

Neighbors who died in air crash honored



By Marsha King
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For Rachel Pearson, 6, and her grandfather, the neglected park with the dilapidated play equipment was known as "Rachel's park."

Rachel and several other Queen Anne children and their families were among the 88 people who died in January 2000 when Alaska Airlines Flight 261 went down in the Pacific.

Almost from the beginning, a few neighbors left behind started looking for a way to work through their grief and honor their lost friends.

Rachel Pearson

They committed to turning the pocket park called Soundview Terrace on the west edge of the hill



into a legacy for the community.

The group grew into a larger effort called the Friends of Rachel's Park.

Their project is finally finished, and the public is invited to help celebrate what a community can do at the park's reopening at 1 p.m. today at 11th Avenue West and West Wheeler Street, when the ribbon will be cut to "Rachel's playground."

"Everyone has their reasons for wanting to be involved," said Stephanie Bower, a co-manager of the project.

Bower, who was close friends with Rachel and her family, had volunteered to watch their house and take in the mail while they were gone on vacation. She remembers hearing them climbing into their car as they were leaving.

"And they never came back," Bower said yesterday. "It was an unbelievable shock."

Renovating the park hasn't been easy, either, Bower said.

"It's been a struggle the whole way," from planting in wind and rain to dealing with the objections of some neighbors who lived near the park.

The project, which cost about \$400,000, was supported with grants from the Neighborhood Matching Fund administered by Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods as well as the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation and contributions from the local community and businesses as well as people from across the country.

An apprenticeship program of the local masonry-trades union donated thousands of dollars of free labor, laying stone pathways and setting a circle of tiles decorated by people from the neighborhood.

A plaque commemorates the children and their families who died: Rachel and her sister, Grace, 22 months, and their parents, Rodney Pearson and Sarah Manning Pearson.

David Clemetson and his wife, Carolyn Margiotta Clemetson, are listed along with their children Miles, 6, and Spencer, 6 months, as well as David's daughters Cori Barnett-Clemetson, 8, and Blake Barnett-Clemetson, 6.

Cori and Blake's mother, Claire Barnett, lives in Seattle.

Her tile in the park reads: "Devoted to You. Cori and Blake. I love you infinity past infinity. Mommy."

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