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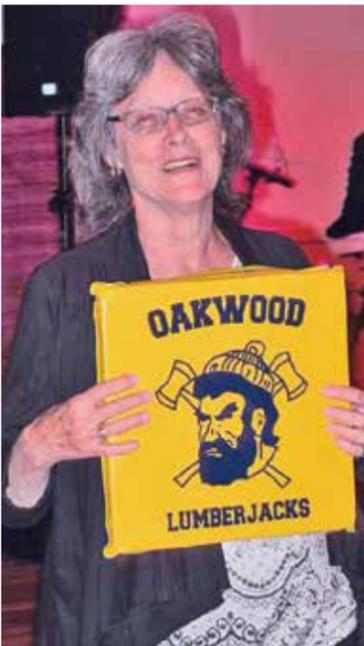


July 27, 2016

Oakwood Schools Foundation receives \$500,000 gift from estate of OHS Class of 1964 alumnus

Oakwood Schools Foundation officials said it is with enormous gratitude that they accepted a generous \$500,000 gift from the estate of Oakwood High School Class of 1964 graduate Barbara Mokrzycki Sanderson.

After graduating from OHS, Barbara moved to San Francisco in the early 1970s, working in diverse fields including behavioral research, counseling and banking. At the time of her passing she enjoyed being near the ocean in Santa Cruz on the coast of Monterey Bay. Her brother Roy S. Mokrzycki, OHS Class of 1961, was also



Barbara Mokrzycki Sanderson

a resident of California and passed away in September of 2014.

Barbara returned to her 50th class reunion in October of 2014, pursuing the opportunity to reconnect with former Oakwood classmates and their spouses. Shortly thereafter she contacted Oakwood Schools Foundation to establish the Barbara Mokrzycki Sanderson Fund for Facilities. In 2015, the Foundation was notified by her estate of her passing, and received a distribution of funds in May of 2016. The funds were designated for the benefit and support of

Oakwood Schools facilities.

"It is a delightful surprise when such a gift comes to the Oakwood Schools, and the Oakwood Schools Foundation is profoundly grateful to Barbara Mokrzycki Sanderson

for making this provision in her will. Barbara's loving legacy will be remembered forever in the Oakwood schools through this generous gift," the foundation said in a statement acknowledging the gift.

The Oakwood Schools Foundation, a component of The Dayton Foundation, provides students with diverse and distinctive opportunities that go above and beyond the

reach of the district's normal operating budget. Pursuing its mission of "Enhancing Excellence in Education," the Foundation provides significant annual support for quality initiatives, including teacher and administrative grants, scholarships and special wish list items.

For more information about the Oakwood Schools Foundation, contact Director Dante Connell at 297-5332, email dante@oakwood-schoolsfoundation.org or visit the Foundation's website at www.oakwood-schoolsfoundation.org.



A contingent of the Dayton Hikers group gathered at Paw Paw Camp in Hills and Dales MetroPark in Oakwood. The group regularly hikes Twin Valley Trail.

Twin Valley Trail gives backpackers a chance to experience the 'backcountry' close to home

The traditional domain of Boy Scouts and bearded, flannel-clad outdoorsmen, recreational backpacking and hiking has attracted a new following and enjoyed a resurgence in recent years thanks in part to such Hollywood productions as *Wild* and *A Walk in the Woods*.

Locally, Five Rivers MetroParks abound with any number of options for casual day or nature hikes, but the county park system also affords outdoor enthusiasts an opportunity to experience 'backcountry' camping along the 22-mile Twin Valley Trail, located just 20 minutes from downtown Dayton.

The trail, which opened in 2008, connects the 1,655-acre Germantown MetroPark with the 1,000-acre Twin Creek MetroPark, giving day hikers and backpackers alike a chance to hike through a one-time Boy Scout camp - 'Old Camp Cook,' which dates to 1926 - and

see the ancient Carlisle Fort earthworks built by the Hopewell culture some 2,000 years ago.

Linking three trails to give hikers a chance to experience year-round backcountry camping locally is unique to the MetroPark system, and the region.

"It is unique," said Angie Sheldon, an outdoor recreation coordinator with Five Rivers MetroParks. "You can do a little backpacking at Caesar Creek State Park and in Cuyahoga National Park, but you can probably count on one hand how many backpacking opportunities there are in the state. Twin Valley is a just a short drive from Dayton and there's really nothing else like it around. To go backpacking, a lot of people around here either have to drive two-and-a-half hours to southeast Ohio or Tennessee or Kentucky, but this is really right in their own backyard."

The Twin Valley Trail connects a 7-mile loop trail at Germantown MetroPark with an 8-mile loop trail at Twin Creek MetroPark via a 7-mile connector, giving backpackers a viable two-day hike with three designated backcountry camping sites along the way. Hikers can expect to encounter two miles of pavement on the connector, one mile along a bike path and one mile shared with a roadway, but the remainder of the trail is well wooded, said Sheldon. "The connector has a small, little road walk, but other than that you are out among the trees walking along Twin Creek."

"There are various loops, so we like to say it's a 22-mile trail, but if you actually hike all of the connector loops it would be a 29-mile hike," noted Sheldon.

The beauty of the trail system is See **Trail** on page 12 ▶

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► **Trail from page 1**
that it can be tailored to various skill levels, both challenging enough for veteran hikers while giving novice backpackers a taste of the experience on easier terrain, and at minimal cost. "You can do hikes as short as 2 miles or 8 miles, or anything in between," Sheldon explained.

