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Westgate Community Partners Recognized with Great Blue Heron Award
For Conservation Education Advocacy

10/28/2015 FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO— Patti Von Niessen, Rachel Pace, and Kristi Crissinger were awarded with the Great Blue Heron Award at Westgate Park, in the heart of the Hilltop community during the Westgate Neighbors Association meeting on October 27th. These women were recognized for their work within Westgate Park and the Hilltop community, educating residents and raising conservation awareness.

Each year, Patti Von Niessen organizes *Summer Jam Westgate* at Westgate Park. The festival brings the Hilltop community together through family-friendly activities, conservation education, and partnerships with local artisans and crafters. This year's festival was dedicated to the education and conservation of the Monarch Butterfly. Patti worked with local vendors and educators to raise awareness for one of Ohio's key pollinators. She ensured all vendors were local—even native nectar and host plants were available to residents!

The main event for the 2015 *Summer Jam Westgate* was the unveiling of the “On the Wings of Change” public art piece that depicts the four stages of the Monarch Butterfly. Commissioned to create the piece was local artist, Rachel Pace of Steeling Copper Metal Studio. Rachel, along with her studio, also launched the *Monarch Conservation Project*—providing seeds to central Ohioans, including 16 varieties of Milkweed, a primary food source for Monarch caterpillars and a common nesting place for adults to lay eggs.

The “On the Wings of Change” art piece currently resides at Westgate Park, near the rain garden that was installed by the park's enclosed shelter house with the help of Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District and maintained by the dedicated volunteers of the Friends of Westgate Park, led by Kristi Crissinger. Kristi works year-round to maintain the rain garden, weeding and dividing the plants. What does she do with the divided plants? Donates them to the Westgate and Hilltop residents, of course!

The Great Blue Heron Award recognizes outstanding contributions in natural resources and stream protection within Franklin County. Franklin Soil and Water recognizes the importance of partnerships to the sustainability and success of its mission to protect and improve soil and water resources, and is pleased to recognize Patti Von Niessen, Rachel Pace, and Kristi Crissinger with this award.



(Rachel Pace, Right with Franklin Soil and Water Director, Jennifer Fish, Left)

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The mission of Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District is to promote land-use decisions for the conservation, protection and improvement of soil and water resources by providing information assistance through effective partnering, technical guidance and education.