

*"GO! GO! GO!"* The cheers of the crowd echo across the fields of Oak Grove as soccer players race through the grass to score one final goal. *"Wow! Look at that tree!"* A family peacefully hikes through Bill Yeck, stopping to stare at the unique plants they find. *Smack. Whack. Bounce.* Four exhausted tennis players battle it out in a doubles tournament at Yankee Park. *"Over here! I found it!"* A group of children Geocaching at Hidden Meadows Day Camp rush to see what their fellow camper has uncovered. *"BOO!"* Shrieks fill the air as kids and adults alike walk the annual Haunted Trail at Grant Park. *"TOUCHDOWN!"* The fans in the stands of the Schoolhouse Park stadium are on their feet as the football team runs the ball into the end zone.

Sporting events, hikes, nature programs, and camps. It's all just a day in the park for the lucky residents of Centerville and Washington Township. With over forty-five different parks and more than nine hundred acres of green space set aside by the park district, there truly is something for every person to enjoy. As a lifelong resident of Washington Township, many of my fondest childhood memories involve these incredible parks. From sledding at Schoolhouse Park when it was nothing more than a small hill to hikes at Grant Park, picnics at the Activity Center, and Saturday morning softball at Oak Creek, the city's parks have been an integral part of my life.

As families today become busier and more involved than ever before with school, work, and extracurricular activities, a community's green space has never been more important. The beautiful, well-maintained parks of Centerville and Washington Township are an essential part of human life. They not only serve as an outlet for relaxing, exercising, and enjoying the wonders of nature but more importantly are a unifying entity bringing together families, neighbors, and friends from our community. By offering abundant opportunities for residents of

all ages, the park district draws community members to the great outdoors at an early age and instills lifelong ideals of respect, preservation, and care towards our parks, their inhabitants, and all of nature. From camps, recycling drives, and nature academies to guided hikes and nature tours, the park district educates its citizens—from preschoolers to seniors, and everyone in between—on protecting not only our wonderful green space but the environment and our planet as a whole. Learning to protect our countless parks and care for the environment are not lessons that can be taught in a classroom. Rather, they are values that must be inspired through exposure to the wonders of nature, and never would anyone be so willing to work for the preservation of the environment than after experiencing the beauty and excitement of all that the Centerville and Washington Township parks have to offer.

The residents of Centerville and Washington Township are blessed with a growing and ever-improving network of green space that serves as the foundation of community-building activities and a source of pride to all who call this city their home. The essential presence of these areas in the lives of every resident demonstrates their willingness to protect and conserve their parks and ensures that our beautiful green space will only continue to thrive in the coming years.