

Pioneers look to future of parks

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Tom Anderson/KTUU-TV

Anchorage, Alaska - They are founders of Anchorage's parks, and more than 100 pioneers were honored today by the city. They were honored for their contributions that thousands of Alaskans enjoy every year.

At Cuddy Family Midtown Park, it was a day for music and sunshine, as well as ice cream with sprinkles and some baseball, too. The event was the first of its kind and it's designed to honor the city's park pioneers. Organizers say it was a day to celebrate this park and the 200 others like it in Anchorage -- and the people who made it all happen.

"If those individuals who founded Anchorage had not thought about the future and about their children, it would be very difficult to buy that land back today. And so that's time to celebrate them and learn from what they did right," said Jeff Dillon, the director of the Municipal Parks and Recreation.



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Organizers say close to 150 of Anchorage's founding park families came to the festivities. Names such as Benson, Kincaid, Carr, Sullivan and Cuddy were each given a rose, since each has a park bearing their name.



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"We wanted it to be a park that was not like every other park in town," said Betti Cuddy (pictured below), a park founder.

Cuddy says she has plans to expand and improve the park with summer activities, as well as winter. "My big passion is to copy Rockefeller Center," she said.

Officials say this vision and other improvements are on the way for the Cuddy Park and other parks in the city thanks to funding. More than \$400,000 from the Rasmuson Foundation and more than \$200,000 from Wells Fargo and other donors will go toward improvements.

“In the event of the Rasmuson Foundation grant, we've taken a \$400,000 foundation with some other funding involve. We're going to create \$1 million worth of value in a variety of parks around the city this year,” said Victor Mollozzi, the chair of the park foundation.



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Officials say this move, in addition to state and federal money, which totals well over \$7 million, will go improve city parks. The improvements, the Cuddy grandchildren think, are well worth it.

“I think it's just a place where kids can come when they like -- just want to hang out with their family,” said Mckenzie, Emily and Mallory, some of the Cuddy grandchildren.

It's places that families like the Cuddys and others in Anchorage can enjoy for generations to come.

City officials say they hope to improve about 28 parks this summer with the new Clean and Green and Safe and Secure park campaign. They say it will be a very busy summer in Anchorage.

Dillon says it's likely that they will hold this celebration again next year. He says it opens up the doors for the next generation of park founders.