

THE TAMPA TRIBUNE

and The Tampa Times

Serene memorial garden attracts growing acclaim

By JOYCE McKENZIE

jmckenzie@tampatrib.com

Published: April 28, 2010

Beverley Hurley calls it the icing on the cake.

As founder and president of the board of directors of Angel of Hope Memorial Garden, she is referring to the recognition of the site within Riverside Park where family members and friends are invited to honor loved ones whose lives were cut short.

At the 18th annual Future of the Region Awards luncheon last month, hosted by the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, Angel of Hope Memorial Garden and Riverside Park received second place in the cultural/sports/recreation category.

And at the Temple Terrace City Council meeting last week, TBRPC Executive Director Manny Pumariega and Mayor Joe Affronti honored Hurley and Karl Langefeld, the city's parks and recreation director, with a plaque.

This award and others presented each year, Pumariega said, are to recognize projects that make significant contributions to the region's quality of life. Judges take into account the innovative and resourceful planning that goes into the undertakings, which can be initiated either by government employees or private citizens.

The garden, more than six years in the works, opened last fall. Hurley's purpose was to honor her daughter, Debbie, who died of cancer at age 22.

After visiting a similar site in South Bend, Ind., the South Tampa resident searched the Tampa Bay area and found Riverside Park. She said the Temple Terrace park is the perfect spot for the memorial. It is tucked beneath a canopy of grand oak trees just north of the Hillsborough River and east of 56th Street on Riverhills Drive.

The city donated the land for the placement of a bronze statue of an angel atop a granite monument that reads: "Our Children Loved, Remembered and Missed." And employees with the city's Leisure Services Department provided countless hours preparing the new

park for the monument and its Oct. 4 dedication.

"It's a unique concept of combining peace and hope within a peaceful and serene setting," Pumariega said. "They complement each other, and that results in a pleasant, unique place."

Affronti, who has experienced the deaths of two infant grandchildren, called the effort a labor of love. "We knew from the very beginning it would be a wonderful thing, and it was such an honor to have the Angel of Hope committee select Temple Terrace," Affronti said. "It's also a wonderful memorial, and we're delighted to have it in one of our parks and in a place where people can come to meditate and watch the children play."

Temple Terrace resident Sherry Daly's daughter, Lauren, a second-grade teacher at Lewis Elementary, died in 2005 of a brain aneurysm. She watched the monument and park come to fruition and often visits the memorial. When she goes in the early morning, she sometimes takes her dog and her breakfast with her.

"I'm just grateful to Beverley Hurley, to the city council and to the parks department for making this possible," she said. "It is truly a beautiful setting for parents and children alike, and I'm so thankful that it is part of our city."