

Grand Opening

Dakota Memorial Park

Vonnie Harris • Spot Magazine

What a great party in Vancouver on Saturday, August 2. It was the ultimate in activities for the two & four-legged, filled with heartfelt emotions, and dogs, dogs, dogs!

Pacific Community Park has been in the works for years, and culminated in the special day-long dedication event. The park features a picnic shelter, playground, basketball courts, and an extreme sports park, but the most notable and distinctive feature is the eight-acre off-leash area for dogs. This space is a fully fenced enclosure with two double-gated entrances, gravel trails through open lawn and a wooded area, an agility course, benches and drinking fountains. There is even a rinse-off area for the exceptionally dirty canine or the gotta-stay-clean human.


This off-leash playground for dogs exists largely thanks to DOGPAW (Dog Owner's Group for Park Access in Washington), a local nonprofit advocacy group committed to developing and maintaining safe public off-leash dog parks in Clark County. The only other permanent dog park in the county is the Ross Off-Leash Park, which was built entirely by DOGPAW. Both the Ross and Pacific sites are maintained by volunteers, with ongoing maintenance funded through



DOGPAW membership fees and fundraisers.

The most bittersweet and touching moment of the festivities was the dedication ceremony and ribbon-cutting. The off-leash area of the park was named Dakota Memorial Park in honor of K9 Police Officer, Dakota. The five-year old German Shepherd was killed in the line of duty October 22, 2007, while searching for a reportedly armed man in a wooded area. Dakota's handler, Vancouver Officer Roger Evans, received a plaque honoring Dakota. He spoke briefly and tearfully, fondly remembering his best friend. There wasn't a dry eye in the crowd when he cut the yellow ribbon and officially opened Dakota Memorial Park.

Smiles were everywhere, too, and every mix of dog imaginable ran here and there, through the trees and across the lawns with unbridled joy. Dog lovers were everywhere, checking out vendor booths, watching the Doggie Olympics and Adoption Dog fashion show, and enjoying each other. Activities went well into evening in the other park, including a bicycling contest, free community picnic and skateboarding competition (held in Phase I of the Extreme Sports area of the park). The day wrapped with a concert by Holding On.

The party was an absolute perfect beginning for this great new park in East Vancouver, and my four-legged best friends will be visiting again soon. It's a place we can all be proud of. 

Guardians of the Night

Trust in me my friend for I am your comrade. I will protect you with my last breath. When all others have left you and the loneliness of the night closes in, I will be at your side.

Together we will conquer all obstacles, and search out those who might wish harm to others. All I ask of you is compassion, and the caring touch of your hands. It is for you that I will unselfishly give my life and spend my nights unrested. Although our days together may be marked by the passing of the seasons, know that each day at your side is my reward.

My days are measured by the coming and going of your footsteps. I anticipate them at every opening of the door. You are the voice of caring when I am ill, the voice of authority when I've done wrong.

Do not chastise me unduly for I am your right arm, the sword at your side. I attempt to do only what you bid of me. I seek only to please you and remain in your favor.

Together you and I shall experience a bond only others like us will understand. When outsiders see us together their envy will be measured by their disdain.

I will quietly listen to you and pass no judgment, nor will your spoken words be repeated, I will remain ever silent, ever vigilant, ever loyal. And when our time together is done and you move on in the world, remember me with kind thoughts and tales. For a time we were unbeatable, nothing passed among us undetected.

If we should meet again on another street I will gladly take up your fight. I am a Police Working Dog and together we are guardians of the night.

Author unknown

DAKOTA

In Loving Memory

Dakota was born in Slovakia July 2002, and commissioned in Vancouver three years later. He became a SWAT dog in July 2006, and was responsible for 150 narcotics finds and more than 100 suspect captures. He was dubbed Dakota after the department sought suggestions from local schoolchildren.

The courage, sacrifice and exemplary service provided by police dogs and their handlers every day play an integral part in public safety. They are heroes in the truest sense of the word.

