

NEWS

Skatepark offers new venue for Asheville skateboarders

Ed Fickle
Staff Reporter

Hundreds of skaters and spectators attended the grand opening of the Food Lion Skatepark Oct. 20, featuring a professional demo, open skating and live music.

"This park is amazing, one of the best designs I have ever seen. It has open and varied terrain, professional construction and concrete smooth as glass," said Kate Bush, a biology major at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The new park is located across Interstate 240, at the corner of Flint and Cherry streets in Montford.

Almost five years in the planning, the park was built this past summer by Team Pain, the professional park design and construction company led by Tim Payne.

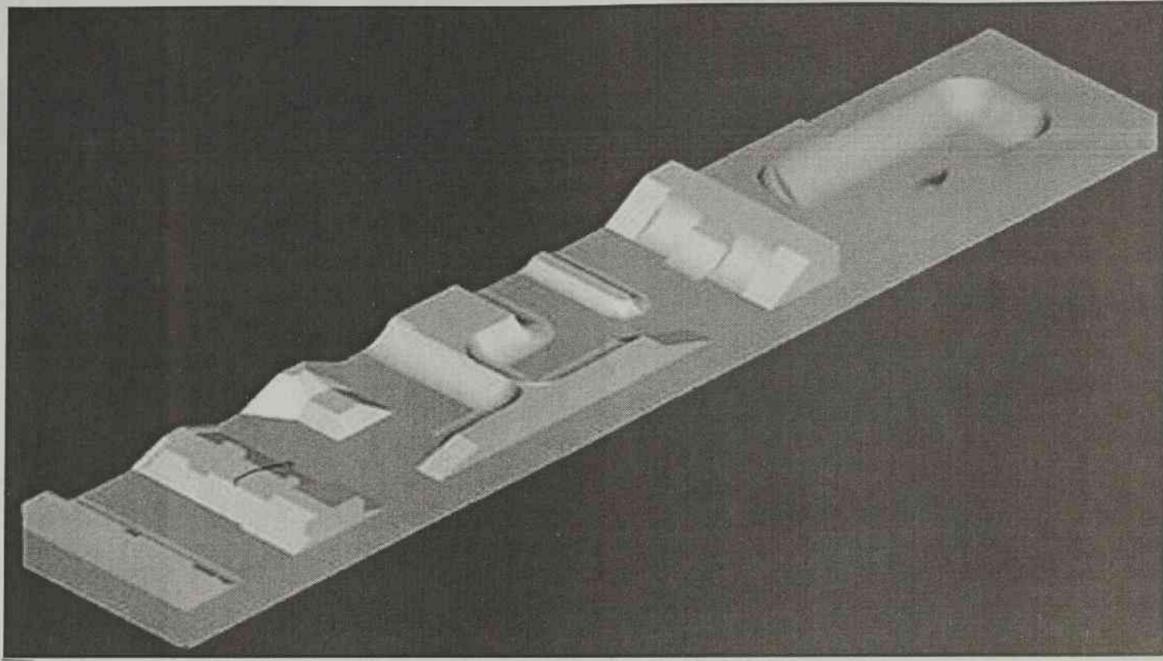
Michael Hosey, manager of the new Food Lion Skatepark, said, "It's just the idea that if you build it, they will come. I worked at the old park on top of the parking deck over the summer, and we rarely had much of a crowd at all.

"Now that we have this great park, there have been tons of people from Asheville, and from as far away as Raleigh, Wilmington, Tennessee, Florida, Atlanta, and Richmond," said Hosey.

Food Lion Inc. donated most of the financial backing for the project, about half of the \$600,000 needed to build the park.

Other partners in funding are Doritos and Mountain Dew, with media coverage from Mountain Xpress and New Rock 93.3 The Planet.

"Once everything is complete with the construction of the concessions, bathrooms and the permanent fence, it will be a fantastic facility for skaters in Asheville and sur-



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF FOODLIONSKATEPARK.COM

This graphic shows the design of the new Food Lion Skatepark, located at the corner of Flint and Cherry streets in Montford.

rounding areas," said Laura Loftis, an employee in the athletics department of Asheville Parks and Recreation Department.

Not only was the opening attended by amateur skaters and spectators from all over North Carolina and surrounding states, but several professionally-sponsored skateboarders were present in support of the new park.

"I think it's priceless. I've been skating since in Asheville since I was 12, now I'm 27. This park is something that we really needed," said Chris Dow, team manager for Flipside Skate Shop in downtown Asheville. "It's illegal to skate in the city otherwise."

The old skate park, a temporary one located on the top of the Civic Center parking garage, has been deteriorating for the last several years, due to the old park's exposure to the weather.

"The old park was in pretty bad condition," said Evan Schafer, a multimedia arts and sciences major at UNCA. "Finally, skaters have somewhere to go without getting in trouble with public safety or the Asheville Police."

Among the professional skateboarders who attended the grand opening were Chet Childress, sponsored by Accel Wheels, Independent, Vans and 151 Boards.

Jud "Farmboy" Heald and Tim

Byrne, the number two-ranked freestyle skater in the world, were also there. Heald and Byrne put on a demo for spectators Saturday, representing the Columbus, Ga.-based Manna Skateboard Co.

"It's a world-class park, as good as any professional park you will find anywhere else in the world," said Dow.

One of the new park's biggest supporters, Kevin Shelton, Asheville native and professional skateboarder/snowboarder, has been pushing for the park since the early 1980s.

Shelton said he considered the opening of the park Oct. 20 a high point in his career.

Featuring three separate sections, a minibowl, street course, and big bowl, the park is designed to offer something to skaters of every age and experience level.

Although most students at UNCA and citizens of Asheville probably wouldn't know the value of a professionally designed and built park, the dedicated group of skaters in Asheville and surrounding areas most certainly do.

"It's Team Pain, the number one park builders in the nation, and one of the best in the world for sure, so this is a world class facility, good enough for hosting a professional skating competition," said Hosey.

"Finally, skaters have somewhere to go without getting in trouble with public safety or the Asheville Police."

-Evan Schafer
multimedia major

Tim Payne and the other Team Pain employees, who have built and designed over 50 skateparks around the world and across the US, did the design and construction of the Food Lion Skatepark. Among other notable parks completed by Team Pain is the X-Games Skatepark in Philadelphia, built specifically for the 2001 summer X-Games.

Although this past Saturday was the grand opening of the park, it has actually been open for about four weeks to skaters, giving them as much of the good seasonal weather as possible.

The Food Lion Skatepark has begun normal operations, hours of operation and admission rates can be found on the official Web site for the new skatepark, located at www.FoodLionSkatepark.com

Much to the disappointment of local BMX riders, the new park is only open to skateboards and in-line skates.

"Not to bicycles, due to the damage that bicycles would cause to the skateable surface, causing that surface to degrade and become unsafe for skateboards and in-line skaters," according to the Asheville Parks and Recreation Department.

"Some people have complained about bikes not being allowed, but there is a meeting planned for Nov. 1 to look at doing something for BMX riders," said Hosey.

Italian cuisine with "Yav"



WALTER FYLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Vice chancellor Eric Iovacchini cooks for students in the UNCA cafeteria.

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