

*Charting the Course*  
**2012 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY**



**CONSERVANCY**  
*for CUYAHOGA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK*



Cuyahoga Valley National Park traces its roots to the Cuyahoga Valley Association's efforts in the early 1970's to protect the valley from growing development threats. Culminating with Congressman John F. Seiberling's successful campaign for Congressional designation, the Cuyahoga Valley was recognized as a unit of the National Park System in 1974.

Today, the Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park draws its strength from thousands of members, volunteers, donors, and advocates who share a love of our extraordinary 33,000-acre national park lying along 20 miles of the resurgent Cuyahoga River between Akron and Cleveland. We work in partnership with the National Park Service to engage the community in enjoyment and support of the park and its programs.

Our passion is to help Cuyahoga Valley National Park rise to its full potential for the people of Northeast Ohio and the nation. We cherish our Cuyahoga Valley as a phenomenal civic asset, a treasured landscape, and a very special place firmly rooted in *who we are and what we care for*.

**CONSERVANCY**  
for CUYAHOGA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

[conservancyforcvnp.org](http://conservancyforcvnp.org)



## A DECADE OF GROWTH

Ten years ago, key leaders of Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP), the Cuyahoga Valley Association and the Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center (CVEEC) had a vision. Built on the strong foundation of the Cuyahoga Valley Association, a reorganized friends group for CVNP was formed. It provided youth programs and outreach through the CVEEC, while continuing the tradition of organizing supporters and providing funding for key park projects.

Today's Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park is organized into six units: education, fundraising, volunteer management, Extraordinary Spaces, programs and retail. We have been on a continuous growth curve, with today's budget triple the size of what it was in 2002. Our volunteers, staff, and dollars support a wide variety of projects and programs in the national park.

Our highlights for 2012 include:

- Co-management with Cuyahoga Valley National Park of over 5,900 volunteers.
- Residential environmental education and summer camp programs for 3,000 children.
- Field trips, day camp, and outreach programs for 9,000 children.
- 65 weddings hosted by the park's Extraordinary Spaces program.
- Opening Trail Mix Peninsula, a new retail/welcome center.
- 9,500 people enjoyed our Music in the Meadow free summer concert series.
- Thousands of park visitors enjoyed special events including the popular Fall Running Series, Festival of Lights, Music by Nature, and more.
- Involvement with a variety of park initiatives, including the new Trail Plan.

The success of the Conservancy is due to the strong support of our members and donors. As a supporter of the Conservancy, you are an advocate for our national park and the benefits it presents to our region. Your support demonstrates your commitment to the park's values of health and wellness, education, nature and wildlife preservation, and diverse programming offered through CVNP and the Conservancy.

We also appreciate the dedication of Stan Austin, CVNP Superintendent and his staff, the Conservancy's board members and staff, and our partners, Craig Tallman of the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad and Darwin Kelsey of the Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Conservancy. Together, we preserve this special place and provide great opportunities for people to enjoy their time here.

Chuck Mlakar  
Chairman, Board of Directors

Deb Yandala  
CEO



## FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

In recognition of the Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park's many accomplishments since the organization's inception, I want to thank Deb Yandala and her staff, the board members, committee members, donors, and thousands of Conservancy members for their tireless efforts and commitment to the mission of Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Our partnership has grown tremendously over the years and we would not be considered on the cutting edge for partnerships without the creativity and commitment from the Conservancy.

This has been a successful year for many long-term projects in the national park. A few highlights include: soil remediation completion and the preparation for the final restoration efforts at the former Krejci Dump Site; launch of a National Park Service initiative *Call to Action #13: Stop Talking and Listen*, in which we engaged with under-represented audiences and formalized a Community Engagement Council; finalized public comment for the park's Trail Management Plan where we expect a record of decision in spring 2013; and the launch of the first phase of the Environmental Assessment for the Boston Mills Area Plan which includes upgrades to visitor, employee, and partner facilities.

Thank you for your dedication and passion in moving this great national park forward to many more successful years!

*Stan Austin*  
Stan Austin



1971

Roots of Cuyahoga Valley National Park established when Cuyahoga Valley Association (CVA) forms (predecessor to the Conservancy)

1974

Congress establishes Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area (CVNRA) with grassroots support from CVA

1991

Cuyahoga Valley Photographic Society established

1999

November Lodge dedicated on CVEEC campus\*

2002

CVEEC and CVA merge to form Cuyahoga Valley National Park Association (CVNPA)

2007

Trail Mix Boston opens

2008

Trails Forever program initiated\*

2011

Renovated Stanford House re-opens to the public (formerly Stanford Hostel)\*

2012

Trail Mix Peninsula, a retail store in partnership with Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, opens

As the Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park looks ahead and embarks on a new strategic planning process, we also reflect on significant accomplishments from our past. This timeline shows a few examples.

