KIM’S JOY

READ ABOUT KIM’S JOURNEY ON YONDER ON PAGE 12

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED
Hiking every trail in CVNP and how you can do the same!

50 YEARS OF VOLUNTEERS
A visual journey through history.
OUR MISSION

The Conservancy enriches people’s lives and enhances our region by inspiring use, preservation and support of Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

COVID UPDATE

We ask that you wear a face covering and practice social distancing when visiting our stores.

Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center remains closed to school groups. We hope to offer safe programming to children in the spring/summer of 2021. At-home DIY programming is available on our website at cvnp.org/CuyahogaConnections.

We are hosting a limited number of events in the park while following established protocols.

The Conservancy counts on our members and donors to help us remain a vital organization that supports our popular park.

A LETTER FROM THE CONSERVANCY CEO

A S I WRITE THIS, no one knows what the next weeks and months will hold for us. Yet one thing is for sure: being on the trails in Cuyahoga Valley National Park this fall and winter is one of the healthiest things you can do. I hope that this issue of our magazine will inspire you to try new trails and visit old favorites. Some of my favorites vary with the season and I hope you will be encouraged by stories of hiking all the trails to discover a new favorite.

This year is the one to enjoy winter hiking. Layered clothing and a warm pair of boots, maybe hiking poles, will make your cold weather experience more enjoyable. I love the peace of walking in the snow, of seeing winter birds, and enjoying views and vistas that aren’t visible when leaves are out.

You will find in this issue stories about two people very special to the Conservancy. Kim Smith Woodford has been leading hikes in Cuyahoga Valley National Park for quite a few years. I love to hear her talk about her experiences along our trails, especially when she brings first-time visitors to the park. Kim has assisted the Conservancy in many ways and spoke at the opening of the Boston Mill Visitor Center. You will enjoy her story.

Dave Yasahardy is a hero to all of us who value public lands. His ability to craft mutually beneficial deals with landowners led to the preservation of precious forests, meadows, and wetlands. I first knew Dave as a ranger in our national park. Watching him put his passion for land preservation into practice in a new career was inspirational. His life’s work will impact our region for generations. He was also a remarkable husband, father, son, and friend, and our park community honors him and misses him.

Finally, I want to say a special thank you to all of you, our members, and friends. It has been a hard year for our organization, and your support has overwhelmed us. Thank you for sharing with us your commitment to the park and the Conservancy. We are getting through this and looking to a brighter 2021 because we know what the park means to you. You are helping us improve the park and the park experience. Thank you.

Deb Yandola

Deb Yandola CONSERVANCY CEO
IN NATURE, A CHILD FINDS FREEDOM, FANTASY, AND PRIVACY: A PLACE DISTANT FROM THE ADULT WORLD, A SEPARATE PEACE.” - Richard Louv, The Last Child in the Woods

Dave Vasarhelyyi was born and raised in Parma, Ohio. He found his “separate peace” roaming outside with friends, playing and exploring in the forests of what is now West Creek Reservation. Eventually becoming a Boy Scout and Eagle Scout, this connection to the outdoors followed him throughout his early years.

A few years later, while taking a hiatus from college, Vasarhelyyi found himself outdoors once more—but this time within the boundaries of Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP), working a job at Brecksville Stables. There he learned about a Park Ranger Academy at Cuyahoga Community College, which prepared students to be seasonal law enforcement rangers with the National Park Service (NPS). Something clicked, and he enrolled.

Fresh out of the Park Ranger Academy, Vasarhelyyi’s first assignment was at Badlands National Park in the summer of 1988. He ended up working five summers there—Badlands was also where Vasarhelyyi met his wife Jennie, who was a seasonal interpretive ranger there at the time.

Juggling a seasonal career with NPS while finishing school, Vasarhelyyi worked in several other parks, including Saguaro and Glacier Bay National Parks. As the seasons passed, Vasarhelyyi’s love and skill for visitor and resource protection grew. He thoroughly enjoyed problem-solving, adapting, and having genuine interactions with parkgoers, which were the bread and butter of this work.

