

Pancake Breakfast Wraps Up Campground's 40th Anniversary Celebration

The Stow Parks & Recreation Department has spent the entire Summer celebrating the 40th anniversary of Silver Springs Campground. When thinking of an event to best wrap up the celebration, the idea of a pancake breakfast seemed to be right on target.

"I wanted a social event for the campers," says Parks & Rec employee Ken Barnhart, "but I also wanted to be able to recap the year's-worth of activities and events, plus give a little something extra to all the campers who have so faithfully supported the campground this year and through the years."

It was one of the campers who came up with the name for the event. "The campground has had three record-breaking years in a row, and we were hoping for a fourth in 2016," Barnhart continues. "Juan Villarreal, one of our frequent campers, came up with 'The Record-Breaker's Breakfast'. I liked the optimism, so we went with it."

The Record-Breaker's Breakfast was held at Heritage Barn (the large rental facility adjacent to Silver Springs Campground) on Sunday, October 23rd, from 9 AM till Noon. The breakfast featured pancakes, bacon, sausage, orange juice and coffee. It was catered by Robert J. Events & Catering, owned and operated by Jeff Kline of Stow (another active camper at Silver Springs).

One of the activities at the event was giving campers a chance to guess how many total campsite rentals the 2016 camping season would generate. "I had a large chart showing what Silver Springs Campground has done over the years," Barnhart explains. "This gave the campers a little bit of guidance while making their guess. They just needed to figure out if we were going to go up from last year, down, or remain about the same."

The guesses ran in all directions. "We won't know the answer until the 2016 camping season ends. But the camper who guesses closest without going over will win a free five-night stay at the campground during the 2017 camping season."

Barnhart also created some stand-up displays depicting the local newspaper articles, flyers and photos that represented the 40th anniversary events of this year. "I wanted to give the campers a chance to review all of the activities that took place this year. A lot of folks enjoyed looking through the visual record, and it was a nice way to re-visit some of those fun events."

Barnhart adds, "There was a lot of chit-chat between the campers during the breakfast, some of whom were acquainted, but many of whom were strangers to each other. In addition to some regulars, we also had some folks who don't camp at Silver Springs Campground quite as often. We even had some first-time visitors from Michigan, here to visit the national park, who joined us for the breakfast and had fun meeting everyone."

There were some free camping weekends given away, as well. "We had three drawings during the course of the event," Barnhart continues, "so three families from the Record-Breaker's Breakfast will enjoy some free camping next year."

But there was one other activity that Barnhart wanted to be sure was included at the breakfast. “I made a large sign saying ‘Happy 40th Anniversary, Silver Springs Campground’ and placed it above a roll of poster paper that covered an 8-foot table. It was like an over-sized greeting card, and I asked the campers to sign it and include their thoughts about the campground, what they enjoy most and what the campground means to them. The campers were great, and expressed some wonderful sentiments about the campground and about camping in general. It was perfect.”

So the breakfast turned out to be a great way to finish off the milestone season. “It’s been awesome celebrating the 40th anniversary this Summer,” Barnhart summarizes. “And it looks like it’ll be another record-breaker, so the name of the breakfast proved to be very fortuitous.”

STAR WARS and MUSUEMS invade Silver Springs Campground

Stow Parks & Recreation Department employee Ken Barnhart has been working with Silver Springs Campground for almost four decades. During that time, he has seen a lot of camping clubs, Scout troops, or groups of friends camping together at the facility...often times with a “theme” attached to the campout.

“Scout troops might be working toward a particular merit badge, so much of the troops’ activities center on accomplishing those requirements,” Barnhart explains. “Camping clubs might have a dinner theme for their Saturday night potluck dinner. And, sometimes, a group of friends might do something special together such as placing small flags around the perimeter of their campsite on July 4th weekend, or placing jack-o-lanterns by their site marker posts for Halloween.”

It’s not unusual for groups to do something special for dinner. “One camping club cooked five deep-fried turkeys for their Saturday dinner,” Barnhart recalls, “and I can remember a chili contest with about a dozen crock pots of various chili types. That was the first time I had ever seen “white chili” (with chicken, kernel corn, and a white sauce). Everyone in the club sampled each chili and voted on the best.”

“And, speaking of chili, one camping club that used to frequently visit here always planned something traditional for their October campout. They had a large copper kettle that hung from a tripod, and they would always build up a nice pile of glowing coals underneath it. Each club member brought a large batch of their own recipe of chili, which they added to the kettle and allowed it to simmer much of the day until dinnertime. Because each recipe was different, there was a wide variety of meats and such in the combined chili.”

But there was also a bit of humor involved with the blended chili, as Barnhart notes, “Those people who like their chili especially spicy-hot would contribute a recipe that was nearly thermonuclear. Those who preferred their chili on the milder side added one that was basically just meat and tomato sauce. Each party thought they were making the blended chili to their own personal liking, not realizing that the next camper was compensating in the other direction. In the end, it all averaged out into one of the finest chili dinners imaginable, with each camper believing that their special contribution was the reason for the success. They always had lots of cornbread on hand, and it was the perfect meal for a typically cool October campout.”

There has been a “Christmas In July” campout, and one group of camping friends used to bring their musical instruments to play Dixieland Jazz around the campfire (much to the delight of the other campers in the campground). There have been Easter Egg Hunts and Corn Hole Tournaments. But some recent campouts have “raised the bar” for themed campouts at Silver Springs Campground.

Enter Jeff & Angelique Kline of Stow and friends Juan & Sue Villarreal of Cuyahoga Falls. The two couples have been organizing a Memorial Day Weekend campout with fellow campers for a number of years. “Juan and I like to think of it as the ‘Klinearreal’ Memorial Day campout,” Sue explains. “As the two originating couples, we have carried on this tradition since the last locust

emergence, 17 years ago. We have done this at a few different campgrounds, but have been celebrating at Silver Springs the longest by far.”

Jeff Kline adds, “We started the themed campout with just a cook-off. Each year, about a month before the Memorial Day campout, Angelique and I would have dinner with Susan and Juan to discuss the campout. We would plan our menu for the weekend and then come up with what we should all cook on Sunday night for our Cook-Off. We had a chili, ribs, sliders and even a hot dog cook-off.”

Recently, each campout involves the showing of three movies, one per night of the campout, and often it is a movie trilogy. Jeff explains, “One year, I purchased an inflatable screen and projection/sound system for my business. As we were planning the food for that year, we decided to show all three “Pirates Of The Caribbean” that weekend.”

Past showings have also included the “Back To The Future” series, the “Indiana Jones” series, and “Gremlins”, “ET” and “Real Steel”. “We toy with different movie themes throughout the year, trying to find a trilogy that will be appropriate for all ages,” Sue explains. “Jeff is always generous in contributing and setting up and tearing down the movie screen and making sure the kids get to enjoy the special weekend. It takes a lot of work to have that much fun every year.”

Last year (2015), the three originally filmed “Star Wars” movies (A New Hope, The Empire Strikes Back, and Return Of The Jedi) were shown on the large movie screen, to the delight of young and old alike. Each year, the Klines and Villarreals invite all of the other campers around Silver Springs Campground to join their group in the viewing. The more, the merrier.

Mike & Barb Radcliff of Stow have been attending the themed campouts for about six years. Barb remembers when the Star Wars movies first came out, and “how top notch the graphics were and how sophisticated the special effects were.” Mike comments, “They’re still enjoyable movies, but the light saber battles are much cooler and complex now.”

All together, the Star Wars-themed campout group occupied 12 campsites and included 55 people. By the time other campers from surrounding campsites joined in for the movie-watching, the number was much higher.

But, last year, there was some additional fun. All of the food for the Sunday evening dinner was “Star Wars”-related. Among the many food offerings was “Yoda Fingers” (asparagus spears), “Princess Leia’s Buns” (a cinnamon bun dessert), “Wooly Bantha Balls” (a Mediterranean meatball recipe with lamb, veal, and lots of herbs and spices), “Chewbacca’s Chewies” and “Vader’s Taters” (mashed potatoes, turned black with food coloring).

Jeff Kline remembers, “We made Watto’s Wings. We had a bag of chicken wings in the freezer and needed a character to connect those to. They were easy to make.”

Mike Radcliff points out, “The themed dinner is a great idea, and a lot of fun to see who comes up with what. One of the fun things about the themed dinner is the naming or creativity of the

food you bring to the table. You don't have to be a chef and bringing something already pre-packaged is fine; we just ask for some creativity in how you present it."

Jeff Kline adds, "There was a lot of laughter at all the names of the items."

"It was a delight to see the creative ways the camping group managed to make the rather large variety of tasty treats all relate to the Star Wars movies," Barnhart notes. "And the food selection was awesome. I'm sure nobody left there hungry."

This year (2016), the movie trilogy was the "Night At The Museum" series. Not only a fun set of movies to watch, but the various characters and creatures in the movie once again provided an ample selection of movie-related food for the Sunday evening dinner.

Mike Radcliff mentions, "These movies fit in well with the campground atmosphere and in connection with the animals. Good movies for the kids and adults alike."

"Angelique is very good at sending emails before the weekend," Sue points out, "so we all know what the theme will be and what day we should set up our sites."

Once everyone knows the movie theme, there's a rush of creativity to provide something amusing for the dinner. Because of the mummy character in one of the "Museum" movies, Stow residents Tom & Amy Karnofel (who have been coming to these themed-campouts for four years) contributed "Ahkmenrah Unwrapped". The Karnofels explain, "It's a pasta dish using linguine representing the wrap."

The Klins created "Caveman Kabobs", as Jeff explains, "I chose that because I wanted to use the campfire to make the dish and the cavemen (in the movie) were so infatuated with fire. Worked well together."

The Villarreal contributed "Anylosaurus Salad" (based on a Kenyan coleslaw-like dish called Kachumbari). As Sue explains, "Never having seen the movies, we were at a disadvantage so I thought of the coolest vegetarian dinosaur that I might see in a museum and went with that."

The Radcliffs contributed Dexter Donuts and Dum Dums, but you'll need to see the "Museum" movies to understand the connection.

Other items included Jedidia's Jambalaya, Johnny Applesauce, Rex Bites, Hun's Hot Wings, Paleo Salad, Peach Cobbler and Pineapple Upside Down Cake.

