



Honoring John and Pat Leech

A Legacy of Stewardship, Service, and Love for Geauga County

Connecting people with nature seems woven into John and Pat Leech's very DNA. For more than fifty years, the couple has made their home in Newbury Township, nurturing a deep and enduring commitment to preserving the beauty and biodiversity of Geauga County's wild places. "We like some land, we like animals, we like taking care of yards. We like friendly people, we like up-and-down terrain," John reflects. "Gauga has really been a great place to raise a family—and for us to get to know neighbors. We thoroughly enjoy it."

A longtime attorney with Calfee, Halter & Griswold LLP in Cleveland, John later founded a healthcare consulting firm and served on both the American Hospital Association and the Ohio Hospital Association boards. His work took him to more than 200 hospitals across the country—travel that only deepened his appreciation for the place he and Pat call home. "Seeing so much of the country made it even more clear how lucky we are to live in Geauga County."

Their home, nestled beside The Rookery, is a daily reminder of that good fortune. The 800-acre preserve borders their property, creating a seamless connection between their land and the protected natural world they cherish. "We are protected by the park," John says. "We see the rangers and naturalists—many of whom we know personally—especially because we have a trout stream on our property. That makes our day."

But the beginning of their vision for conservation and protection of the land started with efforts that eventually resulted in The West Woods. It was at the time of the birth of The Rookery, coupled with Pat's initial involvement with the Foundation for Geauga Parks, and learning about vision for preservation of the land for parks for years to come, that gave rise to the couple's joining the effort that became The West Woods.

Their bond with The Rookery, The West Woods, and the Foundation for Geauga Parks grew from years of involvement in the development and stewardship of these treasured spaces. The West Woods holds special meaning for the Leeches. And yet, another park has captured their hearts just as deeply: Observatory Park. Its dark skies, brilliant stars, and sense of wonder make it one of their favorite places. John often notes that Observatory Park might never have been built without the community's early support for The West Woods—proof that one generation's vision can spark the next.

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They also hold a special affection for Sunnybrook Preserve, the smaller “boutique” gem that once flourished as a thriving herb and perennial farm. Its intimate scale and unique history reflect the diversity of experiences that make Geauga County’s park system so extraordinary. From big-picture leadership to hands-on support, the Leeches have helped shape the parks that so many enjoy today.

One program especially close to Pat’s heart is Nature Scopes, the Foundation’s year-long environmental education initiative for every Geauga County fifth grader. “It’s perfect today,” she says. “Kids need to get off their cell phones, walk in the woods, listen to the birds, and forget about all the digital stuff.” Pat’s passion for children extends far beyond the parks. A dedicated advocate, she is active in the Children’s Guild of Cleveland, supporting nonprofits that serve vulnerable youth. She also co-founded the Bellflower Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse, leaving a lasting impact on countless families.

Together, John and Pat Leech embody what it means to love a place—and to care for the people and natural world that make it special. Their decades of service, stewardship, and generosity have strengthened Geauga County in ways that will endure for generations.



Tribute to John and Pat Leech

by Christine Davidson, Executive Director, Foundation for Geauga Parks

“Tonight, the Foundation for Geauga Parks is also honored to recognize John and Pat Leech for their remarkable service, leadership, and enduring contribution to the Foundation, the Geauga Park District, and the people of Geauga County. This recognition is heartfelt. It is also long overdue.

There are some people whose influence is so foundational that it becomes part of the story itself. John and Pat Leech are among those people. Their dedication helped shape the early vision, spirit, and strength of both the Geauga Park District and the Foundation for Geauga Parks. Their service was not simply participation; it was leadership rooted in care for the land, belief in community, and a deep understanding that parks and natural spaces are among the greatest gifts one generation can leave to the next.

John’s service as a Park Commissioner placed him in a position of significant responsibility during an important time in the development of the Geauga Park District. The decisions made by park leaders in those formative years helped determine what kind of park system Geauga County would become. Through thoughtful leadership and a commitment to public good, John helped advance a vision for parks that would protect natural spaces, serve families, educate children, and preserve the rural and natural character that makes Geauga County so beloved.”

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“Pat’s contributions are equally meaningful. As one of the early trustees of the Foundation for Geauga Parks, she helped establish and strengthen an organization created to support the parks beyond what public funding alone could accomplish. That early work required vision, trust, persistence, and a willingness to build something that would grow in value over time. Pat’s service helped lay the groundwork for a Foundation that continues today to support conservation, education, recreation, and community connection throughout Geauga County.

Together, John and Pat represent a special kind of civic leadership – generous, humble, steady, and deeply rooted in place. They did not serve for recognition. They served because they believed in the importance of protecting land, creating opportunities for people to experience nature, and building institutions that would last. Their contributions helped ensure that the Geauga Park District and the Foundation for Geauga Parks would become strong partners in preserving and enriching the natural spaces that define our county.

Their legacy can be seen in the parks we walk, the trails we follow, the programs that inspire children and families, and the continued commitment of this community to conservation and outdoor education. It can be felt in every effort to protect habitat, expand access to nature, and invite people of all ages to discover the beauty and wonder of the natural world.

The Foundation’s history is filled with dedicated people, but some names belong especially close to the beginning of the story. John and Pat Leech are among them. Their leadership helped create momentum. Their service helped build trust. Their belief in the mission helped shape a future that continues to unfold today.

That is why tonight matters. This recognition gives us the opportunity to say, publicly and with deep gratitude, what should have been said long ago: John and Pat Leech made a lasting difference. Their contributions to the Foundation for Geauga Parks, to the Geauga Park District, and to Geauga County are significant, enduring, and worthy of celebration. As we mark 35 years of the Foundation’s impact, we also honor the people whose vision helped make that impact possible. John and Pat’s service reminds us that strong communities are built by people who step forward, give generously of themselves, and work quietly but powerfully for the good of others.

On behalf of the Foundation for Geauga Parks, we offer our sincere thanks to John and Pat Leech. We honor their leadership, their generosity, their service, and their lasting contribution to the parks and natural spaces of Geauga County. This recognition may be long overdue, but our gratitude is deep, joyful, and enduring.”