“I think he liked the well roundedness of being a visitor and resource protection ranger... It wasn’t all about law enforcement. It was about the whole thing. It was about search and rescue, and [wildland firefighting], and emergency medicine, and engaging with visitors,” says his wife, Jennie.

Both Jennie and Dave arrived at Cuyahoga Valley in 1995 as permanent NPS staff, Jennie in Interpretation and Dave in Visitor and Resource Protection. One of Vasarhelyyi’s favorite projects was working with a group of volunteers called the Tract Trekkers, who regularly surveyed the boundaries of the park. In another of Vasarhelyyi’s most memorable moments as a ranger, he was able to assist in extracting a car from a waterfall on Route 32, a testament to his creativity and problem-solving skills on the job.

Tom Bradley, Assistant Superintendent of CVNP during Vasarhelyyi’s time as a ranger, has fond memories of Vasarhelyyi’s down-to-earth nature.

“Dave was a perfect fit for Cuyahoga Valley during the time he was there,” says Bradley. “He liked working in a new park like Cuyahoga where he could make a real difference. He wasn’t one of those rangers who was dying to go work in Yellowstone. He was an inherent optimist—always finding the good things in life.”

Bradley recalls a time when he was taking a ride up to the northern region of the park with Vasarhelyyi. He remembers Vasarhelyyi pointing out things he enjoyed along the way, with a genuine warmth and appreciation—whether it was man-made and developed, or natural.

“He prided himself on knowing all the back roads and alternative routes, and finding those little pieces of nature,” says Bradley.

His love for CVNP wasn’t the only thing that made him a great ranger. Vasarhelyyi’s ability to connect with others had a huge impact on his career. During his time as a visitor and resource protection ranger, he spent a lot of time engaging with people and educating them about the park.

“He had a wonderful sense of humor, and could relate to all kinds of people across the realm,” says Bradley.

Soon after his return to Northeast Ohio, Vasarhelyyi learned that his boyhood stomping grounds in Parma were being threatened with the development of a golf course. Being a person of action and problem solver to the core, he knew he had to save it.

So he did.

On his own time, Vasarhelyyi gathered a group of community members to form the West Creek Preservation Committee. He convened meetings, formed a political action committee, collected signatures and talked to voters and community members, urging them to support the effort. He built the nonprofit now known as the West Creek Conservancy, and served as its first director—all as a volunteer. The West Creek Conservancy now works across the Northeast Ohio region to develop parks and trails.

“They’re an organization, from my perspective, willing to take risks, willing to be a doer, willing to make things happen. And honestly, I think the personality of the organization grew out of his personality,” says Jennie.

The West Creek Conservancy was the beginning of Vasarhelyyi’s shift to a career in land trust work. He became a senior project manager in the Ohio office for The Trust for Public Land, working on land acquisitions for NPS, county park districts, Cleveland Museum of
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THIS FALL IS THE PERFECT TIME TO HIT THE TRAILS IN CUYAHOGA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

No other outfitter knows Cuyahoga Valley National Park as well as the staff at Appalachian Outfitters. Stop in and learn about the park and what clothing, footwear, and accessories you need to enjoy a safe and healthy day on the trails in Northeast Ohio’s National Park.

Conservancy members receive 10% off in-stock, regularly priced items. We will donate an additional 5% of qualified member purchases to the Conservancy. Certain restrictions may apply. See store for details.

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SINCE 1970, volunteers have played an integral role in the history and story of America’s national parks. This year, we are joining the National Park Service in celebrating 50 years of the Volunteer In Park (VIP) Program and the many different people who make a vital contribution to Cuyahoga Valley National Park and our community. From people aged 9 to 90, our volunteers from all walks of life maintain our trail system, protect important natural, historical, and cultural resources, and educate and engage our local community.

