayak.

### Controlled Bow Hunting Program Submitted by Lieutenant Greg Grimm

COVID-19 had a significant impact on park wide operations, including outdoor activities such as our controlled bow hunting program. The Conservation and Parks team worked closely with Rangers to update program rules to meet COVID-19 guidelines. A plan of action on how

to safely and responsibly hold the annual controlled bow hunting qualification had to be made. It was decided that this was the first year that in-person qualifications would not be held; only participants in the 2019-2020 season would be eligible to hunt in the program in 2020-2021. Participants responded favorably to the changes and a large portion of the applicants elected to donate the application fee back to Great Parks, even if they were not eligible. Eligible hunters picked out their hunting packets through an online process or via phone and were asked to print off their own dash card and equipment labels.

Another COVID-19 adaptation for the program this year were two YouTube videos starring volunteer coordinator, Brian Barnard, and links were sent to all participants. The first video outlined the program, rules, when to contact a Ranger, etc. and can be used for future bow hunting seasons and new participants. The second video addressed the changes made due to COVID-19 for 2020-2021 as well as other season-specific updates to the program.

For up-to-date information on our Controlled Bow Hunting Program, visit [www.greatparks.org/bowhunt](http://www.greatparks.org/bowhunt)

### Diversity & Inclusion Committee Submitted by Clerk Cathy Yohey

Like most committees in 2020, the Diversity & Inclusion committee started strong then cancelled all meetings & scheduled events for the remainder of the year. Our committee, which focuses on creating an inclusive environment for all employees and a Park system representative of the community we serve, participated in Kick-Off in January and then held a Poverty Simulation training with the help of St. Vincent De Paul in February.

For the Poverty Simulation training, participants were given an alternate identity which included a monthly income and a list of monthly expenses that needed taken care of by the end

of the training. For 1 ½ hours, we had to navigate stations set up to represent the social services and public services networks to try to meet our goal. For that afternoon, I was a 67 year old single female living on social security who had just been prescribed a very expensive drug for a serious medical condition. It was a humbling experience and I, like several other participants, was not able to pay all of my bills due to various obstacles I encountered. The hope is to be able to offer this training again in the future so more employees can participate in this eye-opening experience.

### **Health & Wellness Committee Submitted by Ranger Sherry Garner**

#### **"#PositiveVibes2020Health&Wellness"**

That is our motto for 2020. Needless to say 2020 was a difficult year. This year with the start of COVID-19 we could not meet face to face. We focused on finding new ways to stay healthy during this pandemic. Each month a new article dealing with mental or physical wellness was published in the employee weekly newsletter, "The Gazette". We used Facebook a lot this year to connect employees with ideas for being in quarantine, home schooling, and basically not being able to go anywhere. We would have people submit new and healthy recipes, stay at home exercise, post quarantine projects around the house, and your new daily routines. With more family time, you had to figure out new ideas as a family to stay healthy. With parents working from home and kids taking part in e-learning, getting outside for exercise was the highlight for most people. With Great Parks still open, we had several people try to visit a new park each week for their daily walks with the hopes of visiting ALL Great Parks of Hamilton County. It was the one place you could still relax and enjoy.

### **Kick-Off 2020 Submitted by Sergeant Katie Lake, Co-Chair**

This year's Kick-Off event ended with a bang! It was the last park district wide event that staff could attend in person before the coronavirus

pandemic hit. The event was scheduled for two days in January (the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>) and was held at the Sharonville Recreation Center. The theme was 'Treasure Our Parks' and several park district committees (PEET, Diversity & Inclusion, and Health & Wellness) provided actives and information for our staff. We also heard from our Chief of Planning, Tim Zelek, about the Parks and Facilities Master Plan and our CEO, Todd Palmeter, wrapped up the day with some fun questions and answers. There were games and snack breaks throughout the event but I don't think anything topped the awesome raffle prizes several staff members were lucky enough to walk away with at the end of the day. Overall 183 staff members attended Kick-Off this year. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 a 2021 Kick-Off committee was not formed and no event will occur in 2021.



### **2020 OPRA Conference – Submitted by Ranger Kendra Keuffer**

The 2020 OPRA (Ohio Parks and Recreation Association) conference attended by Sergeant Katie Lake, Ranger Kendra Keuffer, Sergeant Alex Stephens, and Ranger Matt Randolph was held February 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> in Sandusky, Ohio.

The conference was a great opportunity to spend time not only with fellow Rangers and Park District employees that we may otherwise only see in passing but also Rangers and park employees from other park systems in Ohio. There was a wide range of interesting and informative classes available and everyone who attended definitely left having learned something new. Whether it was that the Wood Frog makes a quacking sound or the fact that Ohio's last confirmed rabies case was 50 years ago (despite the common concern some people get when they see raccoons or opossums out during the day) every class was very

informative. Another take away from a class were the five P's of Resilience: Psychology, Purpose, Practices, Priorities, and People. Lastly, and one of the most startling facts, was that salamanders in Ohio are poached and sold online for as much as \$70 each for red salamanders and \$25 each for spotted salamanders.

The conference included a very nice awards dinner where The Great Parks of Hamilton County was honored as a recipient; having received an award for our Holiday Lights recycling program. We were also recognized for some of our other Great Parks programs. The conference was very informative and an overall rewarding experience.

#### **Park Employee Engagement Team (PEET) Submitted by Sergeant Katie Lake**

In 2020 PEET was very limited in the tasks we could accomplish due to the COVID-19. We were, however, able to provide an activity at Kick-Off 2020. The activity revealed our new core values that staff members were very involved in helping select. The values are Integrity, Sustainability, Inclusivity, and Fun.

