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# LYNCH FAMILY SKATEPARK BUILDS A COMMUNITY ON WHEELS

“A GOOD SKATEPARK SESSION IS LIKE THERAPY.”

BY KATHERINE RUGG  
PHOTOS BY JESS BENJAMIN

**T**he Lynch Family Skatepark doesn't just provide the area's skaters with 40,000 square feet of bowls, ramps and railings.

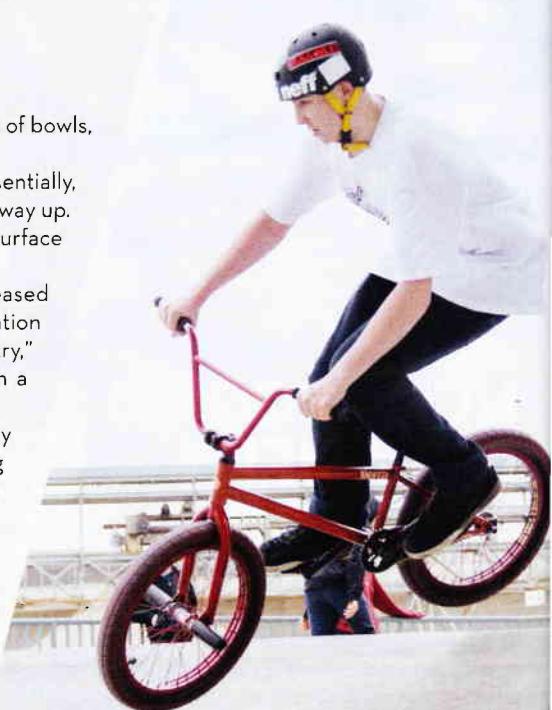
Skateboarder Maya Volpacchio, age 18, loves the park's layout. Its three bowls—essentially, empty swimming pools—of different sizes allow beginning skaters to start small, working their way up. She's also a fan of the mini street section. “There's a lot of variety,” Volpacchio says, “and the surface is really smooth. It's fun to just cruise around.”

Renata von Tscherner, president and founder of the Charles River Conservancy, is pleased by how well-received Lynch has been in the short time since its grand opening on Education Street in November. “The skatepark was designed and built by the best experts in the country,” she says. “Whenever you have really talented people working together, you end up with a wonderful product.”

For skaters like Volpacchio, the park is more than a fun place to kill time on a Saturday afternoon. She and friend Bowie Lam, age 19, have discovered self confidence while skating at Lynch, as well as an encouraging network of female athletes. Lam builds connections with other skaters across the country through social media, and she's met lots of local skaters at Lynch. She's there four or five days a week, and she hopes to see more girls join her. “I hear girls say a lot that they don't want to go to the skatepark because there are too many guys or they're too intimidated,” says Lam. “But once when you love skateboarding enough, none of that stuff really matters anymore ... and it doesn't really matter how fast you progress, because as long as you're having fun, that's what's important.”

“I used to care so much about what other people would think about me when I was skateboarding,” Volpacchio adds. “But it's not about what other people think about you. It's about doing what you love and just pursuing it.”

It's that community building that has made Lynch such a valuable resource for



the athletes of East Cambridge. The project was launched by the Charles River Conservancy, in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and with major funding support from the Lynch Foundation and Vans. After 15 years of effort from these organizations and others, the Lynch Family Skatepark is now the only mega complex park of its size and quality on the East Coast.

"DCR's Lynch Family Skatepark serves as an excellent example of state government and private partners working together to create a unique, outdoor recreational experience for the public to benefit from," says Troy Wall, director of communications for the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. "The results of this partnership will have a lasting effect on the skating community, as a whole, and we are proud to have the skatepark part of DCR's portfolio."

Teens aren't the only people taking a spin at the skatepark—for many, an afternoon at Lynch is a family affair. Skateboarder Gregg Hammerquist, along with his 7-year-old daughter and 10-year-old son, shows his love for Lynch by doing his part to keep the space clean and by teaching his children the importance of maintaining the park. "Without the tenacity of Renata von Tscherner and the Charles River Conservancy, this park would not exist," says Hammerquist, who also appreciates the work of Vans—and of the individual skaters and BMXers who he says were involved in making the park a reality from day one.

"A good skatepark session is like therapy," says Mandi Marino, a Boston Roller Derby skater who has frequented Lynch over the last few months. "It's really satisfying to see your growth, and it's super exciting to finally land that trick you've been working on forever."

Marino, along with fellow skaters Emily Erdman and Caitlin Boag, created the Boston chapter of Chicks in Bowls, a movement that started out as just a handful of rollerskaters taking over skateparks in New Zealand. According to Erdman, the community that Chicks in Bowls creates has been important because it brings women into a space where they may not feel like they belong, and it pushes them to try something new while they're there.

As Cambridge residents, Marino and Erdman didn't have many local options for skateparks before Lynch opened. "There are a few parks spread out over the Boston area," Marino says. "But for the most part, they are really small and in poor condition." Before Lynch was completed, she and Erdman had to drive nearly an hour outside of the city to find a decent park. Both Erdman and Marino have worked hard, not only to hone their own skills, but also to create a network of athletes here in the city—one that welcomes new skaters and encourages them to have fun and challenge themselves.

In the short time since its grand opening, the Lynch Family Skatepark has provided a space for a growing community of skaters and riders of all ages and skill levels. Hammerquist grew up skating and is able to spend Saturdays at Lynch with his kids thanks to the park's "wheel friendly" policy, which welcomes skateboards, scooters, roller skates, roller blades, bikes and wheelchairs. His son, Luke, likes being able to meet new BMXers during these family skatepark sessions, since Lynch brings in people from all over the area.

"As a father who skates, who has a son who's an avid BMXer and a daughter who skates, being able to come here ... all of us can enjoy



what we do together," Hammerquist explains.

That's exactly what von Tscherner of the Charles River Conservancy had hoped for in the 15 years spent planning and building the park. She always wanted Lynch to be an urban hub open to everyone. "It was absolutely crucial to us that Lynch be free to the public," she says. "I go on a regular basis and see it being used by people of all ages and abilities. Everyone really seems to enjoy being with each other and learning from each other in this space, and I think that's really powerful."