Campers throughout the campground are invited to join in for the dinners. As Mike Radcliff recalls, "I remember the year we did breakfast-themed food for dinner and there was a couple from Holland that joined in. They made crepes that were native to their country and that was very cool and educational. That is the thing about themed campouts or any campout, we welcome others in the campground to join in."

Barnhart chimes in, “That’s not only one of the fun parts about camping...getting acquainted with your camping neighbors...it’s also been one of the fun parts about this job. There is such a diversity of people from all over the U.S. and many other countries who have come through Silver Springs Campground over the years, and they all have a story.”

The Kline-Villarreal campouts go beyond just the movies and dinners. Other activities are carefully planned and coordinated for these fun weekends. As Jeff explains, “We have launched model rockets, held scavenger hunts, set up a kiddie pool, slip and slide, home run derby and 500 games, fishing derby, a clinic on how to prepare and care for your fishing equipment lead by Juan to the little kids, Texas Hold ‘Em, hikes through the woods, biking, dogs and kids to the dog park and corn hole tournaments.”

One of the items on the scavenger hunt list came as a bit of a surprise to an unsuspecting city employee. “I wondered why I had suddenly become so popular, with everybody wanting to pose for a photo with me,” Barnhart laughs. “It was later that I realized that a photo with me was merely part of their scavenger hunt list.”

The camaraderie of the camping group develops nicely over these long weekends, especially around a community-campfire. Mike Radcliff explains, “It is always nice hanging out with great friends. While the kids are watching the movies, we typically try to get a campfire going where the adults can sit and talk, but still see the movie screen.”

Jeff Kline reflects, “Everyone looks forward to the Memorial Day weekend. We stay up late and laugh for hours. Sometimes we laugh at previous camping events and other times we make new funny memories. Susie always makes popcorn and we pass the bowl around until it is empty.”

Sue Villarreal says, “We all had a great time visiting, sharing, trying to understand the complications life continuously presents. Beth Reiger made ‘walking S’mores’ with snack sized bags of fudge stripes cookies and a toasted marshmallow strategically placed inside to melt and get all gooey. Well done!”

And the Karnofels add, “We look forward to each year. For some, this is the only time we get to see each other. We have made some great friends over camping.”

As Jeff Kline explains, “Throughout the years, we have had many families participate. We have people that come out just for the movie and dinner. Most that stay with us come out a week before just to get a site. We have introduced new families to Silver Springs by telling them about our Memorial Day weekend that never knew the campground was there. We have had nearly 40 families participate in the weekend over the last 12 years.”

Barnhart mentions, “I really look forward to this whole group visiting our campground each Memorial Day Weekend. It’s fun to see the movies they’ve selected, and it’s very amusing to see the movie-related dishes that they line up for their pot-luck dinner. These folks have certainly taken “themed campouts” to a whole new level.

Silver Springs Campground is in the midst of celebrating its 40th anniversary. For details about the campground, the anniversary discount camping rates and a very special drawing that is taking place this Summer, visit www.funinstow.com and click on Parks & Places, then Silver Springs Campground.

“Other groups of camping friends/families are welcome to come out and enjoy a themed-campout of their own,” Barnhart notes. “Silver Springs Campground is the perfect place for groups to camp on adjacent campsites and share activities together.”

The Karnofels offer, “We love the campground” while the Radcliffs add that Silver Springs Campground is “a wonderful campground; a jewel in the city of Stow.”

And as Jeff Kline sums up the themed-campouts that he has been co-hosting, “There are lots of funny, silly and crazy stories from our time camping at Silver Springs. Stop around our campfire, or come by and participate in our cook-off, or bring your chair to enjoy the movie. Anyone is welcome to our campsite. The movie, the food and the friendship are not just for those that plan on camping with us but for everyone who enjoys Silver Springs Campground that weekend.”

Kamper City Joins Silver Springs Campground's 40th Anniversary Celebration

Silver Springs Campground, located in the northeastern corner of Stow and operated by the Stow Parks and Recreation Department, is in the midst of its 40th Anniversary celebration. The campground is hosting a number of events, drawings, give-aways and more during the 2016 camping season as part of the celebration.

Kamper City, the popular RV dealership on Akron-Cleveland Road in Peninsula, will be staging an event at the campground on Saturday and Sunday, July 23 & 24. The dealership will be bringing out five camping models for viewing: a fifth wheel, a travel trailer, a hybrid, a pop-up, and an ultra-lite. The public is invited to come out and take a tour of the new units. A member of the Kamper City staff will be on hand to answer questions.

The dealership will also be displaying and demonstrating some of the latest in camping gear. "It's a bit like a Kamper City: Show & Tell", says Parks & Rec employee Ken Barnhart. "Visitors will have a chance to see what's new on the market, and discover new camping items to enhance their next camping adventure."

The event was spearheaded by another Parks & Rec employee, Andy Kemp. "I have always loved to tour campers," Kemp confides, "to see what's new and innovative. Most of the new models seem to have a more timeless look compared to the models of the '70s."

Light refreshments will be served, including a marshmallow roast. "We'll have a campfire going so guests can roast themselves a sweet treat," says Barnhart.

Visitors will also receive a BOGO coupon for Silver Springs Campground (pay for one night on a campsite and get the second night free) good until the end of the 2016 camping season. There will also be a door prize drawing for a free two-night stay at the campground. "The coupons and door prize are good until October 31, when we close down for the season," Barnhart explains.

The Kamper City event will take place from 11 AM until 4 PM both days. The rain dates are August 6 & 7. The public is invited to park at the Silver Springs Ballfield parking lot (5150 Young Road) and walk to the ballfield-side of the campground for this event.

"40 really has been the magic number this year," Barnhart comments. "We had a very well-attended Open House where we gave away 40 camping-related door prizes. We currently have a special discount on campsite fees and firewood, both involving the number 40."

"We also have two special drawings taking place this summer," Barnhart continues. "For each two-night stay at Silver Springs Campground, the camper's name goes into a drawing. Around Labor Day, we will draw 40 names and those folks will win a free two-night stay at the campground. Also, those campers who register for the five-night special will have their name placed into a separate drawing. Around Labor Day, we will draw one name and that camper will win 40 free nights of camping at Silver Springs Campground. It's all part of our 40th Anniversary celebration."

The campground seems to be off to a good start for having another record-setting year. "I've worked with the campground for a long time and I've experienced all of the recent record-breaking years," Barnhart notes. "But even I am impressed with how well this year is going. It's only fitting that we should

have such a great year during our anniversary celebration.” To which Kemp adds, “It’s just a great place – ya gotta tell everyone.”

“And I’m glad to see Kamper City taking part in our celebration,” Barnhart notes. “We’ve worked together a bit in the past, but not on this type of event. I’m anxious to see how it turns out. This may lead to other similar events in the future.”

For additional information about Silver Springs Campground, or the drawings and specials, visit www.funinstow.com → Parks & Places → Silver Springs Campground. If you click on “Campground Brochure”, it will bring up map and directions, rules, site diagram and more. There is also a link to “40 Reasons To Camp At Silver Springs Campground” that will acquaint visitors with the park and facility.

“Who doesn’t like shopping for a new camper? Come out and see what’s new in camp equipment and reacquaint yourself with Silver Springs Campground,” says Kemp. “I hope the public comes out and gets inspired to explore the great outdoors. There is no feeling like an evening walk around the campground while people are sitting around the fire, enjoying each other’s company.”

Silver Springs Campground's 39th Year Is A Record-Breaker

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The Stow Parks & Recreation Department offers a wide variety of programs, facilities, and special events for local residents. One need only visit the department's new website (www.funinstow.com) or read the Preview recreation brochure to appreciate the ample offerings. There really is "something for everyone."

Of all the diverse facilities open to the public, one of the most unique is Silver Springs Campground (located at 5238 Young Road, not far from the northeast corner of Stow). "The campground opened in the mid-'70s and is one of the very few municipally-operated campgrounds in Ohio," states Parks & Rec employee Ken Barnhart. "City-run campgrounds are a rarity in Ohio, but ours has just successfully completed its 39th year of operation."

The key word in that statement being "successfully", as the campground had more site rentals this year than in any previous year. "We experienced a 15 percent jump over the previous year," Barnhart continues, "and 2013 was a record-breaker at that time, so this is a real precedent for us...a real achievement. Last year, we only beat the previous record by 16 site rentals, which is not a very significant amount. But this year, we went over last year's total by 259 campsites, which is a much more substantial figure. It's a big leap forward."

The recent success isn't just a "spike" in attendance. Rather, it's part of an overall growth in recent years. "Silver Springs Campground has developed a genuine fan-base," Barnhart explains. "We have a large number of campers who return multiple times a year and, sometimes, multiple times a month. But our four biggest years have taken place in the last five years, and eight of our ten biggest years have taken place in the last eight years. This reflects the strong interest and support of our campers."

Approximately half of the campers live in Stow, while the other half come from surrounding communities, out-of-town visitors, and even a few from out of the country. Barnhart reveals, "This year, we have hosted campers from all over the U.S., plus three families from Canada, one family from Germany, and four families from Australia. That's part of the fun of camping at Silver Springs. You never know who your neighbors will be or where they come from. It's a wonderful experience meeting and getting acquainted with such a diverse group of people."

While not specifically known as a "destination campground", Silver Springs Campground enjoys the good fortune of being situated amongst many northeast Ohio attractions. Families have camped in Stow while visiting the Rock-N-Roll Hall Of Fame, while participating in the All-American Soap Box Derby, for attending concerts at Blossom Music Center, and to visit the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Barnhart adds, "That's actually been one of the biggest areas of growth at our campground this year. The number of people camping at Silver Springs to visit the national park went from 44 families last year to 77 families this year. We're the closest public campground to CVNP, so that's a real convenience for many of the visitors."

While camping at Silver Springs, guests have access to the many amenities of the Stow park. From Bow Wow Beach (dog park) on the west side to Heritage Lake (fishing lake) on the east

side, campers have easy access to wooded trails, S.O.A.R. playground, and more. “We’re also adjacent to the Metro Parks Bike & Hike Trail,” Barnhart points out, “which offers over 33 miles of trail. Many campers bring their bicycles and take advantage of the trail, but hikers enjoy it, too.”

