



The Star-Ledger

Town street signs going up on eBay

Funds raised will go to help build skate park

Thursday, December 04, 2008

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Green, aged street signs that once graced Livingston's streets will now be on the block.

From Aspen Drive to Windermere Court, hundreds of signs will be auctioned off on eBay Monday through Dec. 15, with a \$25 starting bid, said Alan Karpas, a community leader who hopes nostalgia will entice customers to buy a bit of town history.

Many streets will have as many as five signs available for sale, but some streets will not have any, he said. For sure, there are Dead End and South Livingston Avenue signs, too.

Karpas, president of HCHY (Healthy Community-Healthy Youth Initiative), said the group's Skate Park Committee needs to raise money for an 8,000- to 10,000-square-foot skate park, scheduled to be built by next summer. So far, the United Way has donated \$30,000 that will be more than matched between the \$25,000 promised by the town and an additional \$16,000 that has already been raised, he said.

But a total of \$150,000 is needed for the park, he said, and that's where the auction comes in.

Robert Ehrlich, co-chairman of the Skate Park Committee and the dad of a skateboarder, said efforts to create a skate park began 25 years ago in Livingston, but money and momentum for the project never built up. He takes his 12-year-old son, Alex, to a skate park in Chatham on weekends.

"It's so important for us to get it done this time," he said. "There really isn't a safe area for them to skate because all other safe areas are designed for other activities."

The skate park will be located between the YMCA and the police station, Karpas said. Renderings and details on the proposed skate park can be found at <http://livingstonskatepark.wordpress.com/category/general/>.

Livingston's dozens of skateboarders end up setting up ramps in parking lots behind Dunkin' Donuts and Walgreens and at the busy Livingston Town Center, irking merchants and creating potentially dangerous situations. Those areas now have "No Skating" signs.

"The kids who play soccer have a field, those who play basketball have a court," said Martha Ackerman, vice president of HCHY. "We feel as a community, we need to come together to give this group of children a safe place to be, just like the children who play tennis have tennis courts."

In researching skate parks around the country, Karpas found many have been named as a memorial to a skater who was killed because of an accident.

He doesn't want that to become the impetus to create a park in Livingston.

"We're trying to be proactive and prevent it," Karpas said. "These kids are skating all over town."

To build momentum, HCHY has posted a YouTube video advertising the sale and telling viewers to "Bid on a piece of Livingston New Jersey history" and "Own a piece of your hometown" set to Bruce Springsteen's "My Hometown."

Anyone interested in bidding but without internet access will be able to use a computer in the Livingston Library free of charge, Karpas said, adding that volunteers will be on hand to assist the "computer challenged" to participate in the auction. Call the Skate Park Hot line at (973) 992-6411 for location, days and times.

Mayor Gary Schneiderman said donating the signs to the committee made better business sense than selling them for scrap metal.

"Obviously, now more money will come into the municipality than if we had just sold it to someone as scrap," Schneiderman said. "And it goes for a really good cause."

For him, it's also a thrill.

"I would like my street sign," said Schneiderman.

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