

# CAPE CORAL DAILY BREEZE

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## Pooch Park opens to delight of local dogs and owners Hall served as master of ceremonies

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On Feb. 9, scores of dog owners — with their pets — attended the official dedication of Pooch Park.

The newest Lee County park, located within Judd Park in North Fort Myers, is a welcome addition to the area, according to local dog owners.

Lee County Commissioner Tammy Hall served as master of ceremonies, joined by her Boston Terrier, Spanky.

"It's wonderful," she said of the park. "So many residents here live in gated communities with no yards and nowhere for their dogs to run. And the best thing about the park is that it's a social experience for both the dogs and their owners."

ed, and children under 12 must be accompanied by adults.

Judd Park itself is a 14-acre facility that offers a lighted baseball field, four tennis courts, two pavilions available on a first-come, first-serve basis, a playground for ages 2 to 12, a canoe/kayak launch area and restroom facilities.

The dog park is a little over a half an acre and cost \$47,000.

"Taxpayer money well spent," said Hall and several speakers.

She added that it will be well used. At the dedication alone, about 50 dog owners attended with their pooches to show their appreciation for the park.

Barbara Manzo, deputy director of Lee County Department of Parks and Recreation, spoke at the ceremony.

"We're so excited to open this new facility. The park was under-utilized. Then we added the tennis courts and now the dog park,"

Kirk Woodbury, a local Realtor, serves on the parks and recreation committee representing North Fort Myers. He agreed with Hall about the social experience the park offers citizens.

"Dogs get to meet each other and so do their owners," he said.

Woodbury added that the park enhances North Fort Myers, a place he is proud to call home.

"North Fort Myers is one of the best places to live; it's Lee County's best kept secret," he said.

Residents Ron Gardner and his wife, Sandra, and Bud and Ruth Tison were commended by county officials as being instrumental in making the park a reality.

"It's been a long time in coming," said Ron Gardner. "We first

started working on this in October of last year, and the park opened informally in June."

Gardner "started the ball rolling" for the park by approaching Hall to campaign for it.

Besides the two gated, off-leash areas — one for large dogs and one for small dogs — the park has potable water for dogs and owners. The area is irrigated to maintain the turf and a sculpture of a Labrador retriever is at the main entrance gate.

For users of the park, there are a few rules. Aggressive dogs will be removed immediately. Owners must carry a leash. If their dog digs, officials ask that owners fill in the holes. Dog owners also are encouraged to use the "Scoop the Poop" bags available on-site. Female dogs in heat are prohibit-



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she said.

Manzo pointed out that the landscaping and design was incredibly well done.

"The design of the park fits it perfectly, with the oaks and the pines. It's as much for the dog owners as it is for the dogs," she said.

Fred Johnson, who designed the park, construction manager Jim Kirkpatrick and John Long, who oversees maintenance and a daily staple at the park, were commended for their work.

Joe Gugliuzza, a resident and

firefighter for the North Fort Myers Fire District, was one of the speakers at the event who brought along his dog, Massimo. He talked about the importance of the park to local dog owners and ended with a thoughtful quote:

"In the immortal words of Bob Barker, please help control the pet population — have your pet spayed or neutered."

Pooch Park is located in Judd Park, at 1297 Driftwood Drive. For dog park information, call Park Managers Pat Putnam or John Long at 656-7748.