The campground, itself, features 27 campsites (some shaded, some open). Sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis (no reservations). Each site has a picnic table (some sites have two), a fire ring (most with an adjustable cooking rack), and access to 20-amp electric. There are several water spigots scattered around the campground, and a trailer dump station is near the entrance drive. Portable restrooms are on site, but a modern facility (sinks and flush toilets) is available at the nearby ballfields. “We’re just a step or two above primitive camping,” Barnhart opines, “but if you don’t need game rooms, WiFi, or saunas, then our campground certainly fulfills all of the camper’s basic needs.”

Campers can bring a tent or a mobile unit (trailer, pop-up, motorhome, etc.), as the campground accepts both. Pets are permitted, and camping clubs are welcomed. Firewood is available and sold for a modest fee - - a fact appreciated by many of the campers. “Some folks don’t like hauling firewood on their camping trips, so they are grateful for the convenience of us having it on hand,” as Barnhart notes, “and we sold over 8,000 pieces of firewood this year.”

The price to camp is inexpensive at Silver Springs Campground. It’s \$10/night for Stow resident families, \$12/night for non-resident families. You may have up to six people per campsite, “which works out to only about \$2 per person for 24-hours of recreation,” Barnhart points out. “What a bargain in today’s economy.”

The reasonable price may have contributed to the record-breaking attendance this year but, also, the word seems to be getting out to more people. “Our campers are introducing more of their camping friends and families to Silver Springs, and the campground is listed on numerous websites,” Barnhart states. “It’s really helped us to have a banner year.”

For more details about Silver Springs Campground, visit the Stow Parks & Recreation website www.funinstow.com and click on “Campground”. You’ll be able to print out the campground brochure, which includes map & directions, rules, site diagram, and more. The 2015 camping season will be from April 1 to October 31.

“We’re proud of the many programs and facilities that our department offers to the public,” 36-year veteran Barnhart says. “But I’m especially proud of this very unique campground. For nearly four decades, it has been offering up recreational opportunities for families to have fun together, appreciate nature and study outdoor sciences, and bond in a way that is rarely felt with today’s hectic family schedules. I hope more families will discover and take full advantage of the camping experiences offered at Silver Springs Campground. It can truly improve the quality of their lives.”

SILVER SPRINGS CAMPGROUND ANNIVERSARY PARTY IS APRIL 9

Open House To Include Firefighter Sandy, Jungle Terry, Door Prize Drawing, More.

The Stow Parks and Recreation Department has been operating Silver Springs Campground for forty years, and the department is commemorating the milestone achievement with an Anniversary Party/Open House at Heritage Barn (5120 Young Road) from noon until 4 p.m. on April 9. Parks & Rec employee Ken Barnhart says, "Anybody who enjoys camping, nature, or outdoor family fun should stop by. The public is welcome, and you do not need to be camping to attend. There is a parking lot by the Barn, plus there is additional parking available at Silver Springs Ballfields."

For anyone who happens to be camping that weekend, it's an easy walk to the Barn which is adjacent to the campground. There will be a variety of activities taking place during the Open House, and campers can come and go at their leisure.

During the Open House, Firefighter Sandy (from the Stow Fire Department) will be presenting a hands-on fire extinguisher program at 1 p.m. The purpose of the program is to help adults gain a better understanding of the use of fire extinguishers.

As Firefighter Sandy explains, "Weather permitting, the Stow Fire Department will be utilizing a fire extinguisher trainer for adults to get a feel for what it's like to use a fire extinguisher to put out a small controllable fire. Some basic fire safety information will be taught before utilizing the extinguisher, to ensure that individuals understand its proper use, along with literature on hand to take home for further details. Although this is not an activity for children, there will be handouts geared for them on fire safety. There will be additional information on summer outdoor safety, grilling and camping, as well."

Barnhart points out, "Many adults have never actually experienced using a fire extinguisher, so this will be a valuable opportunity for them. When it comes to safety issues, it's always best to be prepared."

At 2 p.m., Jungle Terry will be presenting his Live Animal & Reptile Show, an exciting interactive educational program for all ages. Jungle Terry will be showcasing a wide variety of exotic animals from around the world, and he'll explain where the animals are from as well as some fun facts about them such as what they eat and special characteristics of the animal.

"Jungle Terry has been producing his Jungle Animal Program since 1990," explains Barnhart, "and he currently conducts as many as 1,000 performances a year, giving the public an up-close look at his critters. I've seen his show before, and it's a 'don't-miss' program that will thrill young and old alike."

Then at 3 p.m., there will be a special door prize drawing. "In honor of our 40th anniversary, we will be giving away 40 door prizes," Barnhart says. "There will be camping-related items, like pie irons, grills, camp chairs, and such. There will be nature-related items, such as binoculars, field guides, and bird feeder. And there will be some recreation items, such as a compass and a kite. I think campers will really like the prizes. It'll be a fun drawing."

Each family attending the Anniversary Party/Open House will receive a BOGO coupon for Silver Springs Campground. The coupon will allow the family to pay for one night on a campsite and then receive the second night on the same site for free. "The coupon is good until the end of the 2016 camping season, which is October 31," Barnhart explains. "It's a great bargain for camping families."

Light refreshments will be served during the Open House, including a marshmallow roast near the patio area of the Barn.

“There will probably be some visitors at the Open House who have never camped at Silver Springs Campground before,” Barnhart surmises. “This will be a great opportunity for them to wander through the campsites and check out the facilities. They can chat with local campers, some of whom have been camping at Silver Springs for many years. Also, I’ll be on hand to answer any questions they might have.”

The public can also learn more about Silver Springs Campground by going to the Stow Parks & Rec website www.FunInStow.com. Click on Parks & Places, then click on the campground. There is also a link to the Campground Brochure, which contains map and directions, site diagram, campground rules and more. Another link will take visitors to “40 Reasons To Camp At Silver Springs Campground”, which lists some of the highlights of the park and facility. “I think some folks will be surprised to learn some of those 40 Reasons,” Barnhart opines. “It’s a fun way to learn about the campground and the surrounding park area.”

The 40th Anniversary celebration doesn’t end with the Open House. “We are offering a five-night camping special plus a separate firewood special, both taking advantage of the number 40,” Barnhart explains. “Those specials will be on-going throughout the 2016 camping season. We will also be having a special drawing later in the year giving away 40 free weekends of camping and, for one lucky family, a special 40-night package of camping. Details about these drawings can be found at our website.”

All of this is a big “thank you” to the camping public for supporting the Silver Springs Campground operation over the years.

“We’ve received tremendous support from the camping public,” Barnhart states, “especially from Stow residents. And we’ve just completed three consecutive years of record-breaking attendance at the campground, so we want to take advantage of the 40th anniversary to show our appreciation. The Stow Parks and Recreation Department continues to offer a wide variety of facilities and programs for the public, and we’re happy to see the public respond the way they have. It’s very gratifying.”

Silver Springs Campground Off To A Record Start For 2013

Visitors are mostly local campers, but include out-of-state and out-of-country guests.

Stow residents can be proud of their local campground operation, one of only a few municipally operated campgrounds in Ohio. Silver Springs Campground recently enjoyed the biggest April attendance in the campground's history, and the turnout for May was also the best in recollection.

"We had a capacity crowd for Memorial Day Weekend," said veteran Stow Parks & Recreation employee Ken Barnhart. "But we also had a strong opening weekend and capacity or near-capacity crowds on a number of other weekends. We're off to a great start for 2013."

Success has not been a stranger to the campground operation in recent years. In fact, the three biggest years in the campground's history have taken place over the last four years.

Silver Springs Campground has been operated by the Stow Parks & Recreation Department since about 1976. The campground is quietly nestled in the east side of Silver Springs Park, with its own access drive off of Young Road. Having its own drive helps separate the campground from some of the other park facilities, giving it a quality of isolation in an otherwise busy park.

"Many new campers arrive here with a bit of disbelief that there would be such a nice campground located here," Barnhart continues. "They drive past businesses and residential areas to get here, and they are surprised to find such a jewel located so close to home."

While Stow residents account for about half of the campers using Silver Springs Campground, many other campers come from adjacent communities or nearby towns around northeast Ohio. But there are also many visitors from outside of the local region.

"Besides visiting local friends and relatives, or attending school reunions, we've had campers stop by for quite a number of local events such as the All-American Soap Box Derby in Akron, the annual Twin's Day Festival in Twinsburg, AA Founder's Day, Akron's Hardesty Park Arts & Crafts Festival, and more," explains Barnhart. Out-of-town campers have used Silver Springs Campground as a base to be able to spend a couple of days at Geauga Lake & Sea World, visit Canton's Pro Football Hall Of Fame, or go up to the Rock-N-Roll Hall Of Fame in Cleveland. They've come in for local square dancing contests, Civil War re-enactments, the Yankee Peddler Festival, Moody Blues fan gatherings, GPS conventions, shuffleboard tournaments, and Harry Potter Festivals. "We can get a rather diverse group of visitors at Silver Springs Campground," Barnhart adds. "It's always a pleasure meeting and getting acquainted with them."

A recent (June 1st) Blossom Music Center concert featuring the popular Dave Matthews Band drew folks from all over Ohio plus Michigan, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Connecticut, Minnesota, and Texas. In fact, the campground has actually filled up from attendance by travelling concert-goers numerous times over the years. "We've even printed off a special map with directions, to help get the out-of-towners to and from Blossom more easily," Barnhart says. "It includes how to

deal with exiting concert traffic without getting lost, and such. It's proven very helpful to these guests, and we get a lot of compliments on the service."

Recently, one of the biggest draws for out-of-town guests at the Stow campground has been the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Families and individuals have camped at Silver Springs while attending a national park event, or for bicycling the Towpath, riding the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad, visiting Brandywine Falls or Hale Farm & Village, and hiking the many superb trails throughout the park. "We are the closest public campground to the national park, so we are the ideal location for CVNP visitors to stay and camp," Barnhart explains.

The campground being adjacent to the Metro Park's Hike & Bike Trail not only provides an excellent place for local campers to ride recreationally, but also allows bicycling travelers an opportunity to camp. A number of times, bicyclists have come into Silver Springs Campground and pulled small backpacker's tents out of their bicycle "saddlebags" to set up camp. Recently, two young ladies were riding from the Cleveland area to Cincinnati over an eight-day period, and used Stow as their first overnight stop. Another time, a cyclist was doing a loop from western New York, through Canada to Michigan, down to Ohio, and back up through Pennsylvania to New York again. "He was very excited," Barnhart relates, "because he had just put in his first 100-mile day on the trip, having biked in from the Sandusky area."

