

VALLEY & STATE

Hocking County group attends Advocacy Day

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COLUMBUS — Earlier this month, a group of 14 individuals from Hocking County traveled to Columbus to attend the annual Developmental Disability Awareness & Advocacy Day.

The event is held each year in the State House to educate and empower people with developmental disabilities, their families, and community members. This year, there were over 400 people in attendance.

Abilities United (AU) of the Southeastern Ohio Center for Independent Living, Hocking Valley Industries (HVI), and the Hocking County Board of Developmental Disabilities (DD) worked together to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip.

“HVI and AU each took members or clients, and DD provided the transportation,” Independent Living Specialist for the Southeastern Ohio Center for Independent Living, Mary Clark, began. “It was a nice collaboration to get our folks up there.”

Clark is associated directly with Abilities United, which is a group of around 50 members associated with the Southeastern Ohio Center for Independent Living. The members decide which activities and learning sessions are to be held each month, and the lessons are open to the community. Coming up this year, the group has chosen first aid, self-defense and medication safety.

A group from Hocking County has attended the past several Advocacy Days, and the size of the group continues to grow.

This year’s theme was “Side by Side, Hand in Hand, and Heart to Heart”. Guest speakers included Ohio Governor John Kasich and Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Hocking County group of 14 met with Senator Troy Balderson during the Advocacy Day. Front from left is Senator Troy Balderson, Rob Rose, Caitlyne Carruthers, Mary Clark; (second row) Alexis Schriener, Chrissy Tracy, Maddie Call, Sheila Hall, Linda Ritchie; (third row) Ryan Burghy, Anna Saunders, Zac Guelsdorf, Tyler Clark, and Ciera Anderson.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Speaking with the Senator, the Hocking County group advocated for better transportation in rural areas. From left to right is Anna Saunders, Alexis Schriener, Senator Troy Balderson, Zac Guelsdorf, Ciera Anderson, and Tyler Clark.

Director John L. Martin. Speakers touched on the importance of advocacy and people with disabilities to be as active and involved in their communities as possible.

In the afternoon, the Hocking County group met with Senator Troy Balderson. Some of the individuals have met the Senator before,

and were impressed that he not only remembered their names, but their stories.

Group members continue to share their stories with others so that the services and community for those with developmental disabilities can improve.

For the past few years, the group has advocated for improving rural transit in some

way. Abilities United offers a variety of classes and training for their members and interested community members, but transportation can be a deterrent to attendance.

“Here in our community, transportation is an issue for some of our folks,” Clark explained. “Transportation isn’t countywide. We work with a number of agencies to try to meet some of those transportation needs.”

Each year, Balderson challenges the group to do something more, whether within their own groups or with the community, and Clark said proudly that the group is quick to rise to each new challenge.

“Every time we walk away from there, we come back home thinking about what we can do next to improve services within the community, and to help our community. Our group loves to give back and help,” Clark concluded.

Driver on a cocktail of drugs sentenced in Athens

BY BETH LANNING
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ATHENS — An Athens man convicted of driving while high on three different drugs during a crash has been sentenced to six years in prison.

Athens County Prosecutor Keller J. Blackburn said Robert Johnson III, 33, was the driver of a vehicle that crashed on state Route 13

in Athens County last April that resulted in injuries to passengers in the vehicle.

“Johnson’s passengers, an adult female and a juvenile female, were both injured and had to be transported to hospitals in Columbus. It was determined that Johnson was under the influence of heroin, cocaine and Suboxone at the time of the crash,” Blackburn remarked.

Johnson appeared before Judge George P. McCar-

thy on Tuesday, and was convicted of two counts of aggravated vehicular assault, felonies of the second degree; endangering children, a felony of the fifth degree; operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol, drug of abuse or a combination of the first, a misdemeanor of the first degree; and operating a vehicle while under the influence of a listed controlled substance or a listed metabolite of a controlled substance,

a misdemeanor of the first degree.

Johnson was sentenced to six years in prison. He also could have three years of mandatory post-release control upon his release from prison and a seven-year license suspension. Johnson was also ordered to pay a fine and restitution.

Johnson’s case was investigated by the Ohio State Highway Patrol.

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before heading to the Nationwide Arena, where there is a family-friendly celebration.

The family typically spends the day in Columbus, beginning with Mass at the cathedral before the parade, and then on to Nationwide, which isn’t over until six. The Nationwide Arena serves as a gathering place for music, food, Irish step dancing and local Irish organizations.

Amnah shared that some of her students from her years of teaching at St. Charles may be in the pa-

rade, marching or dancing. The Walsh family has had its own members dance in the parade, as well.

On a more local scale, one of Amnah’s nieces has taken it upon herself to host a St. Patrick’s Day party for the family in her home over the past four or five years. Nearly 80 percent of the family gathers to enjoy time together and celebrate the holiday. This year, the party will be on Saturday, due to the families being in Columbus all day Friday.

For the first time, three of Amnah siblings and a handful of other relatives, her son

included, took the Fun Bus to Chicago last weekend to witness the river water turning green in preparation for the holiday.

“They all got on the bus and it was like a crazy 30-hour trip, but they all thought it was really cool. That was the first time we’ve done that, and they said it was a fun time,” Amnah laughed.

