

# 2023 Annual Report



ARIEL ~ FOUNDATION PARK



SUNBELT  
CENTER

Prepared February, 2024  
Foundation Park Conservancy





## **Mission**

The mission of Foundation Park Conservancy is to lead and support the economic stability, preservation, development, programming, and promotion of Ariel-Foundation Park in collaboration with the City of Mount Vernon.

## **Vision**

Ariel-Foundation Park will be a world-class example of adaptive reuse that honors its industrial heritage and is the focal point for recreation, entertainment, and social interaction in Knox County.



## **Board Officers**

Nick Clark, Vice President  
Jen Odenweller, Secretary  
Josh Mullet, Treasurer

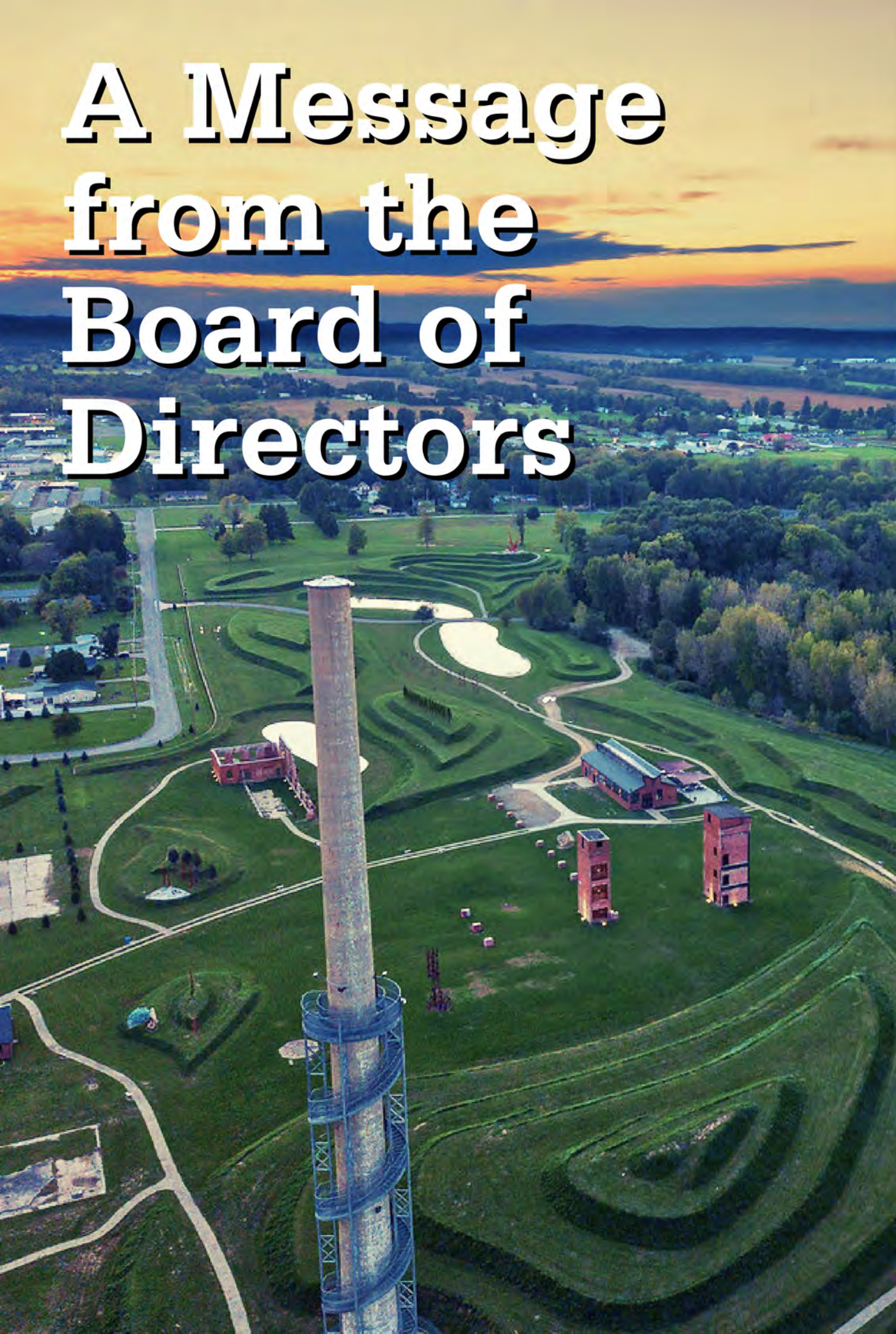
## **Board Directors**

Tom Hinkle  
Noelle Jordan  
Amber Keener  
Mike Miller  
Jeffrey Scott



**Foundation Park  
Conservancy  
Board Members**





# A Message from the Board of Directors

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on the accomplishments of Ariel-Foundation Park in 2023, it is with immense pride and gratitude that we share the remarkable journey we've embarked upon together. Last year was filled with significant milestones, transformative projects, and the seamless transition in leadership, all of which have propelled us forward in our mission to preserve and enhance this treasured community space.

One of the most noteworthy achievements of 2023 was the successful transition in leadership from Mark Fritz to Jennifer DeWinter. Mark's dedication and vision laid a strong foundation for the park's growth and development, and we are deeply grateful for his years of service. With Jennifer at the helm, we have continued to build upon this legacy, embracing new opportunities and charting a course for even greater success. Her leadership, passion, and strategic guidance have been invaluable assets as we navigate the park's future.

Throughout the year, our partnership with the City of Mount Vernon has remained steadfast and fruitful. Together, we have worked hand in hand to ensure the park continues to thrive as a vibrant hub of community activity. From hosting cultural events to maintaining the park's pristine beauty, our collaboration with the city has been instrumental in fostering a sense of belonging and pride among residents and visitors alike. We are incredibly grateful for the unwavering support of Mayor Starr, Tanner Salyers, Tom Hinkle, and the entire city council, whose commitment to our shared vision has been instrumental in driving progress.