The VIP Program is co-managed by the Conservancy and the National Park Service, and is one of the most active volunteer programs in the National Park Service. Volunteers have helped us accomplish some amazing things in CVNP—our park wouldn’t be what it is today without their unwavering stewardship and commitment. We are incredibly grateful for our volunteers and are looking forward to creating more memories with them for years to come.
Journey on YONDER

I REMEMBER MY FIRST VISIT TO A NATIONAL PARK IN 2010—it was Yellowstone, home to the Old Faithful geyser. The park presented stunning views at every turn. I traveled with a couple of family members out west to Wyoming where the land of majestic “purple mountains” resides. The time of year was late summer, yet we could see the hints of autumn’s brilliance on the leaves of the forest trees and along the quiet lake. The reflections of the landscape on the water made it difficult to tell where the trees, the sky and the earth meet.

The iconic geyser that I learned about as a student in science class was every bit of spectacular that I had imagined it would be. I marveled at the natural geothermal activity. The hot steam spewing a hundred feet in the air was an amazing sight to see, as were the white-hot pools of water along a series of hot springs with warning signs of “do not touch.” I remember watching kayakers peacefully paddling along the shores of Yellowstone Lake near the hot springs. Seeing them float so gracefully along the calm waters evoked feelings of liberation in my soul.

My first experience with the great outdoors left me wanting more from that space of natural wonder. The sights were too incredible to witness with just a passing glance inside of a tour bus. I became motivated to seek out other national parks. At the time, it didn’t quite occur to me that a national park was right in my backyard.

“Seeing them float so gracefully along the calm waters evoked feelings of liberation in my soul.”
“...Not only have I come to know and love the unmistakable beauty of Cuyahoga Valley National Park, but I also have the opportunity to introduce the lush trails, stunning waterfalls, and magnificent ledges to dozens of African Americans living in Cleveland and Akron.”

YEARS LATER, not only have I come to know and love the unmistakable beauty of Cuyahoga Valley National Park, but I also have the opportunity to introduce the lush trails, stunning waterfalls, and magnificent ledges to dozens of African Americans living in Cleveland and Akron. Through my work as a former volunteer leader with Outdoor Afro, and now as founder of Journey on Yonder, or “JOY,” I aim to create a safe space—both literally and figuratively—for the Black community within nature. JOY allows me to facilitate experiences and conversations that help people of color embrace nature’s presence.

My desire to create a space for healthy experiences in nature is rooted in the need for diverse and inclusive representation in the outdoors. Journey on Yonder gives me a chance to collaborate with communities I knew weren’t getting an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors and green space. Time and time again, data has shown that people of color visit national parks far less often than other Americans. These numbers are a result of America’s outdoor system being built on an underlying history of oppression. In many cases, legislation segregated people of color away from public lands, like national parks and forests. It has only been a little over 50 years since the 1964 Civil Rights Act was passed, which among other things, granted permission for Black communities to enter public spaces like national and state parks. Prior to that, we were often banned from entering.

Although new laws like the Civil Rights Act dismantled legal segregation, generational trauma is what keeps Black people from visiting the natural world. From 1865 to the 1950s, a horrendous amount of lynchings usually took place in forests or natural areas. Our history books have led us to believe that figures such as John Muir were founding fathers of our national parks, but fail to recognize that he was influenced by his own white privilege. His advocacy for nature had an inherent racial bias—even though indigenous people have lived and cared for the land there for thousands of years. Muir wrote that they “seemed to have no right place in the landscape.”

Muir’s derogatory comments about Black and Indigenous people carry a heavy weight and continue to alienate those communities.

I believe understanding America’s history can only improve the positive benefits of green spaces to all people. Each time I am out leading a hike, I come upon a random tree or a bush and I am reminded of my African ancestors and their deep relationship with nature. They relied on the natural world for agriculture, shelter and medicinal needs that predates western medicine. I think Journey On Yonder, or “JOY,” is about creating safe space for healthy and fun experiences in nature for people of color.
Introducing...
PARK PACK!

The Conservancy is excited to announce a series of hand-picked, park-related products, delivered right to your home.

Each volume, carefully curated with exclusive activities and swag, will highlight ways to engage with the natural world—both in Cuyahoga Valley National Park and your own community.

Each Park Pack can be purchased individually at Trail Mix stores or online. For more information, visit forcvnp.org/shop
Cuyahoga Valley National Park is the perfect place to snap a picture and share a memory—just take a look at all of your beautiful photos!

