

Volunteers Pitch-In to Renovate Wade Johnson Park



From left to right: Wadie Jean Aman, Vera Pitts, Ken Houston, and Renee Henry. Photos by Gene Hazzard.

West Oakland residents celebrated the Re-Opening of the Wade Johnson Park and to honor the contributions of many donors and volunteers. Joining the May 21 celebration were Wade Johnson's two daughters and granddaughter.

Prior to the renovation, Wade Johnson Park was just a few benches used mostly by the homeless population in the area. When the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) moved some of its offices into the old Cole Elementary School, which is adjacent to the park, Police Chief Pete Sarna founded, with the support of KaBOOM the "Together we Can" program for the neighborhood children.

The Rebuilding Together Oakland organization and their sponsor, McGuire and Hester, prepared the grounds. Mike Hester, President of McGuire and Hester, said "It's rewarding to be in a position to give back once in a while." We have been blessed." Kym Luqman, the Executive Director of Rebuilding Together Oakland, said they were honored to bring their sponsor to help build a safe play area.

Hundreds of volunteers also helped install the play equipment, paint the basketball court, paint benches, install planter boxes, and other tasks. The renovated Park is within walking distance for children in the community and, with the

location near the OUSD Police Services building, will provide a safe haven for neighborhood families to laugh and play together.

The park is named after Wade Johnson, a community activist who founded the United Taxpayers and Voters Union, served on the Housing and Appeals Board and had the ear of many civic leaders, including then Chief of Police George Hart. One of his daughters, Dr. Vera Pitts, said, "It is a tribute to his vision and civic involvement that his legacy includes a community park named for him."

Councilmember Nancy Nadel thanked Chief Sarna, volunteers and donors.