As we look ahead to the future, we are inspired by the limitless potential of Ariel-Foundation Park and emboldened by the support of our dedicated partners, volunteers, and supporters. Together, we will continue to honor the park's rich history, and create lasting memories for all who pass through its gates.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication to Ariel-Foundation Park and the Foundation Park Conservancy. With your continued support, we will build upon the successes of 2023 and write the next chapter of our shared legacy.

Warm regards,

Nick Clark  
Vice President  
Foundation Park Conservancy



In the middle of December, while others were preparing for time off for the holidays and traveling to see family, I fully immersed myself in a significant endeavor as Park Manager and was reminded of the sheer volume of hard work and accomplishments that have been made since 2015. I was also reminded of the various community connections that occur within Mount Vernon, Ohio, and the diligent work it requires to facilitate them. The responsibility that Foundation Park Conservancy shares with the City of Mount Vernon Parks Department to sustain the vitality of Ariel-Foundation Park is equally tremendous and joyous. Where else but Ariel-Foundation Park can locals and visitors from all over the world enjoy our 250-acre oasis to experience beauty, nature, exercise, relaxation, and community? Ariel-Foundation Park is a treasure. Through generous donations of time, experience, and money, thank you all for sharing my passion for hard work, accountability and improvement and expressing it through your welcoming hospitality and continued knowledge and support.

In 2023, some critically important, behind the scenes work took place. We planted a prairie garden and our efforts to create donor and partner programs that build deeper, meaningful relationships started to take root. Plus, we began to expand our reach to cast an even wider net for community awareness and inclusion. A defining exercise was revisiting the true goals of our park. It is through this lens which we will continue to verify validity and prepare for all future endeavors.