Knowing how important these values are going to be to our agency's culture and PEET going forward, we wanted to come up with more ways to announce them and make them memorable. After Kick-Off was over, we unfortunately were hit with the pandemic which limited our monthly meetings. At first, we didn't meet at all and then when we resumed, our monthly meetings were shorter and strictly virtual. As everyone quickly learned, it wasn't going to be easy getting our list of action items completed in 2020. So instead, we decided to concentrate on one and that was to get our core values out and more familiar to our staff members. It was decided that in order to get this information out to everyone and on a regular basis it would be perfect to have them added in every park Gazette along with our agency mission statement. We also thought it would be perfect

to add our core values into the Getting Started program. Since every employee working at Great Parks has to attend this introductory training, we thought it would be a great place for new hires to learn about what's important to our agency. Currently we are trying to figure out the best way for our park leaders to express the importance of these four words to their staff and remind them frequently the positive effects they can have on our agency and guests. We want managers, directors, and chiefs to start recognizing employees and praising their accomplishments when they are utilizing our core values and making a difference. The core values that were selected will be a great tool for the advancement and continued growth of each employee and our agency. Once PEET completes the task of educating all staff about our core values and their importance we will move on to our next endeavor. Hopefully 2021 will allow our committee to meet more frequently and permit us to have a more hands-on approach with our next project.

#### **Park Law Enforcement Association (PLEA) Submitted by Captain Dale Steele**

Captain Dale Steele and Ranger Shawn Wright attended the PLEA Conference at DeGray Lake Resort State Park near Bismarck, Arkansas held February 24-27, 2020. While there, Captain Steele attended the annual Board Meeting as he is currently serving on the Executive Board as the PLEA Treasurer.

Conference classes were offered on: *Planning for Times When Things Go Wrong; Drone Technology in Park Law Enforcement along with Drone Demonstrations; Search and Rescue Plan Implementation; Tour Day of Local Arkansas State Parks; "Bulletproof Mind" Presentation from Lt. Colonel Dave Grossman.*

## Traffic Safety Committee Submitted by Sergeant Katie Lake

The Traffic Safety Committee was created in March of 2020 but due to the pandemic didn't hold its first meeting until July 1<sup>st</sup>. The committee, started by Chief Snow, is led by Sergeant Lake and includes Rangers McCoy Lambing, Jamie Jones, Shawn Wright, Kendra Keuffer, Joel Altman, and Andrew Quine; all representing each region of the department and all providing certain skills helpful for the success of the committee. Since its creation, the committee has discussed its purpose and established goals for the year. It was decided our committee would be responsible for providing education to the public about traffic safety and doing what we could to help keep everyone safe.

Our first goals were to have the department become more involved and participate in key traffic safety campaigns (Click It or Ticket, Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over, Stay Alive Don't Text and Drive, etc.) and host several departmental events each year. We are hopeful to host a Bike



Rodeo and Safety Town event in the Spring/Summer of 2021. Since events like these have never been

provided by our department before, our committee has been meeting often to try and plan as much as possible. With the assistance of other park's departments and staff we have been able to confirm dates for these events, get materials in place, and chose our locations. Our fingers are crossed that COVID restrictions will be lifted in time for our events.

Even though it's new, our committee has been able to come up with a lot of other great ideas as well this year. One of which being to install a new crosswalk at Sharon Woods (near High Banks at Buckeye Falls Drive) and another at Miami Whitewater Forest (near the Bad Lands

Trail on Timberlakes Drive). Both projects were presented to the Planning department with the goal to improve pedestrian safety. After the winter months have passed, a new crosswalk is scheduled to be installed at Sharon Woods and once budgets allow a new crosswalk will also be installed at Miami Whitewater Forest.



*Area designated at Sharon Woods for a new crosswalk thanks to the Traffic Safety Committee.*

Another idea that came about was trying to develop a way to successfully keep track of seat belt usages within each of the parks. Thanks to our very skillful clerks, a spreadsheet was created that will allow us to track problem areas so we know where to concentrate our resources and try to educate drivers as to why it's always important to wear safety belts. It seems like at every meeting, even more great ideas are being discussed as well as ways to help execute a plan to help keep people safe.

## Community Involvement

Submitted by Lieutenant Greg Grimm and Sergeant Katie Lake

Looking back, when this news release appeared, it looked as if the Parks would be seeing gatherings again as early as April. While individuals would return and find solitude, comfort and exercise in the parks, large gatherings would not return for the remainder of 2020.

### **"New Release: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE"**

#### **Great Parks Cancels Indoor and Outdoor Events, Outdoor Locations to Remain Open**

*Effective immediately, Great Parks is cancelling indoor and outdoor programs and events through at least April 5, 2020, including reservable areas, indoor play areas, visitor centers, exhibit areas and the Nature Center at the Summit. Our outdoor locations including parks, golf, camping, boating and trails will remain open.*

*These cancelations are in an effort to limit public gatherings to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Great Parks will continue to communicate updates to the public as necessary.*

*Visit <https://www.greatparks.org/covid-19> for more information."*

We were fortunate to have been able to participate in the PBS "Kids Meet the Helpers" event at the CET Studios in downtown Cincinnati. This event held March 7 celebrated our community helpers and first responders. Ranger staff had the opportunity to speak with over 400 children promoting safety in our parks, stewardship and the recreation and educational opportunities that our parks provide. The Helpers event was the inspiration of Fred Rogers who said, "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."



