

## Grand opening of Chief Gene Shepherd Park set for June 1

BY SARAH WOJCIK  
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SHELBY TOWNSHIP — It's been a long time coming, but officials finally nailed down June 1 as the grand opening of the township's sixth park — the first new park in at least 15 years.

Fire Chief Gene Shepherd Park was prompted by a late-2000s situation involving a failed indoor soccer facility and wetland encroachment litigation that cost the township approximately \$1.3 million under its previous board.

"It's a nice addition to the west end of Shelby, and I give the Township Board credit for taking something that was nothing but an eyesore and putting it into a beautiful park for our residents," said Joe Youngblood, director of the Parks, Recreation and Maintenance Department.

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## Shelby Memorial Day service honors fallen heroes

### MAY 25 CEREMONY IS DEDICATED TO SOLDIER KILLED IN ACTION

BY SARAH WOJCIK  
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SHELBY TOWNSHIP — For more than a decade, Township Veterans Events Coordinator Phil [Name] has been organizing the Memorial Day event at the [Location] grounds to honor American soldiers who fell in action.

The event is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. May 25.





# Park

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The park's name is a salute to the late fire chief Gene Shepherd, who died of cancer in 2012.

"I think it's a very fitting tribute to Gene and fits right in with the person he was. He was always about the family and the kids," said Fire Chief Jim Swinkowski.

The grand opening celebration, hosted by the Parks and Recreation Committee, is scheduled for noon-3 p.m. June 1, with the official ribbon-cutting featuring Shepherd's widow, Lee Ann Shepherd, at 1 p.m.

The family-friendly event will feature a live disc jockey, games and educational activities for children and adults. Firefighters from the Shelby Township Fire Department will be present with a fire-themed bounce house and fire truck.

The Vietnam Veterans Association's honor guard out of Mt. Clemens will be present to post colors and play taps.

The park features a covered pavilion, tennis and sand volleyball courts, bocce ball and horseshoe pits, a soccer field, and restrooms. Located at 2452 23 Mile Road, just east of Dequindre Road, the park offers a spacious parking lot and is in close proximity to Yates Cider Mill, and several walking and bike paths.

Board liaison to the Parks and Recreation Committee, Treasurer Michael Flynn, said only a few finishing touches must be completed before June 1, including leveling dirt piles near the bike path, putting grass seed down, adhering a fire truck decal to the clubhouse and recoating and striping the parking lot.

"We already have a large number of rentals for family picnics (at the pavilion), which has a really sharp look to it," Youngblood said. "The restrooms are some of the nicest you'll find in any park, all nicely tiled and very clean."

He said his department intends to start a sand volleyball league, offer youth tennis lessons and host a youth soccer league at the park in the future.

While the park initially was slated to open in the fall, the cold



Photos courtesy of Michael Flynn

**TOP: The dirt on the sides of the asphalt walking and bike path at Fire Chief Gene Shepherd Park needs to be leveled and grass seed laid before the grand opening celebration June 1. ABOVE: A large decal of a fire truck needs to be adhered to the clubhouse garage door at Fire Chief Gene Shepherd Park before the grand opening celebration.**

weather beat out construction efforts, and the Department of Environmental Quality wanted several trees planted and more areas stabilized from a wetland consent agreement dating to 2006, according to Shannon Filarecki, an engineer with Fazal Khan and Associates.

In a May 13 phone interview, Filarecki told the Shelby-Utica News that her office looked into the issue diligently for the last three weeks and submitted plans that morning for the DEQ's approval to plant trees and remove a dirt pile located at the west end of the site, closer to Dequindre Road.

"They have done a preliminary review of the plans and said everything looks OK," Filarecki said.

Flynn said the estimated cost

of the park was about \$450,000 and that the final account is a few thousand dollars under budget. Income from cable television paid for the project at no cost to township taxpayers.

Private donations, including \$25,000 from Sunoco, will go toward park improvements, including a possible splash park feature, Flynn said. The public also is welcome to sponsor park benches.

"We turned (that land) into something we could use in five years, so we're really happy," Flynn said. "(The grand opening) should be a lot of fun. I think we'll have a big crowd."

For more information, call the Treasurer's Office at (586) 731-5145.

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