



# PHILADELPHIA PARKS & RECREATION

## Goodbye Old Friend

*By Tim Gill, Director of Marketing and Promotions*

A grim February day with dark skies and a cold steady rain sets the somber mood for a sad goodbye to a dear old friend. Like a true friend, we had our ups and downs, maybe more ups. Our relationship had a rocky start, most warned me it wouldn't last. Some wondered what I saw in you, we had so little in common, it will never work out... But I saw something few others had. I saw an opportunity to make a change, to make a difference where it really mattered, and the stakes were high.

Over a decade ago I tried something unusual in city government. I suggested the entrepreneurial project of reopening the closed visitor's center in LOVE Park and initiated programs to change the public's opinion of the rundown block in the shadow of City Hall. Having been closed for 6 years had taken a toll on the old spaceship's image and usefulness. The lack of presence left the surrounding park's activities without structure or purpose.

With a plan, a prayer, and backing from the Executive Director, the effort was underway to reconstitute the round building into a haven for visitors, tourists and citizens alike. We agreed to dispense information about Fairmount Park, open a small gift shop and throw open the doors to the world. I believe park visitors have multiple, layered interests that are opportunities for various engagements. So to complement the new information center we looked towards food, music and culture; things that resonate with the widest span of age and demographic groups. The renaissance of LOVE Park from its dreary years is due in large part to the Summer in LOVE free concert series, combined with center city's only food truck court and public access to arts and culture through the Welcome Center's art gallery, Parkway Museums District tickets and city tours.

By now the reconstruction of the new LOVE Park is underway, and the excitement of tomorrow will build as the ribbon cutting ceremony draws near. Tomorrow is a new day full of promise and excitement! In a short time, we will be toasting the new LOVE Park and the generations who will enjoy it!

[View a brief slide show of LOVE Park through the years](#)