

Commemorative Bench And Tree Program Grows Throughout The Years In Randolph

By Henry M. Holden

Randolph Township has created a way for its residents and organizations to memorialize and honor others with a long-lasting tribute. The Township Commemorative Tree and Bench Program offers donors the opportunity to donate and dedicate either a park bench or a tree at one of the township's five parks.

The program started over 12 years ago according to Russ Newman, director of the parks and recreation department.

"The parks committee felt it would give people the opportunity to dedicate a tree or a park bench in memory of a loved one, or as a celebration of a special event such as an anniversary, a birth or a marriage. A donation for a bench is \$1,075 and for a tree it is \$375.

"For the tree program, we will plant a young tree and mount a commemorative plaque in the lobby of the Community

Center. For the bench, we would create a plaque and mount it on the bench.

"We generally get to dedicate two or three benches a year, and one tree," said Newman. "We allow the people to choose one of the five parks they would like the bench to be in because the park probably has a special memory for them. However, the final placement will be at the discretion of the Randolph Township Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services. The Parks, Recreation and Community Services will work with the donor to find the best location.

"We have a ceremony when we're dedicating the bench or the tree, and the people who requested it are generally there for the ceremony.

A different park or open space area is selected each year as the focus of the program by the Randolph Township Parks Advisory Committee. Tree and bench dedications are typically



scheduled in May and October.

"A plaque is placed on the bench or at the base of the tree indicating the name of the person, event or organization being recognized. With more than 12 years of this program there are many examples throughout Brundage Park, Freedom Park and the other parks.

"So far, this year, two benches have been donated and dedicated in Randolph," said Newman. "One dedication took place

in Freedom Park, and another took place on the trail close to the municipal building. The two benches we did this year were kind of unique since they were both in honor of someone rather than in memory of someone.

In May, Lenny Pietrewicz the former coach of the Randolph High School Girls' Track Booster Club had a bench dedicated to him.

"The bench was donated in *continued on page 10*

Commemorative Bench...

continued from page 8

his honor by the club to recognize Coach Pietrewicz's many years of commitment to the girl's track program and his perseverance to their success," said Newman. "Current and former members of the track team, along with Coach Pietrewicz and his wife, were present for the event. Fittingly, the bench is located on the trail across from Randolph High School.

"A bench was also dedicated in Freedom Park to Gary and Kathy Algeier, two long-time residents of Randolph who made many contributions to the community during the 40 years they lived here," said Newman. "Kathy was a long-time volunteer in the township's schools,

and library. Gary served on the town council for 15 years and as mayor for two years. Perhaps his most lasting achievement was to create a vision and provide leadership for the development of Freedom Park. The Algeiers, along with many family and friends, attended the bench dedication in July.

For more information about the Randolph Commemorative Bench and Tree program, visit the Randolph Township website at http://www.randolphnj.org/parks_and_recreation/commemorative_program, or contact the Randolph Township Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services at 973-989-7081.

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