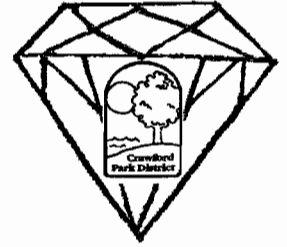


CRAWFORD PARK DISTRICT HAS BECOME A JEWEL FOR THE COUNTY

By Gary Ogle

Normally it takes years for nature to develop precious stones that sparkle and shine. But here in Crawford County it's only taken a relatively few short years for a real diamond in the rough to emerge as one of the area's real gems.



The Crawford Park District was the dream and commitment of a group of people that began with little fanfare and was in actuality little more than an expressive wish list. From there it has developed into a system of parks that offer recreational and educational opportunities as well as a gathering place just to swap stories from long ago.

To those who insist there is "nothing to do around," here: well you obviously haven't been to the parks lately.

In the last couple of weeks alone there have been family campouts and the chance to gaze through telescopes at the wonders of the night sky. There have been water games and nighttime nature symphonies, old-fashioned Chuck Wagon meals and walks in the woods with the family dog.

One could look for "hidden treasure" with a GPS unit, or simply treasure all the Park District has in store for those who bother to look.

If one chose, there were chances to see and pet some animals of a more exotic nature. There were all types of history lessons – some regarding geography, others regarding the settling of this area and those who were here first.

In the months to come there will be a chance to go hunting if that is of interest. But always, there is something to do.

There are birds to watch and identify, fish to catch, and amphibians to inspect. And it matters little whether you're a preschooler, or out-of-schooler, the Park District has an endless list of programs.

But if an organized activity isn't your thing, there is also the opportunity of just being alone in the woods, or an air-conditioned bird watching room. You can take the kids or grandkids along. Or, if you would rather, just become a kid again yourself.

The Park District is as diverse as the interests in the county. There are the woodlands and river of Lowe-Volk Park with its award-winning Nature Center, historic Unger Farm, the unique Heckert Nature Preserve and Sears Woods, the incredible Daughmer Savannah and the Sandusky Wildlife Area. And don't forget the bike path that promotes exercise while appreciating our County's beauty or the simple Picnic Park at the county fairgrounds.

One of the incredible things about the Park District is what it has cost the property owners and taxpayers of the county: not one thin dime. Thus far the Park District has gotten by on local government funds – the return from the state of tax money to the townships and communities here – as well as donations, fund raisers, grants and the efforts of some very hardworking volunteers.

Imagine all that could be accomplished with just a little county-wide financial support.

But to my way of thinking the best thing the Park District provides is all the proof we need that something very good is happening right in our own backyards we call Crawford County.