

Bergeron pitches in to help park

■ A Davie philanthropist has helped transform five acres of land, adding punch to the town's Adopt-A-Park program.

BY EILEEN SOLER

Special to The Miami Herald

In this year of cutbacks, the town of Davie has received a big helping hand in revitalizing park land.

Cowboy and business magnate Ron Bergeron, with the help of family and area businesses, contributed \$80,000 for a cleanup and upgrades at a five-acre park at the north foot of historic Pine Island Ridge.

The Percy T. and Dorothy M. Bergeron Memorial Park, donated by Ron Bergeron in 1995, is dedicated to his parents. The couple represent seven generations of a family that has considered the rural town their home since 1882.

A public grand reopening with horses, refreshments and country music is set for 10 a.m. Aug. 14.

"This used to be more like a sand pit," Steve Rodgers, contract manager for the town's public works department, said during an Aug. 3 meeting at the park.

The space, at 1900 S.



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MAKEOVER: The Percy T. and Dorothy M. Bergeron Memorial Park in Davie got a face-lift.

Nob Hill Rd., has been outfitted with new picnic tables, a new barbecue grill, a handicap-accessible paved sidewalk that snakes through the place and a freshly lined parking lot. Workers and volunteers planted four live oak trees, improved the lighting at pavilions, added canopies and expanded two children's jungle gyms and installed split-rail fencing.

A bronze monument in the likeness of Bergeron's parents, who opened a grocery store in 1948 when the

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Bergeron park gets a makeover

• BERGERON, FROM 1

town had only 400 residents, was restored. Horse trailer parking and riding trails make the place a trailhead for the town's 52-mile Equestrian Trail.

The park's face-lift, spearheaded by Bergeron's grandson Casey Hojara, 30, senior project manager for Bergeron Emergency Services, came with a posse of help.

"It's called sprucing up and helping out," said Evelyn Pagni, owner and president of EDJ Services, a family-operated landscaping business rooted in Davie for the past 31 years.

EDJ Services was among seven contractors who donated supplies and labor to the project. The others were Homestead Concrete & Drainage, No. 1 Bobcat and Drainage, Getting Green Plant Service, Lines Unlimited Inc., and All Peoples Choice Pressure Cleaning.

"It's nice to see cooperation when other companies in the town pitch in when the town needs it," Hojara of Pembroke Pines said.

Rodgers said the project was a bonus to the town's Adopt-A-Park program established in 2009 in which local landscape companies are linked with municipal parks. The program reduces the town's maintenance costs and gives businesses a sense of ownership, he said.

Pagni of Plantation adopted Bergeron Park and Westridge Open Space just south on Pine Island Ridge, Broward's highest natural elevation where Tequesta Indians lived more than 5,000 years ago.

Rodgers said Pagni's company bushwhacks the



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HELPING HANDS: Evelyn Pagni, back left, with Steve Rodgers; and front row, Casey Hojara, left, and his grandfather Ron Bergeron gather at the park's memorial statue.

land, keeps paths clear of growth and helps maintain the landscape with native plants that attract birds, butterflies and wildlife.

Of the town's 29 parks, nine have been adopted.

DynaServe Florida adopted Shenandoah Park and Orange Park Community Center; Miele Brothers Management serves Oak Hill Park and Math Iglar Citrus Park; Main-guy Landscaping Services helps out at Bamford Sports Complex; and Prestige Property Maintenance lends a hand at Potter Park and East Davie Nature Park.

Hojara said his family's participation in Bergeron park's renovation came from the heart.

"The park holds a lot of sentimental value. It's in our hometown and we want to keep it like when

we were kids," Hojara said.

The park was dedicated when Hojara was still a teen, but his family legacy started long before.

Hojara remembers playing in fields behind his grandparents' rustic house on Griffin Road. The historic 1912 Walsh Osterhoudt House, home then to Hojara's maternal grandparents Ron and Linda Osterhoudt, was moved in 2004 to the Old Davie School Historical Museum.

Bergeron said his parents moved to the town from West Palm Beach in 1948 and opened a grocery store out of an old chicken coop off Davie Road near what is now Bergeron Rodeo Grounds. His parents allowed the First Baptist Church to hold its first services

there.

In the early 1950s, Percy and Dorothy Bergeron donated land for the town's first fire station. Burris Road is named for Bergeron's uncle Charlie Burris, who settled in the area in 1910.

"When my grandparents moved here there were more places to hitch a horse than park a car," Bergeron said. "Davie was all agriculture. We didn't know a tennis court from a golf course."

Ron Bergeron, 66, grew up riding, working and hanging out at the rodeo arena in the center of the town that his father helped establish with 17 other townsmen. The arena was named Bergeron Rodeo Grounds in 1996 after Ron Bergeron donated \$150,000 for parking and \$160,000 for a new entryway and land-

scaping.

Now the owner of 30-plus companies that bear the family name, Bergeron lives on a ranch in Weston that abuts the Davie line. He is the father of six, grandfather of nine and great-grandpop of four with one on the way.

Rodgers said the park project proves that citizens and government can work together through rough economic times.

"Anyone who walks in any city or county park can see the struggle we're in," Rodgers said. "Things are tough but we show that with public and private cooperations we can do it. And we can be proud of it."

For more about the grand reopening of Percy T. and Dorothy M. Bergeron Memorial Park, call 954-797-1145.