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It's Gateway Park: New sign affirms moniker on small Sims Way site

By Erik Hidle
Peninsula Daily News

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PORT TOWNSEND -- The park at Sims Way and Kearney Street finally has a sign -- and a name.

"It's been called Willow Tree Park, Soroptimist Park, the Triangle Park, but the real name is Gateway Park," said Joy McFadden, president of Soroptimist International of Port Townsend and Jefferson County.

"During the official permitting process for the sign that we just put up, we found out that was the real name.

"It's been kind of funny having so many names for it because you have to use them all to know what park we are talking about," McFadden added.

"But now, with the sign, that should be cleared up."



Women from the Port Townsend chapter of Soroptimist International show off the new sign marking their accomplishments in restoring Gateway Park on the corner of Sims Way and Kearney Street in Port Townsend. From left are Ruth Gordon, Judi Morris, Fran O'Brien, Ella Sandvig, Joy McFadden, Sherry Perry and Betty Oakes. -- Photo by Erik Hidle/Peninsula Daily News

The park has a bigger story than the name, however. To the local Soroptimist chapter, the park has become a visual representation of their community involvement.

Community project

In 2005, the group of philanthropic women contacted the city of Port Townsend about taking over the park as a local project.

"When we got it, it was pretty much a mess," McFadden said. "We redesigned it to the state it's in now, with the walkway through it, the plants and all of the maintenance.

"From March to October, we have people down there all the time, working on the park in work parties or just by themselves.

"It's become a really nice community place, and now the sign kind of completes it."

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McFadden said that the process of erecting the sign was an involved process because of the city's strict sign code, which regulates adding new signage to businesses or public areas.

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"We had one up, but had to take it down to get it permitted," she said. "Without that, we might not have found out the official name though, so it's funny how it works."

The Port Townsend City Council has discussed an ordinance to allow departures from the sign code, and allow people to work with the city on unique signs. City Manager David Timmons said the sign code would be discussed again in December.

McFadden said she is happy to see the park constantly improving, adding that the message that it provides, that the Soroptimists are working for the community, is invaluable.

Ruth Gordon, a Soroptimist member and the Jefferson County Clerk, said the group has several projects to support local women.

"Our mission is to make life better for women and girls in the community," Gordon said.

"We're currently looking for applicants for two awards for local women."

Gordon said she hopes to find nominations and applicants for the Violent Richardson award, a \$500 gift to a 14 to 17-year-old girl who has excelled in community service, and for the Women's Opportunity Award, which gives \$1,000 for education to a woman who is the primary provider for her family.

In addition, McFadden said, the Soroptimists "provide scholarships, support the Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault program, support women's health care in Jefferson County, sponsor foster kids and of course, buy plants for the park.

"But beyond donations and fundraisers, we are always looking for people who are philanthropically inclined who wish to get involved."

The group's current fundraiser is a \$10 coupon book for shops and restaurants.

McFadden said that more information on Soroptimists can be found at www.soroptimistpt.org or through phoning her at 360-301-2008.

She also encourages people to take a walk through the park before the winter season hits.

"It's really come together nicely this year," she said.

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