

My Story



Service and Learning

Antietam Lake Park

By Jay Worrall, Director of Holleran Center

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As chair of the Berks County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, I have had the great privilege of being involved over the last few years with the exceptional development of Antietam Lake Park. I am thrilled to have been a part of the restoration and reclamation of the magnificent natural and historical elements of the park. Antietam boasts



Keystone Fund Investment: \$567,000
Total Public/Private Investment: \$1.5

over 650 acres of beautiful and varied terrain, including several historic farmhouses, dams, and lakes (including the large man-made lake from which it takes its name.) But to be completely honest, as engaging as the beauty and serenity which characterize the park are, there is still a more impactful and important feature of the park that I have witnessed, and it is through my role as the director of the Holleran Center for Community and Global Engagement at Alvernia University in nearby Reading.

For six years, the Holleran Center has been bringing groups of students to Antietam Lake Park, and other parks in the Berks County system, for service projects. We have brought as many as 500 students at a time to Antietam, often on the first day of their college

careers. They spend five or six hours removing invasive species, improving trailheads, removing unproductive fruit trees, removing trash, mulching gardens, harvesting apples, and building a variety of educational items including butterfly houses, bee boxes, raised bed gardens, fences, compost bins, and other things.

I can hardly describe to you how positive and impactful these experiences have been for our students—not only because they spend the day at a beautiful facility outdoors, but because of

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the Parks Department staff's ability to describe and demonstrate the importance of parks and public outdoor spaces to students while working alongside them. When our students leave Antietam Lake Park at the end of a day of service, they are tired, dirty, and newly inspired. They understand that places like Antietam can show to generation after generation the value of the natural world. Parks can help connect people to the natural spaces around them, and hopefully instill in people an understanding of the need for all of us to be better stewards of the planet we live on.

These experiences have shown me that the value of our parks is rooted as much in their educational potential as in the preservation of nature. Over 600 preserved acres is a huge accomplishment for the Berks County Parks Department, and one of which they should be very proud. The potential for these spaces to impact how we as a community and as a species interact with our earth is much greater—and easily seen in the joy of our young people when helping with the renovation of Antietam Lake Park!

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