"But the one that really surprised me was a young couple that I signed up a few years back," Barnhart continues. "When I registered them and reached the part of the permit that asks for their home town and state, they replied 'Philadelphia'. I was surprised and asked what their destination was, and they responded 'San Francisco'. These folks were more or less following Interstate 80 all the way across the U.S. on bicycles for the summer, and then planned to fly home from the west coast. Now that was impressive." There have also been campers cycling from Virginia-to-Colorado and California-to-Maine.

Silver Springs Campground has also played host to some out-of-country guests. Most years have at least one family from neighboring Canada, but often include a visitor or two from other countries. Travelers from England, France, Germany, Denmark, Hungary, Switzerland and countries as far away as Australia and New Zealand, have visited the Stow campground over the years. "We recently had a really nice couple from Holland stay with us during their several-week tour of the U. S.," Barnhart reveals, "and they were enjoying their visit here so much that they added on days to stay here for an entire week."

When out-of-town campers visit, the Silver Springs Campground staff will help direct them to local points of interest or events. "We'll hand out flyers or directions to Stow events such as the July 4th parade, Aviation Day, and the Harvest Festival," Barnhart explains. "I recommend events like those taking place in Cuyahoga Falls on the riverfront mall. I'll also direct campers to Seiberling Naturealm's underground visitor's center, or the Great Blue Heron nesting area on Bath Road. There's plenty to see and do in the area, and we're fortunate to live in a locale that has so much to offer." In fact, the Stow area has impressed out-of-town campers so much that a couple of families have moved into the Stow.

And Stow residents are fortunate to have such a great campground in their own “backyard”, as they say. Silver Springs Campground (5238 Young Road in the northeast corner of Stow) offers open and shaded sites for tents or mobile units (RVs, trailers, etc.) on a first-come, first-served basis. Site amenities include picnic table, firering/grill, and 20-amp electric. Water spigots are scattered through the campground, and there is a trailer dump station. Portable restrooms are available on site, and there are flush restrooms and sinks at the nearby ballfields. Firewood is sold for a modest fee, or campers can bring their own wood. The site fee is only \$10/night for Stow residents and \$12/night for non-residents, and you can have up to six people on a campsite.

“For more information about Silver Springs Campground,” Barnhart recommends, “visit the City Of Stow website at www.stow.oh.us and click on Departments, then Parks & Recreation, then Campground. This will bring up the campground page. If you click on the campground brochure, it will reveal map & directions, site diagram, rules, and more. All of this can be printed out at home, or stop by the campground and pick up a copy of the brochure.”

As part of the upcoming Stow Pride Festival, the Stow Parks & Recreation Department will be offering a free night of camping at Silver Springs Campground for Stow residents on Friday, June 21st. “This is a ‘thank you’ to local residents for all their support of the campground,” Barnhart says, “and we hope that some new families who have never visited the campground will come out and give it a try. I think they’ll be impressed.”

Stow residents can be proud of many facilities and events in their hometown and, with its recent success, residents can include Silver Springs Campground on that growing list.

Submitted to the Stow Sentry newspaper. Published on September 16th, 2012.

Stow's 36-Year Old Campground A New Discovery For Some

“I’ve lived in Stow for eight years and never knew this campground was here.”

“How long has this campground been here? I’ve lived in Stow for twelve years and only just found out about it.”

“We’ve lived in Stow for 15 years, and we only just discovered that there’s a campground in Silver Springs Park.”

“I frequently hear comments like this from new campers,” says veteran Stow Parks & Recreation employee Ken Barnhart. “I recently had a long-time Stow resident comment during his campsite registration that he had lived in Stow for 38 years, and only just this year found out about the campground. It seems so strange that our 36-year old campground could still remain such a well-kept secret. But we’ve been getting a lot of new campers this year, so I guess the word is getting out.”

Silver Springs Campground, located in the northeastern corner of the city, has been successfully operated by the Stow Parks & Recreation Department since 1976. It’s one of only a small number of municipally-operated campgrounds in Ohio. “There are some state-run public campgrounds, and even some county-run public campgrounds around Ohio,” Ken explains. “But I’ve been told that there are only two other city-run public campgrounds in Ohio, and they are located between Columbus and Cincinnati. That makes us very unique, especially in the northeast Ohio area.”

Paul and Maria Grimm have lived in Stow for 18 years, but only recently heard about the campground. Maria explains, “Friends of ours, the Rath family, told us how much they enjoyed camping here while still feeling connected to the busy lives their children lead. It’s a great place to be ‘away’ but not miss out on the kid’s events such as birthday parties, sports and their busy lives.”

Their first campout was a good experience. “I was surprised how quiet and peaceful it is there.” Maria further describes, “You can hear the night sounds of crickets, owls and frogs – right in the middle of our great city. I expected to hear traffic, sports fields and sirens, but it’s very still and sounds like vacation there.”

The Grimms have visited the campground in Silver Springs Park a number of times already this year, and have even shared it with others. “When we camp, our friends and family members love visiting and sitting around the fire with us.” Maria continues, “It has also brought my brother’s family into town for a quick family reunion vacation. My brother (from Elyria) was so impressed that we would have such a pretty, simple city campground. What a great way to use our park lands. His dog, Rosie, loved Bow Wow Beach dog park, too.”

Stow residents John and Valerie Huddleston also visited Silver Springs Campground for the first time this year. “Valerie was born and raised in Stow,” John explains. “I’ve read many articles in the Stow Sentry about Silver Springs. This year we bought the new camper and decided we’d take our first trip to Silver Springs, just to set up the camper close to home in case we needed anything. We have brought several family and friends out who now camp at Silver Springs. It’s just so convenient and you can’t beat the price.”

John was also surprised to find “how much fun it is, and how quiet and relaxing it is. The sites are large, too. You don’t feel that you are right on top of your neighbors.”

Kris & Kim Gau recently discovered Silver Springs Campground. Kris explains, “Kim has lived in Stow since 1976 and I moved to Stow in 1994. We have been camping as long as we can remember. When our son was in Boy Scouts, we camped about once a month in and around Ohio. Neither one of us knew about the campground at Silver Springs until just this Summer. We first read an article about the campground in the Stow Sentry and then another in the Akron Beacon Journal.”

That’s when the Gaus decided to give the Stow campground a try. Kris continues, “This Spring we bought a camper and decided to make Silver Springs our first outing. It was the perfect place to go to get our feet wet. The sites vary where you can choose a more ‘woody’ site or a sunny site overlooking the open field (and the various activities that take place there). At \$10 a night for residents, it’s a real bargain. We’ve recommended the campground to our friends, neighbors and family.”

There is plenty to do while camping at Silver Springs Park. Maria Grimm relates, “We enjoy cooking over the fire, catching fish, chasing ducks and geese, and catching critters in the puddles nearby. Living near the roadway by our first campsite, there are some frogs that the girls have named. Stop by to hear Bob, Fred, Joe and Suzy – they’re great singers!”

Maria continues, “We love exploring the fishing lake and the frog bog at the entrance. We loved the goslings this Spring, too. The hike nearby is very open and we need not worry about our pre-teens getting ‘lost’ in there. The canopy of trees is rather large and impressive for a city park.”

The Huddleston Family, who have been camping for about three years, agree. John says, “My daughter loves to fish at the lake. We like to hike and visit the dog park, too. There is a lot of wildlife at Silver Springs (fish, ducks, geese, groundhogs, raccoons, and we saw a deer while walking in the woods). Several weekends there are groups or clubs there. For example the HAM Radio Club was there and we were able to walk around and talk with the operators who were very willing to share their hobby and educate us about HAM Radio. The Air Stream club was just through a few weeks ago as well.”

The Gaus have found much to enjoy while at Silver Springs. Kris notes, “Taking our beagle, Morgan, to Bow Wow Beach is our favorite thing to do when we are camping at Silver Springs. We like being able to just walk over to the dog park from our site on the hiking trails. We also enjoy meeting and chatting with the other campers. We met the Lacy family on an earlier visit this season and camped with them for the Summer Sunset Blast over Labor Day weekend. This

was the first time we attended the event and enjoying it from the campground was wonderful. We invited friends to join us and we walked back and forth from the festival to our site throughout the night. We could hear the band from the camper and we definitely had the best seats in the house for the fireworks.”

Having a campground so close to home has its advantages. For the Huddlestons, “We all have obligations, family, church, kid’s sports. It’s not always convenient to leave town but you still want to camp. When we have a busy weekend, we will stay at Silver Springs and then we are right in town and able to fulfill all of our obligations. We have camped and run home to do yard work and run errands and meet back up at the camp for dinner and a bonfire.”

Maria Grimm notes other advantages. “It’s a great place to come when outfitting a new camper. As ‘veteran’ campers (Paul and I both camped throughout our childhoods) we just purchased our own travel trailer and found out the hard way how many details we would forget to pack, or just do without. Tablecloth clips, warmer blankets, citronella candles – when you live around the corner, it’s so easy to make a trip back for those items you may overlook at first and truly stock yourself for future trips to more remote locations. It’s also great during inclement weather. Just head home for a warm shower and come back as the rain clears out.”

And, as Kris Gau points out, “Such a short travel time (as well as the later 4PM check out time) allows you longer to stay and enjoy the outdoors.”

John Huddleston also tells about a surprise at the campground. “Through camping at Silver Springs, we’ve run into friends that we didn’t even know camped. We were setting up and our kids recognized each other. Needless to say, the kids were off and playing the rest of the weekend. Now, we try to let the other family know when we plan to camp at Silver Springs so they can try to set up as well.”

Having worked for so long at the campground, Ken Barnhart is very familiar with stories like this. “It’s another one of those ‘small world/you-never-know-who-you’re-going-to-run-into’ stories that take place frequently out here. Campers tend to get acquainted with other campers on adjacent campsites, only to discover that they have things in common. It’s all part of the warm social atmosphere that comes with the camping experience.”

Not all of this year’s first-time visitors to Silver Springs Campground are long-time Stow residents. Jay (last name withheld by request) recently moved into Stow, and has visited the campground with friends a number of times already this Summer. “This is the first year I have committed to investing in ‘outdoors’ gear and really made it a priority in my life,” Jay explains. “Silver Springs Campground has become my personal backyard. I love having it so close to home. I can camp out on a weeknight, stop by my house in the morning for a quick shower, then head to work -- and it is seamless.”

