

## MIDDLETOWN

## Park makeover features basketball, tennis courts

*A \$1.24 million upgrade will also include paved walking paths and a new parking lot.*

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Middletown resident Rose Belonsoff loves taking her great granddaughters to the nearby Lance Corporal Harry J. Simmons Jr. Memorial Park on Brownsville Road.

She will miss the park when it closes in a few weeks for a \$1.24 million upgrade, but she figures the wait will be worth it.

"That sounds wonderful," said Belonsoff of all the work planned at the site. "Parks are very important for kids and a lot of them come here. If they have to close it for awhile to really improve it, I have no problem with that."

The supervisors recently awarded a \$1.24 million contract to DePaul and Company Inc. for the project described by township Parks and Recreation Director Debby Lamanna as a reconstruction of the entire park.

Work will include two new full basketball courts, two new tennis courts, paved walking paths, a new storm water management system and a new 50-space parking lot, which will have 30 more spaces than the current one.

Township officials have tried to be environmentally friendly in planning the upgrade. The parking lot and basketball courts will be made of porous pavement, which will allow rain to soak into the ground, said Lamanna. Another environmentally friendly feature will be waterless urinals in the new restroom, she said.

Nearby resident David Savage, a roller hockey player, was happy to hear the project also will include a "flexible" court next to the two new tennis courts that can be used for tennis, roller hockey and other sports. He also likes to walk his dog Floyd at the park.

"That definitely sounds nice," Savage said of the improvements.

Simmons Park, formerly Veterans Park before it was renamed in honor of a township resident killed in the Vietnam War, hasn't gotten any major improvements since it was built in the 1970s, said Lamanna.

"Another one of the things we're doing is providing pedestrian access (paved trails) to the park from surrounding neighborhoods," she said. "It's never had that before and I think the entire project will be a wonderful improvement for the community."

Lamanna said she hopes work can start about the second week of June and be finished in four months, meaning the park could reopen in October. The extensive nature of the project made it impractical and unsafe to keep the park open during construction, she said.

Money for the work is coming from a \$10 million bond issue approved by the supervisors last year.