

## Skate park opens to rave reviews

Thadeus Greenson/The Times-Standard

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Mother nature must hold a soft spot for ollies, nosegrinds and kickflips.

After a gray week on the North Coast, the clouds parted Saturday morning just in time for the grand opening of the Eureka Skate Park in Cooper Gulch Park, which drew more than a hundred people.

"We really didn't expect to have a crowd today," said Eureka City Councilman Jeff Leonard, who has championed the park as his pet project. "What we expected was rain and swim suits."

Instead, Leonard got to see the fruits of about eight years of work in the form of a swarm of skaters trying out every inch of the new park.

With the steady hum of wheels gliding over concrete all around him, Leonard explained that there is still some work to be done on Eureka's newest addition. He said plans are in the works to build a staging area near the skate park to make it a bit more user-friendly for events and competitions, as well as to install a "mile of tile," with tiles crafted by park donors and plaques honoring those who helped make the skate park dream a reality.

Dave Varshock of McKinleyville came down for the grand opening and said he was greatly impressed with the park.

"This isn't just any old skate park," Varshock said.

"They talked to the pros to get the designs for the place. I'm just stoked."

Having grown up in San Diego, Varshock said as a kid he had two skate parks within riding distance of his house that helped keep him out of trouble. Now, he says he'd like to provide something similar in McKinleyville, but he recognizes it's no easy task.

"It's going to come down to the people of McKinleyville getting involved," Varshock said, adding that a Web site, [www.mckskatepark.com](http://www.mckskatepark.com), has been set up to help launch the effort. "One person can't do it."

And, that's a lesson Leonard knows all too well and is quick to echo.

While Leonard came to the council with a "fire in his belly," in the words of Eureka Mayor Virginia Bass, he said Saturday that it is really the avalanche of community support that brought the Eureka Skate Park to fruition.

"The reality is, you're the ones that made this happen," Leonard said.

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