A new year, a new park

Cancer Survivors Park set to open first amenities in early 2016

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The Cancer Survivors Park in downtown Greenville has been more than a decade in the making; and in 2016 will open a boardwalk winding from Church Street down to the banks of the Reedy River, along with holding multiple fundraisers and celebrations of survivors.

Leap of Faith Perspective

THE PAST

Patients First, a nonprofit formed in 1999 as a patient advocacy group, developed the idea for a park that would provide respite for survivors. The organization defines "survivor" broadly as "those who are kicking cancer right now and also people who have lost someone to cancer and who are surviving and carrying on in their memory," according to Diane Gluck, co-founder of the organization now known as the Cancer Survivors Park Alliance.

Land had been designated for the park in other areas, but plans never moved forward, she said. The opportunity arose to provide a central space for survivors and improve a 6.8-acre area along the Greenville Health System Swamp Rabbit Trail behind the Greenville Chamber of Commerce. The park was designed to include contemplative spaces, educational areas, sculpture installations and a children's garden.

"The Cancer Survivors Park provides the perfect opportunity to rejuvenate the area and increase its accessibility while working closely with Upstate Forever to ensure the native setting is appropriately preserved," said Gluck.

PHOTO BY MARK KIRBY

PHOTO PROVIDED

Lindsey Motley with her daughter, Lilla (left), and husband, Jay (right).

Showing Support

Roots Smokehouse fundraiser

Benefits Lindsey Bates Motley Leap of Faith Overlook at Cancers Survivors Park

WHEN: Dec. 31, 7 p.m.-1 a.m.

WHERE: Mac Arnold's Blues Restaurant, 1237 Pendleton St., Greenville

COST: $60

INFORMATION: http://bit.ly/1OcT8v2

THE PRESENT

Partnerships were forged with the City of Greenville, Greenville County, ReWa and the Nature Conservancy to locate the park along the river. Work began in 2015 on a boardwalk, which is to be fully accessible and is set to open in the early part of 2016, said Cancer Survivors Park Alliance director Kay Roper.

In addition, the Lindsey Bates Motley Leap of Faith, an overlook along the new boardwalk, is set to open in 2016. The overlook is named for Motley, who was diagnosed with stage-four colon cancer in 2013 when she was pregnant and has been undergoing treatment. Tom Bates is raising funds to name the overlook after his daughter.

Roots Smokehouse is also hosting a fundraiser for the overlook on New Year's Eve at its new location at Mac Arnold's Blues Restaurant. Arnold is donating a live performance at the event that will also feature unlimited smoked fare and a cash bar.

"I wanted the opening of Roots Smokehouse, whose fundamental philosophy is about getting to the root of what matters – in our case, cooking – to benefit Lindsey and the roots of courage and compassion she is instilling in all who know her story. Our entire Roots Smokehouse team strongly believes in raising awareness about cancer; shedding light on this disease that so personally affects us all is key in fighting it," said Ivan Mathena, the owner of the Roots Smokehouse and a longtime friend of Motley.

THE FUTURE

Soon the infamous "cheese grater" bridge across the Reedy River will be replaced with one ››