

Freedom Grove Park established at lease signing

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Champaign County Freedom Grove Park was established Wednesday with the signing of a lease agreement between the Champaign County commissioners and the Urbana Rotary Club.

"This park will enable the community to celebrate the cherished freedoms of the United States of America," said Commissioner Bob Corbett.

The 25-year lease will require the Rotary Club to pay \$1 annually to maintain the five acres of land in front of the Champaign County Community Center as a park.

"The Urbana Rotary was looking for a way to serve the entire community," said Rotary President Jim Wehrman. "After the events of last year, we realized that we take so many freedoms for granted and many members hit on this idea as a place to stop and reflect on what we have as Americans."

"A year ago at this time we were secure in our jobs and our places as

citizens," said Commissioner Phil McCullough. "During the events of the day, we were in disbelief - this couldn't be happening - and as I sat there I wondered what the effect would be on our country for the rest of time."

McCullough said the park is dedicated not only to the people who lost their lives on Sept. 11, 2001, but to all who have given their lives in the pursuit and defense of freedom.

"I would hope that this is not just a memorial for the events of last year, but a memorial for freedom, the foundation our country stands on," McCullough said.

Wehrman said the Rotary's intention is to create an attractive site:

"We want this to be not just a barren lot, but a focal point for the county," he said. "The Rotary will spearhead the activity, but welcomes support from other groups and organizations that would like to take part and help develop the Freedom Grove."



Citizen photo by Breanne Parcels

Pictured standing, left to right, Commissioner Bob Corbett, Urbana Rotary President Jim Wehrman and Commissioner Phil McCullough address a gathering of people at the lease signing establishing the Champaign County Freedom Grove Park. The project, spearheaded by the Rotary, will turn a green space near the Champaign County Community Center into a park with trees and walking paths.