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**Gavin Miller, left, and Hunter Wilde, students at Illinois Valley High School, work at Illinois River Forks State Park, where a disc golf course is planned. A total of about 200 high school students have been working at the park at various times.**

## Community disc golf park in works for Illinois River Forks State Park

**By Ruth Longoria Kingsland**  
of the Daily Courier

**CAVE JUNCTION** — Amid a flurry of community service projects last week to celebrate Dan Fiske Memorial Day of Service, work also kicked off on a \$12,000 three-month-long project at Illinois River Forks State Park to build a nine-hole community disc golf park.

The project is funded, in part, through a \$5,000 grant from the Ford Family Foundation, a nonprofit organization out of Roseburg that funds many worthy community projects in Southern Oregon.

Other contributions for the project came from local businesses and individuals, and several fundraising projects, including selling sponsorships for golf holes and benches to be placed around the course, and volunteers bagging groceries at the local Shop Smart store.

“Everybody pitched in and it was amazing how quickly we raised the money for a project that has been talked about in the community for the past 10 years,” said Carol Dickson of Cave Junction.

Dickson is a member of the Ford Family Foundation’s Ford Institute Leadership Program, and together with other locals in that group, helped select the disc golf course as a project for sponsorship.

In addition to adding a fun activity for local residents, the course is expected to attract visitors from other parts of the region, as it’s such a popular sport, said Skyla Patton, a student at Illinois Valley High School.

Patton is junior class presi-

dent at IVHS and a member of the Josephine County Foundation, as well as a member of the Ford Family Foundation’s Leadership Program.

“We really want (the disc golf course) to bring in people of all ages, and be a place where everyone can have fun at the park,” Patton said, adding that Forks Park is one of her favorite places to go with family and friends.

Patton coordinated 200 of her classmates for last Friday’s half-dozen community service projects around the Illinois Valley. The work day is being called the Dan Fiske Memorial Day of Service, a day set aside to honor the late, longtime Cave Junction city councilor.

Patton said she had the opportunity to work with Fiske on a few projects in the past and was proud to honor him in such a manner.

“I was always inspired by Dan Fiske for the energy and soul he put into leading our community. The least I could do was to help organize this community service day to honor him,” she said.

Last Friday, a few dozen youths from Illinois Valley and Hidden Valley high schools spent the morning working on trails there, cleaning up the state park, and readying it for a community work day Saturday, when folks from around the area planned to show up to begin work specifically on the disc golf course.

Creating the disc golf course at the park has taken several years, in part because of funding, but also because the land that will be used is on 80 acres of land owned by the Bureau of

Land Management and leased by the Oregon State Parks Department.

Dickson said the leadership group needed the approval of both the BLM and Oregon State Parks in order to begin the project. They also gained sponsorship of the Illinois Valley Community Development Organization, which has helped coordinate the project.

This isn’t the first time the development organization has been involved at Forks Park. The group rallied to save the park when the state threatened to close it a few years back, after a park ranger complained of criminal activity there because of lack of supervision.

This year, in addition to IVCDO taking on sponsorship of the park through the state’s Adopt-a-Park program, a host was added at the park. That means that park hosts, who stay a month or more at a time at various state parks, have made Forks Park one of their destinations.

Park hosts are often retired couples designated by the park’s system to park a recreational vehicle and keep an eye on the park.

Dickson said she’s excited by all the changes taking place at Forks Park, including the new handicapped-accessible trails and the disc golf course.

“This is such a wonderful place,” she said, adding, “It’s another free outdoor recreational activity and something that will benefit the whole community.”

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