



KEY PENINSULA NEWS



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Eddie Vannausdle adds anchor pegs to joints in new open-span timber structure. *Photo: Lisa Bryan, KP News*

Pavilion at Gateway Park Nears Completion

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Children, families, hikers, bikers and equestrians have been flocking to the playgrounds, trails and fields of Gateway Park on State Route 302 near Wauna since it opened Sept. 30, 2017. The latest showpiece in the 72-acre park, still under construction, should be ready for the public by April.

Originally conceived as a simple picnic shelter, what has come to be known as the Gateway Pavilion is a 30-by-60-foot traditional timber-frame work of art designed and constructed by volunteers and Key Pen Parks staff.

Longtime Key Peninsula residents and volunteers Jeff and Marcia Harris approached fellow Gig Harbor Rotary Club members last spring about supporting the project with a grant of \$20,000 and a cadre of volunteers to help with construction.

"This park should be and will be the signature facility for the Key Peninsula as a true gateway between the Key Peninsula and the Gig Harbor peninsula," Jeff Harris said at the time. "As such, I and others think the pavilion can serve as something of a symbol for the Key Peninsula to represent us and to tell our story."

Harris also worked with Bob Green and the KP Parks Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization created six years ago to help fund park projects with tax-deductible donations. The foundation was able to pay for enhancements to the pavilion, including carved knee braces and stainless-steel support brackets that double as sculptures depicting slices of KP life.

Local architect and Key Pen Parks board President Ed Robison designed the pavilion for ease of assembly by volunteers under professional supervision; that leadership came from longtime KP resident and

builder Tim Keolker of RTK Construction.

"It's all timber-frame, mortise and tenon, but Ed Robison engineered it to also stand as an independent structure," Keolker said. Long, heavy timbers fit together like a giant puzzle, making load-bearing walls unnecessary and creating a sweeping, cathedral-like interior. "It's really pretty spectacular," he said.

"This is tight-knot, kiln-dried Douglas fir from Gray Lumber and it is the best they could find," Keolker said. "Steve Gray has had a family house out here over the years. I asked him if he would be interested in doing this and he really did help us out by getting us the best material he could at the best cost."

The open structure resembles the frames of a traditional wooden sailing ship, with large posts anchored by bright, stainless-steel brackets shaped and etched with

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GATEWAY PARK FROM PAGE 1

an image evocative of a place or experience on the KP.

“I just took a photograph for each side of each bracket, gave it to the metal guy and he turned it into a line drawing to feed into his computer,” Keolker said. “Each one is different on each side, and that’s so you can walk up and see a story that leads you all the way around.”

The brackets were fabricated by Tacoma Steel and paid for by a grant from The Tremaine Foundation facilitated by the local Stanley family through the KP Parks Foundation.

Much of the labor of sanding and sealing the thousands of feet of lumber fell to work crews from the Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women in Belfair.

“The girls did it, all of these timbers and 500 pieces of car decking,” Keolker said, referring to the tongue-and-groove boards of the pavilion ceiling. “It was at least three months’ worth of work for eight or 10 women once a week. It was no problem for them; they wanted to be a part of something.”

But according to Scott Gallacher, executive director of Key Pen Parks, it is Keolker and his son, Matt, who have done the bulk of the prefabrication and assembly,

working as volunteers with help from the Key Pen Parks staff.

“You look at this thing, this incredible building—how do you say thank you for that?” Gallacher asked.

“Tim is both passionate and exceedingly knowledgeable about the KP,” Jeff Harris said. “I talked to him long before the pavilion was anything but a few white flags identifying the location. You see today what that passion, along with his extreme skill and tenacity, has resulted in.”

“The rest of the buildings we have in the parks are really utilitarian,” Keolker said. “When we started planning to do something really nice here, somebody said, ‘Oh, this kind of building belongs in Gig Harbor.’ No, it doesn’t. It belongs right here, to these people here who live on this peninsula. The whole place should be proud of it. I am; I’m honored to be able to do it.”

Gateway Park is in the first two phases of a master construction plan. “Phase three is the splash pad, the amphitheater and a smaller pavilion,” Gallacher said. “We are applying for grant money for that phase, but we’re not going to start construction for that probably until 2020.”

For more information, go to www.keypen-parks.com or www.keypenparksfoundation.org.