



MEDIA RELEASE

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Preservation Parks of Delaware County Wins 2025 OPRA Governor's Award

[Sunbury, OH] Preservation Parks of Delaware County is the winner of the 2025 Ohio Parks and Recreation Association Governor's Award for the Braille Trail at Hogback Ridge Park in Sunbury—the only known Braille Trail in central Ohio.

This half-mile trail creates a safe, inclusive way for people of all abilities to connect with nature. Designed to engage touch, sound, and sight, the trail features a continuous guidance rope threaded through metal posts, a stable crushed gravel surface, three interactive interpretive signs, and a 3D tactile map of the park.

“Developing partnerships to improve the quality of life for all people is something that parks and recreation professionals excel at,” said OPRA executive director Woody Woodward. “And this trail is a shining example of that work. Because of the foresight and dedication of the team at Preservation Parks, Central Ohio residents will have new opportunities to experience the beauty of nature—regardless of their ability to see. It really is a powerful project and a most deserving winner.”

Developed in partnership with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, the American Council of the Blind of Ohio, the Cleveland Sight Center, and the Sunbury Lions Club, the Braille Trail reflects collaboration, creativity, and resourcefulness of our community. It was supported by a \$120,000 grant from the Delaware County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

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“This project demonstrates what’s possible when organizations come together with a shared commitment to providing meaningful access for all. The Delaware County Board of Developmental Disabilities is proud to support efforts like the Braille Trail that remove barriers and ensure everyone has the opportunity to be included,” said Chase Waits, director of communications & community engagement at the Delaware County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

In addition to the trail itself, the project also includes the park district’s first family-style accessible restroom with an adult changing station. These achievements remove barriers and set a new standard for accessibility, allowing all visitors to listen to the forest, feel the bark of a shagbark hickory, and explore the tactile shape of Ohio’s state wildflower, the trillium.

“Parks should be a place where everyone feels welcome and included. By adding a Braille Trail, Preservation Parks is expanding access and creating new ways for more visitors to experience and connect with nature. I would like to thank our staff who are always innovating ways to invite visitors into the parks and our many partners who helped make this possible,” said Mary VanHaften, executive director of Preservation Parks.

As the only known Braille Trail in central Ohio, this initiative marks a significant step in making outdoor spaces more inclusive. Beyond serving those with low vision, the trail’s design benefits all visitors, including families with young children who can independently explore by following the rope. The project aligns with Preservation Parks’ commitment to fostering meaningful connections with the natural world.

For more information about the Braille Trail, including a detailed guide on where to find the trailhead and what to expect, visit <https://preservationparks.com/programs/braille-trail/>.

The Governor’s Award for Parks and Recreation, presented by Ohio Parks and Recreation Association was established in 2010 to recognize the one park and recreation project, program, or event that has had the most significant impact on quality of life in the preceding year. The winner was announced and the award was presented at the OPRA Annual Awards Dinner on February 3, 2026 at the Kalahari Convention Center in Sandusky. Officials from thirteen statewide organizations formed the voting panel for the 2025 award.

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Governor’s Award Finalist YouTube video, credit to Ohio Parks and Recreation Association: <https://youtu.be/NUzhsEITrw>

Braille Trail Photo Collection on Canto: <https://preservationparks.canto.com/b/KV9P7>