

City officially opens Ketchum-Libolt Park in formal ceremony with city and police leaders

Costa Mesa City and Police leaders officially opened the newly imagined and expanded Ketchum-Libolt Park on Monday, Oct. 12, christening a coveted slice of open space that will meet the needs of the city's Westside community for years to come.

The park's name is a tribute to Costa Mesa Police Officers James "Dave" Ketchum and John "Mike" Libolt, who lost their lives in a March 10, 1987, helicopter crash. The park was built in August of 2005 to pay tribute to their many years of dedication to Costa Mesa and its residents.

"This project has been a labor of love from day one," Mayor John Stephens said. "Our City team did a great job in creating a park that the community will be proud of while at the same time keeping the legacy of these brave police officers alive. Special thanks to Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris for her initial investment that made this park possible."

The ceremony started with a presentation by the Police Honor Guard and ended with a flyover of three helicopters from Anaheim and Huntington Beach police departments and the Orange County Sheriff Department and a trove of children who gleefully played on the equipment.

Also in attendance at the ribbon cutting was Council Members Mike Buley, Loren Gameros, Arlis Reynolds and Andrea Marr, City Manager Cecilia Gallardo-Daly, Assistant City Manager Alma Reyes, County Supervisor Katrina Foley and top ranking members of the police and fire departments.

"There is something especially meaningful about honoring Senior Officers Dave Ketchum and Mike Libolt through a neighborhood park," said Chief Joyce LaPointe. "This is a place where children will play, families will spend time together, and neighbors will get to know one another. Those everyday moments reflect the community our officers work to protect. As this park begins its next chapter, it also gives us an opportunity to introduce Dave and Mike's story to another generation. When someone asks about the names on the sign, we have a story to share about service, courage, sacrifice and two officers whose commitment to Costa Mesa is still remembered."

At Monday's ribbon-cutting, residents heard from former Costa Mesa Police Captain and current Chaplain Dave Brooks, who was a personal friend of the two officers and was on duty the day of the crash. Brooks shared personal anecdotes of both men and acknowledged their children, Hilary Ketchum and Katie Libolt Wright and her mother Becky West.

The project was made possible by the funding earmark of \$1.2 million from State Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris, who spoke at Monday's ribbon-cutting.

"Ketchum-Libolt Park gives Costa Mesa families a safe place to play, neighbors a place to connect, and a community something to be proud of," said Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris (D-Irvine). "Dave Ketchum and Mike Libolt gave their lives protecting this community, and I'm grateful I could help secure state funding for a park worthy of their legacy."

The footprint of the formerly quaint park on the City's Westside was expanded by Costa Mesa Public Works into the adjacent unused parkway area to increase the size of the park to 24,000 square feet and provide additional recreational space for residents.

"One of my many goals when arriving on the Council eight years

ago was to improve parks and open space opportunities for the people in Westside Costa Mesa,” said Mayor Pro Tem Manuel Chavez, who represents District 4 where the park resides.

“I am so proud that with the help of Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris we were able to deliver for the children and families. The upgraded Ketchum-Libolt Park will continue to honoring the memory of these two valiant police officers and provide more open space for the community. Thank you to Assemblywoman Petrie-Norris, Public Works and Parks teams for making this a reality.”

The park now has new playground equipment and rubber surfacing, concrete and paver walkways, shade and picnic shelters, improved lighting and other site amenities. The Costa Mesa Public Works team worked to incorporate helicopter and law enforcement themes in the newly designed park.

“For various elements of this project, we attempted to recognize the officers and police department,” Public Works Director Raja Sethuraman said. “We have mosaics, markers, and playground equipment that will continue to inform current and future generations of Ketchum and Libolt and the legacy they left behind.”