

Planting the future; Black River Audubon Society Park dedicated in Elyria (with video)



MORNING JOURNAL/BILL DELANEY Jack Smith, left, founder of the Black River Audubon Society, helps plant a Dawn Redwood tree yesterday at a new Elyria park.

By BILL DELANEY (Morning Journal, posted online 5/23/2012)

ELYRIA -- A new park on West Bridge Street was dedicated in Elyria yesterday by community members and city officials and named the Black River Audubon Society Park.

The nearly 2 acre park is across the street from the former Murbach store and flanked by the Black River. The land was donated to the city by Jack Smith, who founded the Black River Audubon Society in 1958. Elyria Parks & Recreation Director Frank Gustoff addressed the small crowd, thanking Smith and the society for its dedication.

"Jack has been very kind to (Elyria) Parks & Recreation over the years," Gustoff said. "As a nature lover, he has done a lot of things in this county, and we're pleased. We're in the process of just getting things started."

A Dawn Redwood tree, non-native to Ohio, with the potential to grow to 200 feet and live for 5,000 years was planted in the park. Mayor Holly Brinda was on hand for the dedication, and with Smith, helped shovel dirt onto the freshly planted tree, and thanked Smith for the contribution.

"(Smith) is very kind in his outright donation with this magnificent piece of property," Brinda said. "(The Redwood) is a magnificent piece of nature that we're very fortunate to have here in the city of Elyria.

"I've seen big Redwoods, but I've never seen one in its infancy," she added.

Smith was quick to credit the Black River Audubon Society for the contributions.

"It's a beautiful tree," he said. "It will be Black River Audubon Society Park, dedicated to a very fine local organization. You couldn't ask for a better group of people."