

Vision becomes reality for SK8 CJ

By
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IVN Contributing Writer

The long awaited grand opening of the Cave Junction Skate Park, the newest feature at Jubilee Park, is scheduled to take place this Saturday, August 16.

The “free for all” event will run from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and feature locally and regionally renowned bands including Oneironauts, Only Natural, Wilderness, Mista Chief, Catsxan, Ras Deezum, Vega in Lyra, Mr. Shatta, Rosie Wittman and Maca Key. Sound will be by event co-sponsor HWFT.

Activities throughout the day will include free bicycle repair, helmet giveaways, drawings for prizes and skateboard and bike demonstrations. Event sponsors include Wheels a Turnin’, Good Earth Organics and Havoc which has recently expanded their Grants Pass store inventory to include boards and bikes. No alcohol, weapons or illegal drugs will be allowed at the event.

Organizer Maureen Connolly is hoping as many original skatepark volunteers as possible from throughout the park’s two decade history will be there to take the ceremonial “first skate” immediately following the ribbon cutting ceremony at noon.

The first C.J. skatepark was dedicated in 1997 at the Labor Day Festival, when organizers Thom LeGay and Andrea Thom-as were on hand to cut the ribbon. Their group of volunteers installed a concrete slab and built wooden and metal structures, which lasted about nine years. LeGay later raised funds to have a larger concrete slab poured, which was incorporated into the current design.

“We’re building on 20 years of effort,” said Connolly, who teamed with Stacey Williams to realize Williams’ dream of a first-class park for the community to use and enjoy.

The pair of mothers co-chaired the Sk8CJ Committee, a project of “Y.E.S.” (Youth Empowerment and Support), which also sponsors the annual Barter Faire fund-raiser for the Dome School.

In 2007, Billy Dillard led a team that built new temporary ramps as his Eagle Scout project. These were dismantled in 2012 when they were deemed unsafe by the city. About the same time, Williams learned that the famous skateboarder Tony Hawk was coming to Grants Pass to do a demonstration.

Williams was also aware that Hawk’s foundation made grants to help communities build skateparks, and approached him during his visit. Together with Connolly, Williams won a grant from Hawk’s foundation. Next, Cave Junction Mayor Carl

Jacobson helped parlay the boon into acquiring a \$60,000 grant from Oregon Parks and Recreation. The grant required nearly \$29,000 in matching funds, which was raised over the past two years. Connolly listed eight benefit events and other fundraising activities including concerts, Valentine’s Day and Halloween parties as well as in-kind contributions.

Due to the tremendous outpouring of volunteers and community support, Connolly estimates the value of this first phase of the park at nearly \$300,000. She compares their efforts to that of a relay racer who carries the baton a distance, then passes it on to the next runner or organizer who will oversee the next phase.

Many riders are hoping for more “street” features in Phase II, including railings and stairs. The park’s designer, Sage Bol-yard, of Grindline Skateparks, has also recommended a wind-ing and ramped sidewalk that would weave through the trees.

The final push to complete the project came during the past few weeks when finishing touches like sod were installed. She’s proud of the work her grandkids did on the project,

including granddaughter Daisy and her 3-year-old grandson, Django.

“There’s a whole section Django did by filling a bucket, and then pouring mortar around the rocks to secure them,” she said.

Connolly honed her organizational skills during her 30 year career as a critical care nurse and ongoing experience as a board member of the Medford/Alba, Italy sister city program. “Grandma Mo” has twice traveled to Italy where she’s visited her friends and many honorary grandchildren.

Connolly praises Williams’ efforts toward the project’s realization.

“We compliment each other,” she says of Williams. “She’s the visionary and I’m the reality.”

Donations for upkeep and further improvements can be made to Y.E.S., a 501c3 charitable organization, at P.O. Box 812, Cave Junction, OR, 97523. For further information, visit SK8 Cave Junction on Facebook.



Area youth rides his scooter at the skate park in July 2014.

(Photo by Dan Mancuso, Illinois Valley News)

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