Jay notes, “I am always impressed by the attention to detail at Silver Springs Campground. The grounds and facilities are always clean and tidy. The staff is so knowledgeable, pleasant and helpful. I have recommended the campground to numerous friends and family. In recent months, I have been really fortunate to share the Silver Springs experience with my loved ones.”

Jay adds, “In all honesty, I have not taken advantage of everything that Silver Springs Campground has to offer. Silver Springs Campground and I have years ahead of us to get familiar.”

Jay also experienced having a surprise guest at his campsite. “Just recently, I was fortunate to have a gorgeous Red Tailed Hawk perch about my tent for a weekend. Absolutely, gorgeous.”

The campground, located at 5238 Young Road, has its own entrance drive just north of Heritage Lake. This helps separate the campsites from some of the activities taking place elsewhere in the park. The campground, itself, offers electric, picnic tables, and a firering/grill at each campsite. There are water spigots scattered around the sites, and there is a trailer dump station. Portable restrooms are on site, with flush restrooms and hot/cold running water available at the nearby ballfields. Sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis. The site fee is \$10/night for Stow residents, \$12/night for non-residents. (You may have up to six people per campsite.) Additional information may be found by visiting the campground webpage. Go to www.stow.oh.us, and click on Departments → Parks & Recreation → Campground, and you will find site diagrams, map & directions, campground rules, and much more.

Even though he works at the campground, Ken still manages to get out for some camping of his own from time to time. “I just spent two nights out there in late August, enjoying the campfire until four o’clock in the morning. While relaxing by the fire, I heard an owl and some raccoons in the woods. I also startled a deer when I got up to adjust the logs. It must have come to the edge of the woods to observe what was going on. It was also an especially clear night sky, so I was able to enjoy a bit of stargazing. Very peaceful.”

Ken continues, “The campground is open until October 31st, and the best camping season of the year is approaching, for me anyway. I enjoy Autumn camping the best. Jeans and flannel shirt...my time of the year. The leaves change colors, the mosquitoes disappear, and the ice lasts longer in the cooler. Plus, a camper tends to appreciate the campfire a little bit more as the temperatures drop. It just doesn’t get much better than that.”

Some of the other campers agree. Kris Gau notes, “We’ve camped at Silver Springs three times this Summer and hope to get at least one more weekend in.”

John Huddleston says, “With school in session, we won’t travel too far from home unless we have a three-day weekend. We plan to spend a few weekends at Silver Springs this Fall to enjoy the cooler weather outside.”

Maria Grimm concurs, “Seriously – looking forward to experiencing Fall camping in Stow’s little hide-away.”

To which Jay adds, “Without a doubt. Please feel free to extend the camping season!”

Silver Springs Campground inspires outdoor education and nature appreciation

Submitted to the Stow Sentry on August 19, 2011; published on September 25, 2011.

When thinking about communing with nature, one sometimes imagines visiting a large park, an arboretum, or a nature center. Depending on where you live, these facilities can sometimes be a bit of a drive or difficult to get to. Fortunately, those who live in this area have the option of visiting Stow's Silver Springs Campground.

The campground, operated by the Stow Parks & Recreation Department since the mid-'70s, acts as a gateway to nature. Families have used it to get closer to nature, home-schooled children have used it for outdoor education, scouts have used it for earning merit badges, and artists have used it for inspiration.

The campground, at 5238 Young Road in Silver Springs Park (in the northeast corner of Stow), offers guests a 24-hour visitation with many appealing facets of the great outdoors. Families can stay for a day, or multiple days. While there, campers have access to not only camping facilities, but woods with winding hiking trails, a populated fishing lake, a small wetland area, open fields, and more.

Many families take advantage of the trails and woods to learn a bit of tree identification. "With over 50 acres of woods in the 280 acre park," explains Stow Park Attendant Ken Barnhart, "there is an abundance of trees to study. There is a nice selection, and you can learn to discern trees by their leaves or their bark. And whether you're actually learning tree identification or just looking around admiring the variety, it's especially rewarding to hike the trails in the fall as the leaves change color."

"Silver Springs Park is home to a variety of birds. Aside from some of the more common birds that you might find around your home, you may also catch a glimpse of a wren or finch, scarlet tanager, indigo bunting, Baltimore oriole, hawks, and many more." There is a series of bluebird houses around the perimeter of the open area of Silver Springs Park, creating a Bluebird Trail. This trail makes for a pleasant and easy hike around the park. "It's also fun to get up early in the morning and walk into the woods to hear the 'morning call' of the birds. Some of those calls are quite different from the ones you hear throughout the day. Contrast that with lying awake late at night in your tent and listening to an owl performing sentry duty in the nearby woods."

The campground becomes an unofficial "school of the woods" for the folks who camp there. Families can identify animal tracks, learn about poison ivy and jewel weed (and the relationship between the two), discover a glacial pond, and maybe chance upon a deer or some other critters.

Tim and Laura Rath of Stow bring their four boys with them to Silver Springs Campground for a few campouts each summer. "We always enjoy learning about the numerous plants and animals that can be found at the campground," Laura explains. "We keep several reference books/pamphlets in our camper to help us identify and study the leaves, trees, plants, and animals we've encountered while camping. Our boys were especially delighted to discover edible grapes and apples growing at the campground. We all enjoy hiking the trails and exploring the nature that is part of the Silver Springs Campground experience."

From time to time, there might even be a fun take-home project that originates at the campground. One such recent project stands out for the Rath family. “The boys and I spent some time online, and we think we’ve correctly identified a feather found at the campground,” Laura reveals. “It seems that the feather came from a red-tailed hawk. We actually found a very useful website from the US Fish and Wildlife Service called the “Feather Atlas,” which can be found at www.lab.fws.gov/featheratlas/idfeather.php . The website asks a few questions and helps users narrow down the choices. It then shows pictures of feathers taken from different parts of each bird’s body so that users can best identify any feather they may have found. We will be sure to refer to this helpful website to help us identify feathers in the future!”

These take-home projects are not only fun and educational, but they help bridge the gaps between campground visits and offer a little something extra for families to do together during summer.

Parents who home-school their children can take advantage of the practical lessons offered in the wild. Aside from many outdoor sciences such as botany and wildlife habitats, fun activities like orienteering (a type of race using a map and compass) can bolster math skills. Leaf rubbings might appeal to those who like art. Children can write their experiences for English and composition.

Stow resident David Hanke and his family have been camping at Silver Springs more than 25 years. “Our family has been camping in different areas since 1984, but the best place we have found to teach our four children (two now adults; starting families of their own) about camping has been Silver Springs Campground because it is so close to home for us. We have been home-educating all of our children since their birth, starting in 1987.”

Hanke continues, “We like to study plants. We especially enjoy camping in April and May or in September and October when most other children are in school. We basically get the whole place to ourselves during the week to study either the new growth or the changing colors.”

Many families simply teach their children to appreciate and respect nature. Spending time in the park is a great way to teach children the cycle of life, ecology and how to be conscientious stewards of natural resources.

Former Stow residents Ralph and Judy Richardson have been camping at Silver Springs for about three decades. Judy explains, “We have five children and six grandchildren. All of them, other family members, as well as young friends, have camped with us at Silver Springs. My grandsons, Evan and Kaden, and I recently spent a blissful few days in the most quiet, serene place ever [the Stow campground]. All I could think about was all the information written about protecting the earth and how we should all live with ‘green sense’. My husband and I chose to not fill our children’s hands with books about it or movies...but to introduce our family to nature up close and personal.

“I really like the fact that it is just a park full of nature, not a water park or a theme park that we spend our day at and only use the camper as a place to sleep. I love the fact that all things done here are done together and are pretty much spent powered by our imagination. Fun, here, is recognizing so many different birds and watching them busy themselves. Bluebirds that are no longer common in this area are everywhere in the park. A green heron lives just inside the park at the turtle pond, and of course many Canada geese have babies every year. Have a hummingbird come close to parting your hair...now that will get you laughing!”

Judy continues, “At Silver Springs, you can touch, smell, and hear nature. You can see the groundhogs grazing on the clover, or set bread out on a table overnight and see raccoon prints the next morning. You can watch turkey buzzards soar through the sky, and watch a hawk check out his dinner menu from up high. And, not sure, but we saw a possible eagle one early morning.”

For many families, the old adage “the family that plays together, stays together” can be reworded as “the family that *camp*s together, stays together.” In this hectic world, camping is a wonderful way for families to bond.

Many Scout troops have used the campground to earn merit badges for outdoor skills and nature education. Stow resident Jeff Kline has used Silver Springs Campground extensively, both with his family and as a Scout leader. “Cub Scouts can earn the conservation award by helping keep the campground clean and preserving nature.”

As Scouts advance through their program, more awards become available. “Webelos Scouts can earn the Naturalist Pin, which teaches them about the life cycles of plants and animals. They can earn the Forester Pin, where they learn about trees and plants, and how to take care and preserve them. They can earn the Geologist Pin where they learn about the soil, rocks and what makes up the earth.”

Kline continues, “As Boy Scouts, Scouts can work on the Nature Merit Badge, where they learn general information about the animals and plants. They can also work on Mammal Study Merit Badge. Here, they need to make and bait a tracking pit and they get to take photos of mammals. In 2010, the Boy Scouts brought back four historical merit badges for their 100th anniversary. One of those was the Tracking Merit Badge. The campground was a great place to track animals. Bird Study is another merit badge that can be worked on while camping at Silver Springs. There are plenty of birds to observe there, for sure!”

A new program the Boy Scouts are teaching and trying to get all scouts to use is the Leave No Trace concept. With this “low-impact” camping concept, boys are taught to leave only footprints and take only pictures from the places they camp and hike. Kline explains, “We have worked with our Webelos den to earn the Leave No Trace award this summer, and Silver Springs is the ideal place to work on this. We also use the park for our annual Troop Planning Meeting. It’s a great place to be outdoors to plan the rest of the scouting year.”

Camper Janet Harris of Stow recalls a Scout troop visiting the campground. “I remember they were ‘roughing’ it, and it was a reminder of my Girl Scout camping days in the `60s. It was fun to watch them as they camped and did all of their activities. What was really cool was they made a flagpole out of a broken off long tree branch, raised the flag and took it down at night.”