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We love seeing you in the Park!
Keep tagging @cvnp to be featured in the next issue!
Hiking Every Trail in Cuyahoga Valley National Park

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED!

BRYAN AND SUSAN KINNAMON are always looking for a challenge.

Whether it’s traveling the entirety of the Towpath Trail, visiting all of the covered bridges in Ashtabula County, completing the Summit Metro Parks Fall hiking spree (31 times) or, our favorite, hiking all the trails in Cuyahoga Valley National Park!

The Kinnamons aren’t originally from Ohio, but both found themselves in Akron after landing jobs in the area. After meeting, they moved around quite a bit, but decided to find a permanent home in Northeast Ohio and quickly fell in love with CVNP. The two have been hiking the trails together for a little more than 40 years since then. Last spring, they decided they would make a goal to hike them all.

“The first question we had to ask ourselves was, ‘what are all the trails in the national park?’” Bryan said. “So, we used the list on the Conservancy website, and said when we complete all of those, we will declare victory.”

“The Kinnamons laid out a plan on paper, listing all the trails they needed to complete. After each completed hike, they documented the date, miles hiked, and any reflections they had about their trip. Two months and 165 miles later, the Kinnamons completed all the trails in Cuyahoga Valley National Park at 73 years old.

Among their many adventures, Bryan and Susan said the most memorable part of their entire journey was meeting interesting people along the way. Their favorite encounter was with a veteran from Alaska who started a nonprofit which introduces physically and mentally injured veterans to the healing power of nature. The Kinnamons still keep in touch with him, and said they’ve made a lifelong friend.

“‘When you’re out in nature, the people you meet are incredible,’” Susan said.

To end their challenge, Susan and Bryan decided they would hike the Ledges as their final destination, commemorating the first trail they hiked together over 40 years ago.

“‘Having done this, we know more about the park than we thought we would ever know,’” Bryan and Susan said. “It turned out to be a fantastic experience and provided lasting memories that we think about every time we are in the park. We are pleased to share our story and sincerely hope others will accept this challenge as well.”

“WHEN YOU’RE OUT IN NATURE, THE PEOPLE YOU MEET ARE INCREDIBLE”

WANT TO HIKE EVERY TRAIL IN CVNP YOURSELF?

Bring a friend and use the handy map on the next page to keep track of the trails you’ve completed!
TO OUR DONORS

YOU MAKE THIS POSSIBLE

Thank you for your support during these new and challenging times!

The Conservancy gratefully acknowledges the generous individuals, organizations, corporations, and foundations who made gifts during the Conservancy’s Fiscal Year 2020 (9/1/2019–8/31/2020)
CONSERVANCY FOR CVNP

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 1

GET TO KNOW A MEMBER
We asked some of our members what do the trails in Cuyahoga Valley National Park mean to you?

AMY & JULIET HURSTLEY
“When I think of what the trails of CVNP mean to me, I think of the following words: community, escape, health, oasis, intention and clarity. The community and fellowship you can build while out on a CVNP trail is unlike anything else. There is something about immersion yourself into our local national park to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life, bring clarity to your mindset and intentions, and improve your own physical health all at the same time.”

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PHOTO BY ZAHA SALEH

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"To me, trail in CVNP mean peace, stillness and beauty in this very busy and complicated world. I look forward to getting away if only for a short hike just to slow down, appreciate the beauty around me and to collect my thoughts."

**Meadow**

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CONSERVANCY FOR CVNP

VOLUME 6: ISSUE 1

SOFIA STED

“I love that Cuyahoga Valley National Park gives me accessible hiking paths with stunning views. As someone who graduated from the University of Akron, one of my favorite things about living in the area was being able to hike whenever I wanted. When I was hiking regularly, I would constantly look up new trails to explore, and it always led me to paths with gorgeous trees, butterflies, and sunsets. CVNP is the perfect place to fall in love with hiking and I feel so lucky to live in a state with such a great park within driving distance.”