The weekend was a special trip to celebrate their youngest brother, Pat Walsh, turning 60 on March 12. Not to be outdone by the river, the family decked themselves in their green for the occasion. “Everybody’s Irish on

Members of the Walsh family traveled to Chicago to watch the river turn green in preparation of St. Patrick’s Day and celebrate Pat Walsh’s birthday. From left is Mary Kay, Mike, and Pat Walsh and Chris and Kathy Stiverson.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

St. Patrick’s Day,” Amnah concluded. “There is a priest in Columbus who dresses up as St. Patrick each year, and attends the Nationwide events, greeting everyone. I’ve never asked if he’s got Irish in his blood. It’s just a fun time.”

Be safe and have a Happy St. Patrick’s Day.

News in brief

Shamrock hike scheduled for Boch Hollow

LOGAN — The Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Natural Areas and Preserves is hosting a “shamrock” hike in Boch Hollow on Saturday, March 18 from 1 to 4 p.m.

The public is invited to celebrate spring and discover a very special shamrock, the Running Buffalo Clover. This rare and federally endangered species grows in Boch Hollow and stays green all year round.

Participants will also be a part of a discussion on the vernal equinox and model the positions of the sun and earth throughout the year. A short hike will reveal changes taking place in the fields and woods with the increasing daylight hours.

Those wishing to participate should meet at the Boch Hollow office, 7211 Bremen Road. For more information contact lauren.metcalfe@dnr.state.oh.us.

WNF proposing fee changes

NELSONVILLE — The Wayne National Forest is seeking public comments on a proposal that would change recreation fees to enhance campgrounds and trails and help attract more visitors to southeast Ohio.

The proposal calls for reducing trail permit fees for off-highway vehicle (OHV) users and eliminating fees for horse and mountain bike users.

Currently, OHV, horse and mountain bike users are paying \$45 for a seasonal permit, \$24 for a three-day permit and \$12 for a daily permit. Beginning in 2018, seasonal permits would be reduced to \$35 and the three-day permit to \$20. The daily permit would be eliminated. These new fees would apply to motorized trail users only. Horse and mountain bike users would be exempt from purchasing a trail permit.

“Motorized trail use on the Forest has declined over 50 percent in the last eight years. By reducing the fee, we hope to see an increase in usage,” said forest supervisor Tony Scardina. “By eliminating fees for horse and mountain bike users, the forest will be aligned with other trail providers in the area.”

The proposal would also help standardize camping fees for higher developed campgrounds across the forest. Base camping fees would be adjusted to \$15, plus \$5 for campsites with electrical hook-ups.

Based on the proposed fee changes, Iron Ridge Campground would increase from \$18 to \$20 for sites with electrical hookups. Leith Run Campground would decrease from \$21 to \$20 for sites with electrical hookups and tent-only non-electric sites would remain at \$15. Stone Church Horse Campground would increase from \$14 to \$15. Burr Oak Cove Campground would see an increase from \$10 to \$15 for non-electric sites. Tent only sites at Burr Oak Cove will remain unchanged at \$10. When water is not available fees will remain at \$10.

The proposal also includes a new fee of \$10 for campgrounds along state Highway 26 in Washington and Monroe counties, which include Hune Bridge, Lane Farm, Ring Mill, and Lamping Homestead Campgrounds. Revenue generated from the new fee would be used to make improvements, such as upgrading picnic tables, grills, fire rings, restroom facilities, and signage.

Once public involvement is complete, the new fees will be reviewed by a Regional Recreation Advisory Committee, who will submit their recommendation to the Regional Forester for a final decision.

The public is invited to comment on the proposed fee changes. The comment period is set to end by close of business on Friday, July 28, 2017. To ensure that your comments are considered, send your comments no later than the above date.

Comments can be emailed to comments-eastern-wayne@fs.fed.us with the subject line “Fee Change”. Emailed comments must be submitted in a format such as within the body of the message, plain text (.txt), Word (.doc), portable document format (.pdf), or any software supported by Microsoft applications.

Written comments must be mailed or delivered to Wayne National Forest Supervisor’s Office, 13700 US Hwy 33, Nelsonville, Ohio 45764 or sent by fax to 740-753-0119, attention: Chad Wilberger.

Oral comments must be provided in person at the supervisor’s office during normal business hours (Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) or by calling 740-753-0101 and indicating you would like to provide comments on the proposed recreation fee changes.

For more information on the proposed project, visit our website at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/wayne>.

To celebrate St. Patrick’s Day, here are some facts about the holiday and St. Patrick

- The Catholic Church has never officially canonized St. Patrick, although he is included in the list of saints.
- The color associated with St. Patrick was originally a light blue. The color changed to green as a result of the Irish Independence movement.
- Beer was originally banned. Irish law from 1903 to 1970 made the day a religious holiday, meaning that pubs closed for the day.
- Oddly enough, St. Patrick’s Day is now considered one of the largest drinking holidays.
- The story of how St. Patrick used the three-leaf clover to explain the Holy Trinity may be just that — a story. There is no evidence to say that the clover was used at all, while some believe it was St. Patrick’s use of pagan symbols to explain Christianity.
- The odds of finding a four-leaf clover are one in 10,000.
- The first St. Patrick’s Day Parade took place in New York City.
- Leprechauns earn their gold by making and mending shoes for themselves and other fairies.



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