Thank you for all of your support as we've progressed along our journey. We look forward to *charting the course* to continue our work for Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

1994

Formal dedication of the Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center (CVEEC)

2000

CVNRA name changed to Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP)

2006

Extraordinary Spaces program formalized to promote meeting and event facilities within CVNP

2009

Dedication of the Cuyahoga Valley Volunteer Center\*

2011

CVNPA changed its name to Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park

\* Indicates projects where fundraising was managed by the Conservancy.



NAVIGATING THE CONSERVANCY ON ITS MISSION

Like the Cuyahoga, with its strong current that pushes the river relentlessly northward through twists and turns to its final destination, energetic leaders of the Conservancy follow a steadfast course to preserve, protect and enhance Cuyahoga Valley National Park. The Conservancy’s board of directors has remained true to the course – the organization’s vision – that was set 10 years ago.

“The Conservancy took on the responsibility to be the organization to develop and do as much as it can for the park,” said Conservancy incoming board chair Lee A. Chilcote. “I’ve seen very positive change and growth. Our friends group is one of the best in the country. And we have a great future ahead.”

Chilcote has been active with the Conservancy since it was established 10 years ago. He has not only seen dramatic change at the Conservancy, he has contributed much time and talent to the Conservancy’s efforts to promote the park.

“You ask yourself, ‘What can be done?’ And, then you just do it,” said Chilcote, a longtime board member who takes the helm of the Conservancy’s board beginning in 2013. “When people see the strength of your commitment, they will get involved. They bring energy and enthusiasm, and that generates more involvement from others.”

When the non-profit friends group reorganized 10 years ago, Chilcote said the group was small. Today, however, the Conservancy boasts 2,700 members and an annual budget of \$3 million.

“We’ve grown and we’ve accomplished much,” he explains. “Look at what we’ve done with the growth of the Environmental Education Center and other programs, the rehabilitation of Stanford House and Volunteer Center, and the creation of Trail Mix Boston and now the new Trail Mix store in Peninsula.”

Chilcote continues, “Northeast Ohio residents may know the park is here, but they may not realize what a real jewel this is. We have a dream that so many people will learn to love this park that it will be thought of in the same breath as our other regional iconic amenities: the Akron Art Museum, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Rock Hall, and the Cleveland Art Museum.”

To reach that goal, the board formed a strategic planning committee in 2012. Chilcote chairs the committee and is proud of the enthusiastic participation from more than 50 people who are involved in creating the five-year plan. The group’s strategic plan will be completed in June 2013. “We’ll present a report to the board and then immediately take action,” the board chair said. “We are setting up implementable goals. If done right, this five-year

plan should carry us for 10 years, but we’ll do another strategic plan in five years to make sure we’re on course.”

Deb Yandala, Chief Executive Officer for the Conservancy, said, “Lee has a deep passion for national parks, green spaces, sustainability and environmental education. He truly believes in our mission, as shown by years of commitment to environmental efforts in Northeast Ohio. We are not ‘just another organization’ to him – we are truly fulfilling many objectives that he holds dear.”

She continued, “Lee’s planning and leadership of our strategic planning process will help chart the course of the Conservancy for years to come. He knows how to identify talent and utilize people’s skills to the benefit of the organization.”

Chilcote said the committee gathered input from more than 60 strategic thinkers across the region. “We have 30 pages of input which we have been using as we build the plan,” he added. Chilcote said there are five main areas that the Conservancy will work to enhance during the next five years: revenue, awareness, environmental education, programs, and partnerships.

While Chilcote is passionate about the future of the park, he’s also proud of the efforts of the executives

PHOTOS | TED TOTH



LEE AND TUNI CHILCOTE ENJOY THE ANNUAL DONOR GARDEN PARTY.

and staff members who have dedicated themselves to work daily fulfilling the Conservancy’s mission. “I’m excited about the donors and the volunteers,” he said. “But I give a lot of credit to our senior staff here. Deb [Yandala], Janice [Matteucci] and John [Debo] provide great leadership and truly motivate those who work with them.”



TOPOGRAPHY GUESTS ENJOY EVENING AT THE OVERLOOK.

Lee Chilcote and his wife Tuni share a love for the outdoors that they’ve passed on to their children. “We have four children – three boys and a girl,” Tuni said. “They’re all grown up and live in the Cleveland area. They’re all members of the Conservancy. They have all done biking and hiking in national parks across the country,” Lee added. “Our son Don has hiked in 40 national parks.”

The Chilcotes’ involvement with CVNP began in 1997 when they began supporting an artists’ program at the CVEEC. He has numerous years of experience serving on boards and committees of nonprofits.

