







Friends of Greater Lansing Dog Parks







2008 State of the Parks

Submitted by Rebecca Stimson, President
on behalf of the Friends of Greater Lansing Dog Parks





The Friends of Greater Lansing Dog Parks (FGLDP) have faced and met a lot of challenges since forming in 2003, including

-  Establishing cooperative relationships with two different governing bodies -- the City of Lansing and Ingham County Parks
-  Finding a major sponsor for Lansing's first dog park -- Howard Soldan II, in honor of his parents
-  Attracting donors who contributed thousands of dollars for fencing
-  Working with the city and the county to open Lansing area's first off leash dog park


We've also seen many accomplishments in 2008:


-  Coping with the icy paths in the winter and the extensive flooding in the spring,
-  Resolving the conflict with the neighbors
-  Clearing a loop in the north end
-  Securing more parking near Scott Woods
-  Clearing trees from the tornado this summer and high winds this winter
-  Planning for a bridge to span the south end of the pond and across the island


To our members . . . Many thanks for your


-  Loyalty
-  Membership
-  Patience and understanding during difficult times
-  Participation in meetings and events

And thank you for

 Coming to the park

 Clearing Trees

 Picking up after dogs

 Building the bridge

Special thanks to the Soldans, the co-sponsors of our events, Ingham Regional Medical Center, Lansing Parks and Recreation staff, Hawk Island and Ingham County Park staff, Ingham County Animal Control officers, the Ingham County Sheriff's officers, and the Lansing Police Department officers.

Current Status

The Howard and Erna Soldan Dog Park has been open just over a year, and we sure have learned a lot! We're probably not over the growing pains yet, but with the on-going support of faithful members, the commitment and cooperation from the City of Lansing and Ingham County, and the goal of making space for us to exercise with our dogs, FGLDP stays focused and continues making plans to work with municipalities to establish and maintain dog parks.

Progress

The survey conducted last winter provided us with valuable feedback and suggestions from members and non-members. (Results were shared at our February 2008 Strategic Planning Meeting. If you'd like a copy, email us at info@lansingdogparks.com.)

We met monthly with the Dog Park Task Force, hosted by Ingham County Park staff, to share concerns and resolve issues. Attendees include FGLDP President and co-Vice Presidents, the Director of Lansing Parks and Recreation, the Director of Ingham County Parks, the Manager at Hawk Island, and Ingham County Animal Control officer, an Ingham County Sheriff officer.

This year we have contributed to the extensive fence repair required after the tornadoes hit Scott Woods and Soldan Dog Park in the early summer. More trees fell again later. Fortunately we had assistance from member volunteers in cleaning up when the city and park employees were tending to devastation in other parks.

We've been talking with the city about developing a dog park at the site of the Waverly Golf Course. This winter FGLDP members walked around the course with several city employees discussing what we thought was the optimal area. We are optimistic that eventually we will have a lovely park in that location.

Events

Our first winter . . .

Our membership meeting and strategic planning session drew loyal members and lots of ideas for improvement. Maybe 2009 will be the year we have enough volunteers to move forward with some of those ideas.

In the spring . . .

We attended the Happy Tails Dog Walk, sponsored by Lansing Parks and Recreation and the Michigan Dog Agility Trials.

The Soldans and FGLDP received Humanitarian Awards at the Ingham County Animal Shelter Award Dinner.

In the summer . . .

We held our second membership meeting. Again we received support, encouragement, and more ideas from loyal members.

We were a presence in Reo Town during Lansing's Be a Tourist in Your Own Town activities.

Members and their pooches were part of Lansing's 4th of July Parade.

In the fall . . .

We participated in Trick or Treat events both at The Spotted Dog in downtown Lansing and Perspective 2 in Old Town.

In the spring and the fall, the dogs enjoyed a little extra freedom at our semi-annual Dog Paddles held at the lake in Hawk Island and entertained the crowds with their antics.

The Future

The purpose of the FGLDP is to establish and maintain dog parks. Soldan Dog Park is the first. Waverly or Meridian Township may be the second. Whispers of interest have been heard from DeWitt, and Grand Ledge areas. FGLDP currently expends member donations primarily on poop bags, port-a-john maintenance, and fence repair at Soldan Dog Park. A dog park at Waverly Golf Course property will require financial support from our organization. At this point, we don't know how much or for what features, e.g., fencing, restroom facilities, an entry system.

Ahead of us we have the entry system installation that will give us a process for providing orientation to all new park users, create a community of ambassadors who understand the rules, protect our dogs from unlicensed and unvaccinated dogs, give us a means of following up with users who do not obey the rules, and prevent people and their dogs who are not aware of the rules from disturbing the peace. The plans are not finalized. We invite your comments and suggestions.

Volunteer FGLDP members are reforming the Ambassador Program. We had our first meeting in January and discussed creating a community that will be the source of information at the park instead of acting as enforcers. The Ambassadors will meet regularly and expect to sponsor events at the park and offer presentations about topics of interest to park users – members and non-members. The first presentation is scheduled for March.

With the assistance of a very dedicated member, we have plans for a bridge that will create a new loop around the pond. We expect FGLDP volunteers will provide much of the labor while the Hawk Island Park staff will store the materials and manage the building of sections of the bridge. By late spring, we should have a wonderful new addition to Soldan Dog Park.

Soldan Dog Park has weathered some pretty big challenges. Through it all, the dogs haven't seemed to notice. We're the ones who have trouble with the changes; the dogs enjoy themselves anyway. They have a new path around the north end and an additional beach area. In the spring, volunteers will help build a new bridge that will complete the loop again and effectively seal off the southeast corner of the pond and what was formerly the small dog area. And we'll be able to walk over the water!

Volunteers – and their dogs -- are the lifeblood of FGLDP. We thank you for the on-going transfusions.