



With Walk of Heroines, awareness engendered

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By Tyler Graf

Coordinators of a Southwest Portland park installation believe women aren't properly recognized for their contributions to society, big or small. And they intend to change that by developing a park that celebrates women regardless of economic means or background.

Once developed at the juncture of Portland State University and the South Park Blocks, the project, the Walk of the Heroines, will be a multifunctional park featuring a multi-use stage, an artwork display, an educational kiosk and a planted bioswale.

Portland State project coordinators on Oct. 2 will issue a request for proposals with hopes of breaking ground on the project's first phase Nov. 1, pending permits. The fundraising deadline is Dec. 31.

The project, according to PSU women's studies professor Johanna Brenner, takes inspiration from Wichita State University's Plaza of Heroines – a similar space that honors the contributions of women and was constructed on the Kansas campus in 1998

But PSU's park, Brenner said, will be the first urban park of its kind. Brenner has been with the project since the beginning.

Begun in 2000, the 90 foot-by-200-foot park has developed slowly, due primarily to problems with fundraising. "It's like pulling teeth," Brenner said.

Starting with an initial gift of \$200,000 from PSU students, the project has since acquired more than \$2 million in donations. The fundraising campaigns will continue and are hoped to cover the full scope of the park.

"This came from the thought that not very many parks or buildings have been named after women," said Carol Mayer-Reed of Mayer/Reed Architects, the principal landscape architect for the development. Working in conjunction with Mayer-Reed are Teresa Chenney, also of Mayer/Reed, and Barbara Linn of BOORA Architects. "It's one of those projects that came from a desire to have an educational place on campus that recognized the contributions of women."

The main educational feature of the park will be a kiosk of computer terminals, each showing information and stories about different women, along with space for temporary displays.

Demonstrators and performers will be able to use the park's stage, located at the far end of the park. And gardens will flank both sides of the park.

Donations for the project's varied campaigns – including \$100,000 from the Flora Family Foundation and \$200,000 from Providence Health & Services to honor its founder, Mother Joseph – have helped pay for different aspects of the park – from its fountain, kiosk and reflection areas to its overall artistic vision.

"I wanted to add color, vibrancy and good energy," said Adriene Cruz, a paving artist for the development who specializes in bright colors and sharp geometric designs with an ethnic slant.

"It is a rather long walk, and I wanted to add some flavor to it."

As the project develops, Brenner hopes it will enrich the neighborhood. "We owe these women a great debt of gratitude."