



**Vanessa “Vinny” Klesta,
Public Information Officer, Lorain County Metro Parks**

Q: Just curious. How did you get the nickname “Vinny” from Vanessa?

A: My Dad gave it to me when I was a baby and it stuck.

Q: Tell us about your background.

A: I have a background in hospitality and marketing. Throw in my love for nature and the Metro Parks is a perfect fit. I grew up using the parks and I still walk the parks with my dog Henry. We enjoy the full moon hike at Wellington Reservation.

Q: When did you join Metro Parks?

A: June 2012.

Q: What do you enjoy most about your job?

A: Watching people enjoy themselves, whether it’s through a program, at an event or just being outdoors. I get to tell people all the fun things that go on throughout our park system.

Q: What do you feel are some of your greatest achievements at Metro Parks?

A: Last year the park system celebrated its 60th anniversary and we kicked the year off with a month-long dinosaur exhibit, which took place indoors and out. The event brought more than 50,000 visitors to the Carlisle Reservation!

Q: When did your organization join THRIVE! and why?

A: Lorain County Metro Parks has been involved with THRIVE! since late 2015. Getting the right organizations on board took some time. Metro Parks actually participates in three United Way collaboratives, including THRIVE!. It is a good fit for us because the mission of THRIVE! focuses on physical fitness and healthy living. Metro Parks offers two fitness centers -- The Splash Zone and Mercy Recreation & Health Center, along with our hiking-stick program and bike trails. We provide opportunities for people to get out and get healthy.

Q: Tell us how you're involved with THRIVE! and which projects you're working on.

A: I am a southern Lorain County resident myself and I am currently involved in the McCormick site green space, which is a proposed new public park for the Village of Wellington.

Q: Do you think THRIVE! is making a difference in southern Lorain County?

A: I think THRIVE! can make a difference if residents and businesses get on board. I feel we need a little push on some of our initiatives. Change is inevitable in order for this to work.

Q: If you could design the future with the THRIVE! mission in mind, what would it look like?

A: A healthy, active downtown Wellington where people can come to get what they need. Whether it's food from Well-Help, a coat from the Salvation Army or fresh produce. A place to walk or ride your bike, a place to grow, a place to thrive.