

Posted on Fri, Jun. 04, 2004

## **Park not the usual grind**

**Skate facility on Hillcrest Avenue wins rave reviews**

By CLARISSA ALJENTERA  
Herald Staff Writer

Lately, 44-year-old skater Dennis Deakin Jr. has been traveling 100 miles to get his fix.

But now, with the opening of a skate park in Marina, he no longer heads down Highway 101 to Greenfield to ride.

Deakin was among dozens of people who showed up for the unveiling of the city's skate park on Wednesday. He said Marina's park on Hillcrest Avenue just might be the hottest in Northern California.

The skate park is slightly longer and wider than a regulation basketball court and is outfitted with rails, boxes and a pool.

Even though the other, younger skaters call him "Grandpa," Deakin said he hopes to skate the new park every day. He said the park is remarkable because its open spaces allow for smooth transitions between obstacles.

"It looks unbelievable," said Deakin of Monterey. "It has a fantastic quality."

City officials welcomed parents and children to the park as they outlined the rules: skaters must wear helmets, elbow pads and knee pads.

Mayor Ila Mettee-McCutchon came up to the microphone and asked the crowd, "This is awesome, is it not?"

Businesses have had problems with skateboarders riding on their property, she said. With the new addition of the skate park, the skaters now have a place to go.

The concept of the park began about five years ago, when Marina Community Center Director Michael Lopez was walking down a street in Merced with his children, trying to think of more city activities aimed at them. The answer, he thought, was to build the park.

Lopez researched the idea and found blueprints of parks in Monterey, Merced and Greenfield.

The park was constructed by Don Chapin Co. with skateboarders themselves chiming in with what they wanted to see. Construction began about six months ago, with the final cost adding up to \$585,000.

While the fanfare and attention was directed mostly at the skate park, city officials were also celebrating the re-opening of the teen center next door. Officials said the current renovation to the single-story building will bring in more people.

"It is a nice tie-in with the teen center," Mettee-McCutchon said.

Even though there were more skateboarders than inline skaters at the park, it didn't deter 10-year-old Kody Tuscany, perched on skates, from strutting his stuff.

"There is no one here on skates," Kody said. "I like it here a lot. You can see a whole bunch of different things like that swirly half-pipe thing."

Skateboarder Marty Duvall said the skate park's location is ideal for most people in the county.

"This will bring skateboarders together," Duvall said. "This was the perfect place to put it."

Grandfather Tony Tafoya couldn't wait to take his 6-year-old grandson, Spencer Cohan, out to the new park.

"This is great. This is something other than baseball or soccer," he said. "Instead of driving down to Monterey this is a place close by. To have one here is a really big plus."

For skateboarder John Wittpenn, 42, said the combination of a smooth park and a prime location made a good fit.

"You gotta give props to Marina because this is incredible," said Wittpenn of Prunedale. "There is a variety of terrain if you want to skate vert or street, you can skate either one."

---

*If you go • What: The new skate park in Marina • When: 9 a.m. until 1 hour after sunset every day • Where: 304 Hillcrest Ave. • Rules: Skateboarders or inline skaters must wear helmets, knee pads and elbow pads. • Exhibition: A skateboarding exhibition, also featuring local bands, will be held Saturday from noon to 4 p.m.*

---

Clarissa Aljentera can be reached at 648-1171 or [claljentera@montereyherald.com](mailto:claljentera@montereyherald.com).