

NEWS

OF DELAWARE COUNTY
DREXEL HILL/UPPER DARBY EDITION

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Wednesday, November 1, 2006



ANNE NEBORAK/Staff Photographer

Mario Civera (left) watches as (from left) Allison Lee, Councilman Jack Shingle, Deanna Brown and her son Shawn pour water on the ground to show the ability of porous ground to drain water.

Upper Darby basketball court goes natural in effort to prevent runoff

By Dan Russo
STAFF WRITER

On a chilly Thursday morning, water was poured onto Upper Darby's newest basketball court.

Instead of forming a puddle or sliding off to the sides of the court onto the grass, the liquid soaked directly into the ground.

"When your water goes down into the pavement, it goes right down into the ground," said Project Engineer Allison Lee. "This stuff may last you 20 years and never need to be replaced."

The township government, and state officials and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council partnered to build the new courts at the 2nd Ward Park between Church Lane and Crosley Avenue.

At the opening Oct. 26, designers explained the technology

behind "porous pavement." Aside from preventing flooding, the materials, which are less compact than regular asphalt, does not fall prey to the damage caused by freezing water in winter.

"Upper Darby is really providing important leadership," said Environmental Council Vice President Patrick Starr. "You are improving this park and you're helping improve the environment."

The non-profit group provided funding and expertise for the project, which also included a new tree trench, incorporating newly-planted trees and a vegetation filled basin beside the court which will drain runoff as well.

"Not one dime of tax payer money was used," said State Rep. Mario Civera (R-164).

He was joined by members of the township council, administrators, township employees,

several residents and Mayor F. Raymond Shay at the ribbon cutting ceremony.

The court is one surface of about two dozen similar ones across the state.

Designer Susan McDaniels of Cahill Associates said the project took about two months to complete.

"It's really nice to see this happen in Upper Darby, especially where you have an urban environment that has had problems with flooding," said McDaniels. "The idea here is to regulate the natural hydrologic cycle."

McDaniels said the system would allow nature to take its course without the obstacles caused by traditional impervious asphalt. She hopes the technology will catch on in other places as a means to improve storm water management.