"The Twin Valley Trail is an incredible asset to southwest Ohio," said Andy Niekamp, organizer and founder of the Dayton Hikers. The group, started in 2009 to promote hiking in the Dayton area, has grown to more than 3,000 members, including more than 100 Oakwood residents. "We are so fortunate to have the Twin Valley Trail in our area. The TVT offers hikers a trail that meanders through nature along the Twin Creek, through open meadows, through mature hardwood forest, on level ground for a leisurely hike or on challenging ups and down for a great workout. There is something for everybody. Hikers can choose an easy hike ranging from two miles to a multi-day hike. Some ambitious people even hike the entire 27.5 miles in one day as a challenge."

"The area is relatively flat, but there are definitely some good climbs in both Germantown and Twin Creek, so it's really good practice for someone and a great introduction to backpacking, getting used to carrying your tent and food on your back," Sheldon said of the experience of hiking the trail.

As to equipment, hikers can choose from either external or internal frame backpacks, or even traditional non-frame rucksacks, popular with the burgeoning 'bushcraft' movement that harkens back to old school, low-tech woodcraft techniques reminiscent of those taught

by the Scouts a generation ago. Packs are readily available at many of the outdoor sporting goods stores in the Dayton area, such as Field & Stream, as well as from any number of online retailers, such as REI or Campmoor. Bushcraft enthusiasts often rely on online military surplus sites to outfit themselves with vintage equipment, stoves, cook sets and bivouac - or bivy - bags, allowing hikers to forego a tent. If you're looking to hit the trail before you buy, Sheldon said Great Miami Outfitters in Miamisburg offers backpack and tent rentals starting at \$20 a day for internal frame backpacks and \$25 a day for tents.

"Backpacking is one of those hobbies you can start with less expensive gear and as you get more experienced you can spend more money as your interest grows," she explained.

Overnight hikers are required to obtain a no-cost permit from Five Rivers, all of which can be done online before hitting the trail. "If you're staying at one of the backcountry sites you can call the day of your trip, between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, and if there's availability you can camp that night," noted Sheldon. Permits are emailed to campers. "You just print it and carry it with you on your hike. We do have what we call 'front country' campsites for larger groups, where you can have campfires, but to get one of those campsites you have to call at least a week in advance," she added. "There are two trailheads where you can park a car overnight. When you call to get a permit we'll ask for a license



Photo by Amanda Barbosa
Backpackers on the Twin Valley Trail near Germantown. The 22-mile MetroPark trail system includes three backcountry campsites.

plate number so our rangers know your vehicle is authorized overnight."

Once on the trail, backpackers can expect to find that all three primitive backcountry sites are dry camps, meaning hikers have to carry in all water they will need for an overnight outing. There is a pond near the Oak Ridge site and several points along the trail where hikers can filter potable water before setting up camp. There are at least two 'pods' at each site - three at Oak Ridge - with 'accommodations' for up to six people per pod. Each campsite is equipped with an outhouse, but there are no shelters at any of the backcountry sites, meaning hikers have to pack

in their own tent or bivouac camp.

For those overnights on the trail there are also no open campfires allowed at the sites, and cooking is done at a common area designated at each backcountry camp. Lightweight, dehydrated food also is readily available locally and online, and can be cooked trailside with stoves ranging from solid-fuel Esbit burners and denatured alcohol stoves (popular in Europe), to state-of-the-art, featherweight white gas stoves designed specifically for backpackers and climbers.

"I don't think a lot of people know about it," Sheldon said of the Twin Valley Trail system. "There are a lot of people who don't know it exists. Or they've been walking the trails but don't know there are backcountry campsites available. It's a hidden gem."

Sheldon said the park district schedules various programs throughout the year to introduce newcomers to both the trail and backpacking basics. "We let people borrow our equipment to get started and encourage them to become independent backpackers on their own," she explained.

The trail is within easy walking distance of Germantown, and hikers have been known to detour into town for ice cream, a meal, or "even a luxury backpacking trip and stay in a bed-and-breakfast in town," said Sheldon.

If packing a tent in seems too much of an undertaking, Sheldon notes that Five Rivers MetroParks offer camping options at several parks across the 16,000-acre park district. "We have camping in seven of our parks, and it's all free," she said. "I feel like people are only familiar with the one or

two parks close to their home, but there are 18 parks out there with facilities that they can check out."

Niekamp notes that the Buckeye Trail and North Country National Scenic Trail both travel through Dayton and through the Huffman, Eastwood, Deeds Point, Island and Taylorsville MetroParks, giving hikers additional trailheads in the region. The trails are co-aligned through the Dayton area and follow the Mad River and Great Miami Recreation Trails. They are marked with 2-by-6 inch blue blazes along the route. The North Country Trail stretches 4,600 miles from North Dakota to New York and follows much of the Buckeye Trail as it wraps through Ohio. The Buckeye Trail is a 1,400-mile trail circumnavigating the state, travelling through 44 counties, but backpackers on both can expect a fair amount of pavement hiking.

"So, whether you're looking for an overnight excursion on the Twin Valley Trail or a long distance hike on the Buckeye Trail, Dayton is a great place to start your backpacking adventure," Niekamp said.

The Dayton Hikers group offers two or three hikes a week on the Twin Valley Trail in either Germantown MetroPark or Twin Creek MetroPark. In addition to daytime hikes they offer sunrise and moonlit hikes on the TVT as well as overnight backpacking trips. Dayton Hikers also offer hikes of all skill levels in all area parks including Oakwood and on the Twin Valley Trail. In Oakwood, they offer hikes at Hills and Dales MetroPark which includes side trips to Houk Stream Park, Elizabeth Gardens Park and Smith Gardens Park. For details, dates and times, visit www.meetup.com/DaytonHikers.

For Twin Valley Trail permits, maps or additional information, call Five Rivers MetroParks at 275-PARK (7275) or visit www.metroparks.org

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