Besides Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts and Brownies, other groups such as Indian Guides/Princesses, Campfire Girls, Young Marines, and the Civil Air Patrol have camped at Silver Springs and used the park to improve their outdoor skills, or for other training sessions and organization ceremonies. Even the Akron school system’s Legion For Literacy program has used Silver Springs Park in the summer.

Some areas of the park inspire a bit of artistic appreciation of nature. “As I was driving into the campground one morning, I saw a camper seated along the entrance drive beside the small wetland area,” recalls Barnhart. “The man was doing an oil painting of the landscape. That particular area is especially striking in the early morning hours when the rays of the rising sun sift through the trees and light up the area. It really brings the pond to life.”

Munroe Falls resident Madeline Tabor also likes to paint while camping at Silver Springs. “I often take along my oils and enjoy hours of worry-free opportunities to paint. No household chores or yardwork, just time to paint whatever I find interesting. The choices are endless and ever-changing. Every season presents a new challenge. The woods adjoining the campground are full of plants and trees to paint. The downed trees that lay around are fun to paint, and plants that are growing up to reclaim the forest are beautiful and make a great subject for an oil painter. The footbridge further into the hiking trail is going to be a subject of one of my paintings, if I can get a good picture of it.”

Madeline continues, “I am always intrigued by the lake and its numerous geese, the spire from an old barn somewhere in Stow, the campfires. Likewise, the family of fox that we saw one evening was a rare treat for us. The pond at the entrance has given us some glimpses of animals we were surprised to see so close to people: a muskrat, a crane, huge bullfrogs and countless baby geese each spring. To wake up to deer going through the campground or to be awakened by a raccoon raiding our left-over marshmallows is an experience.”

Nature isn’t the only subject of her paintings. “One time while painting there, I was intrigued by Heritage Barn and ended up painting a picture that our daughter and son-in-law used for their wedding thank-you notes, having been married outside at the Stow Historical Society’s grounds.”

She adds, “As a painter, I’ve found the perfect place to relax and paint until darkness comes...and then it’s time for s’mores! Doesn’t get any better than this...and right in my backyard to boot!”

Madeline will find an additional source for her paintings soon. She will be using some of the nature photos taken by the Park Attendant, Ken Barnhart.

“I’ve been quietly taking some nature photos over the last two years, or so,” Barnhart confides. “I’m not particularly good at it,” he chuckles, “but I’m enjoying it immensely. It’s become a nice hobby. The small wetland area just north of the campground entrance drive has become one of my favorite sites for shoots. It’s a whole lot of nature compacted into a very small area.” The sheer variety of animals that can sometimes be seen at that location may explain why it’s such a great choice. “At different times, I’ve seen deer, ducks and geese, beavers and muskrats, various types of birds and insects (including several types of dragonflies), turtles and frogs, Great Blue Herons and their much shorter cousin green herons, and many more animals. You just never know what you’re going to spot there. It’s always a surprise.”

Activities at the campground don’t end with the sunset. After the fire-building and accompanying safety lessons, as well as the dinners and evening treats, an entirely new set of activities present themselves.

The bats come out around dusk and begin flitting about. Many campers enjoy watching the small flying mammals and their aerobatic maneuvers. Barnhart notes, “It’s hard for me to watch them without thinking of the descriptive song lyrics:

Bats take to wing like puppets on string,

Prancing through cool evening air.

In a sightless glide, no reason to hide,

Away from the sun’s blinding stare.

- Ray Thomas/The Moody Blues
Twilight Time (1967)

But bats are our friends...they eat hundreds-to-thousands of mosquitoes each night, so I find myself silently cheering them on. Bravo, bats!”

Although the park surrounding the campground closes at dark, registered campers can still see some other nocturnal creatures from their campsites, including raccoons and possums. Plus, it’s always fun to capture lots of fireflies (lightning bugs) in a jar to make a temporary lantern.

Some of the campers are surprised to hear coyotes howling at night. One doesn’t necessarily expect to hear that in this area. If you’ve never experienced it before, the sound of a single coyote howl is thrilling. But, sometimes, you get to hear an entire chorus of them, which is very exciting.

The darkened skies also provide an opportunity for campers to observe stars and constellations, the overhead passing of glimmering satellites, and the occasional wish-inducing shooting star.

Stow resident and frequent camper Mike Harris was at the campground on a special night last year. He heard an announcement on a local radio station that the space shuttle and International Space Station would be passing overhead soon after dark. "I notified all of the campers," Harris said, "and we had quite a group of us gathered together on the hill beside the campground, which offers up some great visibility. The orbiting vehicles were to pass from the northwest corner of the sky to the southeast corner, so they were to fly directly overhead. Some campers weren't really sure what to look for, but as soon as we pointed it out to them there was a lot of 'ooohs' and 'ahhhs'. What was really interesting was that they were about three seconds apart, because the shuttle had just undocked from the Space Station earlier that day. But they were both very bright, since the sun had just gone down. We watched them until they disappeared into the earth's shadow."

David Hanke adds, "We like to study plants, but our favorite subject is astronomy. The astronomy program led by Dave Jessie has huge telescopes to help view the stars in a way that is not possible from our home." Indeed, Jessie's computer-controlled telescope has an impressive 12-inch (diameter) lens, which allows viewing of deep-space objects such as star clusters, nebulae and galaxies. The program takes place at nearby Fishcreek Elementary School on every clear-sky Friday night throughout the summer. "I always let the campers know when the free and open-to-the-public astronomy program is taking place," says Barnhart. "So many campers enjoy the subject, and Dave has a fun and very comprehensible manner of explaining things."

Mike Harris also has another favorite after-dark activity. He owns a night scope, which magnifies available light so you can see in the dark. "I've seen deer multiple times after dark," he explains. "The night scope illuminates things in green, and it works better the darker it gets. I'll often see a single deer, but one time there was a herd of six deer...four does followed by two bucks. They usually come out around 10:30 and are active throughout the night. They can frequently be seen going in and out of the pine groves."

After a restful night's sleep (and isn't it interesting that one can sleep so much better outdoors?), you can start the new day with some early-morning fishing or by exploring for some fresh animal tracks created during the previous night. After that, follow a whole new agenda of activities or go back to doing your favorites over and over again. That's one of the fun parts of camping...the schedule is yours to create.

There are still a lot of local families that are not even aware that a campground is operating in Stow. But Silver Springs is seeing more new camping families every year. For those who would like to read more information about Silver Springs Campground, visit www.stow.oh.us and click on Departments → Parks & Recreation → Campground. Once you're on the campground page, click on the campground brochure for campsite diagram, map and directions, rules, and more.

There is also a starburst that you can click on for a special surprise. “It’s a little ‘thank you’ coupon to our campers for helping us celebrate 2010 as the biggest year in our campground’s history,” states Barnhart. “We really appreciate everybody’s support.”

The campground will probably be full during the week leading up to Labor Day. But, after that, there should be no trouble getting a campsite. “In fact,” Barnhart reveals, “we’re coming up on my favorite time of the year for camping...late September and all of October. With the trees changing colors, the scenery will be at its peak. The mosquitoes will be disappearing. And I think everyone simply appreciates a good campfire just a little bit more when the evenings begin to turn crisp and cool.”

“I’m beginning to see more new families exploring the local outdoors,” explains the 33-year Stow Parks & Rec veteran. “It seemed for a while that so many families were somewhat divorced from nature and staying cooped up in their homes. But I’m seeing an up-swing in the number of families wanting to get back out there and enjoy the many discoveries that are available in nature. Silver Springs Park has so much to offer and, by way of the campground, is an ideal means to accomplish exactly that.”

Barnhart shares a literary resource, “Richard Louv authored the National Bestseller book *Last Child In The Woods (Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder)*, which I recommend for every parent. (It’s available at the Stow-Munroe Falls Public Library.) Today’s children are too plugged-in. They live in a virtual world. The forgotten benefits of outdoor play, exploration, and interacting with nature are being reassessed and promoted anew. In Louv’s book, he deftly explains what he has termed “nature deficit” and its consequences on our children, and ways to overcome this deficit. Those children who are re-establishing contact with nature are developing better physically and emotionally. It’s a fascinating and very pertinent read.”

Longtime Silver Springs camper Ralph Richardson understands the impact of introducing children to nature. “The kids can’t often remember what they got for Christmas, or a birthday. But they seem to remember every camping trip, and what we did. I guess you could say it is just one of those things, a gift really, that keeps giving and giving by creating memories...memories that can be shared forever.”

Submitted to the Stow Sentry newspaper. Published on March 27th, 2011.

Silver Springs Campground To Open For 2011 Season On April 15

In 2009, Silver Springs Campground set an all-time record, marking the best year in its nearly 3½ decade history.

In 2010, the campground surpassed that record-setting year with an all-new “best year in our history” attendance.

The 2011 camping season is about to officially begin, with the campground re-opening for public use on Friday, April 15th.

Operated by the Stow Parks & Recreation Department, the campground is located in the northeast corner of Stow, on the east side of Silver Springs Park. The campground has its own entrance drive at 5238 Young Road, just north of Heritage Lake. One of the very few municipally-operated campgrounds in Ohio, the 2011 season will run through October 31st. Site fees are \$10 a night per site for Stow residents and \$12 a night per site for non-residents. You can have up to six people per campsite. Pets are permitted, and camping clubs are welcome. Firewood is sold for a nominal fee.

“We’re a step or two above ‘primitive camping’,” explains park attendant Ken Barnhart. “We don’t offer the extravagances that some private campgrounds offer, such as game rooms or cable TV. On the other hand, some of us don’t believe that all those frills are part of the genuine camping experience.”

With his long-ish hair and beard, Barnhart looks more like Grizzly Adams than Ranger Smith. But this reflects the warm, casual atmosphere of the pleasant, family-friendly campground operation. The 32-year Parks & Rec employee has worked actively with the Stow campground since his start in 1979. “This will be my 33rd summer here,” says the long-time Stow resident. “I have a rather varied job description that includes the entire Stow park system, but my work with the campground is the part of my job that I probably look forward to the most each year.”

