

ThisWeek

UPPER ARLINGTON NEWS

50¢

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Madison Hanusek, 11, and her mom, Cary, share a laugh during the Take Off evening Nov. 6 in Upper Arlington. It was planned by three seventh-graders – Maria Buffer, Claire Geistfeld and Katie Overmyer – to help girls in grades 5-7 be themselves and not feel pressured to define themselves based on such things as social media and magazines.

LOHRE CECIL/THISWEEK

Take Off gives girl power a boost

By KELLEY YOUNMAN
THISWEEKNEWS.COM

Negativity, peer pressure, bullying. One hundred girls gathered in Upper Arlington Nov. 6 to “Take Off” on these issues.

Maria Buffer, Claire Geistfeld and Katie Overmyer, all seventh-graders at Hastings Middle School, hosted Take Off at the Amelia Mirolò Barn. The evening featured speakers and activities aimed at empowering girls in grades

5-7. The three friends, all 12, were able to put the program together after winning a grant earlier this year.

The O2 Conference, organized in a “Shark Tank” style where students pitched ideas for ways to “breathe life into the community,” was hosted by Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in May and awarded money to groups with small community-service projects. Buffer, Geistfeld and Overmyer were

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Video online

Go to the [ThisWeekNews](http://ThisWeekNews.com) YouTube channel to watch Hastings Middle School students Maria Buffer, Claire Geistfeld and Katie Overmyer talk about a program they developed called Take Off, which focuses on helping young girls be themselves and not feel pressured to define themselves based on social media and magazines.

Quarry Trails Park eyed as new regional attraction

By NATE ELLIS
THISWEEKNEWS.COM

Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks hasn't broken ground yet for its 20th central Ohio park, but its project already has won an award from the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission for collaborative efforts to push it forward.

Metro Parks, Wagenbrenner Development and the cities of Columbus, Hilliard and Upper Arlington received MORPC's Collaborative Achievement in Sustainability Award in October for the Quarry Project.

One element of the project is Quarry Trails, a 226-acre Metro Park northeast of Trabue and Dublin roads and west of the Scioto River and Upper Arlington. It will extend as far north as the dam at Griggs Reservoir Park and north of Trabue Road.

The project includes a mixed-use development: Wagenbrenner Development plans to build housing, retail space and commercial offices on 70 acres.

Metro Parks executive director Tim Moloney said the entire site encompasses a little more than 600 acres, but the Shelly Co. has mineral rights to 311 acres that are not part of the park or Wagenbrenner's mixed-use plans.

Metro Parks officials hope to break ground for Quarry Trails in 2019.

When it's finished, the park is expected to feature a 26-foot waterfall, trails for hiking, bicycling and mountain biking, rock climbing, fishing and picnic-

Video online

Go to the [ThisWeekNews](http://ThisWeekNews.com) YouTube channel to watch Tim Moloney outline plans for Quarry Trails Metro Park.

In March, Metro Parks purchased 62 acres of the site for \$1.8 million from Marble Cliff Canyon LLC, a limited liability company created by Wagenbrenner, and it bought another 118 acres for \$5.3 million in June. Wagenbrenner, through Marble Cliff Canyon LLC, donated 46 acres for the project.

The site currently isn't open to the public and trespassing there is illegal, according to Moloney.

“Work that is being done on the site is part of the environmental remediation that is taking part as part of the private development on the site,” he said. “Almost all of this is within the land owned by MCC and not Metro Parks. There are about 5 acres of Metro Parks land that need remediation and that work is being completed as part of the purchase of the land and not being completed by Metro Parks.”

Moloney said Metro Parks has received more than \$6.1 million in outside funding to support the project: \$2.2 million from the state capital budget and about \$3.9 million from the Clean Ohio Fund.

“Metro Parks has been looking at this land for many years,” he said. “It's within 5 miles of about 324,000 people. It gives our users a new experience and it really is going to be a park

QUARRY TRAILS >> A2



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given \$1,500 to help bring their vision to life.

The idea, Geisfeld said, was to create a space where girls could "take off the makeup, take off the fakeness, take off the act and take off on your journey."

When Upper Arlington resident Stori Rex saw the three present their idea at the conference, the LifeCare Alliance volunteer coordinator and mom of three knew she wanted to work with them.

"This was them trying to get everyone together and be unique," she said Nov. 6. "It's different from most middle school parties."

"My hope is for every girl to leave here feeling empowered and confident in who they are - to understand that we are all different and it's OK to be who you are."

Take Off included painting "kindness rocks," which are meant to be left in the community to be found by strangers.

"Each girl will get to pick a rock to decorate with something they like and an inspirational quote or message," Overmyer said.

During another portion of the night, participants wrote down negative thoughts and threw the slips of paper into a fire pit outside.

"It means you're taking those thoughts and throwing them away," Overmyer said.

Olympic gold medalist and Ohio State basketball star Katie Smith served as the event's guest speaker.

When it comes to failure, Smith has two words for girls: "Own it. Don't be afraid to fail. It shows you how strong you are. It shows your resilience."

Currently the head coach of the

New York Liberty, Smith, 44, said when she was in middle school, she never dreamed of having the confidence to organize an event like Take Off.

"You've got to be your biggest fan. If you're beating yourself up, just think of what everyone else is saying," Smith said. "Even at my age, I get caught comparing myself. Everyone needs to reboot their self-confidence sometimes."

The girls said they hope to raise money this summer to host another Take Off event next year.

"Why not do something that is going to affect the whole community? We hope it's like a chain reaction," Butler said. "They're going to be taking something special away from tonight. Maybe we only affect 5 people out of 100, but that is enough."

editorial@thisweeknews.com
@ThisWeekNews



Erin Runa, 10, has her photo taken during the Take Off event Nov. 6 at the Annetto Mirola Barn in Upper Arlington. About 100 girls took part in an evening of activities designed to empower them to not allow themselves to be defined by negative comments or social media. LORRIE GEAL/THISWEEK



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