

## Dog Parks

# Lyngate Park Provides Pet Paradise

With the opening of the Lyngate Dog Park, dog owners living in the city of Port St. Lucie, Fla., now have a safe, secure and fun place to take their furry family members to get some exercise and socialize with other dogs. The city-funded dog park, which cost approximately \$130,000, officially opened with a ribbon-cutting event in October of 2013.

"There are a lot of dog lovers in Port St. Lucie, and there was a big demand from the public for a dog park," explained Ron Finks, Parks Division project manager for the City of Port St. Lucie Parks & Recreation Department. "We tried for several years to find a way to fund the project, and an opportunity came when a cell tower construction company requested permission to build a tower on park property behind Lyngate Park. We had the cell tower company clear an expanded area at the rear of the park to provide additional space — approximately one acre of land — to construct the dog park. This reduced our construction expense and allowed us to proceed with the funding available."

Finks, who has been with parks departments for 22 years, the last three of those with Port St. Lucie, oversees all new construction and major upgrades for the Parks Division.

"I did a lot of the planning and design work with input and assistance from various city departments, but it was a real



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team effort," he noted. "Most of the site preparation, irrigation and water installation was by Parks & Building Maintenance staff. Construction of the fencing and shade structures went to bid with Veterans Fence getting the fence bid and Grand Construction assembling the shade structures. All materials and equipment went to bid for the best prices."

He continued, "On behalf of the Parks & Recreation Department, I would like to thank all those who assisted or contributed to this fun and very much-needed project."

The dog park features three fenced-in areas for dogs, and an open space "common area" for "just enjoying the park," noted Finks. "All four areas have a shade structure, benches



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and a three-way water fountain. The fountains meet ADA standards and provide a watering bowl on the bottom for Fido. We saved most of the trees during construction and added more to maintain the ‘Natural Florida’ look and feel. There are dog agility items throughout the park, as well as real (donated) fire hydrants.”

The dog park features a three-way water fountain from Most Dependable Fountains; pet-waste stations from Dogipot; dog agility equipment from Bark Park; shade structures from Shade Systems; signage from Design-a-sign; and benches from Kay Park Recreation.

“We have had tremendous response to the dog park,” said Finks. “If anything, it is being a little too well used. We have had to perform extra maintenance due to the high usage of the park. We estimate the average use to be 75 to 100 dogs a day. Most of the response has been very positive, and we have had many requests for more dog parks. We hope to be able to build another soon.”

In addition to Lyngate Park, Port St. Lucie boasts nearly 40 unique parks and recreational facilities, all offering numerous opportunities to relax, play, exercise, learn or enjoy the Florida sunshine. The Parks and Recreation Department also facilitates a variety of special events that residents look forward to year round. In connection with these events and other activities sponsored by the department, there are a number of sponsorship and volunteer opportunities available to businesses and individuals alike.

Finks noted that the role of Parks & Recreation in a community is a multi-faceted one that he believes will expand more as we move into the future. “The old idea of a park just being an open space or a recreation center just being some place to go to play cards is long gone,” he said. “Today’s culture demands that Parks & Recreation play a much larger role and provide more opportunities for the public to interact through classes, events, sports and various cultural activities.”

The creation of the Lyngate Dog Park is a perfect example of the positive role that parks and recreation departments play in the overall morale and welfare of a city and community.

-GRF