

Skatepark dreams closer to reality

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FOWLER -- When two grind rails and a quarter pipe were installed in a park in this Benton County town, local skateboarders lined up to use them -- even though it was February.

Since then, interest in the Fowler Skate Park, located in the town park, has dwindled.

"There's not enough stuff to do there, and it's not worth wearing a helmet" for it, said Forrest Deno, 14, of Fowler.

Volunteers hope all of that is about to change.

Fowler "Skateboard mom" Nancy Jackson recently completed her fundraising goal of \$60,000, thanks to a sizable donation from North Central Health Services (NCHS) to the Benton Community Foundation.

The money will be used to buy new equipment for the skate park, giving local skateboarders a reason to hang out at there rather than on the steps of the Benton County Courthouse or in front of local businesses.

"I think they're kind of ready to get (skateboarders) confined in one place," Jackson said.

New equipment planned for the park includes a 2-foot half pyramid and fun box, a 4-foot bank and a curved manual pad with a grind ledge and rail.

The equipment will be installed on a concrete pad that's about 100 feet by 60 feet, Jackson estimated.

NCHS donated \$28,780 to enable skate park supporters to reach their \$60,000 fundraising goal.

Jackson said the Tony Hawk Foundation and Benton Community Foundation also donated substantial sums of money to the cause.

"(The skate park) is a tremendous asset for a community of our size," Ashley Bice, executive director of the Benton Community Foundation, said in a news release.

Thanks to the large donations, Jackson was able to raise the funds she needed much more quickly than she expected. Fundraising began in 2005.

"I thought it would take four years," Jackson said.

Jackson's 14-year-old son, Conor, said he's looking forward to the new equipment, even though he hasn't been skateboarding much lately.

He won't get tired of the skate park now "because there's going to be so much stuff," he said.