

Folklife at Cloverdale Farm County Park

By Pat Johnson

Find Ocean County's Cloverdale Farm County Park down an unpaved road just off the Garden State Parkway Exit 67 for Barnegat. The park was originally a cranberry and Christmas tree farm. Surrounded by development on three sides, entering the park is like stepping back in time into an oasis of calm. The 80 acres of bogs, farm buildings and wooded uplands are open from dawn to dusk for hiking and un-motorized trail biking on your own but they also offer a slew of guided nature walks and folk art programs.

Cloverdale Program Coordinator Patricia Trasferini said Cloverdale has been a welcoming place for people to explore the arts—particularly folk arts.

“In today’s stressful world, we are seeing more and more people exploring the arts as a form of art therapy. Cloverdale is a wonderful place because I truly believe the beautiful setting of the facility and the personalities of the instructors create an environment that feels like home,” she said.

Trasferini has developed relationships with many local craftspeople and enjoys facilitating the programs in the spacious, handicapped accessible program room.

“As the instructors guide the patrons, you can really see their passions for their artisan trade unfold. At Cloverdale, you get a true sense of community as people of various backgrounds, ages, and ability levels relax, laugh and talk while learning a new skill.



Volunteer Chrissy Yang takes care of the butterfly garden.
Photo credit: Pat Johnson.

“We can proudly say that the Ocean County Parks and Recreation Department is helping to carry on New Jersey’s age-old traditions, one patron at a time thanks to these talented instructors. The beauty of my job comes when I see that patron return the next time, maybe with a friend or family member to share the experience; thus helping spread tradition to yet another Ocean County or New Jersey resident.”

Basket making instructor Mary May said teaching at Cloverdale has been a wonderful experience. “Especially after the isolation of COVID, people have been craving social experiences and they can do that while they learn a new craft. I have between five to twelve students per class and many repeat customers who have developed lasting friendships. I do meet the nicest people and the facility is a good one—clean, airy, and very welcoming.”

May said she is sure to stretch herself to reach every attendee—especially making sure she helps beginners or people with limited abilities, those who may be struggling. “I’m conscientious of people’s abilities.”



Patricia Trasferini in the Cloverdale program room with cranberry display board.
Photo credit: Pat Johnson.

The park setting also opens new activities beyond the visitors' center Trasferini added.

"More recently, we have been seeing the patrons attending arts programs go for a walk before or after the program, enjoying lunch at the picnic tables or taking in the views from our newest addition to the park, a dock. The dock was built by our talented special maintenance staff from a donation of supplies provided by the Women's Club at Mirage, a senior community next to the park. Cloverdale's volunteer crew created two beautiful rustic cedar benches for the dock, making it the perfect place to sit back and enjoy the day.

"This little park is truly a gem and is worth a visit, especially during our cranberry harvest season that runs from early September to mid-October. We offer cranberry tours of the bogs and the packing house to show the patrons how cranberries were once sorted and separated before being sold to local restaurants, bakeries, and grocery stores."

For a complete listing of upcoming programs, please visit the Ocean County Parks & Recreation website for the most up to date newsletter:
<https://oceancountyparks.org/>

Upcoming program samples. Photo courtesy of Ocean County.

