

\$900K donation paves way for Fairfield park

FAIRFIELD — A second donation from the estate of Anna and Harold Huffman will allow Fairfield to fully construct a park on the John Gray Road farm that was deeded to the city last year.

The Jeffrey Allen Corp. will begin construction in early February on the southern 12 acres of the 22-acre farm. It is expected to take 6-9 months to complete, said Tim Bachman, the city's director of development services.

Plans call for the southern half of the property to include a butterfly garden, playground which incorporates natural features such as earthen mounds onto which a slide would be placed, restrooms, walking trails, an interpretive pond, community garden and an outdoor education center.

The northern 10 acres of the property will remain green for now until funds are available to create a golf academy.

Initially, the city received \$550,000 to develop the park but after reviewing 11 bids the city received in December, the family donated another \$310,000 to complete it.

"The family thought if we were this close,

we really wanted to finish it," said Fred Wehr, the couple's nephew. "We were pleased it came in under \$1 million."

On her 1991 deathbed, Anna Huffman and her husband agreed to keep the farm green. But it wasn't until Harold Huffman's death two years ago that the city was contacted and planning for the park began.

The couple never had children but Anna taught Sunday school and Vacation Bible School in the city. She loved the outdoors and took care of flower beds and gardens.

Harold Huffman grew up on a Mack Road farm, went to a one-room school until high school, and bought the John Gray acreage from his grandfather when he returned from military service in 1945, when he and Anna married.

His aunt, Wehr said, loved kids and educating them, which is way the city is partnering with the schools for the outdoor education center.

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The park is now the city's fifth largest and is adjacent to the city's South Trace golf course.

Without a second donation, the family knew it might be difficult to complete the items in the schematic because of the cost, said attorney Kenneth Kinder II.

"We really wanted to see it all done at once, but with the economy we don't know when things would be better financial-wise for the city ...which would prevent the city from having the resources to complete the park as we envisioned," Kinder said.

"This was Harold and Anna's dream. They are both looking down at this project and are smiling."

"It was a great Christmas gift," Bachman added.

About the park

Location: 22 acres in Fairfield, fronted on John Gray Road, just west of the Fairfield Greens South Trace golf course

Donation : Total of \$50,000 to draw up plans for the park \$860,000 to develop it from the Anna and Harold Huffman Foundation and the Harold W. Huffman Trust

History : Harold Huffman grew up on a Mack Road farm, went to a one-room school until high school, and bought the John Gray acreage from his grandfather when he returned from military service in 1945, when he and Anna married. Harold Huffman was an engineer, eventually becoming president of the Hamilton Tool Company and holds 33 patents. After retiring, he began a consulting company.

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