Silver Springs Campground offers up most of the basic camping amenities. Barnhart commented on some of them. “Campers have access to 20 amp electric for each site. There are several water spigots conveniently scattered throughout the campsite area, so campers can fill up their trailers on the way in or fill up water jugs while they are here.” The sites, themselves, are much larger than you find in many campgrounds. “The campsites are spacious enough to set up croquet, badminton, even the very popular corn hole toss. There is plenty of room for the extra tent or dining canopy. We receive many comments from campers every year, saying how nice it is to not feel as though they are packed into the campground ‘like sardines in a can’, which is what they often experience elsewhere.”

Some of the campsites are shaded, while others are more open. “The shaded sites are very popular so, often, they are the first to be occupied.” Each site has a picnic table, with many of the sites having two tables. “This is a real convenience for the larger families that camp with us, or if they’ve invited some guests to join them for dinner.” Each site has a fire-ring/grill, most of which have an adjustable grill rack. “This allows campers to control the cooking temperature, making it much easier to prepare their campfire meals. Many campgrounds don’t offer this feature, so we’ve received a rather large number of compliments from campers for making these grills available.”

The campground has portable restrooms on site, and there are modern flush restrooms and sinks available at the nearby ballfields. “We also have a dump station, so trailers and mobile units can empty their holding tanks.” Making firewood available for the campers is a real plus. “Our prices are very reasonable, and it’s nice for the campers to not have to haul their own firewood around. They genuinely appreciate some of the little extras that we provide which make their camping experience easier or more enjoyable.”

Campers seem to have favorite activities in the park. “The hiking trails are well used, and a large number of campers take advantage of fishing at nearby Heritage Lake. I’ve seen 26-inch catfish pulled out of this catch-and-release lake,” attests Barnhart. “Parents take their children to the large playground near the middle of Silver Springs Park, and dog owners take their pets to Bow Wow Beach (a nationally-rated dog park). There are also basketball, tennis, and blue-clay horseshoe courts, and lots of open areas for throw-together games, kite flying, and much more.”

“But many of the activities seem to center around the campsite. Campers bring their own forms of recreation or relaxation, whether it’s a game or a book to read. And there are plenty of activities around the campfire, as well. Many campers stay up for some stargazing or to, perhaps, glimpse a passing satellite. We’ve even watched the International Space Station pass overhead.”

So many campers have benefitted from using the Silver Springs camping facility over the years, that it is estimated the campground has provided about two million hours of recreation to its users. Barnhart adds, “Not bad for a little 300 foot-by-300 foot area.”

And does the long-time city employee ever use the campground himself? “I come out from time to time. I tend to come out during the week, rather than on weekends,” confides Barnhart. “It’s less crowded, quieter, and you have a better chance of getting a choice campsite.” In fact, many people begin their weekend campouts on Thursday evening for some of the same reasons. “They can beat the typical weekend crowd by coming out one night early. And with our site fees being so reasonable, their wallet doesn’t take much of a hit. With the economy what it is these days, everybody can use a financial break. At Silver Springs Campground, a family of six can spend the night for about \$2.00 a head. That’s a lot of ‘bang for the buck’!”

It really is a rarity for a municipal government to provide a campground operation. “We’re very proud of the large variety of facilities and programs that we offer through

the Stow Parks and Recreation Department. But I'm also proud, personally, of the support that has come from the local residents. They truly enjoy our campground, and they've expressed many, many times just how much they appreciate having it here."

"And it's that time of year for everyone to de-winterize their trailers or air out their tents, and begin stocking their camping supplies for that first campout," Barnhart points out. "I really miss the campers during the off-season. But opening weekend is right around the corner, and I'm sure the campers are feeling just like me...I can't wait to go back out there!"

For more details about the campground, visit the City of Stow website at www.stow.oh.us and go to Departments, then Parks&Recreation, then Campground. "If you click on Campground Brochure, you can print off your own copy of the info, which includes map and directions, site diagram, rules, and more. You can read up on everything before arriving at the campground."

Barnhart adds, "I hope everyone will join us for opening weekend. It'll be great to see some of our 'regulars' again. And maybe some new campers will be joining us, as well."

2010/06/06 Silver Springs Campground Off To A Record Start

Silver Springs Campground, in the northeastern corner of Stow, is one of the very few municipally operated campgrounds in Ohio. The campground has been successfully run by the Stow Parks and Recreation Department since the mid-70s, but its 2009 season was one to celebrate.

“2009 was officially the biggest year in our 3½ decade history,” said Ken Barnhart, Park Attendant. “We had more than 1400 site rentals, well above the previous record.”

So, to what should we attribute last year’s increase in campground attendance? It certainly wasn’t the weather. In April and May, winter was reluctant to release its cold grip on the area. It was nearly mid-June before we had any type of consistent “normal” weather. Later in the year, winter felt “just around the corner” with temperatures dipping as early as late September and frequently going into the 30s in October.

It also wasn’t gasoline prices keeping campers closer to home. The mid-\$2/gallon prices of last summer were much more acceptable than the previous summers’ \$4/gallon shocker, so many local campers were willing to do a bit more traveling in 2009 than 2008. So why the big jump in last years attendance?

“It was mostly promotional effort,” said Barnhart. “Some of it was in the form of mailings, some of it was individual PR work at the campground. But I’ve made a concerted effort over the last three years to raise the campground attendance.” The results have been impressive. The growth over the three-year period has exceeded 70% and is the single biggest spurt in the last 25 years.

“It helps, too, that we are one of the least expensive campgrounds in northeast Ohio,” said Barnhart, a resident of Stow since 1960. “Camping is an inexpensive form of recreation. A family of six can get 24 hours of recreation for about \$2 a head. Hiking, biking, fishing and other types of recreation are available at the park. We’re close to home, so you save a lot in the way of travel time and fuel. Families enjoy eating together, sharing a campfire, and stargazing. In a time of hectic home schedules, camping allows families to bond in ways that they normally may not have time to pursue.”

Stow residents Kathy and Doug Rueschman have been camping at Silver Springs for six years. “We enjoy going there because it’s a family friendly, pet friendly, all around friendly campground,” said Kathy. “Silver Springs offers a quiet, peaceful place to get away and spend quality time together as a family at really reasonable rates. We enjoy fishing at Heritage Lake, the large open field is great for kite-flying and the baseball fields which are all within walking distance.” Their daughter, Kaitlyn, says that her favorite thing about camping at Silver Springs is “taking walks along the trails and riding my bike.” Their son, Karl, says he mostly “enjoys fishing at the lake and trying to find frogs and turtles.”

Munroe Falls residents Dick and Madeline Tabor discovered Silver Springs Campground when it was recommended to them by a former long time camper. “We were pleasantly surprised,” said Madeline. “It’s a mere four miles from our home, so it has completely de-

stressed the whole ‘What did I forget?’ problem. Going home to pick up supplies, to shower, to take in the mail is no longer impossible. And, yet, it feels like we’re miles away once we are there.”

Once they’ve set up camp, the Tabors find plenty to do. “We thoroughly enjoy the time to oil paint, read, and to bicycle nearby, as the bike and hike trail adjoins the park. Top that off with a campfire in the evening and you have the makings for a memorable camping trip. And, yes, we DO take a TV and a satellite dish...all the comforts of home and the outdoors too!”

Lisa and Perry Gopp of Stow have been camping at Silver Springs for awhile. “Since our kids were 4 and 6 years old (and now they are 14 and 16 years old). We love to do things together as a family. Going camping at Silver Springs is one of our favorite things to do!”

For the Gopp family, camping means spending time with friends. “We usually have friends on two or three adjacent camp sites and all spend the weekend together,” said Lisa. “The kids take off for a monster game of ‘Capture The Flag’ and the adults get to spend time talking and enjoying the campfire. Even our friends who don’t always camp out, stop by for a potluck dinner and a game of Cornhole.”

Stow resident Jim Wilson adds, “Every year seems better than the one before – meeting other campers or just enjoying the park through the week when it’s just us. Silver Springs gives us the opportunity to get away without a major time or financial commitment.”

Meeting other campers is also a highlight for the Tabors. “The other campers are friendly and respectful of each other,” says Madeline. “We have only met wonderful people in our three years of camping there.”

Barnhart is beginning to see a fourth generation of campers at Silver Springs. “Children who came out with their parents and grandparents years ago are now grown and married and bringing *their* children to the campground. It’s fun being recognized by these grown kids. I think they look at me as being as much a fixture at the campground as the firerings!”

There has also been an increase in single-parent camping at Silver Springs. “That’s been one of the recent trends. A lot of single parents of both genders have been bringing their children out and enjoying camping lately.” Another trend is the Friday night campout, then going home on Saturday. “So often, families are too busy to put in a full weekend of camping,” said Barnhart, himself camping since early childhood. “So they camp Friday night and go home around lunchtime on Saturday, allowing time for most of the other weekend events that dominate their schedule.” He also sees an increase in camping during the typically slower weekday period. “People are realizing that they can just as easily go to work from the campground as they can from their own home. The upside is that they can return from work, kick back and enjoy a stress-relieving campfire.” To this, Jim Wilson adds, “Rates are low enough that we can pick out one of our favorite spots and set up – even if we are still having to fit some work time in.”

Residents can also take advantage of having guests stay at Silver Springs. “The park also makes the perfect spot for our out-of-town visitors to set up camp,” says Jim Wilson. “They don’t feel like they are inconveniencing us by staying at the house.”

Many campers take advantage of some of the special events held throughout the year at Silver Springs Park. “We make it a point to camp during the Summer Sunset Blast each year,” said Kathy Rueschman. “It’s so convenient to be able to spend the day at the festival enjoying the music, food and fireworks and then just walk back to our campsite and relax around the campfire. We also enjoy the Joshua Stow Fest & Harvest Festival. It’s always fun to look at the exhibits and visit the historical houses.”

The campers truly appreciate the staff at Silver Springs. Madeline Tabor points out that “the staff is there with answers to our questions, suggestions for upcoming activities in the area, and even firewood if we need it.” Lisa Gopp adds, “The campground attendants and local police do a great job checking on people in the campground, and we have always felt safe being there.”

Of the 1408 site rentals from 2009, 694 (49%) were Stow residents, while 714 (51%) were non-residents. “Stow residents have been providing just either side of 50% of the total camping taking place at Silver Springs for quite a few years now,” said Barnhart, in his 32nd year as a Stow Parks & Rec employee. Does this high figure come as a surprise to the veteran? “Not anymore. If you had asked me before I started working here, I would have guessed that Stow residents might provide about 20% of the camping in a good year. But that’s taking into account the populations of the surrounding communities (the Falls, Kent, Hudson, etc.), our big neighbor to the south – Akron – and our even bigger neighbor to the north – Cleveland. But Stow residents have proven to be a disproportionately large percentage of our campground attendance. I’ve always been impressed with their high level of support.”

