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By Ken Gordon, The Columbus Dispatch

Posted Apr 12, 2016 at 12:01 AM

Updated Apr 14, 2016 at 2:35 PM



Tuesday, Peg Hanley has learned, is the day she is likely to look out her window and see environmentalism in action. “There are two retired guys who come in a pickup truck, then go down the hill and clean up Spring Creek,” said Hanley, a spokeswoman for the Metro Parks, which has its headquarters at Sharon Woods Metro Park in Westerville.

Tuesday, Peg Hanley has learned, is the day she is likely to look out her window and see environmentalism in action. “There are two retired guys who come in a pickup truck, then go down the hill and clean up Spring Creek,” said Hanley, a spokeswoman for the Metro Parks, which has its headquarters at Sharon Woods Metro Park in Westerville. “One day I asked them, ‘Why are you doing this?’ and they said they get to see places in the park they normally don’t see while keeping it clean.” The men usually pull enough trash out of the creek to fill two or three bags, Hanley said. This weekend, Metro Parks officials hope to greatly multiply that haul. As a lead-in to Earth Day (April 22), five parks are planning clean-up events: Battelle Darby, Scioto Audubon and Sharon Woods on Saturday, and Blendon Woods and Highbanks on Sunday. “We had not done a cleanup open to the public in a few years, so when we decided to do one this year, it made sense to do it around Earth Day,” said Kaylin Callander, a naturalist at Battelle Darby. “That’s when everybody is more willing and open to do things of that caliber.”

Battelle Darby is the only park not linking its cleanup with Earth Day Columbus, which since 2007 has been organized by the nonprofit group Green Columbus.

People who want to participate in a clean-up event can visit the website www.earthdaycolumbus.org and search a database of more than 100 sites by date or type of activity -- such as tree planting, river cleanup and gardening.

Tad Dritz, founder of Green Columbus, said the number of Earth Day activity volunteers has grown from 1,300 in 2007 to 4,500 last year.

The group set a limit on volunteers at each site, he said, to

Cleanup events at various Metro Parks

Contact: 614-508-8111, metroparks.net, earthdaycolumbus.org

Times: Saturday - 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Scioto Audubon (Grange Insurance Audubon Center, 505 W. Whittier St.); 1 p.m., Battelle Darby Creek (Indian Ridge bulletin board, 2705 Darby Creek Drive, Galloway) and Sharon Woods (Apple Ridge picnic shelter, 6911 Cleveland Ave., Westerville); Sunday - 2 p.m., Blendon Woods (4265 E. Dublin-Granville Road, Westerville)

avoid overcrowding and to guide volunteers to sites that need more help.

Admission: free

The Highbanks effort, in fact, has already filled its 60 slots -- the only Metro Parks site to do so.

As with most parks, the activities vary: Jill Snyder, a Highbanks naturalist, said she typically has families with younger children help in the flower beds around the nature center, while others may pick up litter or pull invasive plant species.

One goal, she said, is to spark an interest in keeping the park clean all year long, not just around Earth Day.

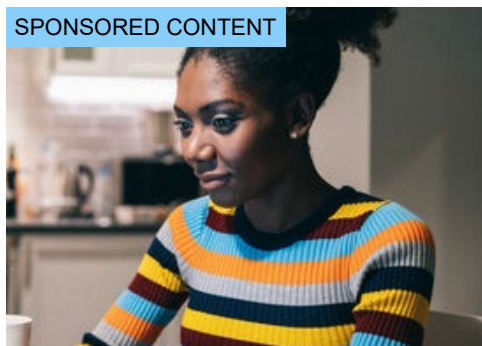
“If people like it, they can sign up to volunteer and do it more regularly.”

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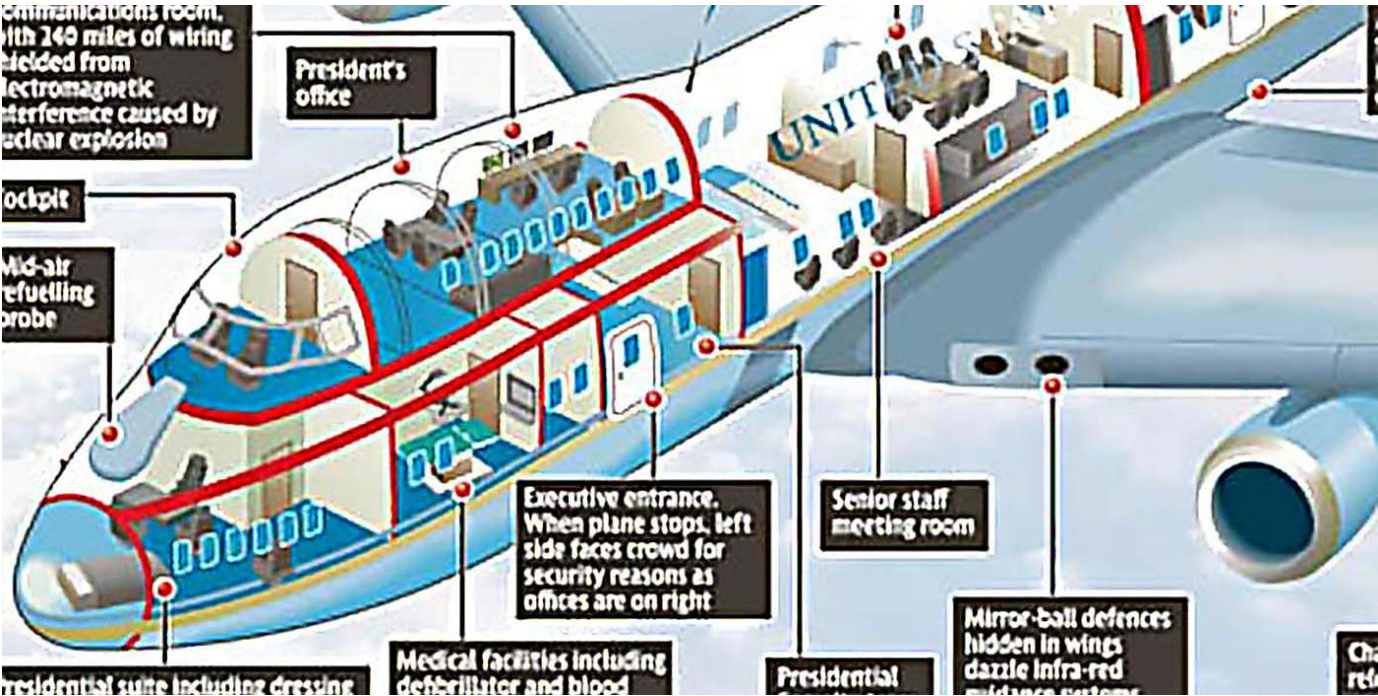
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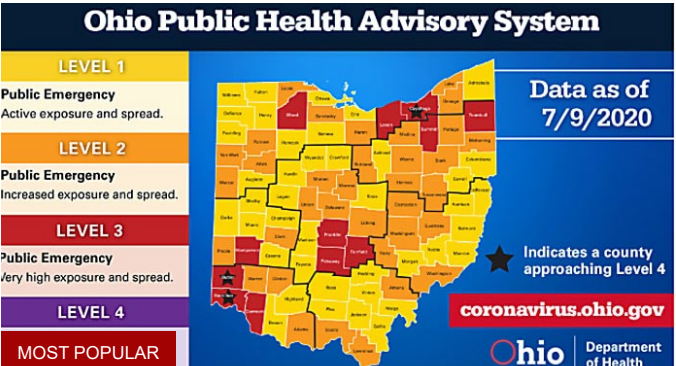
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