The new board chair said he was drawn into the Conservancy by friends and other people who were actively looking for a way to support the young park. “This park has tremendous people and wonderful features. We are a regional entity,” he added.

This year, Lee and Tuni were recognized with a medallion (pictured right) in the Cuyahoga Valley Donor Recognition Garden, signifying lifetime contributions to the Conservancy of over \$100,000.





## SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING BLUE, SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY

Park Ranger Brady Bourquin has spent the past 10 years getting to know Cuyahoga Valley National Park. He has served in a variety of roles at CVNP that have allowed him to become familiar with inspiring places and extraordinary spaces.

One such extraordinary space will become the setting for his wedding later this year. Bourquin and his fiancée, Rebekah Miller, chose CVNP as the location for their outdoor wedding in August 2013. The event will take place outside the Hines Hill Conference Center.

The conference center is surrounded by 60 wooded acres and Bourquin said that weddings at the park are beautiful. The Extraordinary Spaces program was designed to open up the park's historical facilities for public use and enjoyment.

"This park is one of our favorite places," he explained. "It was a joint decision to have the wedding in the park."



"Hines Hill is a beautiful facility and we wanted the reception to be in a place that had meaning to us," Bourquin said. "There are hundreds of places in Northeast Ohio where we could have been married. None of them could mean as much to us as this park."

Although the Parma resident spends each work day in the park, he and Rebekah frequently hike CVNP's trails on their days off. "One of our favorite trails is the Buckeye Trail," he added. "In fact, the first hike

we took together was the Buckeye Trail – between Brecksville and Boston. We hiked 13 miles to the Stanford Campground."

A park ranger serving in Interpretation for nine years, Bourquin said he and Rebekah spend all of their vacations backpacking at national parks. They became engaged while on a backpacking trip to Redwood National Park. "We got engaged just outside the park," he said. "I don't know if she was very surprised, though. We had already booked the conference center for the wedding, so she knew the proposal was coming!"

PARK RANGER BRADY BOURQUIN IS ALL SMILES  
AS HE PLANS HIS UPCOMING NUPTIALS IN CVNP.



PHOTO | RALPH DAVILA



## EXTRAORDINARY SPACES

The Conservancy's Extraordinary Spaces are available for a wide variety of occasions including conferences, weddings, parties, retreats, meetings, reunions, etc.

*The facilities include:*

Happy Days Lodge

Hines Hill Conference Center  
and Stone Cottage

November Lodge, Lipscomb and  
White Pines Dorms and Dining Halls

Stanford House (available for meetings, retreats, and  
overnight accommodations.)

For more information about extraordinary spaces and catering available for events, go to [conservancyforcvnp.org](http://conservancyforcvnp.org) and click on SPACE RENTALS, or contact 330-657-2909 ext. 119.



PHOTO | MATT PETRUNAK

## TOPOGRAPHY

This year's *Topography* event was attended by more than 430 TRAILS FOREVER supporters. The sold-out event is widely praised as one of Northeast Ohio's most unique and enjoyable fundraisers. *Topography* raised more than \$170,000 for the Conservancy's TRAILS FOREVER campaign - an initiative to maintain and protect Cuyahoga Valley National Park trails.

Please join us for next year's *Topography* on Saturday, June 22, 2013.



## CLAMBAKE

The 12th annual Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center *Clambake* was a great success. Thanks to the generosity of more than 330 guests, many deserving children will get to experience residential camp at the Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center. The *Clambake's* live auction raised more than \$75,000 for the CVEEC!

Please join us for next year's *Clambake* on Sunday, September 29, 2013.



## CVEEC'S HAPPIEST CAMPERS

Mention summer camp to most teens and you'll likely hear grunts and one-word answers in response. Eleanor and Caroline Werner have a much different reaction. Their enthusiasm bubbles over like the rush of water spilling over Brandywine Falls during a spring thaw.

They can't seem to get enough of summer camps – as long as the camps are at the Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center (CVEEC) in CVNP. The two sisters have attended 22 camps at CVEEC since 2007.

Eleanor, 16, a junior at Laurel School, said that within two hours of getting home from Chef Camp this summer, she was on Facebook, starting a countdown to next year's programs. "We were already talking to our friends and saying how much we missed them and that we couldn't wait for next year's summer camps," she said.

Due to her age, though, she won't be able to attend the CVEEC's camps in 2013. "I've maxed out," Eleanor says with a mixture of pride and sadness. "Well, I won't be able to go as a student, but I'm hoping I can go for a week as an intern counselor. I want to be a counselor-in-training. And then someday maybe I can be a counselor for the CVEEC."

