



We  parks!

Summer 2025

## Take a Walk in the Park 2025

A Walk in the Park happened Saturday, May 10, 2025. Passports were stamped at each of four stations, then dropped into a drawing for either an owl sign or a water bottle. Everyone got a cookie. The weather was great, Riverfront Park beautiful, and everyone enjoyed their walk. Donations totaled \$300 and will be added to the Eco-Earth Restoration Fund.

**Thank You** to  
volunteers and  
participants!



Take A Walk in the Park walkers grab a cookie at the end of completing their walk and collecting their passport stamps.

## Ways to Give to Salem's parks

- **Mail** a check to Salem Parks Foundation at P.O. Box 5764, Salem, OR 97304 or donate online at [www.salemparksfoundation.org](http://www.salemparksfoundation.org).
- **If you are over age 72**, arrange with your IRA custodian to send some or all of your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) directly to Salem Parks Foundation. This is called a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD).
- **Not 72 yet?** You can still make a Qualified Charitable Distribution at age 70 1/2.
- **Make a charitable bequest** in your will to SPF and/or name it as a retirement plan beneficiary.
- **Link** your Fred Meyer Rewards card to **SPF** at [www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards](http://www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards).
- **Bottle Drop/Give** Fill pre-labeled blue bags with cans and bottles. Drop them off at a Bottle Drop site. Send an e-mail to [info@salemparksfoundation.org](mailto:info@salemparksfoundation.org) We will arrange to get the bags to you. Half of the proceeds from BottleDrop go to the Eco-Earth project.
- **Consider gifting** the park lovers on your list with a donation to Eco-Earth in their honor.
- **Honor or remember** a loved one with an honor or memorial gift





## Congratulation to the winners of the Salem Parks Foundation's 2025 Neighborhood Park grant awards

- **CANDO** (Central Area Neighborhood Development Organization)
  - Marion Square Park - Basketball backboard & rim replacement \$3600
- **Grant Neighborhood Association**
  - Grant Park - 2 soccer goals, including installation \$3800
- **NEN** (Northeast Neighbors)
  - Englewood Park - 3 sided kiosk (partial funding) \$2700
- **NESCA** (Northeast Salem Community Organization)
  - D Street Park - one bench \$1150
  - Hoover, Thorp, D Street parks - kiosk improvement \$750
- **SCAN** (South Central Association of Neighbors)
  - McKinley School Park - walking path improvement (partial funding) \$4300
- **WSNA** (West Salem Neighborhood Association)
  - West Salem Park - replace and install a damaged bench \$3500



**This summer, keep an eye out for the Salem Parks Foundation busker!**

And...

Save the date for **Pinot for the Parks 14**, fundraiser for the Legacy Fund coming September 26, 2025. We hope to see you there!



### Eco-Earth Update

Currently, the Eco-Earth restoration fund stands at \$397,000.

The City of Salem Public Works Department has hired Architectural Resources Group to update the 2020 estimate for restoring the Eco-Earth Globe.

We ask for your continued support for this project.





## Kaethe Mentrum

### Artist in the Park

### Summer 2025 Park Hero



Kaethe (say “Kei-teh”) Mentrum, Secretary and Parks Chair for the Northgate Neighborhood Association (NGNA), got a sudden start to her leadership role. Irma Dowd, Salem’s Communication Liaison, asked Kaethe and her husband, Bayard, to take over NGNA after a sudden leadership vacancy. There could not have been a better choice.

Kaethe credits her German and Japanese heritage for her determination and ability to get things done in a timely manner. The park improvements within the Northgate neighborhood area are a testimony to her leadership, outreach, and persistence skills.

NGNA’s parks - Fisher Road, Hood View, Northgate, and Stephens -Yoshikai - have seen significant positive changes in the past few years thanks to Kaethe’s leadership and her artistry.

She has applied and received grant funding for park benches, soccer goals, walking paths, pollinator gardens, and painting supplies for creating the beautiful murals at Northgate and Hood View Parks. The improvements have made all these parks safer and more inviting.

Kaethe lists her interests as art and poetry. Northgate’s parks speak to her generous and courageous spirit, her artistry, and her determination to help her community thrive.



The parks in Northgate face significant challenges, including gang activity, graffiti, and homeless camps. As is true for all Salem parks, they need more maintenance time and equipment upgrades. When Kaethe and her husband were asked to assume leadership of NGNA, meeting these challenges was part of the package. Their strategy was to make the parks more family friendly. Kaethe coordinated a meeting leading to additional playground equipment for toddlers; a small slide and two spring toys. She and her husband got NGNA to collaborate with another organization for special events such as Fun Fridays and holiday celebrations. These events also helped bring neighbors out to the park.

The most striking example of Kaethe’s contribution is the beautiful wall mural she painted in Northgate Park. The mural, “NW Wildlife in the Spring”, is composed of 35 panels of nature scenes throughout Oregon. Each panel features a different group of animals in a background of their native habitat. Each panel is labeled with the name of the animals to help children with the spelling and to identify what they are.

Kaethe painted the panels in her backyard, and neighbors helped attach them to the fence. She had help, but most of the work is hers. She finished the mural in time for the Fun Friday event in July 2024.

Park Heros are like Ninja Warriors for parks. They have to have a vision and be fearless fighters to see it become reality.

On three occasions, mural panels were graffitied and had to be repainted. Kaethe and Bayard have worked with governmental officials to address problems associated with drug use and homelessness. They continue to advocate for additional safety measures in the parks including motion sensor lights and security cameras.





**Pringle Park, 606 Church St. SE, boasts a rich history, with its formal development beginning in 1941.**

Before it was converted into a city park, the grounds served as the Salem Municipal Auto Park. As automobiles became more affordable and accessible to the American middle class, families began exploring beyond their local communities. This trend led to the rise of Auto Park Campgrounds across the country. By 1920, the Salem Auto Park had been established through the efforts of Salem's Commercial Club, which aimed to promote Salem as a welcoming destination.

In 1922, the Auto Park was promoted as a significant investment for Salem. Reports from the *Capital Journal* in August of that year highlighted the financial gain of \$29,000 attributable to the tourists who frequented the municipal auto campgrounds. For 50 cents for the first day and 25 cents for each subsequent day, guests had access to wood, hot and cold water, and facilities for laundry and personal hygiene. The summer visitor count recorded 2,810 new patrons and 3,001 layover guests.

In 1923, following significant damage from a winter flood, the City of Salem purchased the auto park and took over management of the campground. Magazines and newspapers featured the Salem Municipal Auto Park tourists and their activities were regularly chronicled, including names and hometowns of campers. Follow-up reports featured the names of those who decided to settle in the Salem community.

By 1933, the campground had evolved to feature 12 cabins for travelers, along with a community house holding a collection of current reading materials and a warm fireplace.

In 1940, recognizing the area's potential, the City of Salem undertook an initiative to enhance the former Municipal Auto Park grounds, transforming them into a city park.

Today, Pringle Park is a tranquil refuge, situated where Pringle Creek, Shelton Ditch, and the Mill Stream converge before flowing into the Willamette River. It encompasses 4.4 acres, featuring a walking path shaded by oak trees, picnic tables, and play equipment. It includes the Pringle Community Hall, originally built in the 1940s, but rebuilt in 2000 following the 1996 flood. The hall continues to serve as a gathering place for the community.

Many of Salem's parks have led a former life. This is the first of a series highlighting the history of Salem's City parks.