Foundation Park Conservancy will continue to sustain the vibrancy of Ariel-Foundation Park and is grateful to all who play a role in revitalizing and activating this public green space to ensure it remains a welcoming destination for recreation, culture, education, and community connection for all. While it may be a lofty goal, we know that we are not alone in fulfilling its promise. If you are reading this, you've already taken an interest in Ariel-Foundation Park and are empowering us to make Mount Vernon stronger through the power of community. For this, and for all we intend to accomplish together in the years to come, I humbly thank you for welcoming me into this role and continually asking how you can help. I am excited for all that is in store for 2024.

With Gratitude,

Jenni (Balcom) DeWinter



**A Note  
from the  
Park Manager**



# July 4th Celebration



**PARROTS of the CARIBBEAN**  
A salute to Jimmy Buffett



# A Glance at 2023 Programming and Partnerships



**Farewell to Summer  
Sunset Social**



**North to Nashville  
with CES**



**Color Run  
with Teen Advisory Council**



**KCCC AFJROTC  
Raider Competition**



**Children's Concert  
with the Knox County Symphony Orchestra**



**Praisestock**



## Thank You Retiring Foundation Park Conservancy Board Members:

Amber Keener, City Council Appointee,  
Ex-officio Board Member (2022-2023)

Our thanks to partnering-spirited Councilwoman Keener for providing tenure on Foundation Park Conservancy's Board. From incorporating patriotic events to programs that enhance appreciation and encourage engagement with nature, she offered innovative ways to explore new possibilities within Ariel-Foundation Park's 250-acres as the City of Mount Vernon's Parks and Recreation Committee Chair. We look forward to crossing paths with Amber and her family at our concerts, programs, and special community events in the many years to come! Thank you, Councilwoman Keener!



**Amber Keener**



**Noelle Jordan**

Noelle Jordan, Board Member (2022-2023)

When you see Noelle Jordan in the outdoors, there's 99% likelihood she's smiling. Jordan's love of nature is evident from the moment you meet her. From planning for development of the prairie and arboretum, to looking for tadpoles and minnows at the lakes, the various outdoor offerings of Ariel-Foundation Park are considered Jordan's happy places. In her two years on the Foundation Park Conservancy Board, she has assisted with volunteer recruitment greeted visitors, provided directional information and educated the community: on the importance of butterfly attraction and the dangers of autumn olive growth. She provided endless opportunities for how Ariel-Foundation Park can positively impact the quality of life in Mount Vernon and Knox County. We wish Noelle well and anticipate consulting with her for outdoor programming opportunities in the future! Thank you, Noelle!



# Prairie and Arboretum Project



## Project Details

- Control burn occurred across roughly 3 acres
- Prairie Planting – occurred in December 2023
- 32 hours volunteer time
- Bee City purchased seed from Pheasant Forever
- The wildflowers are perennials, with an additional 5 species of annuals for more flowers in the first year.
- Recent reseeding project: 7 volunteers in a total of 2 days, with seed from Pheasants Forever
- 35 species native wildflowers for nectar and pollen, and 5 species of native grasses.

