

12/21/2016

Dear fellow dog lovers,

After more than seven years of hard work, planning, and waiting, we are now closer than ever to finally bringing a dog park to Oakland. And that means it's time to take the next step.

My involvement with this project began in 2008, when I had to propose something that would benefit our community as an eighth-grade assignment at Valley Middle School. Our family had just rescued a golden retriever mix named Scooby, and my mother suggested that I could develop a dog park proposal for our town as my project.

Since then, my idea has grown into a community movement. In the last few years, the Borough of Oakland purchased a rundown former swim club site and now a volunteer run committee has diligently worked to develop that property into Great Oak Park – and a dog park is part of the plan. You can even see a sign announcing that a dog park is coming soon if you visit the property.

Sadly, my mother, the inspiration for this project, won't see this idea come to fruition, as she died of cancer in 2012 before my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. That's why I hope, with Borough approval, the dog park can be named the Jill Schwertfeger Memorial Dog Park in her memory.

It still took a while to get to this point after meetings, discussions, waiting, and plans had to be developed. You may have even read about the progress in the Suburban News and The Bergen Record! **However, we've now reached a crucial point in the process to finally make an Oakland dog park a reality.**

As we stand today, myself and the Great Oak Park Committee have coordinated the location of the proposed dog park with the Borough Engineer, eliminating the need for costly and time consuming NJDEP permits; and now the Great Oak Park committee chairman has indicated that fundraising for the project can begin with the hope that construction could then start shortly after the necessary funds are raised. Like all dog owners in the Oakland area, I'm anxious to see this dog park built. I've been promising it to Scooby for more than seven years!

The total cost involved in building an Oakland dog park—including removing existing asphalt and concrete, erecting fencing, planting of trees, creating and installing benches and signage, running a water line to the property, and adding appropriate dog-friendly improvements—is estimated at **\$80,000**. We expect to cover most of that cost through donations of time and equipment, but we will still need monetary donations to make a dog park a reality.

**I'm hoping to raise at least \$30,000 total from individuals, businesses, and organizations like you.** My parents and I will be making a substantial donation toward this project too, but we will need many other donations to assemble the needed finances as well in order to move forward and start the actual work to bring a dog park to Oakland.

*Please Flip Over*



All donations will be tax-deductible, because the Sports Association of Oakland, a registered 501(c)3 organization, has agreed to manage contributions to the project. In addition, all contributors of \$1,000 or more will have their name or their business or organization's name featured on a thank-you sign to be erected at the dog park.

So I am asking that you make a donation now, even if it is a small one. Small gifts can make a big difference. **If every one of the 917 people who have “liked” my Dog Park for Oakland, N.J. Facebook page gave just \$10, we would raise \$9,170—or about one-third of our entire fundraising goal!**

If you can't make a monetary donation, you can still sign up to volunteer for the project, as help may be needed for tasks like planting plants, building benches, or assembling park elements. Boy Scouts needing Eagle Scout or community projects are encouraged to contact me as well. You can also be a huge help by encouraging your friends and family to donate, letting me know of any companies that might be willing to offer helpful services, or informing me about a grant that I could apply for.

For me, my personal faith has been a cornerstone to carry me through this entire process, but I also know that for all of us, the passion and drive to achieve something in the face of adversity propels us to keep going, even when things get rough or have more bumps in the road than originally anticipated. What is exciting now is that I can see the light at the end of the tunnel, and we just need a little bit more effort and energy to make it to the end to finally say it is now finished.

Through my personal efforts to bring a dog park to Oakland, I have learned the value of patience, friendship, and diligence, and I pray that through continued hard work and perseverance, our community can soon enjoy the benefit of our own local dog park. I hope you'll now join me and donate to make a dream and desire of many here and not here on this Earth a reality at long last.

Sincerely,

Ryan Schwertfeger

*P.S. Please send your donations to:*

**Sports Association of Oakland, ATTN: Great Oak Park – Dog Park  
P.O. Box 236  
Oakland, NJ 07436**

*The Sports Association of Oakland's EIN is 26-3382087. Canceled checks can be used as evidence of the donation for tax purposes.*