

Lake Placid's Rotary Bark Park opens to the public

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Chris Gaige

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LAKE PLACID — Who let the dogs out?

On Saturday, that would have been the Rotary Club of Lake Placid and Town of North Elba, as the two groups and around a dozen pet owners celebrated the unofficial opening of the Lake Placid Rotary Bark Park.

Residents and visitors alike now have a large fenced enclosure for pets to run, play and make friends under the supervision of their owners. Actually, it's two enclosures: one for dogs under 30 pounds and the other for dogs over that weight.

The park is located next to the North Elba Community Pump Track, which opened in August. The Bark Park was originally scheduled to open in Spring 2027, but fencing was ahead of schedule. There'll still be a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony then, but in the meantime, it's open for everyone to enjoy.

Getting there requires a right turn off Recycle Circle Lane just before the transfer station, and following the dirt driveway to the North Elba Athletic Fields. The town is expected to plow the route through the winter, and the Bark Park will remain open year-round.

Rotarians Sue and Harris Semegram were visiting their son in Birmingham, Alabama when they were struck by how nice that city's dog parks were. While there's no shortage of world class outdoor opportunities around Lake Placid, there was no dedicated secure space for pets to run without a leash.

A dog park was one of the top recreational amenities identified in the North Elba-Lake Placid Comprehensive Plan, which was updated in March. Knowing there was preexisting support in Lake Placid, Harris said the couple began talking with other club members about throwing support behind it.

"We said, 'You know what? We can do that here too,'" he said. "And it was a perfect project for the Rotary Club to take on."

Planning and construction took about two years, with the Rotary Foundation and a slew of individual and business donors providing funding for the fencing and signage, while the town took on grading and surfacing.

Semegram added that the fencing company specializes in dog parks, and was contracted for many of the New York State Thruway rest stops, where a secure perimeter is of paramount importance.

Miona Amoriell took Benny, a family friend's dog who loves to strut around and is very socializable, to opening day.

"He loves to be known and be seen," she said with a laugh, adding that Benny will probably be visiting the park several times per week.

"It's going to be fabulous," Amoriell said. "We've waited for this and are very excited."

The park comes with doggie bags, and owners are asked to pick up after their pets. A full list of rules is posted at the entrance.

Over the winter, the Rotary Foundation plans to add additional amenities, like benches and dog agility and tricks infrastructure. A formal ribbon cutting celebration date is expected to be announced in the coming months.