

New dog park is dream come true for local woman

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

Forsyth County's Department of Parks and Recreation is welcoming the addition of a decidedly new edition, with the opening of Horizons Happy Hounds, another dog park in Forsyth County.

"It's an area that's about three acres in size that we're turning it into a fenced-in area for dogs," explained Forsyth County Parks Superintendent Michael Anderson. "Once you get inside, you can let your dog off-leash and (it will be) able to run in that open area and get exercise."

Born of a swath of untouched land at Horizons Park, Horizons Happy Hounds is on the brink of completion.

"We're pretty much putting the finishing touches on it," Anderson said. "It's going to be a real positive feature for our system."

Complete with intricate fencing designed to keep pets contained, yet free, park benches and landscaping, the park is home to many amenities. Waste stations are plentiful so that cleanup is convenient, and the park has special "doggy" water fountains.

Horizons Happy Hounds is the actualization of a deep-seated dream for community member Darlene Pruitt and her adult daughter, Jenny. The two were the impetuses behind the park's creation.

Jenny Pruitt was the first to bring up the idea of creating a dog park in the area, to ease some of the strain of the city's existing dog park in Washington Park.

"I guess it all started with my



Horizon's Happy Hounds will soon open.

daughter ... She really wanted to build this dog park," stated Darlene Pruitt, who describes herself and her daughter as animal activists.

"Of course, she really didn't have any resources - she didn't have any land, she didn't have any money to really get started on a project that huge. We really put it on the back burner as just a dream that may someday come true and then again, it may be one of those forgotten dreams."

Darlene Pruitt adopted an abused puppy - a Border Collie / Sheltie mix she named Nami, in

2005, and says that everything changed for her after that.

"When I got this puppy, it really opened my eyes to recognizing the need that we really do have," she related. "When I investigated, I found out that Charlotte had five (dog parks) and Greensboro had four, and you know, that we were really being left behind."

A series of phone calls led the Pruitts to the Forsyth County Department Recreation Parks.

"They suggested that we go out and look at Horizons Park so I did that on my own and they were right,

it was an absolute perfect location - already had the parking lot, the land was just sitting there," Darlene recalled. "They gave me an estimate and I gathered a committee of people together who were incredible, and we started fundraising."

The committee, which was intentionally diverse in its ethnicity, also submitted an application for a grant through the Winston-Salem Foundation, which subsequently awarded it \$40,000 toward its \$54,000 goal.

Another \$8,000 was garnered through a series of fundraisers

which ranged from "Bark in the Park" to dog washes, bake sales, even "Santa Paws" pictures featuring the beloved pets with Santa Claus. The county agreed to provide the remaining dollars necessary to make the park a reality.

Pruitt says she has never done a project of this scale before, and likened the intensity of it to childbirth.

"It's incredible to me; I'm amazed at the entire process," she remarked. "It's a lot like carrying a child and going through the pain of the labor - because you go through a lot of the pain whenever you're working your bones off - but now that it's here, you forget the pain and you just rejoice."

Though the project came to fruition through no small amount of hard work, Pruitt says the process was surprisingly seamless overall.

"I just feel like everything happens in divine order and the way that all of this came together was just like putting the pieces of the puzzle together," she commented. "It was incredible - I've never seen anything work so orchestrated, and I really knew it was coming from a higher source."

The Pruitts and their faithful committee have organized a special event for the opening of Horizons Happy Hounds July 21. The event will include appearances by many pet-friendly vendors, as well as animal-oriented nonprofits.

"Oh, we're so excited - it's just the most beautiful place - we're really proud," Pruitt gushed. "It's state-of-the-art ... it's exceeded my expectations. I'm happy that it's over and that we can play soon."

Summer reading

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ed parks and theaters.

Molly Buckley, one of the program's case managers, said the program helps keep children reading at a time when they normally wouldn't be.

"During the summer the kids don't really (read), I mean unless they really enjoy reading, it's something they're not going to do and we want to expose them to new things. Giving them a book is a great thing because it's a brand new book they get to keep every week. So they get experience reading, they get to do different activities," said Buckley.

Buckley said, when it's

reading time, they divide the kids up by age and reading level into smaller groups led by case managers. She said they'll go around the group and take turns reading. The case managers will go over words the kids might not understand before they read and will lead them in conversations and activities about what they read.

The young participants have done a wide range of activities and trips so far. To go along with "A River Ran Wild" they went to Kernersville Lake Park for reading and paddle boating. They also went to Triad Stage in Greensboro, where they got a front row seats for "Carolina Jack's Last Adventure," a musical that had the children singing even after it was over. The

children have also written their own poems.

"I think they're having a really good time. They're making new friends," said Buckley. "I think they're glad to be out doing different things."

Future activities for this summer include a trip to a juggling show and a planting activity where the kids will get to paint their own pots and an outdoor picnic. Even with all the other activities they do, the kids still enjoy the reading. When asked, more than half the kids said they enjoy the reading more than the field trips and other activities, Williams said.

Buckley said the summer reading program is a nice change of pace for the case workers who are usually

charged with matching up a child with his or her Big Brother or Big Sister and supervising the match. She said she hopes BBBS can get more volunteers so they can get everyone on the waiting list matched up with a Big Brother or Big Sister so the fun and enrichment they have during programs like the summer reading program becomes a staple in their lives.

Those interested in becoming a Big Brother or Big Sister can either visit the local BBBS web site at www.bbbsnc.org or call (336) 724-7993.



Molly Buckley on the lake with some of the kids.

Spin-off

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Jones"), Kiko Ellsworth ("Stan Johnson"), Sonya Eddy ("Epiphany Johnson"), Minae Noji ("Kelly Lee"), Bradford Anderson ("Damian Spinelli"), Adrian Alvarado ("Cruz Rodriguez"), Derk Cheetwood ("Max Giambetti"), Richard Gant ("Russell Ford") and Wendy Braun ("Ms. Sneed").

"General Hospital: Night Shift" began production on Friday, April 20. Robert Guza Jr., head writer for "General Hospital" and Jill Farren Phelps, executive producer, "General Hospital" will write and executive produce "General Hospital: Night Shift."

Recently awarded 5



Kiko Ellsworth

Daytime Emmy Awards, including a record ninth for Best Daytime Drama, "General Hospital" celebrated 44 years of broadcasting on

April 1, 2007, and is the longest-running dramatic serial on the ABC Television Network, having aired its 11,000th episode earlier this year. "General Hospital" consistently rates as one of the top daytime programs with Women 18-49.

SOAPnet offers same-day episodes of popular daytime dramas including "All My Children," "Days of our Lives," "One Life to Live," "General Hospital" and "The Young and the Restless" at night for convenient viewing. In addition, the network provides inside access to stars and storylines with original programs, including the biography show "Soapography," "1 Day With..." and the reality series, "I Wanna Be a Soap Star."

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