## Project Partners

The City of Mount Vernon Fire Department

*Controlled burn coordination*

The City of Mount Vernon Bee City Committee

*Planning and seeding*

Pheasants Forever

*Donation of seed*

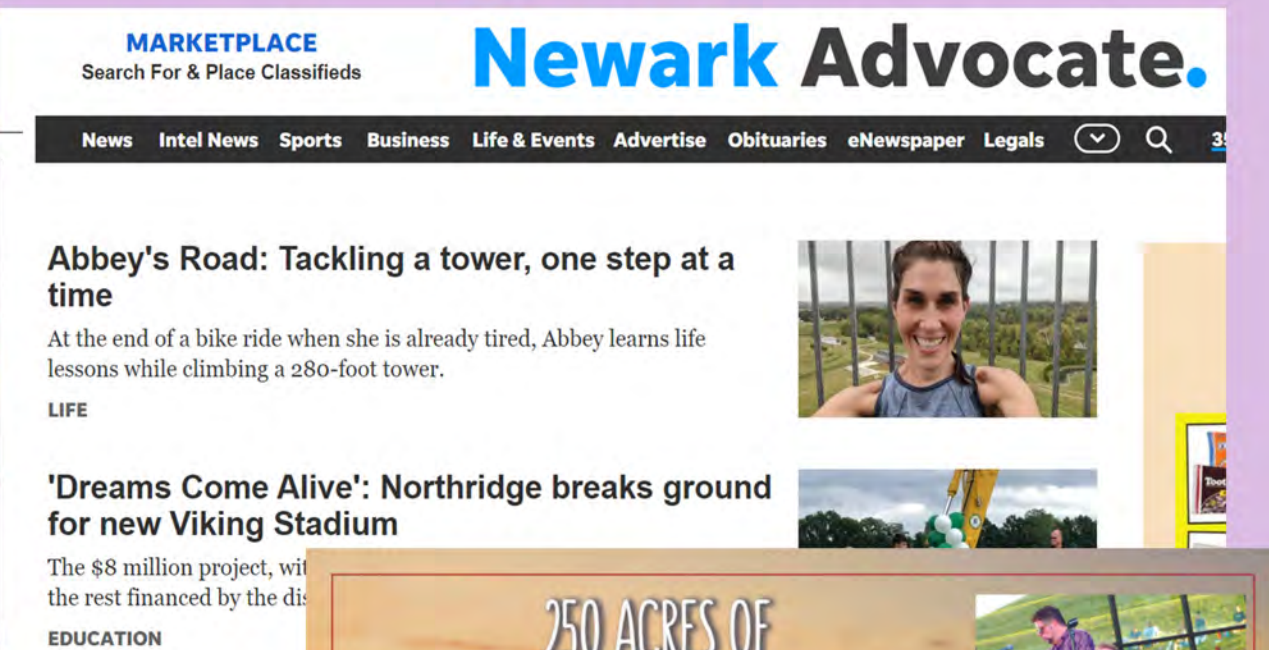
Thanks to Mike Miller and family for their 2023 contributions!



# 2023 Marketing and Outreach for Ariel-Foundation Park

- Reached over 634,690 Facebook users; over 2,200 users on Instagram
- Over 31,500 visitors to the website with 93,000 page views
- More than 1,300 newsletter subscribers
- Featured ads in Ohio Magazine, TownMoney Saver, Mount Vernon News, Knox Weekly News, the Newark Advocate, and more

**Thank you to all who liked, shared, promoted, followed, and told others about our special community gem of a park!**



**"This park is a must-do!"**  
**EXPERIENCE ARIEL-FOUNDATION PARK IN MOUNT VERNON, OH**

More than 250 acres of stunning repurposed factory ground beckon you to reconnect with the great outdoors, rediscover industrial history, and refresh your spirit doing something new. Park is open daily. *We hope to see you soon!*

**ADJACENT TO BIKE TRAILS**  
 Two central Ohio bike trails converge at the park—the Heart of Ohio and Kokosing Gap trails. They are both part of the Ohio to Erie Trail going from Cleveland to Cincinnati. We're a great half-way stop!

**FABULOUS JULY 4TH CELEBRATION**  
 Enjoy a free concert on July 4th ending with a spectacular fireworks show. Spend the day exploring the park and dance the night away in our outdoor event center with food trucks, beer/wine and more.

**ARIEL-FOUNDATION PARK**  
 arielfoundationpark.org  
 740-501-9293 | f t i





# 2023 Financial Notes from the Treasurer

## **Schnormeier Event Center Enhancement Project**

Completion of the fire suppression system installation project was achieved in 2023! This large-scale project took multiple years and is now, thankfully, checked off the list. In addition, through a generous donation, the Foundation Park Conservancy was able to close in the upper portion of the South side of the event center to provide a better, safer experience when weather doesn't cooperate during park hosted events and rentals. This was a much-needed project that will have a significant impact on park enjoyment for years to come.

