

\$3 Million Campaign Unveiled to Renovate Bellaire/Loftin Parks

By Faith L. Howard

Patrons of Bellaire Parks has an ambitious goal. They want to raise at least \$3 million to renovate Bellaire's Loftin and Bellaire Parks over the next three years, to unveil the new complex in time for the city's 100th birthday.

"We want to do this park renovation," says Bellaire Mayor Cindy Siegel. "But if the city does it, it would take a long time, because of other priorities ... Council realizes how important parks are to the community. So, to accomplish this project is the icing on a very big cake."

Patrons of Bellaire Park President Marybeth Flaherty worked with Siegel and CenterPoint Energy Bellaire Service Area Manager Kenneth Mercado to develop the fundraising goals. Mercado, co-chair of the fundraiser, is leading a corporate challenge, seeking pledges from area businesses to help fund park renovations.

Patrons' first priority is to supplement the funds already allocated to Bellaire Pool, so it can be finished by summer 2006, Flaherty

says. "We don't know exactly how much it will cost yet, but the pool is our first priority," she said. "And we will rely heavily on any corporate partners to help with the pool."

"It's a huge challenge, but when it is finished, it will be a centerpoint, it will be a gathering place for the community and a wonderful celebration of the centennial."

With that in mind, Bellaire City Council Monday night considered renaming the entire complex, including both parks, City Hall, the police and fire departments, the library, gym and Little League field, "Bellaire Town Square."

In addition to seeking out corporate donations, Patrons hopes to appeal to individual donors, Flaherty says. "We will have a series of events to let the public know about us," she said.

Patrons will have a presence at the Bellaire Pool in May and the city's annual Fourth of July celebration. Group leaders plan to embark on a grassroots effort to increase community knowledge about the organization's purpose.

Patrons of Bellaire Parks, a non-

profit 501(c)(3) organization, was founded to further Bellaire parks in accordance with the city's Master Plan.

For more information about Patrons for Bellaire Parks, call (713) 661-PARK (7275).



Bellaire Mayor Cindy Siegel, Patrons of Bellaire Parks President Marybeth Flaherty, and CenterPoint Energy Area Manager Kenny Mercado will lead a fundraising effort benefiting Bellaire and Loftin Parks. Photo by Ben Ballantant