

## GH company first to adopt a county park

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SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

[A Grand Haven manufacturing company became the first business to adopt an Ottawa County park.](#)



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Nearly 30 GHSP employees, plus nine family members, volunteered two hours of their time Thursday afternoon to improve the character of Hemlock Crossing Park in Port Sheldon Township. They pulled 53 bags full of knapweed from the park's central meadow.

GHSP will also be helping with other improvement projects at Hemlock Crossing as part of the county parks system's new "Adopt a Park" program.

"One of GHSP's objectives is to have a positive — not neutral — impact on the environment," GHSP Global Marketing Manager Bob Mersereau said. "Another objective is to improve the quality of life for everyone in the communities in which we operate. Adopting a park lets us pursue both objectives — plus it brings our employees together outside of the work environment."

The county has many programs to help maintain the area's 22 parks, including park clean-up in the spring and special projects in which volunteers build boardwalks and bridges. With the new "Adopt a Park" program, companies are asked to engage in the battle against invasive species with a three-year commitment to the program.

"Because of the loss of tax base and reduced budgets, we are counting on the involvement of private-sector assistance to help us be good stewards of the land we are so lucky to have here in Ottawa County," County Parks and Recreation Director John Scholtz said. "Controlling invasive species is more than just pulling weeds — it is a necessary function for maintaining the natural beauty and character of our parks."

Companies in the park adoption program are responsible for bringing a group of volunteers to their designated park at least three times a year for three years.

GHSP initially contacted Shannon Morton, director of volunteerism with the Greater Ottawa County United Way, to learn how the Grand Haven company's employees could make a positive impact on the community. Morton hooked up GHSP, a division of the Grand Haven-based JSJ Corp., with the park program.

"We try to make the perfect match with volunteering and area needs, and the 'Adopt a Park' program seemed to be a good fit for GHSP and the community — especially with the investment the JSJ Foundation has provided to the (county's) Nature Education Center," Morton said.

The JSJ Foundation made a three-year commitment to support the Nature Education Center, which opened this spring at Hemlock Crossing Park.

"We are thankful to GHSP for adopting Hemlock Crossing Park, and we hope other companies will consider doing the same," Scholtz said.

Companies interested in participating in the "Adopt a Park" program are asked to call the Greater Ottawa County United Way at (616) 396-7811.

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