## **Knox County Foundation Pavilion Improvements**

Stabilizing the beautiful, heavy granite benches in the pavilion area was no small task in 2023. Thanks to the skillful work of our friends at Custom Cutters, a few new metal bench tops were created as replacements for the few that had been broken earlier in the year. You have to look closely to see that they are different than their granite counterparts, which is exactly what the Conservancy desired in finding a cost effective, creative solution to this problem. During this project, all 40 benches and 10 tables were re-anchored to provide many more years of safe enjoyment and to prevent other granite seat breakages in the future.

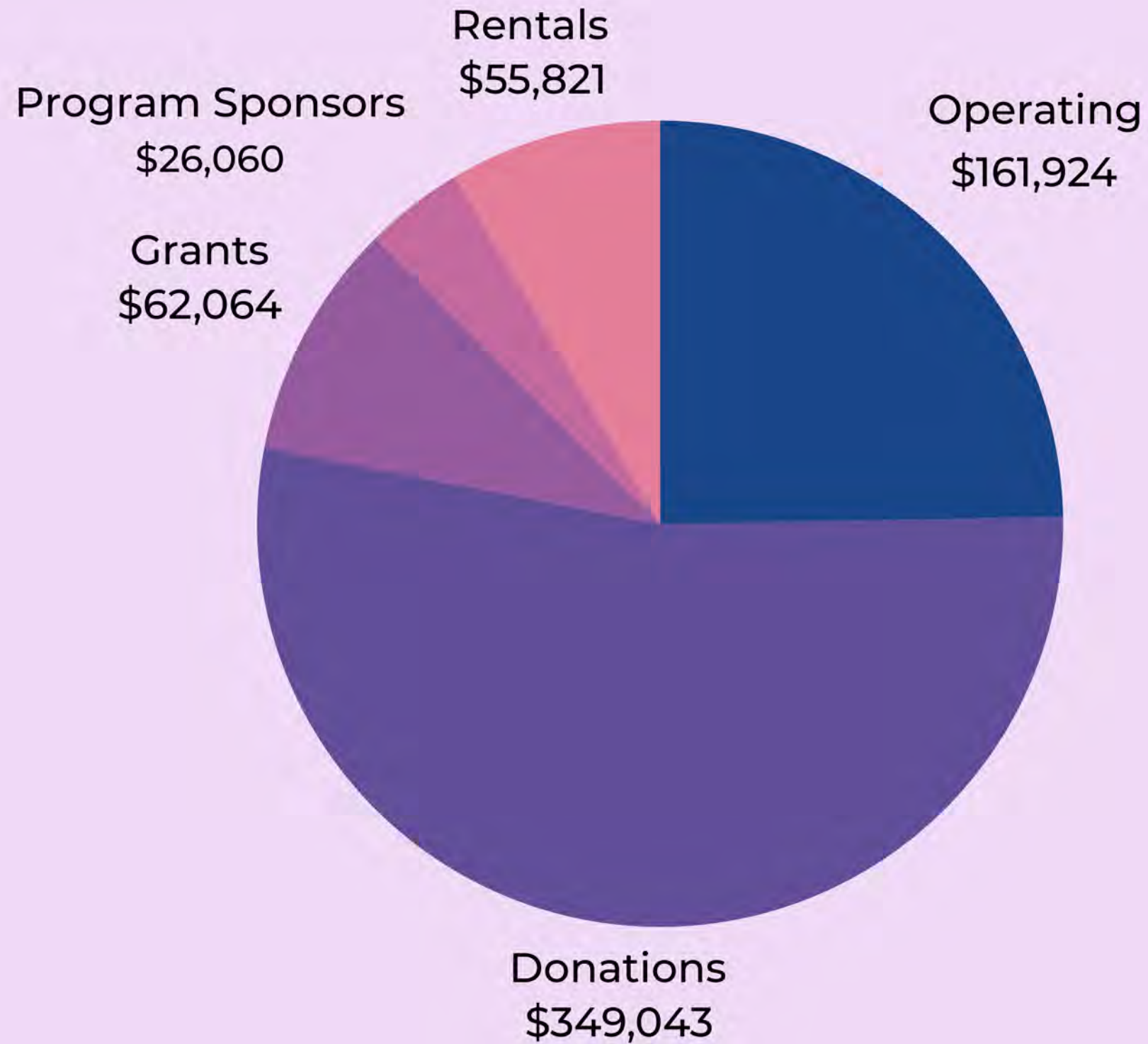
## **Maintenance and Storage Structures**

