

Grant from Tony Hawk Foundation moves Pike County skate park one step closer to reality

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PITTSFIELD, Ill. -- The [Pike County Skaters](#) are \$5,000 closer to the goal of building a skate park in Pittsfield thanks to a grant from the Tony Hawk Foundation.

The Pittsfield group was one of 15 selected nationally in 2008 to receive a grant from the foundation named after the skateboarding hero to offset expenses related to skate park development.

"It's going to make a huge difference," said Chett Pease, secretary of Pike County Skaters and a junior at Pittsfield High School. "This is basically a national honor. Only so many skate parks are awarded this."

Patricia McIntosh, executive director of the Illini Community Health Care Foundation, the fiscal sponsor for Pike County Skaters, said communities across the country have embraced the skate park concept because it gives kids a positive outlet for their energy and a healthier community for them to grow up in.

Pike County Skaters President Michele Westmaas said the group is taking bids on labor to put in the park's concrete foundation and is seeking a grant to cover the cost.

"Then we'll be ready to break ground and build phase one of the park," Westmaas said.

Pike County Skaters have selected American Ramp Co. of Joplin, Mo., to design and construct the park equipment.

"They've created our ultimate dream park. They help you strategically place pieces you can afford so every step of the way we have a park that works well," Westmaas said.

Park plans will be refined at a webinar set for 6 p.m. Tuesday, April 21, at John Wood Community College in Pittsfield. Each piece of equipment is priced individually, which allows organizations or corporations to sponsor a particular piece.

Pike County Skaters began in July 2007 with the dream of 13 youth tired of skating on bumpy roads and crumbling sidewalks.

"We really intend for this park to be a lasting park, to be there for generations and serve all kids in the county and the surrounding areas who will travel to use the park," Westmaas said. "We do need more families to join in with the effort."

The Tony Hawk Foundation was established in 2002 with a mission to help young people by issuing grants to low-income communities building quality public skate parks and providing guidance to city officials, parents and youth through the process.

In the past three years, the foundation has awarded more than \$2.7 million to 427 public skate park projects nationwide, and an additional \$80,000 in ramp equipment was donated through the foundation's Ramp Partnership program.

Building the skate park "is really important to us because we want to get the skaters off the streets where they could be hit by a car or get in trouble with the law," Pease said. "It's a safer place for kids to skate."

The Pittsfield Park Board allocated the former Coultas Memorial Horse Shoe Court at King Park for the skate park.

Pease proves the point you don't have to skate to support the park.

"I'm actually not a skater. My brothers are skaters. It was a good cause, so I just jumped in," he said. "It's a feel-good project."

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