Rangers Grogan and Altman attended Sharonville's Trunk or Treat event on October 20<sup>th</sup>. The event, held at the Sharonville Recreation Center, invited Kids from the community to attend and receive candies and

goodies from officers, fire fighters and many others to help celebrate Halloween safely. Rangers handed out candy and glow sticks; both of which were a huge hit.

Ranger Altman attended Sharonville's Christmas event on December 5<sup>th</sup>. The event was held at Gower Park. The Sharonville Fire Department was also in attendance and assisted with giving kids a fun and safe experience. Those attending the event had a chance to meet Mrs. Claus and Santa but from a safe distance. In fact, Santa was actually in a giant snow globe which allowed kids to get close and be able talk with him while staying safe. Ranger Altman was there to help greet the children and hand out candy and stickers to all who came through.

Rangers Williford and Altman attended the 2020 Operation Santa's Sleigh event on December 23<sup>rd</sup>. This event was attended by multiple police and fire agencies across Hamilton County to serve one purpose and one purpose only.... to light Cincinnati blue and red for all the young patients at Children's Hospital. This parade of cruisers, fire trucks, and ambulances starts at Burnet Woods and travels through the city to the front of Children's Hospital. The lights from all the emergency vehicles are turned to show our support and well wishes for kids and their families that have to celebrate the holidays while hospitalized.

Lieutenant Grimm was thrilled to be a part of the 10<sup>th</sup> annual "Put a Lid on It" bike helmet safety (visit <http://ohioaap.org/PutALidOnIt>). The annual campaign is a collaboration between the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Ohio Department of Transportation. Great Parks provided 88 bicycle helmets to children at the Cincinnati Recreation Commission's Clifton and Dunham Recreation Centers. Biking was very popular in 2020 at Great Parks because it's a great outdoor recreation with safe social distancing.

## Job Fairs/Recruitment

### Submitted by Lieutenant Greg Grimm

In 2020 Lt. Grimm and Lt. Bird attended the 18th Annual Criminal Justice Career Expo on March 3rd in the Great Hall on the University of Cincinnati Campus. We had the pleasure to speak to students looking for volunteering opportunities as well as part-time and full-time work. Rangers staffed a booth at the expo and interacted with over 100 criminal justice students promoting our unique role in law enforcement. Many students were unaware that Park District Rangers are State Certified Peace Officers who enforce state, local and federal law on park lands. Several students followed up with phone calls and emails securing ride-alongs with Rangers before the pandemic caused us to suspend the rides.

The Hocking College Natural Resources Career Fair was held virtual in April of 2020. Natural resources students logged into a virtual chat and learned more about the requirements and application process for park ranger positions. Rangers look forward to getting back into the

community and advancing our recruitment efforts as soon as we can safely do so.

## Event Off-Duty Details

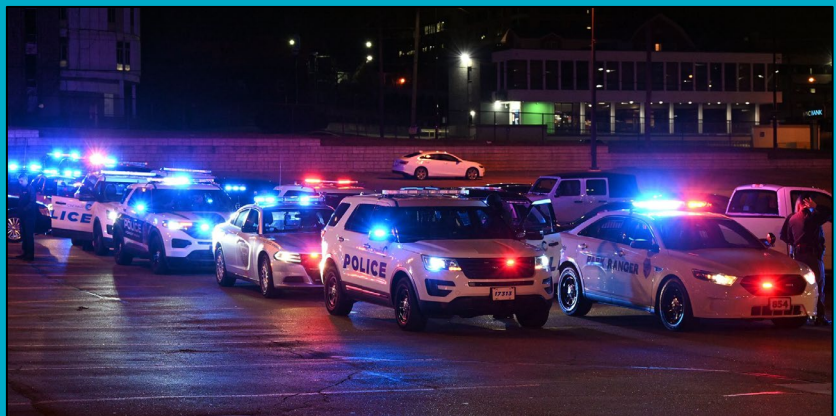
### Submitted by Lieutenant Greg Grimm

In a "typical" year, Rangers are called upon to work in an off-duty capacity providing for the safety of visitors at large gatherings, sporting events and 5k's. During these events, Rangers coordinate crowd and traffic control, act as first responders and serve as a point of contact for hosting the event. The season usually starts with spring soccer tournaments, a large orienteering event (draws national participation) at Miami Whitewater Forest, a host of 5k races at Winton Woods, the *Rollin' on The River Car Show* at Fernbank Park and a wrap with the Alleen Company's *Holiday in Lights Display* at Sharon Woods. 2020 being far from "typical" required only off-duty details at the socially distanced "Walk Thru The Lights " and "Drive thru the Lights "Holiday Display at Sharon Woods.