"The camps that we've been to really draw us in," she adds. "CVEEC's camps aren't like others. These are so interactive. Everyone is really engaged in all of the activities."

Her 13-year-old sister Caroline is a freshman at Laurel School and looks forward to CVEEC camps she attends each summer break. Caroline agrees with her older sister about the effect of the camps have on the students who participate, "These camps have really brought me out of my shell."

Eleanor laughs, adding, "That's the truth. I'm more outgoing and I'll voice my opinion. Typically, my sister is quieter, but sometimes she'll rival me. The camps and the counselors have helped us grow as people."

*"You're not allowed to have any electronic devices at the camps. No cell phones – and I'm a text-aholic," said Eleanor Werner, 16, of Cleveland. "I'm willing to give up texting for an entire week. That's how much I love the camps at CVEEC!"*

Eleanor said she became hooked on the CVEEC's camp programs in fifth grade. She was attending Urban Community School in Cleveland and her class participated in a two-night camp in mid-winter. "I really liked it and came home telling my mom I wanted to go back," she said.

That summer, Eleanor spent a week in a multimedia camp where she learned a variety of crafts and nature photography techniques. The following summer, she participated in two summer camps, including "Mission Possible." She and her fellow campers learned about plants that are not indigenous to CVNP. "We looked at all the plants that aren't supposed to be here and then we went on hikes and pulled them out," Eleanor said.

Since then, Eleanor has participated in at least two camps each summer – her favorites are Theater Camp and Junior Chef Camp. "In Chef Camp we make the food ourselves and everything is organic. One year we picked berries and made our own jam," she said.

By the time Eleanor reached 8th grade, her younger sister had been introduced to the camp programs at CVEEC.

"I was in third grade when I went to Junior Ranger Camp," Caroline said. "I had never really been away from home overnight before and I was pretty scared. The counselors helped me. They understood how I felt and they made it more comfortable for me, so I was less nervous."

PHOTO: ELEANOR WERNER



CAROLINE CREDITS SUMMER CAMP FOR HELPING HER COME OUT OF HER SHELL.

Caroline said that the following year, she was eager to go to the Mission Possible Camp. She had participated in other science camps before, but none that allowed her to experience nature in the heart of a national park. "Everything about that camp was so new. We're out in the woods and we were in the Cuyahoga River helping to clean it up," she said. "We studied what kinds of things live in the river and what kind of things can't survive when there's pollution. It felt great to know I was helping our environment."

In recent years, both girls enrolled in Theater and Junior Chef camps. Both programs encourage creativity

and collaboration as the campers work in teams to prepare meals or to perform a play. "The second summer that I went to camp, I did Theater Camp," Caroline said. "The counselors can see which kids are nervous and so they assign them smaller roles and activities just to get them comfortable."

Eleanor said that one of the best features of Theater Camp is that plays are acted out in various settings of CVNP. "We get to do scenes in a national park, out in the woods," she said.

**The CVEEC is a 500-acre, 128-bed environmental education center, home to the Conservancy's residential program for schools, residential teacher workshops, special weekend programs, and summer camps.**



ELEANOR SHARES A MOMENT WITH ONE OF SEVERAL NEW FRIENDS MADE AT SUMMER CAMP.

PHOTO: ELEANOR WERNER



HARVESTING A GROWING  
NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS

There’s no secret recipe for success in creating a unique kitchen garden at the Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center (CVEEC). The key ingredients are planning, research, funding and volunteers. *Make that a bumper crop of volunteers.*



More than 195 volunteers from Northeast Ohio businesses, communities, schools and colleges worked with project leaders from the Conservancy and the National Park Service since August 2011 to build a kitchen garden hoop house. Team by team, they created the impressive structure that serves a variety of educational purposes and helps provide food for CVEEC’s resident program and catering events by:

Building and securing the steel frame hoop house and enclosing it with UV greenhouse film	Engineering and planning the garden beds and trellis systems	Developing the raised beds and constructing numerous trellises	Planting and weeding rows and rows of vegetables and herbs throughout the long, hot summer	Assisting with the harvest of more than 200 pounds of produce
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Stacey Heffernan, Director of the CVEEC, promoted the idea of developing the hoop house at CVNP. She set a goal of creating the facility that would teach youth where food comes from. Heffernan also knows the hoop house has significant social impact because it provides an opportunity for young people to have a deeper connection and appreciation for land and food.

“A hoop house has been talked about for several years at CVEEC. We really wanted to incorporate farming into the curriculum,” said Lisa Meranti, the Director of Volunteer Services. “An idea can come to life through funding and volunteers.”

“There were multiple phases of the hoop house project and there were so many layers of volunteers involved,” explains Meranti. Each year, several companies call Meranti to say they have employees who want to volunteer. “They want to work with us and get their hands dirty,” she said.

