

# X MARKS THE SPOT

Mirrorscapes refreshes the surroundings of mysterious — and beautiful — Cross Mound Park.

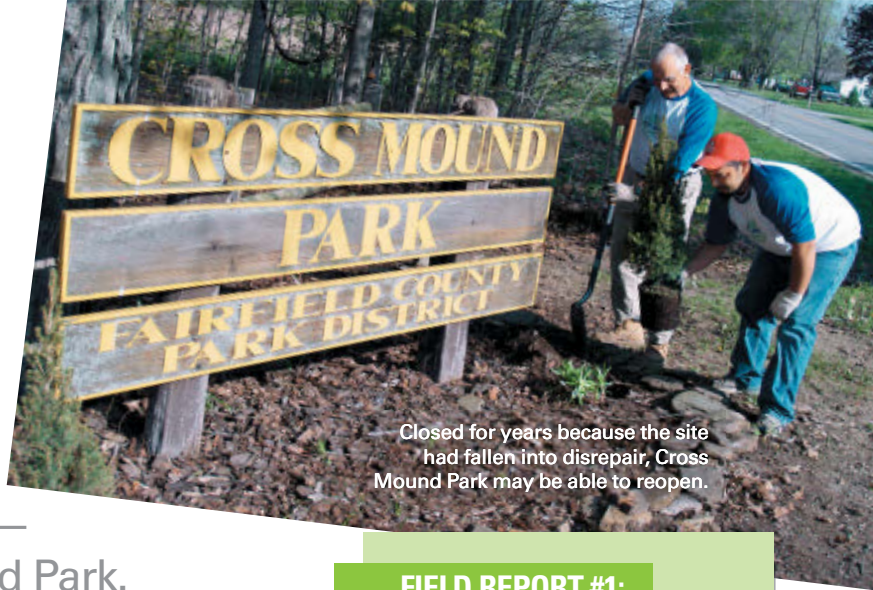
BY **RON HALL** EDITOR-AT-LARGE

NOBODY KNOWS the exact age of an ancient and mysterious Native American mound located at the summit of a wooded ridgeline in central Ohio. Most experts believe it was constructed about the time of the birth of Jesus. The X-shaped mound, whose circumference approximates the size of a Little League

infield, is the attraction at Cross Mound Park on the outskirts of the village of Tarlton (about 300 people), which is a 35-minute drive south of Columbus.

Chuck Miller selected Cross Mound Park as his company's PLANET Day of Service project. His company,

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Closed for years because the site had fallen into disrepair, Cross Mound Park may be able to reopen.

## FIELD REPORT #1:

**Cross Mound Park**  
Tarlton, OH

### Day of Service Mission:

Mirrorscapes team members repaired a split rail fence and cleaned debris from the Cross Mound Park.

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MirrorScapes LLC, proves you don't have to be a big landscape company or one that's been around a long time to do something nice for your region. Miller, 52, founded MirrorScapes in nearby Lancaster, OH, three years ago as he was winding down a 30-year-career as a high school educator — much of it spent teaching agriculture.

His company has four trucks and employs “seven or eight” employees, adding part-time help as needed for bigger projects. Miller's top challenge this spring has been reining in his firm's rapid growth, thanks to its “follow-up and customer service” and, more recently, to winning a prestigious award for its display landscape at the Tri-County Home Builders Home and Garden Show in March.

“We've been going like crazy. The phone's been ringing off the hook,” says



On the bridge to recovery: MirrorScapes' crew brings new life to Cross Mound Park.

Miller, obviously pleased as he and his six-man crew load two work trucks for the morning's work at the park. “We needed a break. The guys needed something different to do. They've been putting in a lot of hours.”

His young crew (including “plant man” Lennie Conrad, a retired high school guidance counselor/coach and

several years Miller's senior) approaches the Earth Day project with unfeigned enthusiasm, fueled probably as much by the prospect of a working picnic in the park — as evidenced by the boxes of goodies being loaded into the trucks — as by the cloudless, bracing April morning.

Driving three trucks to Cross Mound Park, and after digging into pastries and

PHOTO BY: RON HALL



**SPRINTER**

orange juice, the workers scatter about the 29-acre site. Several employees hike across the bridge spanning Salt Creek, built in 1936 as part of the Work Projects Administration (WPA) program, and up a woodland path to the ancient Cross Mound. There, they replace a section of broken split rail fence and clear it of seasons of broken tree limbs, rotting logs and an ankle-deep layer of brittle, dry oak leaves.

The freshly uncovered earthen mound clearly reveals its perfect X shape that, in spite of being surrounded by mature eastern woodlands, has — through some treatment or process known only to its builders — remained, to the bewilderment of many experts, vegetation-free for two millennia or more.

Elsewhere in the park, other employees focus on the park's entrance, where they weed, trim, plant ornaments and put down dark, fragrant mulch.

Amid the roaring and whirring of blowers, mowers and trimmers, David J. Fey, director/secretary of Fairfield County Parks, stops by mid-morning to thank Miller and his team. Fey is the sole employee of the park system. Age 65 and a retired teacher himself (biology), Fey is tasked with maintaining five covered bridges, several historical buildings, nature preserves and a sculpture garden as well as Cross Mound. Even after 11 years on the job, he approaches his duties with an unabashed interest and love for the county's rich cultural history. He also welcomes any help he can get for the cash-strapped park system.

Unfortunately, because of a lack of funds and ongoing vandalism at Cross Mound, Fey has had to keep the park entrance gate closed. (You can still hike to the mound if you park just outside the gate. There's room for one vehicle.)

Miller, whose Day of Service project

in 2009 was at the county's Lockville Park, is pleased to be of help and obviously enjoying his half-hour chat with Fey. Then, it's back to work for the both of them.

"I'm really enjoying this 'retirement,'" says Miller, taking a short break as noon approaches. "Every once in a while, an acquaintance from the school will call and ask what I'm doing and I'll say, 'I'm outside and enjoying it.' And, yes, I work with the crews and then I come home and do the paperwork."

Miller says he has no plans for a second retirement, and he wants to continue to grow his landscape company as circumstances allow.

But we had to know: What exactly was the inspiration behind the company name, Mirrorscapes?

"It's our tag line. Your lawn is a reflection of you," says Miller with a broad smile. **LM**



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