

REPORTER-HERALD

Park opens on west side of town

Mehaffey Park's grand opening showcases new skate park, tennis courts and dog park

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Aug. 2, 2015*



Hundreds gathered in Mehaffey Park Saturday morning for the official grand opening of the new recreational area in west Loveland for a range of activities that even included a peanut butter eating contest for dogs.

After an outdoor yoga class and official ribbon cutting ceremony kicked off the opening of the park, dozens of people of all ages took their skateboards, bikes and scooters into the park's brand new skate park featuring two concrete bowls as well as ramps and rails. Each rider was excited to have an additional skate park to the one at Loveland Sports Park.

"This is a lot nicer, definitely one of the best around," said Tyler Kincaid, a 34-year-old Evans resident.

Overhead lights can be turned on to illuminate Mehaffey Park's skating area until it closes at 10 p.m.

"It's cool — they did it right with concrete and lights," Kincaid said. "You're going to get all kinds of people here, too, kids and dudes in their 50s. Loveland has a good scene."

Loveland's Parks and Recreation Director Elizabeth Anderson also boasted about the new skate park's features.

"That's a state-of-the-art facility for the state of Colorado," Anderson said.

The skate park is part of the \$13.6 million Mehaffey Park project that officially began in 1997 when the city purchased 60 acres from the Mehaffey family, descendants of pioneer settlers of the property. Years of planning led to a groundbreaking in August 2013, and the park officially opened to the public Saturday.

Planned events organized by the city kept park visitors entertained throughout the day. Owner of Heaven's Popcorn Alan Martens was hired by the city to hand out free bags of his homemade kettle corn, and volleyball courts were set up on the north side of the park. The nets will not be set up permanently in the park, though, Loveland Parks and Recreation Department employee Justin Perdue said, but people can bring their own nets to play.

A full basketball court along with seven full tennis courts and four pickleball courts on the north side of the park will provide sporting opportunities as well.

"This is a very special day because it's a celebration," Anderson said. "This is a longtime coming for Loveland. It's a celebration of the quality of life here."



City Councilor Ralph Trenary said it took an extra \$100,000 out of the council fund to construct the pickleball courts, which are shorter than regular tennis courts and friendlier to those who are not expert tennis players.

"It's worth it," Trenary said. "And this park is only 70 percent done."

A nine-hole disc golf course will be installed in the park, too. Andersen said construction for it will start next year and will be completed by 2017.

Larimer County Humane Society had free dog treats at its tent by the park's dog park and also held an event called Skippy Scarfdown, where pooches competed to be the fastest to finish a plate full of Skippy peanut butter.

Emilie Ayoub, owner of a pug named Chloe that scarfed down voraciously, said she will be visiting Mehaffey Park frequently with Chloe because she lives nearby. The dog park has two separate areas for large dogs and small or shy dogs.

"We waited for so long," Ayoub said.

The park isn't just for the neighborhood, though; it's big enough for everybody. Two entrances into the park allow for parking on its north and south sides, at 3350 W. 29th St. and 3285 W. 22nd St., respectively.

"While it's great for people that live close by, this will attract people from all over," Anderson said.

