

9-18-99

Our View

Farmer's dream comes true in Adams

Earlier in this decade, Karl Wirth's farm in central Adams Township was a developer's dream.

Mr. Wirth, in his early 90s, had worked his farm for decades, but he was getting ready to sell his land, which is about 1½ miles north of Route 228 along Three Degree Road. The land's topography and its proximity to Mars Area middle and high schools made it a high-quality site for new houses.

He might have sold his farm for more than a million dollars, but Mr. Wirth had a different dream.

Mr. Wirth died in March 1998 at age 94, but his dream becomes reality today when the Adams Township Community Park holds a grand opening celebration on the land he once tilled, seeded, fertilized and harvested.

Mr. Wirth wanted his farmland preserved as open space against the spread of new housing plans in Adams. So he agreed to sell 105 acres to the township for \$350,000, much less than the market value, with the stipulation that it be preserved as a park.

From noon to 4 p.m. today, township residents and others will celebrate the completion of the park's first stages. The township has built a 1.3-mile, 8-foot-wide, paved hiking and biking trail around the perimeter of the park. It winds through woods and across the sprawling fields.

It might seem a small first step, but there is plenty of room for the park to grow as the township does. In the past decade, Adams' population has increased nearly 37 percent to more than 5,300. Long-range plans for the park include three baseball fields, two soccer fields, playgrounds and picnic pavilions.

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Few, if any, of the children who play in those fields will have known Karl Wirth. But his generosity and his dream of preserving an open space will be multiplied thousands of times over in the dreams — and memories — of the people who play and relax on the land he tended so carefully all of his life.