The 27-site campground has its own entrance off of Young Road, allowing for some additional privacy from the rest of the park. Some of the sites are shaded; others are more open. Each site includes an electric outlet, a picnic table, and a firering/grill. There are portable restrooms at the campground, with flush restrooms and sinks available at the nearby ballfields. Water spigots are scattered around the sites, and there is a dump station for mobile units. Pets are permitted, and camping clubs are welcome.

For additional details, including general park regulations/campground rules, a park map and campsite diagram, directions and more, interested campers can visit the campground website at: www.stow.oh.us/Departments/ParksRecreation/campgrounds.shtml and click on “campground brochure”. You can print out your own copy of the brochure, or pick one up at the campground entrance drive.

“The campground has always been a nice little gem in our community, yet it always surprises me how many local residents don’t know that it’s here,” Barnhart reflects. “Since we’re on the very outskirts of town and away from traffic, people simply don’t learn about us from driving by.”

And will the record-breaking attendance celebration change that? “I hope so. Local residents should take pride in the unique facilities being offered by our department. I’d like to see even *more* people take advantage of what’s being offered. But we’re already off to a good start this year. We opened on April 9th and, despite the less-than-cooperative weather, April 2010 was the best attendance of any April in the campground’s history. We also had a very impressive May, and a capacity crowd for Memorial Day Weekend.”

“I’d also like to take a moment to thank the campers who helped create such a phenomenal year for us in 2009. We really appreciate all the support, and I look forward to seeing them again this year.”

Many campers have already returned to the campground once or twice this year. Even before the campground opened, the Tabors said that they were “gearing up for this season.” Jim Wilson said, “It doesn’t take very many warm days to get me planning another season of camping at Silver Springs Campground.” Lisa Gopp adds, “Camping at Silver Springs is a highlight of our summer and we do it as often as we can.”

There is plenty of time for several more campouts this year. There are still nearly five months remaining in the 2010 camping season. Silver Springs Campground will be open until October 31st.

40 Reasons Why Silver Springs Campground Is a Great Place to Camp

1. Our top-notch maintenance staff keeps the grounds looking great and the facilities in good working order. If there's a problem, our staff will do their best to take care of it.
2. The campground has its own entrance drive off of Young Road, which helps separate traffic in the rest of the park from the campsite area. You can pull directly into the campground, yet have easy access to all other park facilities and amenities. This separation helps keep the bustle of other park activities at a distance, allowing for a quieter and more relaxing campout.
3. The campground is close to the Summit Metro Park's Bike & Hike Trail, giving campers a "trail head" to more than 33 miles of well-maintained paved paths into Portage County, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, and Cuyahoga River in Munroe Falls. Or, why not walk to a local restaurant for a milkshake?
4. Modestly priced firewood, split and stored dry, is delivered to your campsite on request. There is no need to haul your own firewood. And, what's a campout without a good crackling campfire?
5. The small frog/turtle pond along the north side of the campground entrance is a microcosm of nature. This tiny wetland has been home to green herons and Great Blue Herons, beavers and muskrats, ducks and geese, a variety of dragonflies and butterflies, deer and fox, and more. It's a picturesque location for viewing, photographing, or painting nature.
6. In addition to the portable restrooms on site, campers have 24-hour access to a modern restroom building (sinks, flush toilets) at the nearby ballfields.
7. The campground is not too crowded (except on holiday weekends), making it easier to claim one of your favorite campsites. Or, come in Thursday evening and beat the weekend crowd.
8. Each campsite has access to 20 amp electricity, at no additional fee.
9. The Stow Harvest Festival is held annually each Fall in the adjacent Heritage Reserve. This free, local event is an opportunity to view historical homes and learn about local history, enjoy arts & crafts, listen to music and other entertainment, eat at the Country Kitchen, visit the gift shop, and watch apple butter (available for sale) being made in a large copper kettle over an open fire.
10. Silver Springs Campground offers spacious campsites, so you don't feel as if you are camping on top of each other. The sites are large enough to accommodate corn hole toss, badminton, croquet, and other popular family activities.
11. Listen to owls, coyotes, and other nocturnal critters after dark! It's fun to hear an owl inquire "Whooo?" and especially thrilling when a number of coyotes howl in unison.
12. Each campsite has one picnic table, but with extra tables available, it is easy to have guests or accommodate table-top family games and activities without disrupting dinner arrangements.
13. Pets are permitted at the campground and, in fact, are welcomed. We've hosted nearly every type of camping pet imaginable, from ferret to cock-a-too to iguana.
14. Heritage Lake, located along the campground entrance drive, is an ideal spot for some relaxing fishing. The lake has four wooden docks and both a shallow and a deep end. Anglers can catch a variety of small and large fish, but you might also spot the occasional

frog, turtle, snail, or crayfish. The annual Children's Fishing Derby takes place here each Spring.

15. Silver Springs Campground is so close to home, you can easily head back to pick up forgotten items, tend to pets, or pick up mail. Try doing *that* when you are camping four hours from home!
16. Children and camping families can visit S.O.A.R. Playground, a handicapped-accessible area designed to ensure that children of all abilities are able to play in a safe space that meets their special needs. The playground offers many opportunities for self-directed, challenging, and independent play.
17. It's cool to catch lightning bugs in a ventilated jar to make a firefly lantern.
18. Most of the sturdy fire rings have adjustable grill racks, allowing you to easily control cooking temperatures...one of the keys to successful campfire meals.
19. One can stargaze and admire the constellations. Campers have also witnessed the space shuttle, satellites, and the International Space Station passing overhead. Shooting stars, meteor showers, and even the Northern Lights are sometimes visible. Additionally, Wonders of the Night Sky (a free astronomy program featuring a large computer-controlled telescope) is held on clear-sky Friday nights at nearby Fishcreek Elementary School.
20. The Stow Police Department patrols the park intermittently, providing additional safety and peace of mind for campers. Be sure to wave if you see the police. (We'll bet you a s'more that they wave back!)
21. Three trails in the park provide campers with nature adventures. Bluebird Trail goes around the perimeter of the open areas of Silver Springs Park and features dozens of bluebird houses that have helped revitalize the local bluebird population. Two hiking trails in the woods (with an interesting mix of flat path and gradual slopes) wind through alternating open and shaded areas, with the abundant trees forming a beautiful canopy over the trail. You never know what types of critters you might spot along the way.
22. Silver Springs Campground accommodates both tents and mobile units (trailers, pop-ups, motorhomes, and more). Backpackers are welcome to hike in, and "bike-packers" are welcome to ride in. We don't discriminate based on camping units.
23. There are several water spigots (potable water) conveniently located around the campsites. Fill your tank on the way in, or fill up a jug after you've set up.
24. Bow Wow Beach (Stow's nationally recognized dog park) is within walking distance of the campground. The dog park is completely fenced in and features a three-acre lake with sandy beaches, separate large- and small-dog areas, a dog agility course, and other amenities. Your favorite pooch will have a tail-waggin' good time.
25. Campers make s'mores, banana boats, dump cake, hobo pies, and other scrumptious desserts at the campfire. Yum!
26. Unlike most campgrounds, Silver Springs Campground has a late (4 p.m.) check-out time. You can enjoy lunch and relax awhile, or take advantage of other park amenities, before having to break camp.
27. Campers can choose between shaded or open campsites, depending on weather or mood. Cooling trees or warm sunshine -- which do you prefer?
28. It's fun to watch the agile dragonflies (daytime) and aerobatic bats (nighttime) zip and maneuver through the air. Both are our friends, since they like to dine on mosquitoes and other pesky insects.

29. The varying terrain of the campground makes each site unique, ranging from a breezy hilltop to more subdued lower areas.
30. A dump station is available for registered mobile units to empty their holding tanks.
31. The campground is adjacent to Stow's hugely popular Summer Sunset Blast, an annual event over Labor Day weekend. Campers can listen to the outstanding live stage music and see spectacular fireworks from the campground. Some campers wander over to the Blast to enjoy a wide array of food and to participate in the many activities offered for all family members.
32. The campsite design allows you to camp with friends on sites either side-by-side, back-to-back, or across the road from each other. Why not ask your camping friends to join you for a weekend escape?
33. For active recreation, Silver Springs Park offers basketball and tennis courts which are also lit for evening play (until 10 p.m.). Join us on Tuesday or Thursday evenings for the fun and popular Pickleball.
34. Amusing groundhogs (a.k.a. "Whistle Pigs") graze or stand on their hind legs and whistle for their furry companions. It's even funnier to see them quickly retreat for cover at the slightest intrusion. (They can be quite skittish.) There are so many groundhogs in the park that we named the large open field on the south side of the campsites "Groundhog Hill".
35. The campground is close to many places of employment, so you can camp during the workweek. Instead of coming home from work to awaiting intrusive phone messages, nagging bills, or ever-present chores, come to your campsite and relax in peace while enjoying a stress-relieving campfire. Ahhh...!
36. The open field on Groundhog Hill (adjacent to the campsites) is ideal for kite flying, model rocketry, or throw-together games. You can also watch local radio-controlled model aircraft take flight, plus the occasional parasail glider or hot air balloon launch.
37. Camping clubs are welcome, along with Scout troops and other camping organizations. Silver Springs has hosted countless groups over the years, including Indian Princesses, Civil Air Patrol, Young Marines, church youth groups, and more.
38. Silver Springs campers are a very friendly lot, making it easy to get acquainted with your neighbors. Most of our campers are local, but we have visitors from all over the country, and sometimes guests from other parts of the world. You never know where your neighbor is from, so stop over and say hello. Many new acquaintances and friendships are made through camping at Silver Springs.
39. Our experienced and friendly campground staff welcomes campers, handles registration, answers questions, and outlines local activities/events. How may we be of service to *you*?
40. Campsite fees are inexpensive at Silver Springs Campground. It costs just \$10 a night for Stow resident families, \$12 a night for non-resident families. You are permitted to have up to six people on each campsite, roughly \$2 per person for 24 hours of fun, recreation, and relaxation. What a bargain in today's economy!