

Get fit and win a hat with Outdoor Hiking Challenge

Sep 6, 2023 | Ottawa Outdoors | 0 comments



Outdoor Hiking Challenge participants can win a free hat by hiking at local parks, including Cedar Meadow Preserve on Catawba. (Photo by Sheri Trusty)

BY SHERI TRUSTY

The first ever collaboration between the Park District of Ottawa County and the Ottawa County Health Department is encouraging locals to get outside and get active. The two organizations are hosting an autumn Outdoor Hiking Challenge to inspire locals to visit many of the outdoor recreation destinations throughout the county.

The Outdoor Hiking Challenge runs from Friday, Sept. 1 through Nov. 30 and features guided and self-guided hikes at 12 locations, including East Harbor State Park in Marblehead, the North Coast Inland Trail in Elmore and Genoa, Veterans Park in Oak Harbor and Massie Cliffside Preserve on Put-in-Bay.

The first of several guided walks will be held at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Fox Unit on Sept. 10 from 1 to 2 p.m. The one-mile walk, which will be geared toward kids, will follow the storybook prairie trails. The second guided walk, held on Sept. 16 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., will take participants into a restricted access area of Lakeside Daisy Nature Preserve. The hike will be led by Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) staff.

Outdoor Hiking Challenge participants who hike at least 8 of the 12 locations earn an Outdoor Hiking Challenge winter hat. Hikers are asked to record their walks on an Outdoor Hiking Challenge form. Starting on Friday, Sept. 1, the forms can be picked up at the Park District of Ottawa County office, Ottawa County Health Department, Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Visitors Center, and public libraries and senior centers throughout Ottawa County. Forms and details can be found here: www.ottawacountyparksoh.org/outdoor-hiking-challenge. For further information, contact Administrative Specialist Sara Hill at 419-707-4051 or shill@ottawacountyparksoh.org.

Completed forms must be received by text, email or in person by Dec. 8.

"We'll distribute the hats in December," Wilson said. "We'll see how this goes this year. We hope to build on it next year."

Signs featuring an Outdoor Hiking Challenge QR Code are set up at each hiking destination. Participants are encouraged to share their experiences on social media using #outdoorhikingchallenge.



A family hikes at Meadowbrook Marsh in Danbury Township. This fall, visits to the park can earn hikers a free hat. (Photo by Sheri Trusty)

Jannah Wilson, the Executive Director of the Park District of Ottawa County, is excited to launch this new program.

"It was really something I wanted to bring to Ottawa County," she said. "Naturally, it seemed to be a good collaboration to do with the Health Department. They have initiatives to get people outdoors to do physical activity, so we dovetailed our missions."

The Outdoor Hiking Challenge was made possible through the help of partnering agencies including local towns, the Black Swamp Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, ODNR and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"I'm really excited to work with our partnering agencies," Wilson said. "I appreciate the support from all the agencies who stepped up to help with this."

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