

The COURIER-T

ASHEBORO, N.C.

SUNDAY, MARCH 26, 2017

f facebook.com/CourierTribune

www.Courier-Tribune.com

A community gift for Petty's 80th birthday

VISIONARY — Ed Walker, owner of Carolina Bronze Sculpture in Seagrove, shows off a model of the future Richard Petty Tribute Park, the culmination of a community's vision to celebrate a milestone birthday and honor The King and his family.



The COURIER-TRIBUNE

ASHEBORO, N.C.

SUNDAY, MARCH 26, 2017

\$1.2



facebook.com/CourierTribune

www.Courier-Tribune.com



@Courier_Tribune.com

A community gift for Petty's 80th birthday

VISIONARY — Ed Walker, owner of Carolina Bronze Sculpture in Seagrove, shows off a model of the future Richard Petty Tribute Park, the culmination of a community's vision to celebrate a milestone birthday and honor The King and his family.



Need for foster parents growing

Editor's note: In North Carolina, the number of children in foster care increased every month in 2016 compared to the corresponding month in 2015, with more than 2,400 children eligible for adoption. In Randolph County, there are not enough foster homes for children in need of a temporary home, so they are parceled out to foster homes in nearby counties. Today's Focus looks at what's being done to correct the problem.

By Judi Brinegar

jbrinegar@courier-tribune.com

@JudiBrinegarCT



not take care of them. Often their families face issues such as illness, alcohol or drug addiction, or homelessness.

When the Department of Social Services (DSS) believes a child is not safe, and a judge agrees, DSS takes custody of that child and finds a foster home for him or her.

A fund-raising begins to raise \$300,000 for Richard Petty Tribute Park in Randleman

By Micki Bare

mbare@courier-tribune.com

@MickiBareCT

RANDLEMAN —

The Randolph County Tourism Development Authority (TDA) has officially begun accepting monetary donations toward a community project to honor Richard Petty and his family in celebration of The King's 80th birthday on July 2.

The Richard Petty Tribute Park will be erected upon a grassy knoll where West Academy Street becomes West Naomi Street in Randleman, where it can provide a grand welcome to visitors of the birthplace of Richard Petty.

The TDA is serving as the financial entity to coordinate the project.

"I've made many requests of Richard and the family over the past 15-plus years, and not once have they turned us down. Having his support has opened doors for Randolph County that would never have been opened otherwise," TDA Executive Director Tammy O'Kelley said.

"Now it's time for his community, his supporters and his fans to give back — and what better way to honor him than construct this park that will carry forward his legacy for many generations to come? It's very exciting, and I know everyone will want to be part of this!"

More than two

years ago, Wayne and Betty Snyder, owners of Snyder Farms Restaurant, approached N.C. Senator

Jerry Tillman about doing something to honor Richard Petty and his family. Tillman embraced the idea and assured them he would do what he

could to make the idea a reality.

"Richard is a true

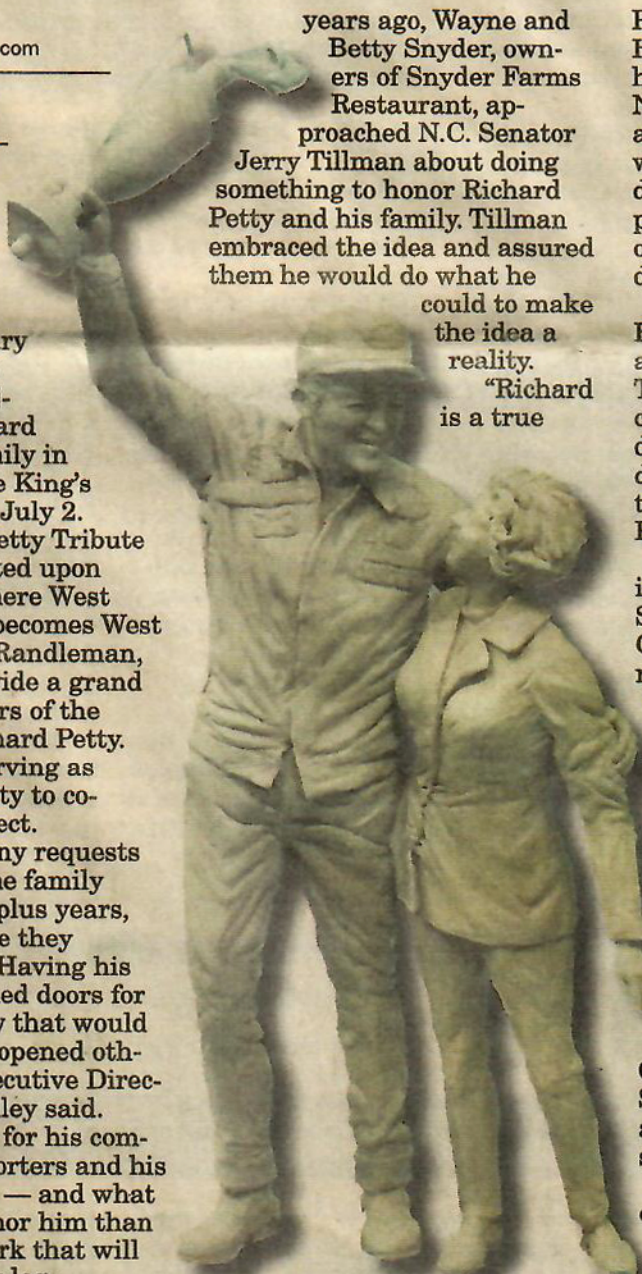
Randolph County treasure. He is a nationally known hero of the sports world and NASCAR," Tillman said. "He and his businesses and his wife, Lynda, before she died, did so many good things for people in the county that no one will ever know about. They didn't do it for recognition."

