

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Leaf Party Day, Beachwood's one-of-a-kind celebration

The 5th annual Leaf Party Day falls on Friday, July 8th

BEACHWOOD, Ohio – One Northeast Ohio community has an annual celebration unlike any other. Best of all, it came to fruition due to the passion of 20-year-old Bartu Hatipoglu, a Beachwood resident who doesn't let autism get in the way of his unique ability to connect with others through nature.

Bartu understands nature and has developed a special relationship with trees and the environment in general. He can often be spotted in the neighborhood planting bulbs, nursing plants back to life and hauling fallen tree limbs back to the woods in his backyard. A composting pile was soon created when Bartu began collecting leaves from the streets of Bryden Road in Beachwood. He quickly got wise to the Public Works Department's pickup times and began collecting from neighbors before the leaves were picked up while his mother rode in her car alongside him. Even snow never thwarted his determination.

In 2017, Bartu began sharing his love for leaves with Pool Manager Missy Bystrom and other employees at the Beachwood Family Aquatic Center. His pure spirit and unconditional joy were contagious.

"Little by little, Bartu began bringing leaves to the pool in 2017," Missy explained. "Fast forward, leaves turned into small branches and he began sharing them with pool patrons. Children began following him around the lazy river chanting 'Leaf Party' as they swung their branches with leaves above their heads. It got bigger the following year in 2018 when Community Services Director Karen Carmen, who's now retired, and took some delight in his interest in leaves and supported his enthusiasm."

Bartu is a rule follower, but Karen knew telling him not to bring leaves wasn't an option. She purchased stalks of artificial leaves and created an official Leaf Party bucket at the pool entrance. From that point on, Bartu jokingly titled the former Community Services Director as the 'Inspector.'

Year after year, Beachwood's Leaf Party Day has only grown. Bartu is a local legend with the summer campers who rush over to see him while lifeguards chant 'Leaf Party' with the patrons. Community Services Director Derek Schroeder has helped the event expand with leaf-themed crafts, garlands, crowns, t-shirts and more.

Although it isn't officially documented in Beachwood history, employees are fairly certain that Bartu is the first resident to do a flip off the high dive while holding leaves. The 5th annual Leaf Party is scheduled for Friday, July 8th, 1-3 pm at the Beachwood Family Aquatic Center for members only. For more information, visit BeachwoodRec.com.

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