

## City opens \$500K skateboard park

By Yadira Betances , Staff Writer  
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LAWRENCE - Jarrod Curtis was 16 when he and other city youths started a campaign to get a skate park built in the city.

He is now 22 and a student at University of Massachusetts Lowell, and yesterday he cut the red-and-gold ribbon to officially reopen the renovated Misserville Park next to Leonard School on Allen Street.

"It's simply amazing to stand here today," said Curtis as he addressed students, politicians and community activists gathered at the ceremony.

Curtis was one of a dozen skaters, who were then teenagers and are now college students, who came up with the idea for the skate park in 2001. They even went before the City Council to file a petition and gathered the necessary 600 signatures from fellow teenagers and adults who supported creating the city's first skate park.

He said pounding the pavement to get the signatures, visiting skate parks in Andover, Amesbury and Salisbury to get ideas, and building models out of clay and plastic foam was worth it.

"I learned perseverance and it's very gratifying knowing that I've contributed something," said Curtis, who began in-line skating when he was 15.

The park features a ramp and rail for slides and grinds, a quarter pipe with a ramp and platform and a fly box with a raised surface and launch ramp set on asphalt.

During the ceremony, four teenagers were catching serious air as they did tricks and airdrifts on their skateboards.

"I'm glad we have this park," said Kenny Turner, 18, of Londonderry, N.H., who has been skating for five years. "Once you start, you fall in love with it and it becomes part of your life," Turner said.

Park renovations began in July and work was done by mid-September. It cost \$500,000 from design to construction, said Kate O'Brien, executive director of Groundwork Lawrence, a

nonprofit organization that oversaw the park construction.

O'Brien said \$377,763 or 75 percent of the funding came from a Urban Self-Help Grant of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. Lawrence provided the other 25 percent, O'Brien said.

"This is a celebration of the city's commitment of building parks," O'Brien said.

Using the students' designs, Cosmo Associates of Natick helped with the landscaping and construction using metal equipment and asphalt.

"I just listened to the students and created something that could be easy to have and maintain," Steven Cosmo said.

This is the second park unveiled in Lawrence as part of the city's Spicket River Greenway, which encompasses three miles of parks and trails set among schools, businesses and neighborhoods. A ribbon-cutting ceremony for Scarito Park on Brook Street was held last year.

Groundwork Lawrence and the city are working on a third park which will officially open before the end of the year.

O'Brien said getting funding for Misserville Park was the reason it took six years to build it. The renovations included basketball courts and removing pavement over 33 percent of the park to have more open land so water can soak in instead of running into the Spicket River.

Separated by the Leonard School, on the other side of the skate park, is a schoolyard garden, where O'Brien said students can grow fruits and vegetables.

Misserville Park was dedicated in 1984 and named after the late Francis Misserville, a longtime city employee and youth advocate.

"This is a great tribute to have his park revitalized this way," said Ellen Minzner, of the Community Development Department.

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