



For Immediate Release

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Local and Statewide Organizations Seek Funding to Make Strouds Run Beach Accessible

The Athens City-County Health Department's Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program and the Ohio State Parks Foundation (OSPF) are partnering to raise funds to build an accessible beach entrance at Strouds Run State Park. Together, they are asking organizations, businesses, and community members to contribute funds to help make Strouds Run a place where everyone can enjoy a day at the beach.

A steering committee of community members has been working to create an accessible beach entrance for about a year, according to project manager Meredith Erlewine, CHC coordinator at the health department. Once completed, the accessible beach entrance will include a concrete pathway from the parking lot to the beach and a permeable pathway across the sand to the water.

According to Erlewine, community members experiencing health inequities or social marginalization partner with CHC to amplify their collective power and create solutions. Health equity is achieved when all people in a community have access to affordable, inclusive, and quality infrastructure that allows them to reach their full health potential.

"Athens County residents who live with mobility disabilities and who have family members with disabilities have voiced the need for this amenity for years," Erlewine said. "We know it is important to bring this recreation opportunity to Strouds Run."

The group has raised \$30,000 of the projected cost of \$84,000 to create an accessible entrance. Community members and representatives of businesses or organizations who would like to contribute to the project can make a tax-deductible contribution through the Ohio State Parks Foundation website: <https://bit.ly/3VtCcrH>.

"This project will enable more people to enjoy the beach and lake of Strouds Run State Park and it will help us fulfill our mission, which is to make our great state parks more welcoming to more people," said OSPF Trustee Brian Blair, a resident of the region. "We are thrilled to partner with CHC on this project."

Carl Ortman, MD
Health Commissioner

Jack Pepper, REHS
Administrator



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Erlewine said the partnership with OSPF will increase the steering committee's fundraising capacity by bringing attention to the project, by adding an online fundraising portal, and by opening doors to conversations with potential donors.

The project steering committee includes representatives of Friends of Strouds Run State Park, Athens County Board of Developmental Disabilities, the Athens City Commission on Disabilities, and United Seniors of Athens County.

Project donors to date include the Athens County Foundation (\$7,500), the O'Brieness Foundation (\$5,500), ATCO Legacy Fund (\$5,000), Rocky Community Improvement Fund (\$5,000), DuPont Polymer Products (\$3,000), Athens Rotary Foundation (\$2,000), G&J Pepsi (\$1,000), Southeast Beverage (\$500), and Lulu's Casa El Camino Mexican Restaurant (\$500). Ohio Department of Health provided in-kind planning assistance through consulting firm Toole Design, whose engineers prepared a preliminary design and cost estimate.

An accessible beach entrance is an environmental change that supports active living, which is one of the goals of the CHC program. CHC is an Ohio Department of Health program that funds 22 local health departments throughout Ohio to implement policy, system and environmental changes that increase access to healthy foods and opportunities for active living.

Anyone with questions about the project can contact Erlewine at merlewine@athenspublichealth.org or by calling the health department at 740-592-4431. For more information about OSPF, contact Executive Director, Lisa Daris at lisa.daris@ohiostateparksfoundation.org or (866) 672-7533.

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Creating Healthy Communities Principles

Sustainable and Equitable Investments • Self-Awareness and Empathy • Community-Led Solutions
Organizational Partnership • Respect for All