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Pacifica gets rolling with a new skate park Seven years in the making, city cuts ribbon on perfect '10'

By Julia Scott, STAFF WRITER

PACIFICA — In the true spirit of skateboarding, the new Pacifica skate park was overrun with children Sunday afternoon before they were even officially allowed to be there. Older kids took a ride in the "vert" bowl while younger ones scrambled up and down the smooth rims like a jungle gym, their parents looking on.

"Hey! No skating!" admonished a voice on a loudspeaker.

Pacifica's children have waited seven years for a skate park, since two local parents first proposed the idea to the city. The wait ended on Sunday, culminating in a dedication ceremony attended by hundreds of people clutching skateboards, and followed by a pro skater demonstration to the strains of punk rock music.

Paul Marsili and his 7-year-old son, P.J., stood watching the skaters shoot across the gleaming cement. P.J. held a skateboard to his chest that was nearly as tall as he was. He said he planned to visit the skate park "nine days a week."

"I already know how to go down steep hills," he bragged.

Marsili, a member of a local band named Freeload, remembered playing a benefit concert for the skate park back in 1999. He said the park would give kids a place to hang out without being harassed by police.

"It's good to have a legal place to ride," he said. "Skateboarding isn't a crime."

Pacifica resident Russell Wright, 39, pronounced the park pro-worthy. It was designed to the highest possible standard by local pro

Wormhoudt Incorporated, and has already earned a perfect "10" from Caliskatz.com, a Northern California skating Web site.

The skate park is adjacent to the Pacifica Community Center and within walking distance from a well-known surf beach on the other side of Highway 1.

"This is one of the raddest public parks in California," said Wright, who has skated since childhood. "It's almost effortless to keep speed up to gyrate up the walls."

Jim Krolyt and his wife, Leonor Gomez, proposed the project to the City Council in 1998 when they realized there were no high-quality skate parks where their two sons could go.

There are three smaller skate parks in San Mateo County — Menlo



Local skate grommets watch the pros on the opening day of the Pacifica Skate Park on Sunday. (Mathew Sumner - Staff)



Skateboarders crowd the Pacifica Skate Park on its opening day on Sunday. (MATHEW SUMNER STAFF)

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Park, San Mateo and Half Moon Bay.

"We were taking our sons to skate parks around the country and we got sick of it," Krolty said. He and Gomez contacted other parents whose children loved to skate. Together, they collected 750 signatures and brought the issue before the city's Parks, Beaches and Recreation Department.

It wasn't difficult to convince officials of the merits of a world-class skate park — Pacifica would benefit from any competitions held there, including, possibly someday, the summer Olympics. The trick was raising the money in a city without capital to spare.

A Skate Park Committee was formed, which eventually found enough state money and private donors to begin construction.

Winning the community over was another matter.

"There was such negativity when we started. People said, 'There's nothing for kids to do in Pacifica, and there never will be,'" said Krolty.

There was no trace of negativity Sunday as Committee members posed for a photo with the newly-unveiled dedication plaque.

"This is a beautiful thing," said Cook to the cheering crowd before jumping on his skateboard to cut the ceremonial ribbon in mid-air.

Ten-year-old Remy Loubriel said she had been waiting for the skate park to open for months. She spent her afternoons skating in her family's carport; cruising the bowls at the skatepark was a whole new experience.

"It was sort of scary with all those people going by you,

but it was fun," she said.

For veterans like Wright, the new ride was a thrill.

"The fact that they built something this radical blows my mind," he said. "I haven't seen this level of gnarliness since the 70s."

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Chris Cook gets air off the big bowl at the opening ceremonies of the Pacifica Skate Park on Sunday. (Mathew Sumner - Staff)

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