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## Skate park opens in Livingston after years of dreaming

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Richard Khavkine/For The Star-Ledger



David Gard/New Jersey Local News Service

After years of planning, lobbying and fundraising, skateboards are finally enjoying the new Livingston Skate Park. Kyle Stetson, 15, in action.

**LIVINGSTON** — Among concrete grind boxes and a vert wall, a handrail and stairs, Brett Traiger has found a small slice of heaven.

So have dozens of other Livingston skateboarders, who, after decades of dashed dreams, now have a place to ply their stunts and tricks.

"I come every day," said Traiger, 15 over the sounds of a dozen wood boards slamming on concrete in the background on a recent afternoon. "And for as long as I can on weekends."

Tucked in between the township police department and the YMCA, the Livingston Stake Park opened earlier this month after decades of lobbying by skating aficionados.

"We were looking for a safe place for the kids to skate," said Alan Karpas, co-chair of the township's skate park committee. "It was all about the kids, getting them out of the parking lots."

On the sunny afternoon, about 20 children, all boys, pitched down slopes and up ramps on their boards and bikes. All wore helmets, in accordance with park rules. Nearly all took a stumble or two every few minutes.

There are few other regulations so far, said Traiger, who helped draw them up. Right now, scooters, inappropriate language and non-residents are off limits. You've also got to be at least 7 years old to use the park.

After a few false starts by park advocates since the mid-1970s, a group of students resurrected the skaters' cause a few years ago. Veterans from past efforts helped untangle red tape. Fundraisers were held. A site was chosen.

Vacant for decades, the swath of grass across South Livingston Avenue from the township library was designated to be a parking lot for the township's new municipal building. That plan was ultimately shelved in favor of wheels of a different sort.

Nearly \$100,000 in private and public funds was raised, the bulk of it coming from online auctions of obsolete township street signs. Those sales netted about \$43,000. An anonymous donor gave \$20,000, and the United Way of North Essex also contributed.

For Jason Grant, 11, who's barely missed a day at the skate park since it opened, it has been a divine turn of events.

"I'm here at least two hours each time, at least," he said. "And I'm learning a lot of new tricks."

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