

## **Tree Commission Brings Out the Beauty**

Travel anywhere within Avon Lake, and tree-lined streets or tree-filled parks likely remind you of what makes our City special: its abundant natural resources. Assuring these trees remain healthy and prosper is in-part the work of a dedicated group known as the Avon Lake Tree Commission. This mostly volunteer group advocates for the health and safety of public trees in our City while also assisting with the development of urban forest inventories, management plans, and ordinances.

“The commission is also involved with the deployment of street trees in new developments, and we are ramping up our public outreach efforts beyond our annual Arbor Day event. We want to foster a community that is committed to the sustainable management of our urban forest, which is made up of all the trees in the City,” explains Terry Robison, who leads the Tree Commission. The Tree Commission has five voting members: three volunteer Avon Lake residents who serve three-year terms, a representative from City Council, and the Urban Forester, a City position that is currently vacant.

This year, the Tree Commission will be ramping up its educational outreach. For the second year, they will be distributing 320 tree seedlings on Arbor Day (April 28) to 5th graders at Troy Intermediate School and St. Joseph Parish School. “In addition, we are collaborating with Avon Lake’s Environmental Affairs Advisory Board on a series of expert presentations at the Avon Lake Public Library,” Robison says. “We are also beginning a public tree inventory to provide critical data to prepare short- and long-term management plans for our public trees.”

Robison’s involvement with the Commission is invaluable for the City. He is an expert naturalist, having worked for more than 11 years for the Cleveland Metroparks, spending many of those years as the park system’s Director of Natural Resources.

“We all love trees for their beauty (well maybe not the leaves in the fall), but a healthy and diverse urban forest provides multiple benefits to the community beyond just aesthetics. Trees provide habitat and nourishment for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife while providing shade and evaporative cooling for us. They produce oxygen while absorbing and tying up carbon dioxide thus helping mitigate climate change. Trees also remove pollution that can aggravate respiratory problems, and they help control stormwater runoff. Moreover, studies have shown that trees are associated with making people feel calmer, lower crime, and even quicker healing for hospital patients. And, our forested parks provide opportunities for shinrin-yoku (forest bathing), which simply means that spending time in nature is physically and emotionally really good for us!”

Residents who are interested in learning more about the Tree Commission are invited to attend meetings, which are held at 7 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month at the Old Firehouse Community Center.