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We Have Lift-off

Robb Field Skateboard Park Gets Grand Opening Saturday

By MICHAEL McGUIRE
The Beacon

After much confident expectation, the day of skateboarder recognition in San Diego has finally arrived. Robb Field Skateboard Park will have its grand opening Saturday, Feb. 19, and everybody is invited to partake of the festivities.

"This day will truly be a day of celebration, both for the kids and for the Ocean Beach commu-

nity," said Ocean Beach Main-Street Association (OBMA) director, Gerrie Trussel. "In keeping with the spirit of the park, the day will be filled with good, wholesome family fun."

The grand opening will begin promptly at 11 a.m. with a ribbon-cutting ceremony that will include skateboard park champions from the OB community, as well as Councilmember Byron Wear, Parks & Recreation Director Marcia McLatchy and Parks and

Recreation Deputy Director Terri Williams. Once the formalities have been completed, skateboard diehards can expect a day-long celebration that will be nothing short of spectacular.

Pro skateboarders Kanten Russell and Andy MacDonald will be the first to initiate the new park with some breathtaking aerial dis-

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Professional skateboarder Kanten Russell flies through the air with the greatest of ease at the new Robb Field skateboard park. Russell and fellow pro Andy MacDonald will officially break in the park following a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Sat., Feb. 19.

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plays. Both Russell and MacDonald have gone well beyond the call to bring in corporate sponsors for the event, and have donated hours of time and energy to the project from the very beginning.

"The transitions are really smooth," said Russell of the new park. "And the bowls and quarter pipes are great."

Skateboarders will have opportunities to skate alongside Russell and MacDonald, and even to pick up some tips and autographs along the way. While spectators are invited to enjoy a number of free skateboard sessions, an impressive number of sponsored pros and pro-amateurs from around the world will be on hand to perform pro-demo skates. At least two 30-35 minute skateboard demonstrations are planned throughout the day. There will be autograph signing, technique discussions and skateboarding advice from event sponsors and corporate team members.

According to Trussel, the entire community has rallied around the opening of the park. The sponsorship of Robb Field Skateboard Park has been so impressive that OBMA has managed to raise nearly \$25,000 worth of free industry-specific equipment and "skateboardships" with no budget for the event whatsoever.

Skateboardships are season passes that will be awarded to underprivileged kids under the age of 18 who qualify. One aim of the skateboardship is to ensure that no youth is turned away from the park because of financial need.

Sponsors such as Papa John's Pizza, Sobe Beverages and Bahia Don Bravo have donated hundreds of food items. There will be free pizza, burritos, soft drinks and beverages available the day of the event.

However, none of this could have been possible had it not been for the efforts of a skateboard enthusiast by the name of Michael Ryan. In many ways, the

whole idea of the skateboard park is the brainchild of Ryan, an OB resident, business owner, parent and skateboarder. For 11 years, Ryan worked selflessly to create a low-intensity, street-orientated skateboarding environment that addressed the needs of the kids grinding their skateboards, as well as the complaints of the surrounding community impacted by the sport.

In the fall of 1998, Ryan's hard work was rewarded when the city allocated nearly \$1 million for the Robb Field improvement project that also included a skateboard park. Teaming up with master developer and architect Steve Estrada, and former pro skateboarder and architect Mike McIntyre, Ryan and the others researched and developed a comprehensive plan for the skateboard park of their dreams. Terra Cal Construction took on the plans, and despite numerous changes and modifications, were able to make the skateboarder's dream a concrete reality.

"The whole thing has been a very positive experience for everyone involved," Ryan said. "People give me credit for keeping the coals breathing, but this park is the result of many people's efforts. For instance, *The Beacon* deserves all the credit in the world for keeping this issue alive, and has been instrumental in getting the park situated in OB."

While skateboarders are invited to come down on the grand opening and skateboard free of charge, no one will be allowed in the park without a helmet and proper padding. Kids under 18 will be required to bring a waiver signed by their parents. Those 18 or older must sign a waiver of their own. Daily passes will cost \$5, season passes will cost \$30. For more information on the Grand Opening of the Robb Field Skateboard Park, and hours of operation, call San Diego Parks and Recreation at (619) 531-1563.

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