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EMBARGOED UNTIL THURSDAY, MARCH 9 at 6 PM

## **Charles River Conservancy honored by the Friends of the Charlestown Navy Yard for Lynch Family Skatepark**

CHARLESTOWN – Thursday, March 10, 2016 – A resounding ovation marked the moment as the Friends of the Charlestown Navy Yard assembled today for their annual gathering and bestowed an award to the Charles River Conservancy for building the Lynch Family Skatepark.

“We are so grateful to the Charles River Conservancy and its founder and president Renata von Tschanner for the tenacious fight for a skatepark in our neighborhood,” said Michael Parker, Chairperson of the Friends of the Charlestown Navy Yard, as he concluded the award ceremony. “I hope you’ll all take the short walk from the Navy Yard to the skatepark site, next to the Cambridge base of the North Bank pedestrian bridge, and see the great sculpture with a twelve-foot deep competition bowl and other features for every skill level.”

“For years the plazas, ledges and stairs of the Charlestown Navy Yard had attracted skateboarders, roller skaters and BMX bikers, much to the dismay of the residents, business owners and visitors,” said Parker. “While watching their artful tricks had great entertainment value, damage to the infrastructure and the physical threats by youth on wheels or loose skateboards outweighed the pleasure of watching.”

The Charles River Conservancy officially gifted the completed 40,000-square-foot skatepark over to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) on November 14, 2015. The project was designed by Stantec Engineering, managed by Vertex Engineering, and constructed by ValleyCrest Landscape company and specialty subcontractor California Skateparks. The opening celebration, with some 2,000 supporters present, included Boston Mayor Marty Walsh and then-Cambridge Mayor David Maher, as well as elected and appointed officials.

Representing the project’s funders was Peter Lynch who, with his recently deceased wife Carolyn Lynch, had been steadfast supporters of this athletic facility that could give young people a place to practice and show off their skills on wheels.

“We used to have to drive to Watertown to go to a skatepark, but now I can walk from my house! I like the park because there are unique elements that aren’t in other parks,” said Mae Morelli, a Charlestown resident, age 8. “I also like it because there are spots for all different types of skateboarding. I think it’s the best skatepark I’ve ever been to!”

Vans, the sneaker company who gave \$1.5 million to the construction and an annual stipend of \$25,000 for 7 years to DCR for maintenance of the park, was represented by Steve Van Doren, Vice President of Events and Promotion. Van Doren brought with him nationally recognized

skater Tony Alva, who moved the audience by telling the story of how skateboarding pulled him out of alcohol addiction and drug abuse. A similarly positive message came from skateboard celebrity and Newton native Andy MacDonald, who links skateboarding with a healthy and drug-free lifestyle.

A major supporter of the skatepark for many years and sponsor of a bill to support the skatepark with state funding, State Representative Timothy Toomey joined his constituents to celebrate the opening of the Skatepark.

At the ribbon-cutting, Renata von Tscharnier, the Founder and President of the Charles River Conservancy, expressed her gratitude for all the help she received during the 15 years of planning and building the skatepark. The most challenging aspect was the clean up of the contaminated soil and the permitting involving several agencies. The pro-bono legal aid of WilmerHale's Robert Fitzpatrick—valued at an estimated \$1 million—made it possible for their small non-profit to complete such a complex and costly project.

Charlestown resident Jo Frances Meyer was at the ribbon-cutting in the function of Executive Director of the Boston Landmarks Orchestra. In addition to providing music to welcome guests, the Orchestra played with its brass ensemble the Fanfare to the Common Man in honor of Carolyn Lynch, who had died unexpectedly just six weeks before the opening and who had very much planned to be there.

“It was truly amazing to see the joy on everyone’s face as they entered the Lynch Family Skatepark for the first time,” Meyer said of the skatepark’s opening celebration. “This park will not only provide a forgotten sector of extraordinary athletes a place where they can practice their sport, it will also offer alternative and after-school recreational opportunities for Charlestown residents for years to come.”

While most skateboarders are males between 5 and 50 years, there are also increasing numbers of young women who practice the sport and wait for it to become an Olympic sport.

“For the Navy Yard residents, for Charlestown and the whole Boston Region, the Lynch Family Skatepark is a great addition whether you are a practitioner of the sport or somebody who enjoys watching budding and accomplished athletes,” said von Tscharnier. “At the Charles River Conservancy, we now look forward to providing Charlestown and other locals the opportunity for a permanent a swimming area in the Charles River.”

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**About the Charles River Conservancy:** The Charles River Conservancy is dedicated to the stewardship, renewal, and enhancement of the urban parklands along the Charles River, for the enjoyment of all. The Conservancy promotes the active use and vitality of the parklands, increases recreational and cultural opportunities, and works to ensure the beauty and integrity of this extraordinary public resource.

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