

Community effort builds memorial gazebo in Kenwood

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Don MacNair of MacNair Landscape Architecture stands in front of the gazebo he designed in Kenwood Plaza Park. (Towns photo)

A handsome new gazebo made possible through volunteer efforts will be dedicated at Kenwood Plaza Park this week in memory of a 5-year-old Glen Ellen boy killed in 2009 when an oak tree toppled onto his family truck on Bennett Valley Road.

“You were a dream come true,” reads part of a plaque in tribute to Bobby Musser-Kirby. “This gazebo we dedicate to you and all the other children who have left us all too soon.”



Butterflies adorn the plaque dedicated to Bobby Musser-Kirby and other deceased children. (Photo courtesy of Don MacNair)

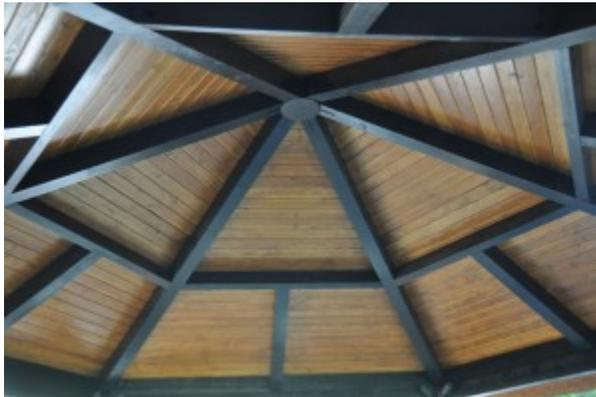
The gazebo will be dedicated at noon on Saturday, Sept. 20. The park is located at 200 Warm Springs Road. A fundraising barbecue with live music will follow.

Etched with butterflies, the plaque rests at the center of the hexagon platform. The shaded park also features picnic tables, lush lawn and a foot bridge.

The gazebo is wheelchair accessible, with a stone façade highlighting each of the six columns painted a deep wine-country burgundy. Landscape architect Don MacNair of MacNair Landscape Architecture designed the gazebo and led a community effort to complete the project.

Bobby's parents, Michael Kirby and Diane Musser-Kirby, donated settlement monies of \$50,000 from the county for the gazebo construction, part of a longtime master plan for the five-acre park. MacNair, who designed the peaceful, tree-lined park in the early 1990s and lives directly across the street, said similar structures cost well more than \$125,000.

The gazebo is located on the Channing Row side of the park, across the street from the historic and picturesque Kenwood Community Church. With help from the Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation, fundraisers, community donations and vendor discounts reduced many expenses. "I just started asking favors," MacNair said.



The geometric design of the gazebo roof. (Photo courtesy of Don MacNair)

Labor, materials and site work was donated, from lumber and landscaping to digging trenches, concrete, masonry and roofing.

"It is absolutely a community effort," said Melissa Kelley, executive director with the Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation. "Kenwood is such a warm community. So many people in Kenwood know the Musser-Kirby family and have rallied to this project."

She credits MacNair with bringing the project to completion. "His heart is in that plaza," Kelley said. "He takes magnificent care of it."

Recent park improvements include a garden dedicated to the memory of community volunteers Candace Heim-Serrano and Glory Whitehead.

MacNair imagines generations of families – children particularly – enjoying the park and attending community celebrations centered at the gazebo stage. The gazebo's memorial plaque notes that Bobby was a singer, dancer and performer.

"I'm immensely proud of what I've done," MacNair said. "I leave a mark on this community that will last 100 years."



The gazebo sits among numerous shade trees. (Photo courtesy of Don MacNair)

MacNair will be among the speakers at the upcoming dedication, along with First District Supervisor Susan Gorin; Sonoma County Regional Parks Operations Manager Bert Whitaker; and Warren Musser, Bobby's grandfather.

The dedication will be followed by "Jazz, Blues and Barbecue in the Park." Proceeds benefit Kenwood Plaza Park and other regional parks in Sonoma County.

Performers include the Kenwood Jazz Trio with Rob Hunt, Oliver Hunt and Joel Kruzic and blues musicians Jay Bodlovich's Ragtag Sullivan Band. Tickets are \$5 for children under 10, \$35 general and \$45 the day of the event. Tickets are limited. Visit brownpaperbag.com or call 833-5306.

– *Dianne Reber Hart*