

October 10, 2011

Councilman Steve Wolfson
& Betsy Fretwell
400 East Stewart
Las Vegas, NV.
89101

Dear Councilman Wolfson and Ms. Fretwell,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to clear up some misconceptions on the naming of the "All American Park."

It's with a denial from the Park and Recreation board for a requested name change to that park that compels me to set the record straight. It has been erroneously reported that the park was named in remembrance of the 9-11 victims. This is inaccurate; the park opened just days after the tragedy of 9-11. One year later, the City Council and Councilman for the area dedicated the "Fire Fighters Memorial Park" in memory of our fallen fire fighters and those lost in the tragedies of 9-11. With that said, there has been some confusion as to what the name "All American Park" actually implies.

There had never been any youth football designated land use in the Valley until 1995. Until then, youth football leagues were forced to use dangerous vacant lots, unused baseball outfields or on Saturday's high school football fields to do their try-outs and hold their games. These Saturday games would last the entire day, sometimes running very late into the evening to accommodate all the teams playing.

That same year it occurred to a gentleman named John McDonald that a seemingly useless parcel of land within Ed Fountain Park could be transformed into a Mecca for local youth football players. The land had once been in the 70's as a make-shift transfer station for garbage trucks and in 1995 it was being used to empty the cities street sweepers.

John McDonald had raised three children in the adjacent neighborhood and saw the need for a safe haven for the youth football players of the area. He envisioned two fields dedicated solely for youth football in place of the dumping grounds and the then defunct BMX track. The execution of John McDonald's proposal on the land use resulted in those fields becoming a highly coveted addition to the area. It was quickly realized that a much larger area was needed to accommodate the demand.

It was with the seeds of an idea that John McDonald had planted that the search was started to acquire enough land to build an entire park for usage by youth football players.

In 1998, a very large privately owned parcel of land was discovered on Buffalo Dr. The owner/developer sought to build it out as a commercial property. The intended land use was met with the overwhelming disapproval of the neighbors. They stood and in one voice told the developer that they did not want any more commercial usage on Buffalo Dr. Subsequently, the intent of the developer was abandoned. During the many neighborhood meetings about that land John McDonald's concept of a youth football designated park was reintroduced. The idea was presented to the neighbors who concurred that such a place would be of great significance to those who would use it. A safe, well lit, use designated area for a

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game that John McDonald wholly believes can shape the character of a child that will carry into adulthood.

In 2001, the park that was the brainchild of a single Las Vegas was finally being realized. Many names for the park were suggested but only one could be used. Again, John McDonald had an epiphany and suggested the name "All American Park."

Every year the Colleges from around our great Nation vote on and choose an "All American Team." This team is comprised of all that year's most promising talent from the sport. It is in their honor and with their spirit in mind that the name "All American Park" was chosen.

John McDonald has been a long time supporter of youth football. As a young family man he would often sponsor entire teams, he would go even further by taking all those children that didn't make the "cut" and teach them the fundamentals of the game. It was with his leadership and coaching that those players would eventually make the team the following year.

John McDonald was also known to take the underprivileged/ at risk children of the area and guide them towards a future in athletics instead of falling victim to a less productive lifestyle as a gang member. John McDonald was well known and respected by the kids of the area for his care and guidance. All of those kids went on to play high school football and some even went on to play in college.

With no disrespect meant towards the memory of fallen Americans, the naming of that park had nothing to do with the horrible tragedy of September 11, 2001. The name was given to honor those children and their families who live and breathe football. Those children needed a safe place to play and because of an idea that was conceived by John McDonald a plan was set in motion, it took years to realize his dream. While in the beginning it was John McDonald's goal to honor the players of the game you are being presented with an opportunity to honor the man whose concept was finally realized. Without the inspiration of this man, this immensely adored park that is used by thousands of families each year would have never been constructed.

It is with hope that the confusion on the name of the park has been clarified.

It also seems prudent at this time to respectfully resubmitted that "All American Park" be renamed "John J. McDonald Park."

*Hand delivered
by Michael McDonald
on 10-10-2011*