A Park for All

TODD BEAMER PARK
FRESNO, CALIF.

DAWN KLINGENSMITH

In the end, Todd Beamer stood for patriotism, decisive action and heroic sacrifice. But before he uttered that now-famous call to action—“Let’s roll!”—on United Airlines Flight 93 on Sept. 11, 2001, Todd Beamer stood for family. He also loved sports and believed in the importance of staying fit and involving kids in physical activities.


“It memorializes what he did and what he stood for. From everything I’ve heard, he believed in providing sports opportunities for kids,” said landscape architect Corbin Schneider of Verde Design, the Santa Clara, Calif.-based firm that designed the park.

Todd Beamer Park provides sports opportunities and more. About six acres of vacant land were developed into the neighborhood park memorializing the man whose actions helped prevent hijackers on Sept. 11 from slamming into another target.

The park sits on 6.4 acres and includes lighted basketball courts and soccer fields, a skatepark, a water play area, a shaded play area, a picnic pavilion, barbecue pits, a shaded game table, a circular path with exercise stations, a dog park, restrooms and a parking lot.

Indeed, “We designed it so whether you’re a dog person or a basketball player, you have your specific activity area where you can do your thing and not be bothered and where you won’t interfere with anyone else,” Schneider said.

Of all the places named in Beamer’s honor, Todd Beamer Park is perhaps the most fitting, as Beamer would have liked that, and the way the park came about as part of a democratic process guided by community input. As such, people of all ages can find something in the park geared to them, Schneider said, though kids were top of mind as the project developed.

The vacant lot had been intended as a park for years, with money being raised through residential development fees. Having waited so long, the city moved forward without sufficient funds to pay for everything on the community’s wish list, with plans to add amenities as funds became available. Neighbors helped with the prioritizing.

However, bids came in lower than expected, making it possible for the park to be built in its entirety, at a cost of $2.7 million. So from the day it opened, it had something for everybody.

“Let’s roll!” was an expression Beamer used whenever he and his wife, Lisa, and their two young sons were leaving their home for a family outing. She was pregnant with their third child when Beamer died along with 43 others when Flight 93 crashed in a Pennsylvania field.

Fresno Parks & Recreation: www.fresno.gov/Government/DepartmentDirectory/ParksandRecreation/default.htm
Verde Design: www.verdedesigninc.com
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