Storing equipment needed in maintaining the 250 acres of Ariel-Foundation Park requires dedicated and easily accessible buildings, in addition to the storage requirements that present themselves when operating three unique rental facilities within the park. In 2023, thanks to a generous donation, the Conservancy was able to check off a large goal on its list, addressing the debt required when building the Pittsburgh Avenue maintenance and storage buildings, and the small park office building, making the organization free of debt. This placed the Foundation Park Conservancy in a strong position going into 2024 as other park needs are continually assessed and projects are planned.

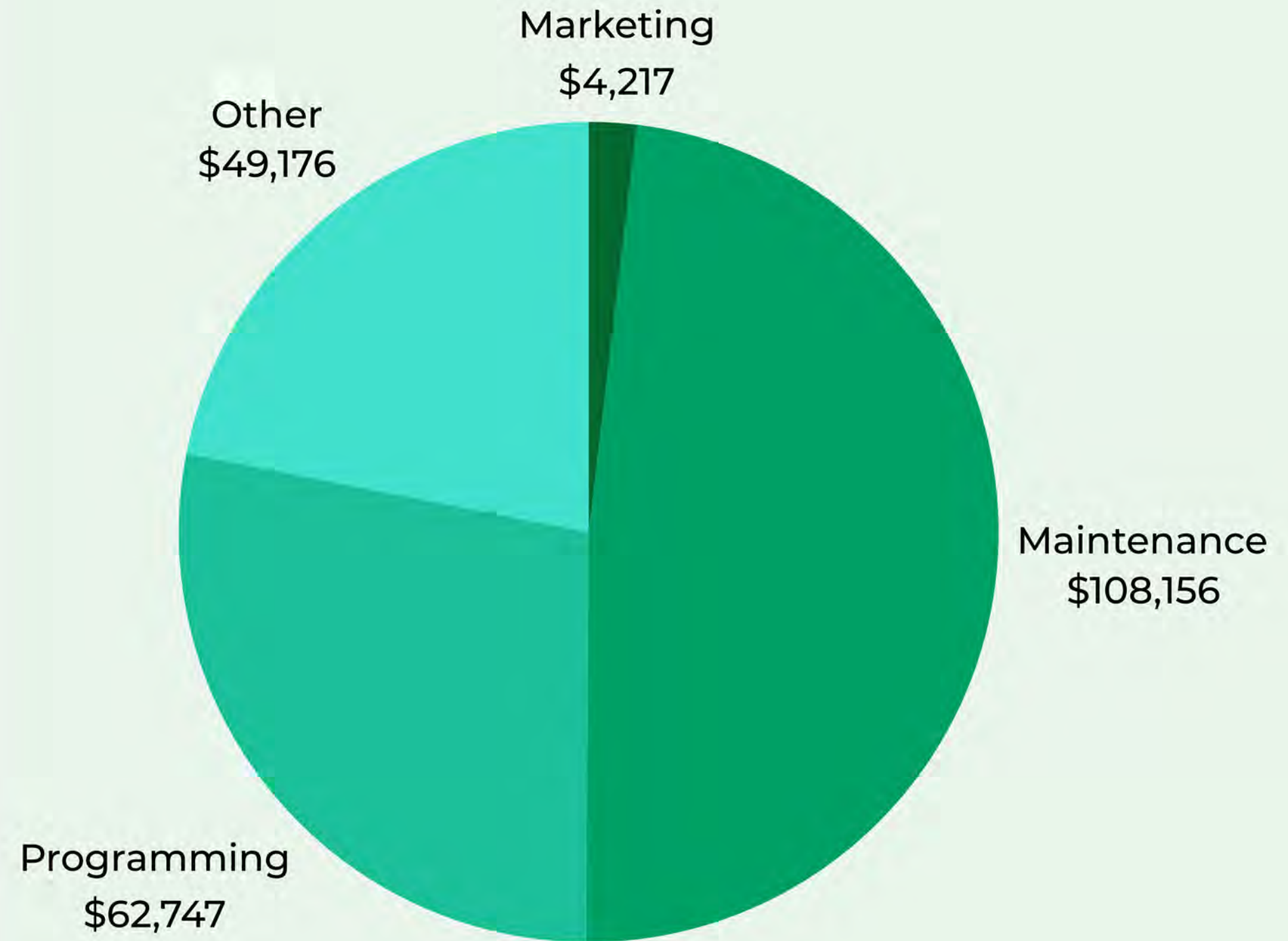
Josh Mullet, Treasurer  
Foundation Park Conservancy