In addition to harvesting the energy and enthusiasm of dozens of volunteers during the year, Meranti said that donations from area companies – including an \$18,000 donation from Fairmount Minerals Inc. and an irrigation system donated by Deloitte – made the CVEEC kitchen garden a reality.

“Not only did they make donations toward creating the hoop house, these companies had employees volunteering to build it,” said Meranti.

Park Ranger Josh Bates, who serves as the liaison to CVNP’s volunteers, coordinated the bed and trellis construction of the building. He said the project attracted volunteers of all ages and skill levels. Coordinating the efforts to complete the hoop house was Dan Krieger, a resident of Northfield who has volunteered at the park for several years. “Dan was my right-hand man for this project,” Bates said. “He’s a fantastic guy. He figured out the math and engineering needed for the raised beds and the trellises. And he worked to get it done. He took ownership of the hoop house project and his contributions were tremendous.”

AMONG THE VOLUNTEERS WERE:

Fifth graders from St. Hilary School in Fairlawn. In February, the children wore mittens and winter jackets as they tackled one of the project’s initial tasks: laying out string to determine the placement of the 4’ x 8’ raised beds.	High school students from Hawken School in Gates Mills. In late May, the group worked to complete and plant vegetables in the first two beds.	College students from area colleges and universities. Alternative Spring Break brought a team of college students to CVNP in March to build the trellises and raised beds on the east side of the hoop house.	Corporate employees and adult volunteers from all over northeast Ohio. Volunteers helped to build the structure and continue to assist with watering, weeding and harvesting in the garden.
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Heffernan said students and summer campers benefited from the hoop house’s first season. “Students this summer were able to plan out and plant their own plots in the hoop house. They benefit from knowing where their food comes from, and that growing your own food is a sustainable option to buying your food from a global food system,” she said.

A GROWING INTEREST IN VOLUNTEERISM

While the CVEEC’s new kitchen garden hoop house required the efforts of more than 195 volunteers, there were many projects that came to fruition in 2012 because of the thousands of volunteers who donated their time.

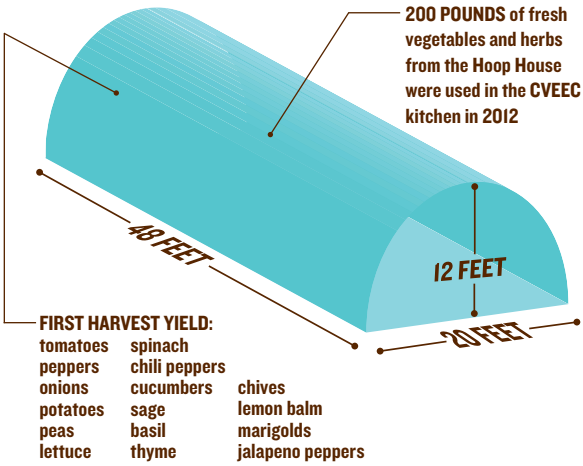
“There has been an increase in the number of volunteers every year assisting the park and its partners,” said Meranti. “It’s been amazing to work with so many individuals and companies. They allow us, the park and its partners, to do things that we never would have been able to do.”

HOOP HOUSE FACTS:

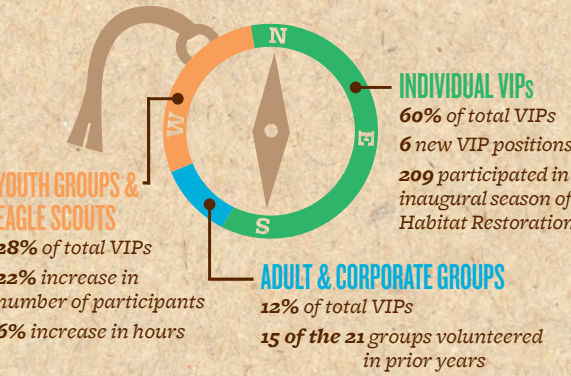
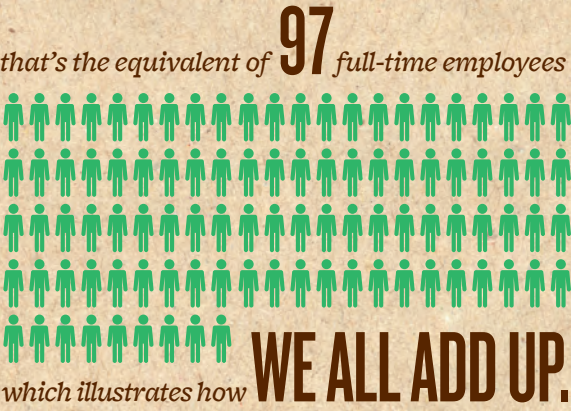
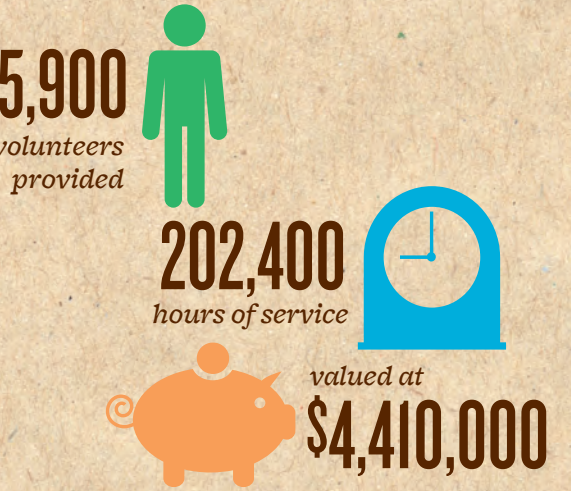
Plans to build the kitchen garden hoop house began in 2010 by Stacey Heffernan, CVEEC Director, and included a six-month process to acquire land use approval from the National Park Service.

