

Youngstown. Really. It is

By Mary Beth Breckenridge
Beacon Journal staff writer

YOUNGSTOWN:

Out-of-towners often have the same reaction when they see Mill Creek Park in Youngstown for the first time.

Their jaws drop.

"It's the universal experience," said Carol Potter, development and marketing director of the park district. "The person says, 'Wow, we don't have anything like this.'"

"This" is a 6-mile-long, 2,600-acre strip of subtly enhanced nature that meanders from downtown Youngstown through the city's south side and into Boardman Township. For people who know Youngstown only for its economic troubles, encountering the carefully maintained oasis in the midst of the struggling city is a particular surprise.

The park follows the lower course of Mill Creek, a waterway that starts in Columbiana County and flows north to the Mahoning River. Nineteenth-centu-



Mike Kilbourne and daughter McKenzie, 3, of Youngstown watch baby geese at the Lily Pond in Mill Creek Park.

ry conservationist Volney Rogers feared that urban development would gobble up the area's waterfalls, gorges and forests, so he established Ohio's first park district in 1891 to preserve the land. Rogers' contribution is honored with a bronze statue, which was funded by schoolchildren's donations and stands near the park's Glenwood Avenue entrance.

Rogers' park is now the centerpiece of the Mill Creek MetroParks, a district that also encompasses outlying parks, preserves, a bike trail and an experimental and educational farm.

Mill Creek Park was formed when landscape architecture was taking hold, and Rogers embraced that movement. The

Please see **Park. G3**

Mill Creek Park is
6-mile-long haven
of nature, beauty
and recreation in
struggling city

OHIO
200 years
1803-2003