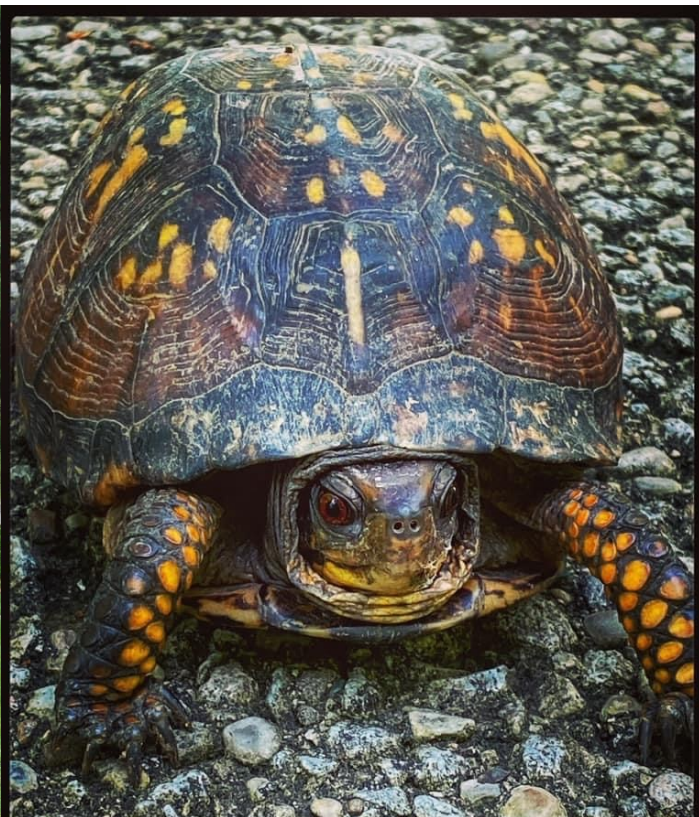
See you in 2021!



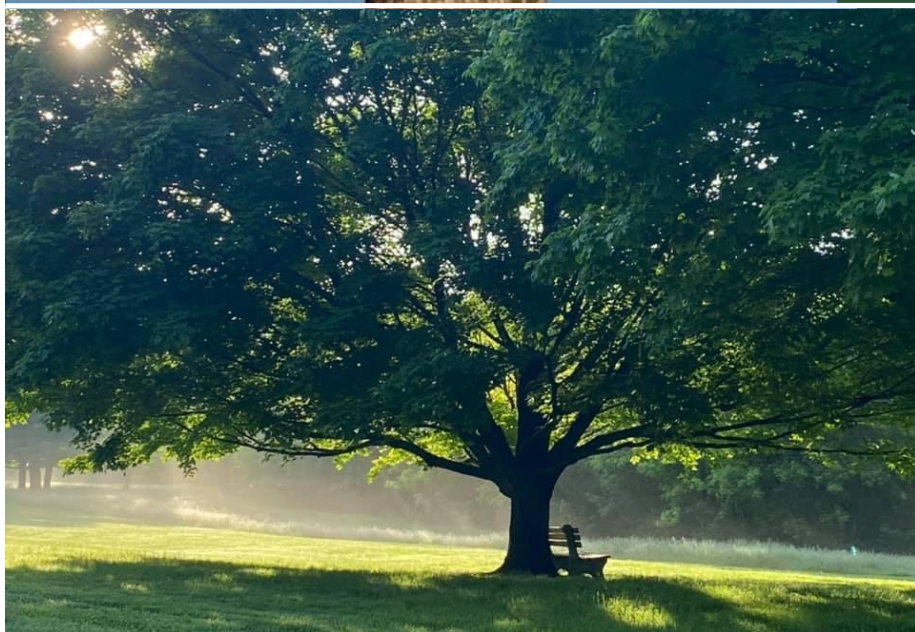
## Operation Santa's Sleigh 2020



Left: Honorary Parade Leaders, Ella & Axel with Ranger Altman. Right: Parade Line-up of Emergency Vehicles



2020 Departmental  
Training  
&  
Statistics



## Training

### CPT Summary

The Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission (OPOTC) sets the minimum number of hours for continuing professional training (CPT) for peace officers in Ohio. The minimum number of hours is based upon funding available for reimbursement. The commission did not mandate any CPT hours in 2020 due to no available funding. Instead, it was recommended each agency continue to build towards the 40 hours of annual advanced training by focusing on specific topics suggested by the Attorney General's Advisory Group on Law Enforcement Training.

Topic recommendations from the advisory group included:

- Legal Updates (i.e., case law, legislative changes)
- Community-Police Relationships (e.g., implicit bias, procedural justice, community diversity, agency transparency, generational issues)
- Mental Health
- De-escalation and crisis intervention
- Refresher training for perishable skills in a reality-based training environment
- Use of Force policy review

### OPOTA Mandatory Training Completed for 2020 (requires 100%)

OPOTA Firearms Requalification Shoot	36/36	100%
OPOTA New Hire Firearms Qualifications	9/9	100%
OPOTA Firearms Instructor Requalifications	1/1	100%
OPOTA Peace Officer Refresher Training	1/1	100%
O.C. Chemical Agent Certification	3/3	100%
ASP Basic Certification (ABC)	2/2	100%

---

### Great Parks Rangers In-House Departmental Training for 2020 (minimum 65% participation)

February 12	Ranger Meeting, <b>Law Enforcement Liability</b> Presented by Greg Hennecke – Hylant Group, Sharon Centre	32/42	76%
February 12	Ranger Meeting, <b>Body-Worn and In-Car Camera Training</b> Sharon Centre	32/42	76%
March 6-7	<b>Defensive Tactics / Use of Force Review*</b> Lake Isabella Riverside Lodge	22/41	54%
October 22-23	<b>American Safety Institute (ASI) ATV RiderCourse</b> Sharon Woods	4/4	100%
Oct – Dec	<b>American Heart Association CPR/First Aid/BLS/AED/Stop the Bleed*</b> Shawnee Lookout Golf Course	6/41	15%
December 20	<b>Firearms Simulator Training*</b> Hamilton County Sheriff's Office Range	7/40	18%

