



STAFF PHOTO/CARRIE ANN GRIPPO

Brothers Dave, Bob and Tom Rothfuss are joined by their cousin Terry Rothfuss at the town's newest park. Named after the family and situated on land their fathers once farmed, Rothfuss Park officially opens to the public Saturday, Sept. 29.

# Former farm sprouts new play land

*The town celebrates the grand opening this weekend of Rothfuss Park, which was 10 years in the making.*

By **AMY CAVALIER**  
Messenger Post Staff

Standing on a raised knoll in the center of the town's newest park, Dave, Bob, Tom and Terry Rothfuss look out over the land they know like the back of their hands.

Their family farmed 1648 Five Mile Line Road and used it for dairy cattle since the late-19th century up, all the way until the early 1990s. In the 1970s, they also ran Rothfuss Dairy on the site.

"This was part of the pasture right here at the bottom of the hill where the parking lot is," said Tom Rothfuss.

Farming was a "family affair," said Terry Rothfuss, with everyone helping in the fields, save Grandma who would be cooking lunch or dinner. The men remember the chores, but they

also remember the fun.

"It was like Disney World," said Tom Rothfuss. "There was always something fun to do."

There were fields, barns and woods to play in and trees to swing from. In the barn, the kids made a volleyball net using bailing twine.

"Growing up, we always just assumed it was gonna be a farm forever, but then as reality set in, it just wasn't possible," said Tom Rothfuss.

Instead, it will remain undeveloped and will be used for a different kind of play.

On Saturday, Sept. 29, the town will celebrate the grand opening of the 70-acre Rothfuss Park. It features six multi-purpose sports fields, a pavilion, a snack bar, paved walkways, picnic tables and handicapped-accessible bathrooms.

It's a project 10 years in the making.

In the mid-1990s, Jim Rothfuss sold the 90-acre property to the town and Western New York Nature Conservancy for almost \$1 million. The Nature Conservancy contributed more than \$200,000 and received about 20 acres bordering the Thousand Acre Swamp Sanctuary; state Sen. James Alesi, R-Perinton, secured a \$750,000 matching state grant for the town, which

## Rothfuss Park's grand opening

- **When:** 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 29
- **Where:** 1648 Five Mile Line Road
- **What:** Penfield Strikers and Rangers soccer teams and Penfield Youth Lacrosse groups will provide demonstrations, games and activities for kids. There will also be juggling, an inflatable obstacle course, a farm equipment display, solar viewing with the Rochester Astronomy Club, paper-kite making and more.

pitched in about \$647,000 from recreation fees.

Channing Philbrick, who was town supervisor at the time, said the town had been eyeing the land as a good spot for a park. It was identified in the 1995 and 2001 Parks and Recreation Master Plan updates as ideal for multi-purpose sports fields.

"The western and northwestern side of town was in need of park land," Philbrick said. "The town needed rectangular playing fields ... Even

See **ROTHFUSS**, 14A▶

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▶ **ROTHFUSS**, from page 1A

though at the time we didn't have an end use decided on, I think we felt we had to act on it and change some other priorities to do what we ended up doing. ... It was too good to pass up."

The property was purchased in November 2000, and designs on a plan for the land got started. With the town dedicating its resources to completing improvements at Veterans Memorial Park, however,

Rothfuss Park had to be put on hold.

Action got under way at Rothfuss in 2004 when Supervisor George Wiedemer freed up some incentive-zoning monies to get started on the park. Field work began in 2005.

"The fields needed to set for two years," said Wiedemer. "You have to establish the grass. We wanted to get it established so we held everyone off it for two years. It wasn't easy, there's such a crunch on availability of

space."

The original plan also called for another 10,000-square-foot community building, a skate park and a playground. Wiedemer said those aspects were addressed in the most recent Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

"This project is ongoing," he said. "Obviously we have a lot more land there."

Jim Rothfuss, the last one in the family to farm the land, will be at the park's grand opening Saturday, along with 30 or so other

members of the family. The men said they are proud that the park bears the family's name.

"When you think about kids 100 years from now playing soccer, lacrosse or some sport that hasn't even been invented yet, they probably won't think of who it's named after," said Tom Rothfuss, "but they'll appreciate that there's a park here."

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