# 2023 Income



# 2023 Expenses





# 2023 Friends of the Park

Thank you to our 2023 Friends of the Park donors, sponsors, and supporters who have collectively contributed more than \$375,000 to help care for and maintain this 250-acre jewel and keep Ariel-Foundation Park looking beautiful year-round!

Ariel Corporation  
Barbara Barry  
Melanie Bolender  
Barry Bowden and Jackie Johnson  
Brenneman Lumber  
Maureen Buchwald  
Keith and Kate Burley  
Todd and Christy Burson  
Jeff and Cheri Butcher  
Ellis Brothers  
Linda Ellis

*In memory of Hunter Wright*

Burt and Lois Hanson  
Herald's Appliances & Electric  
Bill and Cindy Higgs  
Brian and Amanda Huprich  
Susan Kahrl  
Cameron and Christine Keaton  
Kenyon College  
Knox Community Hospital  
Knox County Foundation  
Inge Krajenski  
William Lawhon Jr.  
Doug and Julie Leonard

Bill Levering  
Gerald and Barbara Lindstrom  
McDaniel CPA  
Deborah Massa  
Dick and Peggy Mavis  
Chuck and De Merrilees  
Mike and Paula Miller  
Joe and Krys Mortellaro  
Mount Vernon Rotary Foundation  
Steve and Jeanne Mullendore  
Josh and Meredith Mullet  
Amy Murnen  
Susan Murray  
Joe and Sally Nelson  
Dan and Carolyn O'Brien  
Marc and Jen Odenweller  
Stanley Osborn  
Steven Oster  
Park National Bank  
Noel and Suzanne Parrish  
Parrish-O'Neil & Associates  
Michael Percy and Nicole Pagano-Percy  
Mark and Denise Ramser  
Roger and Chrystal Rardin

Tom Rastin  
Larry and Sarah Goslee Reed  
Stephen Rex  
*In memory of Suzanne Mayer Rex*  
Kim and Pam Rose  
Keith and Vickie Sant  
Ted Schnormeier  
Jeff and Stephanie Scott  
William and Donna Scott  
Carol Shurlow  
Ora and Sue Smith  
David and Kim Stuller  
Martha Stuller  
Jan Thomas and Gary Doernhoefer  
Dennis and Pat Tuttle  
United Aggregates, Inc.  
Larry and Nancy Vail  
Ian and Charlotte Watson  
Bruce and Kathy White  
Karen Buchwald Wright  
Sam and Tate Wright  
*In honor of Ralph and Arlene Bross*  
Gordy and Fran Yance  
Pheasants Forever  
Anonymous – Two Gifts







# Thank You!



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