*\*Due to COVID-19 restrictions and cancellation of additional trainings, we did not meet the minimum participation.*

## 2020 GPHC Optional Training Opportunities

- January 10                    **A.L.I.C.E. Instructor Recertification**, Stephens, A.L.I.C.E. Institute, Online
- February 03                    **QPR Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Program**, Stephens/Keuffer, QPR Institute, Online
- February 18-19                **The Adaptive FTO**, McFadden/Randolph, Hamilton Township OH Police Department
- February 18-19                **Finding the Leader in You**, Lambing/Binkley/Wright, Warren County ESC, Lebanon, OH
- February 25-27                **Park Law Enforcement Association (PLEA) Annual Conference**, Steele/Wright, Bismark, AR
- July 16                         **BCI/II Training**, Reno, Scarlet Oaks, Cincinnati OH
- July 28                         **TAC Training**, Reno, Scarlet Oaks, Cincinnati OH
- August 07                      **Sunshine Laws Certified Training**, Snow/Steele/Bird/Grimm/Yohey/Reno, Ohio Attorney General Webcast
- August 10-13                 **First Line Supervision**, Stephens/Lake, Hamilton Township OH Police Department
- September 22                 **MDC/LEADS Certification**, Jones/Quine, Scarlet Oaks, Cincinnati OH
- October 23                    **AHA Basic Lifesaver & Heartsaver Instructor Update**, Garner/Foley, Online
- October 29                    **Wanted/Missing Functionality**, Reno, Scarlet Oaks, Cincinnati OH
- November 9-11                **Field Training Officer Training**, Wright, Butler Tech, Cincinnati OH
- November 14                 **AHA Basic Lifesaver & Heartsaver Instructor Update**, Shannon, Online

\*4 Rangers completed an additional 10 non-mandatory online blocks of training for a total of 10 sessions in all.

## Hours of Training

EMPLOYEE	2020	2019
Alberico, Andrea	22.75	24.50
Altman, Joel	5.75	6.00
Batts, Anthony		*402.00
Batts, Jordan	10.00	9.50
Biaglow, Tim	16.25	17.50
Binkley, Jocelyn	32.75	*567.00
Bird, Ali	8.75	100.50
Britton, Victoria	0.00	0.00
Dove, Rick	15.25	10.00
Farmer, Michael	2.00	5.00
Faulkner, Cody	3.75	*123.00
Foley, Michael	11.75	12.00
Gantt, Jason		*129.00
Garner, Sherry	65.75	23.00
Gregory, Eric	17.25	124.00
Grimm, Greg	10.25	16.50
Grogan, Kelly	43.75	*458.00
Grubbs, Ken	*225.50	
Hodapp, Dan	43.75	8.50
Jones, Jamie	*377.75	
Kachele, Doug		8.50
Kammer, Alecia	*384.00	
Keuffer, Kendra	56.75	*235.50
LaGory, John	*139.00	
Lake, Katie	77.75	21.50
Lambing, McCoy	28.75	9.50
Larsh, Jeff	*139.5	
Long, Michael		*131.50
McFadden, Edwin	30.75	33.0
Mueller, Andrew		7.50

EMPLOYEE	2020	2019
Nance, Craig	3.75	11.00
Nealan, Andrew	13.75	*367.00
Patterson, John	15.25	9.00
Peacock, Nicole		7.00
Philibin, Zach	*263.50	
Pfeiffer, Jacob	20.00	26.50
Quine, Andrew	*263.50	
Randolph, Matthew	59.75	10.50
Reed, Ryland	2.00	*216.00
Reno, Kait	*379.5	
Rieskamp, Don	10.00	12.00
Shannon, Missie	67.75	25.50
Siry, Matt	10.50	11.00
Snow, Scott	8.75	
Spraul, Elliott		39.00
Spreckelmeier, Rick	1.75	7.50
Spurgeon, Dave	3.75	9.50
Stapleton, Joy	0.00	0.00
Steele, Dale	30.75	67.50
Stephens, Alexander	40.75	150.50
Stoeckel, Daren	13.75	9.00
Tolle, Diane	53.50	
Tremain, Jeff	11.75	8.50
Weed, Chris		*279.00
Wright, Shawn	114.00	*279.50
Williams, Todd	3.75	12.00
Williford, Kelly	19.00	20.50
Yohey, Catherine	3.00	12.00
Zimmerman, Nathan	55.25	45.00
TOTAL	3238.50	4118.00

*\*Includes Field Training Hours*

     *Not employed with GPHC*

## Ranger Division Dispatch Totals

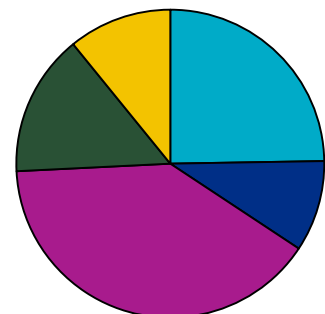
### Nature of Details

DESCRIPTION	2020
911 Call	8
Abduction	1
After Hours in Park	493
Aided Cases	111
Alarm Checks/Drops	1236
Animal Bite Case	8
Animal Complaint	296
Arson	1
Assault	5
Assist Citizen	130
Assist GPHC Bow Hunter	9
Assist Motorist – All Other	134
Assist Motorist - Lockout	117
Assist Other NON-LE Agency	17
Assist Other Police Department	379
Attempt to Locate	13
Auto Accidents	29
Auto Theft	2
BOLO	5
Burglary/Breaking & Entering	3
Campground Check In	24
Check Well Being	29
Child Abuse	2
Citizen Complaint	20
Counterfeit	1
Criminal Damaging	49
Criminal Mischief	7
Custody Dispute	5
Disorderly Crowd	1
Disturbance	21
Domestic	2
Drug Offense - Felony	7
Drug Offense - Misdemeanor	67
Failure to Pay Fees	20
False Report	1
Field Interview	4
Fight	1
Fire	8
Fireworks	7
Follow-Up	30
Fraud	1
Harassment	2
Hunting/Trapping	16
Identity Theft	1
Information	82
Investigative	116
Juvenile Complaint	21
Liquor Violation	52
Littering/Dumping	89
Minor Violation Patrol	231

