Dogs and their owners came out to see the new park in Valley Stream last Saturday despite some light rain.

**VILLAGE NEWS**

**Dogs have their day**

Humans give new park high marks

*By Andrew Hackmack*

See more photos from the event [here](#).

An on-and-off rain last Saturday didn’t stop more than 100 dogs — and their owners — from inaugurating Valley Stream’s new dog park, which officially opened to the public that morning.

Many months in the making, the facility, near Village Hall, is the first of its kind in Valley Stream. Residents got to check out the park and visit with many pet-related vendors who set up shop in the adjoining parking lot during the five-hour celebration.

“I think this is a great event,” said Richard Infield, leader of the Friends of the Valley Stream Dog
Pablo Andres Pachucho, 12, brought his dog, Golden, to the new facility.

Park group, which planned the opening-day festivities along with village officials. “This is the kind of event I was hoping for when we first came up with the idea.”

Dog owners were ecstatic. “I’m so happy,” said Sandra Pachucho, of Valley Stream, who came with her family and their dog, Golden. “I’m so excited. My dog is so big, he needs to exercise more.”

Pachucho said that Golden was a little shy on the first day, but she expects him to eventually interact more with other dogs. She plans to bring him to the park on a regular basis.

Nia Dominguez came with her dogs, Diesel and Lola, a pair of German shepherds. “We love it,” she said. “We’ve been waiting for this. We have a nice-size yard but there’s nothing like coming to the park to socialize with other dogs.”

Dominguez said she liked the location of the park, and added that the layout was done very tastefully. The water fountain, benches and equipment for the dogs are all nice touches, she said.

Frank Vazquez, who came with his son, Joseph, and their dog, Trinket, said it’s good to have a dog park close to home, explaining that he used to have to take his dog to parks in Queens. Vazquez wants to make at least one trip to the Valley Stream park every week, he said, and likes the separate fenced-off areas for large and small dogs.

Several Boy Scouts from Troop 369 helped with the construction of the park, leading community service projects for their Eagle rank. Their projects included a shelter, benches, obstacles for the dogs to negotiate, a storage shed, informational kiosks and murals. The five Scouts who came up with the projects were recognized during the opening ceremony at noon, which concluded with a ribbon cutting. Peter Marin, a sophomore at Central High School, was one of the Scouts. He built the shed and also commissioned the painting of three murals, which hang on the back fence. Marin brought his dog, a 10-year-old golden retriever named Potter, to the opening. “He loves it,” Marin said. “He hasn’t really interacted with other dogs much, so this is a new experience for him.”

Jim Lavery, of Valley Stream, was one of the artists who painted a mural. A cartoonist, Lavery came up with the idea of painting dogs in a park doing activities that humans do, like barbecuing and riding bikes. And there are two undercover cats. “I think it brightens it up,” Lavery said of the murals, all of which have dog themes.
His painting, he said, took about 40 hours to complete over the course of a month.

Jack Clifford, the Boy Scout who built the shelter, said he was pleased with the park. The Central High senior said he expects it to be a popular place for local dog owners, especially in the summer. “It’s really good to see everyone enjoying it,” Clifford said. “It looks really great, definitely beyond what I expected.”

One criticism from a few people was that the pebbles covering the ground in the park are too large. Mayor Ed Fare said he had heard the complaint, but he noted that others like the surface because it makes it easy to clean up after the dogs.

Overall, Fare said, the surface is good for drainage, looks nice and doesn’t create dust. A more expensive surface could be considered in the future, he said, if the Friends group raises enough money.

Employees of Central Veterinary Associates, one of the park’s primary sponsors, were on hand to offer rabies shots and a microchipping clinic. Dr. John Charos explained that microchips, about the size of a grain of rice, implanted under a dog’s skin, have a unique identification number that can help reunite a lost dog and its owner. “It’s a great thing,” Charos said, noting that microchips can be used in other animals too, such as cats and birds. “There’s a pet rescued every eight or nine minutes because of the microchip.” Charos said that Central Vets provided the two services for free, but asked for donations, which were then given to Friends of the Valley Stream Dog Park. “We’ve been wanting a dog park in town,” he said. “It gets the pets socializing and interacting. They get to run, have some exercise.”

The park was open to everyone on the first day, but now will only be accessible to village and Central High School District residents who register to use it. Fare said they will get keys to the park, which will open a padlock. Eventually, the village plans to install an electronic key system, but that will cost $10,000 to $15,000. And Fare said that it would be too expensive to have Recreation Department staff manning the gates during hours when the park is open.

He praised the community effort that went into creating the park. “Everybody pitched in,” Fare said. “There were good days and bad days but in the end, everybody got together for dogs and dog owners.”