



Thomas Jefferson Parkway is Dedicated

More than 100 people set aside a brisk November morning to officially dedicate the Thomas Jefferson Parkway and its main components – Saunders Bridge, Kemper Park, and the Saunders-Monticello Trail.

The young – and still growing – linear parkway is already the most popular park in Albemarle County, while the striking stone-arch bridge over Route 53 provides safer access to the grounds of Monticello for both vehicles and users of the trail.

A short recognition ceremony at Saunders Bridge was the first order of business on Saturday, Nov. 1. Thomas Jefferson Foundation Board of Trustees Chairman Thomas A. Saunders III spoke jokingly of his initial reluctance to become the project's lead donor, and of the

pleasure he and his wife, Jordan, have since taken in their involvement.

The bridge then “passed its first test,” Saunders said, by remaining steady as he broke a bottle of champagne against its side.

Ceremony attendees next gave the Saunders-Monticello Trail a test of its own, walking en masse from the bridge down to the trailhead at Kemper Park, where the main dedication program was held.

From the podium the many project contributors – from financiers to fieldstone artisans – voiced their satisfaction with and fondness for both bridge and parkway. Sally Thomas,



TJF/Stephanie Ginos

TjF Board of Trustees Chairman Thomas A. Saunders III christens Saunders Bridge with a bottle of champagne.

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chairman of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors, called the group one of “dreamers, planners, supporters, and gamblers.”

Among them were representatives of the architectural firm Rieley & Associates; contractors W.C. English, Inc., and Abrahamse & Co. Builders; the Perry Foundation; the Foundation staff; and local, state, and federal governments.

The day’s featured speaker, U.S. Sen. George Allen, lauded the improved safety Saunders Bridge also affords those exiting Brown’s Mountain, where he once resided.

“It used to be a dangerous event,” Allen said with a laugh. “This bridge is the most significant improvement to Route 53 since it was paved.”

With some 24,000 visitors in 2002, and nearly 75,000 to date, the Thomas Jefferson Parkway has hummed with activity since its “soft” opening in the spring of 2000. Still more improvements are on the way, including a children’s garden, outdoor amphitheater, and overflow parking lot.

“You have created one of those things that we didn’t know we needed until it was here,” Thomas said. “And now, by the thousands, we appreciate, enjoy, and treasure a magnificent parkway in all its integral pieces.”

COMMENTS? newsletter@monticello.org