DESCRIPTION	2020
Missing Person	11
MVP Check	19
Neighbor Complaint	1
Obstructing Official Business	2
OVI	6
Parking Violation	229
Peace Disturbance	49
Place Found Open	92
Power Outage	4
Property Damage (Non-Criminal)	16
Public Indecency	20
Public Service	159
Receiving Stolen Property	2
Recovered Stolen Property	3
Recovered Stolen Vehicle	1
Sex Offenses	1
Shots Fired	20
Signal 30	75
Soliciting	2
Stalking	1
Street or Path Hazard	30
Sudden Death	1
Suicide	2
Suicide-Attempt	5
Suspicious Circumstances	24
Suspicious Person	79
Suspicious Vehicle	77
Theft	72
Towed Vehicle	7
Traffic Stop	335
Traffic Violation	87
Trespassing	13
Trouble Run	23
Vandalism	21
Warrant Arrest	19
Warrant Confirmation	1
Water Rescue	9
Weapons Violation	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,438</b>

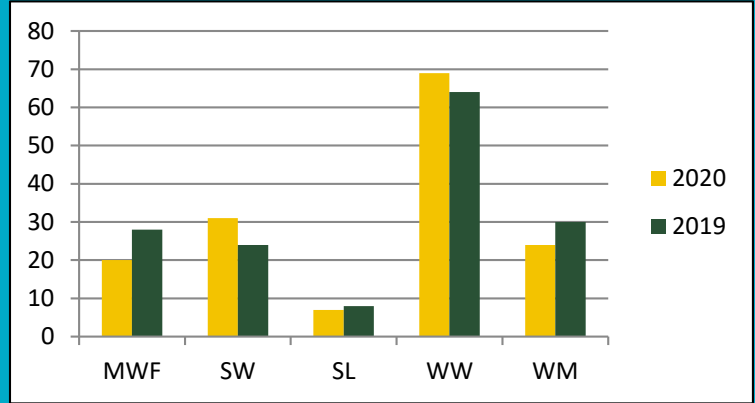
### Details by District

- Miami Whitewater 1,345
- Shawnee Lookout 520
- Winton Woods 2,171
- Sharon Woods 811
- Woodland Mound 591



## Regional Criminal Offense Report Totals

	2020	2019
Woodland Mound	24	30
Sharon Woods	31	24
EAST REGION TOTAL	55	54
Winton Woods	69	64
CENTRAL REGION TOTAL	69	64
Miami Whitewater Forest	20	28
Shawnee Lookout	7	8
WEST REGION TOTAL	27	36
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>154</b>



## Classification of NIBRS Offense Reports

Breakdown of National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) Offense Totals

GROUP A OFFENSES	2020	2019
Arson	1	0
Assault Offenses ( <i>Aggravated Assault, Simple Assault, Intimidation</i> )	8	4
Burglary/Breaking & Entering	2	0
Counterfeiting/Forgery	0	1
Destruction/Vandalism of Property	76	71
Drug/Narcotic Offenses	10	15
Fraud Offenses ( <i>Identity Theft, Credit Card Misuse, Tampering w/Evidence</i> )	3	2
Rape	0	1
Robbery	1	0
Stolen Property Offenses ( <i>Receiving Stolen Property, Recovered Stolen Property</i> )	3	1
Theft ( <i>All Other</i> )	15	16
Theft from Motor Vehicle	57	43
Theft of Motor Vehicle	0	1
Weapons Violations	4	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>157</b>

GROUP B OFFENSES	2020	2019
Bad Checks	0	1
Disorderly Conduct	3	4
OVI	6	1
All Other Offenses ( <i>Illegal Dumping, Failure to Comply, Obstruction</i> )	24	39
All Other Offenses w/Victim ( <i>Importuning</i> )	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>45</b>

### NIBRS Report Classification (Percentages are rounded)

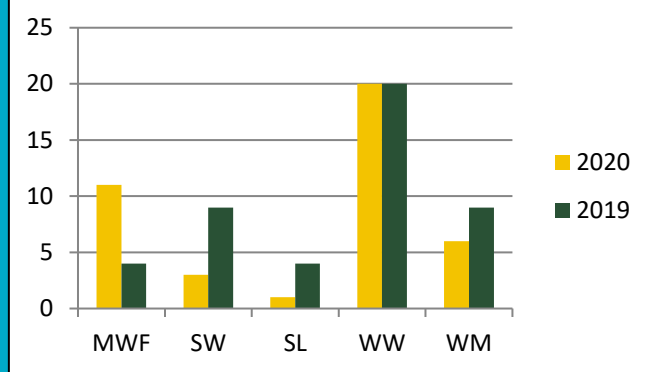
TYPE	2020	%	2019	%
Group A Offenses	180	84%	157	78%
Group B Offenses	34	16%	45	22%
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF OFFENSES</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>100%</b>

NIBRS Offense totals are higher than total number of reports due to more than one charge being included in one report.