CVEEC’s first harvest at the kitchen garden hoop house in 2012 yielded a wide variety of vegetables and herbs – more than 200 pounds of which was used in the CVEEC kitchen – supporting resident programs and catered events at CVNP.

The hoop house is the first phase of a plan to transform a 1/4-acre section at the CVEEC into a kitchen garden. A contest to design the remaining section was held between design teams from Cuyahoga Community College and the University of Akron.



CVNP’S VOLUNTEER PROGRAM



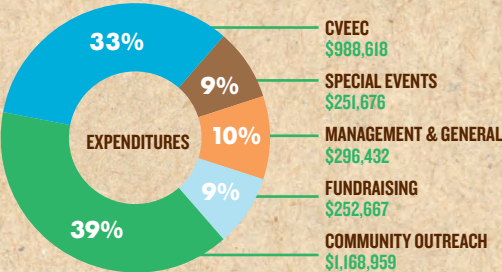
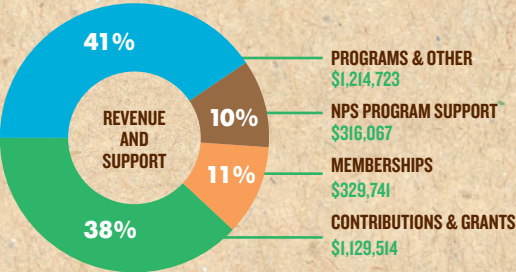
Our volunteer community\* of park stewards had contact with **201,500** park visitors, planted **900** native trees, controlled **330** acres of exotic plants, grew & installed **3,000** native plants from collected seeds, connected park visitors with **30** Countryside Farmers’ Markets, enhanced the onboard experience of **200,000** CVSR passengers

\*THE CONSERVANCY CO-MANAGES CVNP’S VOLUNTEER PROGRAM. VIPs=Volunteers in Park



STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

REVENUE AND SUPPORT:	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED	TOTAL
Program fees:				
Environmental education, net of scholarships of \$118,112	\$ 677,887	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 677,887
Community outreach	546,373	-	-	546,373
National Park Service program support	-	316,067	-	316,067
Memberships	329,741	-	-	329,741
Contributions and grants:				
Environmental education programs	500	267,441	1,875	269,816
Community outreach	7,388	11,434	-	18,822
Trail Mix Peninsula bldg renovations	-	124,600	-	124,600
Volunteer programs	-	7,930	-	7,930
Park support	-	28,000	-	28,000
Special events	41,469	410,255	-	451,724
Trails forever	-	152,672	-	152,672
General operations	63,300	12,650	-	75,950
Investment income (loss)	480	(7,761)	(6,702)	(13,983)
Other income	4,446	-	-	4,446
Net assets released from restrictions	1,264,374	(1,245,653)	(18,721)	-
Total revenue, support and reclassifications	\$ 2,935,958	\$ 77,635	\$ (23,548)	\$ 2,990,045
EXPENDITURES:	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED	TOTAL
Program services:				
Environmental education programs	\$ 988,618	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 988,618
Community outreach and park support	1,168,959	-	-	1,168,959
Special events	251,676	-	-	251,676
Support services:				
Management and general	296,432	-	-	296,432
Fundraising	252,667	-	-	252,667
Total expenditures	\$ 2,958,352	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,958,352
Changes in net assets	\$ (22,394)	\$ 77,635	\$ (23,548)	\$ 31,693
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ 203,377	\$ 709,009	\$ 336,565	\$ 1,248,951
Net assets, end of year	\$ 180,983	\$ 786,644	\$ 313,017	\$ 1,280,644



AKRON CYCLIST KNOWS WHAT’S IN STORE AT CVNP

Akron resident Brent Forrer is lured into CVNP by its long winding roads, steep hills and the scenic Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath. It’s perfect for bicycling and enjoying nature. For his 5-year-old son, Tommy, one of the park’s best features is Trail Mix Boston, where he can sit in the shade and eat a SpongeBob™ ice cream treat.

