

## Settlers' Park, from page 2

prepare for the fast-approaching Centennial in 2007.

"Right from the very beginning, we did aim to have this (park) finished for the Centennial," Vedra said.

In 2002, the Historical Society hooked up with the Wisconsin National Guard for further road construction in the park. As a community service project, the Guard brought in heavy equipment and shaped the area that would eventually become the paved park road and parking areas.

Meanwhile, plans for structures were taking shape. Snedic and volunteers built a kozolec (hay-drying shed) for the main park shelter. A concrete restroom was built, and sided with authentic boards from an area barn. Snedic designed and built an outdoor grill shelter and grape arbor. A storage shed and wellhouse were added.

Plans for an ice skating rink turned into a children's playground. A rock wall to signify the tons of rocks picked by settlers was built. Areas were landscaped and planted into flowers. Trees were planted, and last winter, a huge white oak log inscribed with the "Settlers' Park" name was set in place.

Vedra said "a zillion" times more work has gone into park construction than was first anticipated. That has been a godsend as a grant received from the Department of Natural Resources required matching donations of cash or donated labor. Every time a project has been in the works, local residents, businesses and organizations have pitched in.

"We have just unbelievable hours and hours of work" from volunteers, Vedra said. "The list is endless. It included really a big spectrum of people."

In addition to the DNR grant, other park construction funds have been raised at rummage sales held in conjunction with the Willard Polka Festival each of the last five years, car-parking at area music festivals, and the sale of nameplates for a Willard memory board. Historical Society members also gave freely.

"We really didn't ask for money. They just wanted to see it work," Vedra said.

Kim also went door-to-door to area businesses to seek donations. All of those efforts have covered the approximate \$100,000 price tag for the park.

A separate fund-raising effort has been ongoing for the July 27-29 Willard Heritage Days. A committee for that has been working under the Historical Society's name to raise money to stage the 3-day event that will celebrate the community's 100th birthday. The last weekend of July was chosen for the event because it coincides with the annual picnic of the Slovenska Druzba, which attracts people with ties to the community.



The Willard Settlers' park is filled with small heritage touches such as restroom identification signs in the native language of area settlers. For those who don't know the language, there are drawings to help.

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