## Non-Criminal Incident Reports - Summary by District

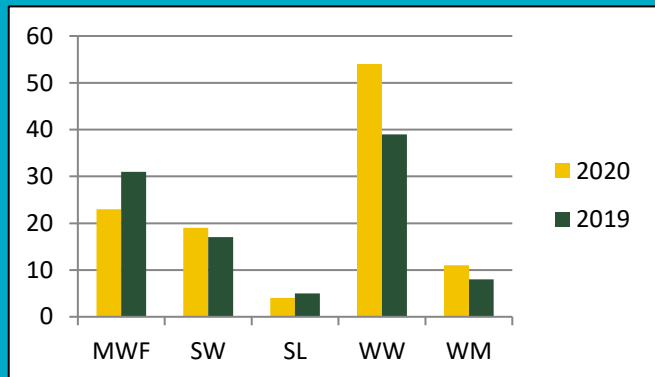
\*These include reports for Suicide Attempts, Water Rescues, Animal Bites, Property Damage and Non-criminal Death Investigations

	2020	2019
Miami Whitewater Forest	11	4
Sharon Woods	3	9
Shawnee Lookout	1	4
Winton Woods	20	20
Woodland Mound	6	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>46</b>



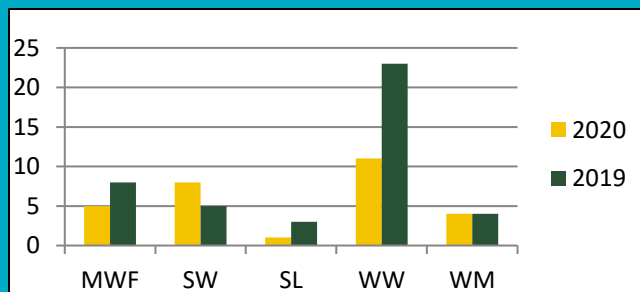
## Aided Case Reports - Summary by District

	2020	2019
Miami Whitewater Forest	23	31
Sharon Woods	19	17
Shawnee Lookout	4	5
Winton Woods	54	39
Woodland Mound	11	8
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>



## Auto Accident Reports - Summary by District

	2020				2019			
	Property Damage	Injury	Fatal	2020 TOTAL	Property Damage	Injury	Fatal	2019 TOTAL
Miami Whitewater Forest	5	0	0	5	8	0	0	8
Sharon Woods	8	0	0	8	5	0	0	5
Shawnee Lookout	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	3
Winton Woods	10	1	0	11	18	5	0	23
Woodland Mound	4	0	0	4	4	0	0	4
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>43</b>



## Citations Issued

### Classification of Minor Misdemeanor Charges

NATURE OF CITATION	2020	2019
Burning Material	0	1
Criminal Trespass	0	3
Deface Park Property	1	0
Disorderly Conduct	0	4
Drug Abuse	42	65
Drug Abuse Instrument	1	1
Drug Paraphernalia	5	8
Failure to Pay Fee	3	0
Failure to Register a Dog	0	1
Fishing Violations	1	4
Furnish Alcohol to a Minor	1	0
Hunt/Molest Wildlife	1	0
In Park After Hours	17	7

NATURE OF CITATION	2020	2019
Leash Law Violation	5	2
Littering, Dumping	3	2
Nuisance Animal	0	2
Open Container	15	16
Public Indecency	1	6
Recites - HCPR	4	16
Recites - Other	104	143
Theft	0	1
Unauthorized Camping	2	0
Water Regulation Violation	1	0
Weapons In Park	2	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>283</b>