Trail Mix Boston is a favorite destination for Forrer and his son. The cycling enthusiast logs between 3,000 and 3,500 miles every year on his bike – most of those miles are in CVNP. Tommy is too young to ride his own bike very far, so he rides in a seat on the back of his dad’s bicycle.

“When Tommy joins me, we usually end up at Trail Mix,” Forrer said. “We’ll sometimes bike up from Akron to Peninsula and do the Bike Aboard! back. Tommy loves the train.” Bike Aboard! is a Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad (CVSR) program that allows cyclists to bike the Towpath in one direction and then ride the train back or to another destination in the park.

He said that his family (wife Sarah, infant daughter Hadley, and son Tommy) venture out on the Towpath during the summer months, but he’s on the trail almost daily. The 38-year-old often rides to his job at Spin Bike Shop in Lakewood. He likes the commute along the Towpath and roads through the national park, even in the winter.

“I know the Towpath and I know all of the roads through the park,” Forrer explained. “Sometimes, I’ll take Tommy for a two-hour ride and other times – if I have a whole day – I’ll ride the Towpath from West 14th Street in Cleveland all the way to Bolivar.”

The Towpath attracts tens of thousands of cyclists every year. But that wasn’t always the case. Forrer said his first bike trek in CVNP was in 1996. “The Towpath has grown tremendously since then,” he said. “My friend and I would ride the Towpath and see two



BRENT AND HIS SON TOMMY SET OFF FOR AN ADVENTURE THROUGH CVNP.

or three other people. Now, there are lots of people enjoying the Towpath! There have been times when I’m late to work because of all the people on the Towpath.”

Forrer said various attractions throughout the park – including the Trail Mix stores (Boston and Peninsula locations), farms and visitor centers – help draw bicyclists into CVNP. He and Tommy prefer lighter snacks from the Trail Mix stores.

“One of my favorite spots in the park is Peninsula – and then the ride up to the Canal Visitor Center,” Forrer said. “But, there are great spots everywhere. There’s an 11-mile stretch that I bike all the time with Tommy. We’ll stop at Trail Mix for a snack and sometimes we’ll get to see eagles.”



Trail Mix Peninsula opened its doors to Conservancy members and CVNP visitors on October 27, 2012. The site is home to the Conservancy’s new gift shop, offering refreshments, park information, and a Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad (CVSR) ticket booth. With nearly 3,500 square feet, the store features a wide variety of CVNP keepsakes (including art and jewelry by local artists), books, clothing, and railroad items. The retail space is a joint venture between the Conservancy and CVSR.

Located at 1600 W. Mill Street, Trail Mix Peninsula is near CVSR and the Towpath Trail – a location that “enhances a visit to Cuyahoga Valley National Park by providing a welcoming environment for information, refreshments, children’s activities and shopping,” said Deb Yandala, CEO of the Conservancy. From 2008 through 2011, the Conservancy’s Peninsula shop, Park Place, was located on Main Street. She said, “We are delighted to be part of the Peninsula community.”

For store hours and more information, go to [conservancyforcvnp.org](http://conservancyforcvnp.org) or call 330-657-2909.



## IN A HEARTBEAT, AFRICAN FUSION BAND STEALS THE SHOW AT MUSIC IN THE MEADOW

From early spring through fall each year in Howe Meadow, the breeze carries songs of whip-poor-wills, warblers, tanagers, bluebirds, chickadees and other birds. The setting is ideal for music – whether from a wide variety of birds or from popular area musicians who share their songs with enthusiastic crowds at six summertime Music in the Meadow concerts.

Part of the Conservancy’s cultural arts program, the free live concerts are supported through donations. Music and nature have the ability to positively affect people in numerous ways. When they are combined, the impact is even more profound.

One group in particular has become a crowd favorite – and the summer series isn’t complete without a performance by HeartBEAT Afrika.

“Music in the Meadow is special to us,” said Olugbala “Olu” Manns, one of the founders of HeartBEAT Afrika. “This is our annual theme performance. We tell people throughout the year to go to Howe Meadow.” Manns, is an adjunct professor of music at Hiram College and also the owner of Rhythm in the Room, a local business dedicated to teaching music to children.

