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NEWS RELEASE

Desiree Stanfield
Chief Marketing and Communications
248-705-4108 | stanfielddd@oakgov.com

OCP to dedicate Pontiac Oaks pavilion in honor of U.S. Sen. Gary Peters

Sept. 25 ceremony will recognize Peters' support for local communities and the lasting park investments made possible through pandemic recovery funding

PONTIAC, MI – Sept. 16, 2026 – Oakland County Parks will dedicate a new pavilion at Pontiac Oaks Park in honor of U.S. Sen. Gary Peters on Friday, Sept. 25, recognizing his advocacy for federal support to local communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and the lasting investments those resources helped make possible across Oakland County.

The pandemic underscored the important role parks and outdoor spaces play in supporting physical and mental health, social connection and overall well-being. It also brought greater attention to longstanding differences in access to high-quality parks and recreation opportunities, particularly in communities disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

Oakland County responded through the Healthy Communities Park and Outdoor Recreation Investment Plan, combining \$15 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding with \$5.2 million from Oakland County Parks. The initiative was designed to improve access to outdoor recreation, reduce barriers to park use, rejuvenate underutilized municipal parks and create welcoming, safe and accessible public spaces that support healthier communities.

Healthy Communities was broader than a traditional park improvement program. It combined investments in locally owned parks, major improvements to existing Oakland County Parks and new long-term partnerships with local governments. Those partnerships allowed Oakland County Parks to take a larger role in operating, improving and sustaining important public spaces in communities where residents historically had less direct access to the county park system.

The result was more than a collection of construction projects. Healthy Communities used a once-in-a-generation source of federal funding to renew aging and underused public spaces, expand recreation opportunities closer to where people live and create lasting community assets in places that had experienced disproportionate impacts from the pandemic.

*"Senator Peters was an early advocate for making sure local communities had the federal support they needed to respond to the pandemic and recover. That support opened a rare opportunity to build transformational, long-term partnerships with local governments and invest more than \$20 million to revitalize parks and public spaces across Oakland County. For decades to come, families will enjoy places like Pontiac Oaks, and the Peters Pavilion will stand as a reminder of Senator Peters' important role in making these investments possible," said **Chris Ward, director of Oakland County Parks.***

Pontiac Oaks is one of the most visible examples of that investment strategy.

Formerly known as Hawthorne Park, the park transitioned to Oakland County Parks management in 2023 through a long-term partnership with the City of Pontiac, which continues to own the property. The revitalization has brought new and improved opportunities for residents to gather, play and enjoy the outdoors, including a fishing pier, playground and play pockets, paved trail, disc golf course, picnic pavilions and restroom improvements.

*"Pontiac residents have seen an important community space given new life, and that is something worth celebrating," **Pontiac Mayor Mike McGuinness** said. "Families now have a welcoming, high-quality park close to home where they can gather, play, walk, fish and enjoy the outdoors. We are grateful for the partnership with Oakland County Parks and for the investment that has made the revitalization of Pontiac Oaks possible."*

Pontiac Oaks received \$1.3 million in ARPA funding for renovations and capital improvements as part of the Healthy Communities initiative.

Peters was an early advocate for federal assistance to local governments during the pandemic. His work helped advance the broader effort to ensure counties, cities and other local governments had resources to respond to the public health emergency and support community recovery.

*"When faced with an unprecedented crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, it's imperative that we come together and fight for the resources needed to help Michigan communities come back even stronger. That's why I made it a top priority to ensure the federal pandemic response included investments for local projects like this one to improve infrastructure and revitalize public spaces," said **U.S. Senator Gary Peters.** "The newly renovated Pontiac Oaks Park is a prime example of what's possible when federal, state, and local officials work together to achieve a common goal. I feel deeply honored to receive this recognition and I'm thrilled to celebrate this new community space alongside residents and partners."*

The pavilion dedication will begin at 1 p.m. Friday, Sept. 25, at Pontiac Oaks Park, 1400 Telegraph Road in Pontiac.

Pontiac Oaks is open daily from 8 a.m. to dusk. Admission is free.