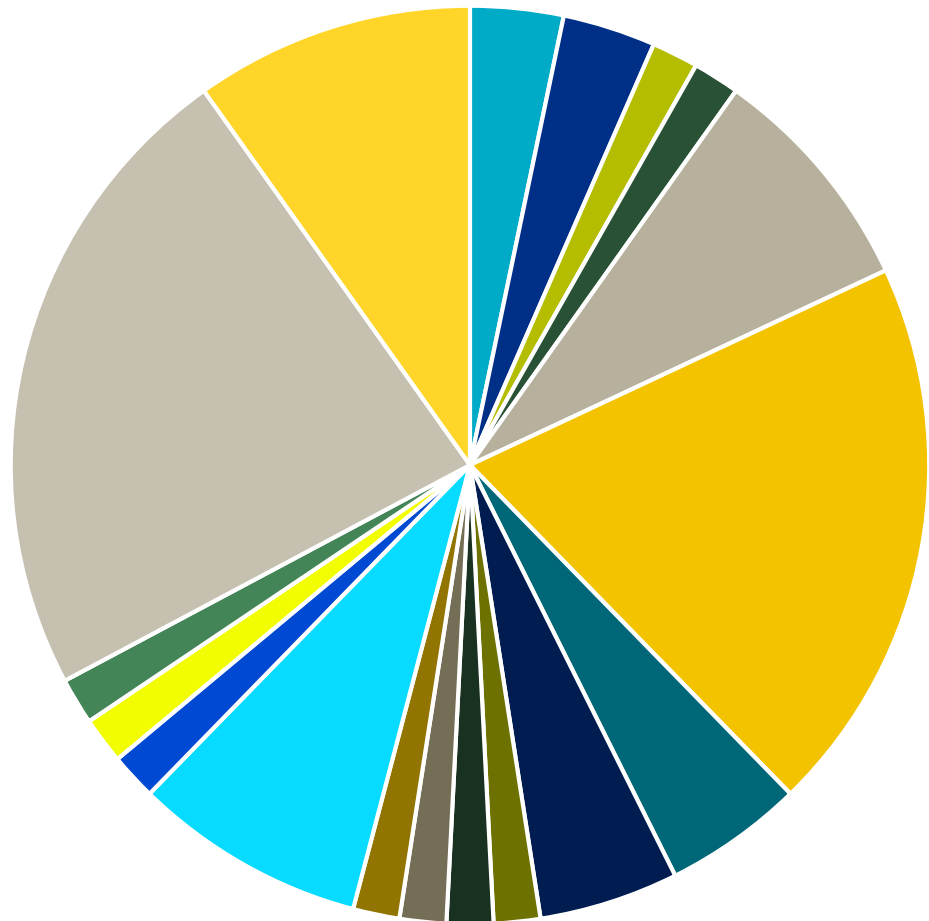
### Classification of Traffic Charges

NATURE OF CITATION	2020	2019
ATV Prohibited	1	0
Child Restraints	3	6
Drive Off Roadway	3	7
Drive on Closed Roadway	1	0
Drive Under Suspension	46	119
Drive Under OVI Suspension	1	3
Expired License Plates	0	6
Failure to Reinstate	10	18
Fail to Report Auto Accident	1	0
Fictitious Tags	1	4
Handicap Parking	0	1
Improper Backing	1	0
License Plate Violation	2	4
Marked Lanes	2	2

NATURE OF CITATION	2020	2019
No Operator's License	17	22
No Passing	4	1
Operation of Low Speed	0	1
OVI	8	1
OVI – Physical Control	0	1
Reasonable Control	3	6
Reckless Operation	1	3
Red Light Violation	4	1
Right of Way at Intersection	0	1
Safety Restraint Violation	0	1
Speed	44	86
Turn Signal Violation	0	2
Wrongful Entrustment	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>297</b>

## Arrests and Charges Summary

	2020	2019		2020	2019
Juvenile Arrests	2	1	Adult Arrests	32	25
Juvenile Charges	2	1	Adult Charges	59	41



- Assault - 2
- Criminal Damaging - 2
- Disorderly Conduct - 1
- Domestic Violence - 1
- Drug Paraphernalia - 5
- Drug Possession - 12
- Drug Trafficking - 3
- Failure to Comply - 3
- Importuning - 1
- Making False Claims - 1
- Obstruction - 1
- Park Hours - 1
- Receiving Stolen Property - 5
- Speed - 1
- Tampering with Evidence - 1
- Theft - 1
- Warrant Arrests - 14
- Weapons Violations - 6

## Guest & Citizen General Complaints

**Ranger Division contacts related to service received:** The following chart shows the number of contacts related to service received in 2020 compared to 2019. All contacts were addressed with the inquirer and the named Ranger. Corrective action was taken when appropriate when the detail type concerned allegations of misconduct.

Great Parks has defined the normal expected range of contacts related to allegations of misconduct to be 0-19 per year. This range is based upon the estimated total number of Ranger/Public Contact opportunities per year. The Rangers perform an average of 5,750 details per year. Assuming approximately 2/3 of those details require a direct interface with the general public, then there are approximately 3,833 Ranger/Public Contacts per year. One-half of one percent (0.005) of that total would amount to approximately 19 allegations of misconduct per 3,833 Ranger/Public Contact opportunities. This is an arbitrary decision and is considered reasonable due to the relatively small number of complaints received and the overall total number of Ranger/Public Contact opportunities.

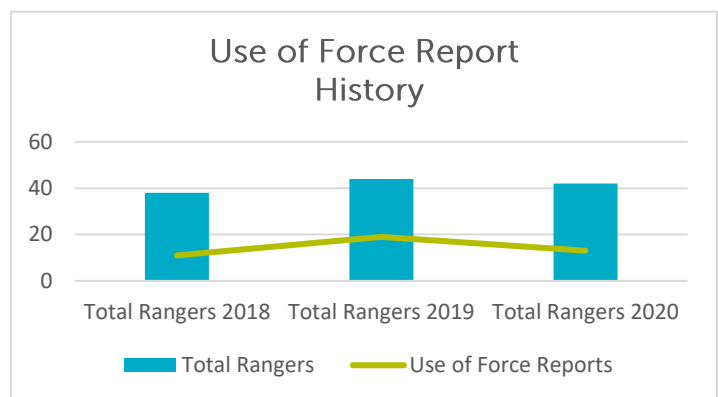
	Number of Contacts About Rangers		Below-OK-Above Norms
Detail Type	2019	2020	
Allegations of Misconduct	2	1	OK
Commendations	2	5	OK
Inquiries	3	3	OK

**Review:** All category values fell into expected ranges. No corrective action is required at this time.

## Annual Use of Force Summary (Traffic Pursuit, Display/Discharge of Firearm Incidents)

The Ranger division recorded 13 Use of Force reports in 2020. These reports are routine, agency-initiated reviews of traffic pursuits, incidents involving physical force, or incidents involving a display or discharge of a weapon, asp or OC spray while on duty. This number is a significant decrease from the 19 reports in 2019.

Five of these reports were for physical altercations and eight involved Rangers who displayed a weapon. All incidents were determined to be within the guidelines of division policy.



Chief's Approval\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_