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PHOTO BY ZABIN SANDE
What do the CVNP trails mean to me? The trails renew my spirit. It’s my other church. God’s playground. I feel fully accepted and part of the Earth. I love group hikes but also treasure the quiet of solo treks—just me and the crunch of the leaves. Winter hiking has become my favorite. It’s so serene and magical! I love that I have a National Park 30 minutes from my house!
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While space limits our ability to list all donor names, we are grateful for the support that each of you provides, no matter the size of your gift.

If you would like to change the way your name is listed in future publications or have other corrections, please contact us at 330-657-2909 x139.

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Cascade Subaru encourages environmental awareness

KEEP THE PARK CLEAN.
ENJOY NATURE.
TAKE YOUR TRASH
BACK HOME.

CASCADE SUBARU, a longtime patron and corporate sponsor of the Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park, is proud of its association with Subaru of America’s initiative to reduce the volume of landfill trash collected at national parks. The Don’t Feed the Landfill Initiative was launched in 2015 with three pilot parks: Denali, Grand Teton and Yosemite. The program has been a huge success. Last year alone, through increased recycling and composting, the parks reduced their landfill waste by nearly half. That’s about 16 million pounds of waste diverted from landfills in a single year.

“Our Subaru customers are earth lovers,” said David Harte, Subaru brand manager at Cascade Subaru. “They are conservation-minded, and we know they love exploring Cuyahoga Valley National Park. We encourage them to do so beginning with their first test drive.”

“The Don’t Feed the Landfill Initiative has produced easy-to-follow guidelines for park visitors across America,” added Michelle Pfenner, managing partner of Cascade Auto Group. “We encourage all visitors to CVNP to follow these guidelines in order to help reduce the amount of landfill trash left behind. Doing so will help keep the park sustainable for generations to come.”

The National Park Service handles almost 70 million pounds of waste a year, enough to fill 600 dump trucks. “Subaru is committed to protecting and preserving not just our national parks, but all of our great outdoors by working toward a future free of landfill trash,” said Pat Pfenner, Internet marketing manager. “We support that lofty goal, and so do our Subaru customers.”

Visitors to Cuyahoga Valley National Park can play an important role in reducing waste by following these steps when planning their trip:

1. PLAN AND PREPARE—especially amid the global pandemic, including requirements to wear masks and maintain social distancing. Think about what you bring into the park. Choose materials that can be reused and take them with you. Avoid buying single-use items and disposing of them while in the park.

2. BRING YOUR OWN COFFEE MUG. Bringing a reusable mug will help you reduce waste no matter where you go. It’s an environmentally sound practice to adopt.

3. BRING YOUR OWN WATER BOTTLE. Water is essential when hiking or biking through the park. Use a refillable water bottle and take advantage of convenient water-refilling stations located around the park.

4. CHOOSE REUSABLE BAGS for your supplies to help eliminate plastic bag waste.

These are simple steps, to be sure, but imagine the impact they could have on the national treasure in our own backyard. So plan your trip to the park and think green! Doing so will ensure the park is here to enjoy for many future generations.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENTAL WORK SUBARU DOES, VISIT SUBARU.COM/EAARTH.

The J.M. Smucker Co. Partners with the Conservancy as Part of its Thriving Together Commitment

AT THE J.M. SMUCKER CO., we believe that being a successful business and a responsible one are not mutually exclusive concepts—in fact, we feel our success is realized by being able to support all those connected to our business. As part of this, we recognize the importance of maintaining our natural treasures and ensuring we have a positive impact on our environment.

Through our partnership with the Conservancy, we support its vital efforts to preserve Cuyahoga Valley National Park and its unique trail system. In addition, our employees have embraced our commitment—volunteering their time to assist with trail maintenance, invasive plant management and more.

As part of our company’s Thriving Together philosophy, we support the Conservancy’s mission to inspire the use, preservation and support of Cuyahoga Valley National Park. We are committed to working with our community partners like the Conservancy to ensure a better tomorrow for our families, our communities and our world.

Read more about the specific steps we’re taking to achieve this at WWW.JMSMUCKER.COM.