HeartBEAT Afrika is an eclectic band that fuses African music with street percussion and modern music. Typically between eight and 14 musicians take up a wide range of instruments for the annual show at Howe Meadow. The group finds its rhythm using traditional drums, African drums, 5-gallon paint buckets... and even tap shoes. Guitars, keyboards and other instruments add to the innovative and exciting sound.

Park Ranger Karen Kopchak, who coordinates the concerts, said HeartBEAT Afrika made its debut at Music in the Meadow in 2007 and has returned every summer since. “Their music is contagious,” she said. “Something about the rhythms of their music makes it impossible to sit still—whether they are playing the more

traditional African songs, the STOMP-style street percussion numbers, or throwing something to the audience with a nod to Brazilian music.”

Manns said, “Our show has developed over the years to be fun and engaging. The meadow is a good venue for us. The crowd is from all over. All walks of life. They love what we do. It’s really wonderful.”

Kopchak said the band draws a diverse audience because of the varied styles of the music, charismatic performers who connect with the crowd, and a unique age demographic. “The band has several members who are young and almost seem to have grown up over the years’ they have been playing at Howe Meadow,” she adds.

The summer outdoor music series appeals to many area residents because of the various genres of music presented. Hundreds to thousands of people are drawn to each of the free concerts.

People bring lawn chairs, blankets and picnics, and sit and enjoy a summer evening listening to reggae or bluegrass, traditional rock, or some rhythm and blues.

Each year, Kopchak schedules talented musicians and groups from Northeast Ohio and coordinates additional activities to make the concerts fun for people of all ages.

Communications Specialist Jared Slanina said there are numerous family activities prior to every concert and many people also stick around after the show to participate in a themed, evening hike led by a park ranger.

Slanina adds that Music in the Meadow brings new people into CVNP and the reaction is very positive when they hear that a non-profit organization (the Conservancy, along with National Park Service) is providing the music series. “We’ve picked up new members and supporters,” he said. “These are fun events that really create awareness for our park.”

## THANK YOU!

Through the generosity of the individuals, organizations, corporations and foundations listed on the following pages, the Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park is able to provide the many and varied programs, projects and services that you have seen highlighted in this report.

While space limits our ability to list all donors’ names, we are grateful for the support that each of you provides, no matter the size or type of your gift. It is because of your support that the Conservancy continues to flourish. Giving levels are representative of donors’ total contributions at \$100 and above made between September 1, 2011 and August 31, 2012. Gifts from family foundations, donor-advised funds and company matching gift programs are reflected in individual donor contribution levels. The Conservancy has made diligent efforts to ensure accuracy in listing all donors at \$100 and above levels. Donor names are listed in accordance with the preferred publication name provided by the donor. Should you wish to change the way in which your name is listed in future publications or have any other corrections, please contact the Conservancy Development Office at 330.657.2909.

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WELCOME OLLIE--  
OUR NEW RIVER OTTER MASCOT!

In October, the Conservancy partnered with Outside the Lines Creative Group and children’s illustrator/cartoonist, Jenny Campbell, to develop the new Conservancy otter mascot. A river otter was chosen based on the animal’s playful nature and recent comeback in the Cuyahoga River.

The mascot will not only be featured on merchandise in both Trail Mix stores, but will primarily serve as an educational, environmental “hero” to children and adults alike. Ollie will help the Conservancy spread messages about health and wellness, activities in the park, and the rich

history of Cuyahoga Valley. Look for a new children’s activity book featuring the otter and its Cuyahoga Valley National Park friends coming out at Trail Mix this spring!



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CONSERVANCY WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS  
TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We would like to welcome Pam Carson, Pat Carlson, Ray Dalton, Carrie Dunn, Janine Janosky, Kathy Leavenworth, Jim Nash, Scott Roulston, and Reggie Stover as the newest members of our board of directors. The expertise and passion for CVNP of these individuals will help the Conservancy continue to preserve, protect and enhance our national park.

We would like to thank outgoing board members Sandy Auburn, Guy Gadowski, Jeff Hyde, and John Perduyn for their years of service. We greatly appreciate all the support and efforts these individuals have contributed to the Conservancy and our growth.

We are grateful to Chuck Mlakar for his leadership as Chairman of the Board of Directors for the past two years. He has provided great direction during a time of growth for our organization.

EXECUTIVE STAFF

Deb Yandala  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
  
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John Debo  
*Chief Development Officer*

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*We are proud to recognize the outstanding service and contributions of the Conservancy's past Chairman of the Board of Directors:*  
Dick Ainsworth  
George Klein  
Diana Lueptow  
Pam Carson

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# CONSERVANCY

for CUYAHOGA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

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