

# Benicia X-cited

## City celebrates X-Park opening

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BENICIA - Hundreds of skateboarders finally had a chance to ollie, railstand and kickflip at the grand opening of the Benicia X-Park on Saturday.

After seven years of planning, fundraising and construction, the X-Park is officially open.

"My face is cramping from smiling the last two weeks. This is just great we are finally open," said Bob Mutch, president of the X-Park Committee.

The 20,000-square-foot park, located in Benicia Community Park, came together with the cooperation of the community, he said. Residents raised funds, local labor unions donated materials and manpower, and private and corporate donations helped keep the project alive, Mutch said.

"Everybody in this community contributed to this park, and we should all be proud," he said.

The idea for the park started after a couple of local residents got together to discuss upgrading the original skate park on West 7th Street, and soon plans were being discussed for a whole new park.

Soon a committee was formed, fundraisers were planned and the new park was in progress, said Rob Mullaney, a member of the X-Park Committee.

Starting in January 2001, the committee held benefit music concerts, pizza nights and car washes to raise money for the new park, Mutch said.

"This is a great example of how the city, elected officials, businesses and residents can come together to make something wonderful for the community," City Council member Bill Whitney said.

Opening celebrations began with a professional skateboarder demonstrating skills, and then local skaters and BMX riders had a chance to give the new park a test run.

Ron Allen, a professional skateboarder from Oakland, said he will be coming up to Benicia to ride X-Park.

"It's really great! I think the new park is rad," he said.

Taylor Young, 15, said she and her friends have been excited about the new park's opening, since the other skate park is a little small and crowded. "At the park downtown, the boys tend to kick the girls out," Young said. "There is more room here for the girls to skate."

X-Park was designed specifically to accommodate BMX bikers as well as skaters, which is unique for California skate parks, Mutch said.

"I like it that you can ride bikes here and not be made fun of, like at other parks," said Shane Streeter, 13, who took turns on his BMX and skateboard at the opening.

Steven Marsden, 11, said he thinks the new park will be good for more advanced skaters and hopes the old one will be used for beginners.

"This one is a lot nicer than downtown. They really put a lot of thought into making it," Marsden said.

Stef Burns, who has two sons who enjoy skateboarding, said the X-Park is the best skate park he has seen, and he hopes it doesn't get trashed by vandals.

"I hope local kids stand up for the place and think it's cooler not to vandalize it," Burns said.

At the opening ceremony, Mutch told the mostly young crowd that the park was now their responsibility.

"It's your park. We're hoping you take care of it," Mutch said.