And this is why, with The King's milestone birthday approaching, the Snyders, Tillman and a committee of citizens chaired by RCC President Dr. Robert Shackleford decided the timing was right to honor not only Richard Petty but his entire family.

The committee — which includes Tillman, O'Kelley, Shackleford, Sheriff Robert Graves, Commissioner Darrel Frye, Jeff Freeman, Jerry Neal, Bob Wilhoit, Maxton McDowell, Melody Hancock, Reynolds Lisk and Roger Blackwell — has been working on the project for about a year and half. As the idea evolved, the project grew.

"We started off thinking about having a bronze statue of Richard made," Shackleford said. After a meeting with Ed and Melissa Walker, owners of Carolina Bronze Sculpture in Seagrove, "we realized we have an opportunity to make it a site, and not just a statue."

"They just adored each other," Ed Walker said of the Pettys as he described the sculpture that will be the focal point of the park, which depicts Richard and Lynda partially embraced



Micki Bare / The Courier-Tribune

MODEL — Details will be honed on this Richard and Lynda Petty model before the full-size sculpture is created through a process that involves artistic talent, state-of-the-art technology and old-school foundry casting.

See **PARK**, page 7A

Park

From page 1A

and looking at each other as Richard holds a trophy high in the air. "I put her hand down so little kids could hold her hand."

"This design implementation has been thoroughly thought out by the committee with input from the children of Richard and Lynda, and I think it's very special because it combines the racing legacy with the closeness of their family ties," O'Kelley said. "Everyone who has been involved in this process had a keen eye on getting behind a design that would incorporate those two aspects — racing and family — and something that those of us who knew Lynda believed she would be proud of. I think we've done that."

The statue will be slightly larger than life as it stands in front of a full-sized cement replica of one of four stock cars — all historic cars that are currently on display in the Petty Museum — featured at the park.

The cars will be built in varying sizes, from half-scale to full-scale. The three smaller cars will be mounted on the race track "wall" of the park.

"When you come in, this is really dynamic," Walker said of the concept. "It forces a false perspective" that will give visitors a sense of being in the midst of racing glory.

At the entrance to the park, visitors will be greeted by a relief sculpture of Richard, Lynda and their four children, Kyle, Sharon, Lisa and Rebecca. The park ground, or infield, is being designed to mimic a waving checkered flag. The oval will be 50 feet by 65 feet, with an interior dimension of 40 feet by 55 feet.

The site was designed to provide an experience for visitors, who will be able to walk around and take pictures. The park will shine



Micki Bare / The Courier-Tribune

RESEARCH — An important part of the sculpting process is the study and research behind the details that become a true-to-life statue or relief.

at night under lighting designed to look like the poles to the fencing that separates fans from the track.

"What we want to do is to have a well-known tribute park with a world-class bronze sculpture," Shackelford said. "It will be a lasting tribute to Richard Petty and Lynda."

The projected cost for the project is \$300,000. To break ground, \$60,000 is needed. The committee has already raised about \$40,000. A fund-raising brochure will be

going out this week to more than 2,500 potential contributors.

"This fund-raising is a big part of getting it done on time," Shackelford said.

"I want to see it done by his birthday," Tillman said. "We couldn't do it for a better person or family."

"The Petty family members are truly some of the best people on earth. They have given more to this community than most people realize or will ever know."



Mickl Bare / The Courier-Tribune

LOCAL PRIDE — Carolina Bronze Sculpture in Seagrove was selected to create the park, including a bronze sculpture of Richard and Lynda Petty and replicas of historic cars from Petty's racing career.

How to Donate

Donations of any amount will be accepted and are much appreciated, so if you want to honor the Pettys and be a part of The King's 80th birthday celebration, here's how to make your tax-deductible contribution to the Richard Petty Tribute Park.

Make checks payable to RCTDA and mail to:
 Randolph County Tourism Development Authority
 Attn: Project RP
 145-B Worth St.
 Asheboro, NC 27203

Cash will be accepted at the TDA office at the above address, Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

To pay by credit card (Visa and MasterCard only), call the TDA office at 336-626-0364, ext. 204, Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

The Randolph County Tourism Development Authority is a tax-exempt organization under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3).

Charitable contributions to governmental units are tax-deductible under section 170(c)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code if made for a public purpose. Its federal tax identification number is 30-0752270.