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## Soulard dog park a howling success

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Of the Suburban Journals

South City Journal

Wednesday, Jun. 14 2006

Tallulah has more reason to sleep hard since her owners started taking her to the John and Lucille Wendling Dog Park.

The dog's owners, Hali and Phil Durham, joined the park in the Soulard Neighborhood when they saw the fence built. Now it's a regular destination for them.

"It's great socialization for her and we bring home a very tired dog. She sleeps very well," Hali Durham said.

"We love the dog park. I don't know if it helps the dog, but it sure helps us," said Phil Durham. "She loves it."

The Durhams and Tallulah were among the people and dogs who turned out Sunday at the grand opening of the park located in an alley at the end of Emmett Street, just west of 10th Street.

The opening of the park comes at the end of two and one-half years of work to provide a fenced-in area in Soulard where dogs can run without leashes.

"The first night the fence went up, we sat here in awe," said Julia Mittelstadt, president of the Frenchtown Dog Park Association, which runs the park.

The park had about 35 members before the fence went up. It now has about 70 members, Mittelstadt said. The group estimates it will get 200 to 300 members.

"It's amazing how fast the word is traveling," Mittelstadt said.

The park is open 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. The association is putting a lock with keypad on the gate and members soon will have to enter a code on the keypad to enter the park.

Those wanting to join may go to [frenchtowndogpark.com](http://frenchtowndogpark.com), Pets in the City, 1001 A Russell Blvd., Washington Avenue Post, 1312 Washington Ave., Four Muddy Paws, 2000 Geyer Ave., or phone 241-8888.

For residents of Soulard, McKinley Heights, Lafayette Square, LaSalle Park and Benton Park, the organization requests a donation of \$35 for one dog and \$10 for every additional dog. For people who live elsewhere, the group asks for a donation of \$50 for one dog and \$10 for each additional dog.

The association raised about \$35,000 to open the park. Donors included the Soulard Mardi Gras Foundation, \$5,000, the campaign fund of Alderman Phyllis Young, D-7th Ward, \$10,000, the Boeing Employees Community Fund, \$5,000, small donors contributed about \$4,500, and Mike Stokes gave \$10,000.

Stokes did more than give \$10,000. Stokes and his wife, Pat Wendling, donated the land for the park.

The couple bought it from the Missouri Department of Transportation several years ago. They could have put townhouses on the property and made a lot more

money, but decided against it, Stokes said. "It was more of a work of love. We never thought it was a sacrifice," Stokes said.

"I'm delighted with what they've done with that land. It's a great park," Stokes said.

The park is named for Pat Wendling's parents, John and Lucille Wendling. John Wendling was an engineer for the city who loved dogs, Stokes said.

Among the beneficiaries of the gift is Janet Groll, who lives in Southwest City, and brought her Nemo, her Chinese shar-pei, to the park Sunday.

"I'm going to join because he's having a good time," Groll said.

"I think it's great for them. They need their exercise," Groll said. "His being a single dog, he doesn't get the chance to see too many animals."

With Groll Sunday were her brother and sister-in-law, Steve and Gerardette Groll of Affton, and their chocolate Labrador female, Muddy. They joined Sunday.

"We were looking for a dog park," Steve Groll said. "I like the idea that I could have her run back and forth and just wear her out."

One other member is Alderman Phyllis Young, D-7th Ward. She brought her two Schnauzers, Sadie and Liza, and paid her dues Sunday.

"I'm looking forward to it. Our yard is small and this will give them a chance to run and play," Young said.

Young, whose campaign fund donated \$10,000 for the park, said, "It's another amenity for our neighborhood. I think it says that we are a community."

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