

The accent is on fitness at city-run park

By Casey Hans
Staff writer

SHLAWASSEE PARK is now a haven for health enthusiasts, nature lovers and anyone who loves a picnic.

Recently completed improvements at the Farmington park were dedicated Tuesday, just weeks before Jack Frost makes his annual appearance to nip at the pumpkins and make our leaves a colorful, autumn palette.

Ceremonies for \$170,000 worth of improvements to the 18-acre, city-owned park, at Shlawassee and Farmington roads, were held late in the morning, with Mayor William Hartsock trying out the park's new exercise stations and fitness court.

Also present were other city officials and representatives of Botsford General Hospital, Farmington Public Schools, the city of Farmington Hills, and a variety of business and civic groups.

Plans for the park improvements began in 1984, when the city applied for a Land and Water Conservation Fund Assistance grant funded by the National Park Service of the federal Department of the Interior, and administered locally by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

BESIDES CONTRIBUTING \$110,000 from city coffers, Farmington received \$52,500 from the grant, \$7,000 from Botsford Hospital and \$5,000 from the National Fitness Campaign sponsored by Wells Fargo Bank. Some labor was provided by the Michigan Youth Corps, whose workers cleared brush and installed new exercise stations.

Farmington Public Schools is leasing five additional acres on the west side of the park to the city for \$1 per year, which allowed the addition of two ball fields, according to Farmington City Manager Robert Deadman.

During the past year, park paths were improved, ball field backstops and fences were erected and player

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— Edward Barter
vicepresident
Botsford General Hospital

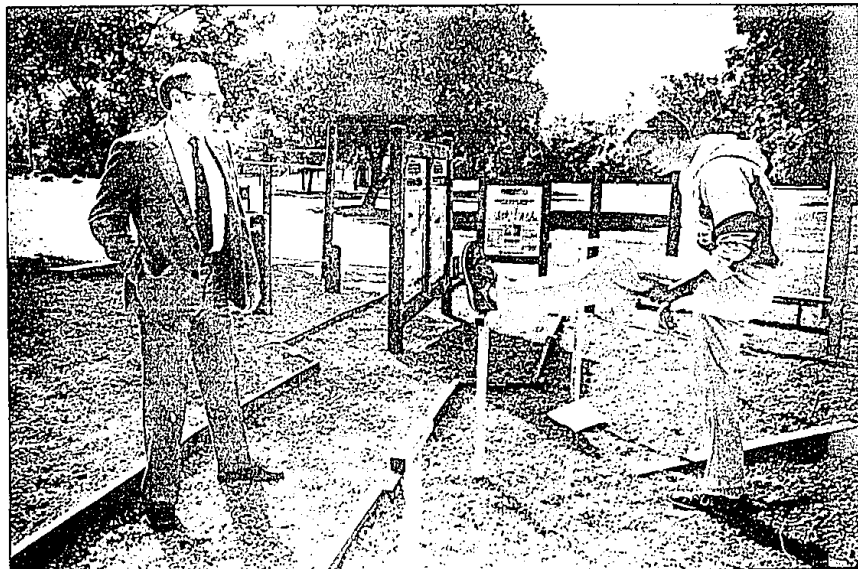
benches added. The ball fields were relocated to improve drainage and were lighted. The park was also updated to provide wheelchair paths from the parking lots and to the rest-rooms.

Part of the fitness equipment donated by Botsford Hospital includes a court with a full range of equipment for body building, weight control and cardiovascular conditioning. A 5/8-mile all-weather track was also installed. A senior walking course with 14 exercise stations "for evenly balanced conditioning" is also complete, according to information from the city.

A new 850-square-foot covered picnic shelter, enhancements to the children's play area and additional hard-surface parking was also added to the park. A total of 140 vehicles can now park in three available lots.

BOTSFORD HOSPITAL Vice President Edward Barter said he was pleased with the city's "dedication to physical fitness" and said he would "prefer to see residents this way — enjoying the fields — instead of as hospital inpatients."

Botsford will meet with representatives of the Farmington Hills senior adult center this week to plan a program for the park using the new exercise equipment. Such a program could be designed for the 100-200 seniors who pass through the center each day, according to organizers.



Mayor William Hartsock (right) tries out the new Gamelfield Fitness Program exercise equipment in Shlawassee Park, Farmington, as City Manager Robert Deadman looks on.

Farmington Hills Special Services Director Dan Potter said the Hills "hoped to use this fine development as an example" in the city's development efforts at the Heritage Park on Farmington Road.

Soccer goals planned for Farmington's park are not yet installed, pending the grading of the field, according to city information.

"The soccer field will overlap the Little League ball field, limiting use somewhat, but it will extend the use of the park well into the fall," according to city reports.

Two bridges span a branch of the Rouge River, which runs through the park. One bridge leads towards the downtown area of Farmington; the other leads to a nature area.

The grant that funded almost one third of the Farmington park project was also used 15 years ago when the city's Drake Road park qualified for money from the same source, according to Deadman.



A senior walking course with 14 exercise stations and a covered picnic shelter are part of the Shlawassee Park renovation.

Olympic gold medalist helps promote fitness

Olympic Gold Medalist Hayes Jones will put on his winning track shoes one more time for a special ribbon-cutting ceremony at Southfield High School Tuesday, Sept. 23.

Beginning at 11 a.m., community and civic leaders will open one of 50 Gamelfield Fitness Programs awarded to area schools and community parks by the program's regional sponsor, Botsford General Hospital, Farmington Hills. Parks include Shlawassee Park in Farmington.

Designed by the Stanford University Heart Disease Prevention Center and the Arizona Heart Institute, the Gamelfield Fitness Program is a self-guided system that promotes the outdoor fitness of the community from ages 1 to 100.

The program falls into four categories: Jogging Course, Wheelchair Sports Course, Senior Walking Course and Fitness Course.

"The Gamelfield at the Southfield High School site will be a Fitness Course. 'We welcome this timely addition to Southfield High School,'" said Dr. Carl Hassel, school superintendent. "It will complement our newly adopted high school physical fitness programs, and will be a valuable resource to the entire community."

JONES, WHO holds the Olympic Bronze Medal for the 100 meter high hurdles from the 1960 games in Rome, and the Gold Medal in the same event at the 1964 games in Tokyo, strongly supports the Gamelfield Fitness Program.

"There is a great need to encourage physical fitness programs today, especially for our young people," Jones said.

"It's encouraging to see Botsford General Hospital making a positive commitment to improving the well being of our communities," Hayes added.

Gerson Cooper, president of Botsford General Hospital, is proud to be the regional sponsor. "We're particularly excited about the physical and mental benefits the Gamelfield Fitness Program will offer to the recip-

ient communities," Cooper said. Cooper will be on hand for opening ceremonies, as will Edward Hodges III, chairman of the board of Botsford General Hospital; Dr. Carl Has-

sel, Southfield Superintendent of Schools; Robert Wright, vice president of the Southfield Board of Education; and Daniel Hogan, principal of Southfield High School.



Farmington Hills Councilwoman Jan Dolan tries out one of the new stretching poles that's part of the new fitness equipment at Shlawassee Park.

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