

SSPR's History and Summary

Benjamin F. Gibbs was one of the sons born to Mortimer and Eunice Gibbs on January 31, 1925, in Sharon, PA. Benjamin attended Sharon schools and worked for his father, the sole proprietor of Gibbs Hauling. After graduating from Sharon High School in 1943, he immediately enlisted in the U. S. Army. He was stationed in France and served for three years. He received numerous medals and an honorable discharge as a Technical Sergeant in May 1946.

After returning home, Benjamin knew he needed to find employment, and he didn't want to work for his father's hauling business, so he applied for a position at the Westinghouse Electric Corporation in Sharon, PA. He was hired as a laborer and showed up for work the next day for his scheduled shift. Benjamin worked that first shift and knew this job was not for him. He never returned to that job again. He observed his dad and brothers owning trucking businesses, hauling refuse for the local businesses and residents. Hence, he purchased a dump truck to haul topsoil and filled dirt. He searched the Shenango Valley for property to house his trucking business. In Hickory Township, in 1948, he stumbled upon two farms owned by Mr. McClendon and Mr. Spangler. After talking to them, they agreed to sell him their farms, totaling 31 acres. His next step was to go to a local bank to secure a loan to purchase the property. While he was waiting for his loan to get approved, a local businessman heard about the potential property sale and tried to intervene and get the property for himself. Thanks be to God; the banker would not let him interfere and told him Gibbs's money was just as good as his. Then, the banker approved the loan for Benjamin.

Benjamin had a three-fold purpose for purchasing this property. First, he needed space for his trucking business. Secondly, he knew of several minorities/underserved individuals struggling to buy property to build homes and wanted to help them. Lastly, he wanted to be a blessing to the community by creating a haven where minorities/underserved individuals and families could come and recreate in the green outdoor space.

In March of 1948, Benjamin attended a church function in Franklin, PA. While there, he met Josephine Lawson and fell in love with her. So, on April 17, 1949, they married and moved to the farm in Hickory Township. Nine children (Bundles of Joy) came from that union, as their mother called them.

Over time, his business grew into an excavating and paving business. At the same time, he was developing a park-like facility on the property, which was called Skyline Summit Recreational Park. He built a pavilion and a basketball and tennis court, dug a swimming pool, designed a putt-putt course, and built a corral for two ponies and a horse. He would either rent a bus or drive his dump truck to Sharon and Farrell and load up the children and youth to bring them to the country for recreation. However, the park suffered and went dormant as his paving business grew. Skyline Summit Recreational Park's original intention was to create a space that would provide a safe place for

minorities/underserved children and families to connect with nature and recreate in green outdoor spaces.

However, In October 2020, a non-profit corporation called "Skyline Summit Park and Recreation" (SSPR) was established to serve ALL youth and families, including the minorities/underserved. Eleven acres of the original 31 acres have been donated to the non-profit SSPR as a legacy on behalf of Benjamin F. Gibbs, Sr., and Josephine L. Gibbs. The SSPR Board of Directors is honored to be able to fulfill their legacy by making their dream a reality.

SUMMARY

Mission Statement: Skyline Summit Park and Recreation (SSPR) is committed to encouraging youth and families, including the underserved, to reach their fullest potential while participating in recreational and environmental activities in the green outdoor spaces and collaborating with schools, families, and community partners.

Skyline Summit Park and Recreation (SSPR) is a sports facility that assists individuals in their health and wellness needs and goals, helps them perfect their athletic skills, and provides a safe gathering place to bring joy and life to people of all ages. It will be developed in phases. The first phase will include two baseball/softball practice fields, children's play structures, a walking track with outdoor fitness equipment, batting cages, tennis/pickleball courts, a basketball court, and a pavilion. The pavilion will be a safe outdoor space to shelter from the elements and hold picnics, family reunions, and other programable events.

The second phase will consist of restoring the culvert in the fishing lake and retrofitting this lake with hydroelectric equipment to create a 500kw electric source for park usage. Restoration of the existing maintenance building will also be completed during this phase. It will be used to store materials, supplies, and maintenance equipment. In the third phase, the multi-purpose facility will be constructed for conferences, banquets, indoor recreation and sports, and weddings. This facility will also be used for training and seminars for STREAMM (science, technology, recreation, engineering, arts, math, and medical).

Skyline Summit Park and Recreation will serve the residents of Mercer County and the surrounding areas. Out-of-town visitors and guests will also be welcomed. People of all ages, from seniors to babies, can have an enjoyable time. As stated earlier, SSPR was created to allow underserved individuals to leave the city and recreate in the country. SSPR is located within five to ten miles of a high population of economically disadvantaged/underserved families, so this would be an excellent opportunity to involve them in our STREAMM program.

The Skyline Summit Park and Recreation Board of Directors have the determination and ability to accomplish the goals. Their success depends on their commitment, SSPR's organizational commitment, support, and community engagement. They have the background and skills necessary to implement the plan.

Marketing and community outreach efforts will inform the community of the establishment of SSPR and educate the community about its goals and objectives. These efforts aim to encourage community members to become active supporters, gain volunteers, and acquire financial resources. They will use social media, online marketing, public relations, websites, and networking with other community organizations.

SSPR's Board of Directors has established a fundraising committee prioritizing fiscal responsibility, integrity, accountability, and long-term financial stability. SSPR will maximize existing resources and use innovative funding to provide and maintain a high-quality park facility. Fundraising efforts will include applying for grants, competitive sports tournaments, membership drives, solicitation of donations from individuals and businesses, and rental fees for special events, ballfields, and courts.

Skyline Summit Park and Recreation is a 501(c) (3) tax-exempt non-profit corporation that will physically and financially encourage community participation. SSPR is administered by a Board of Directors whose role and authority will be specified by SSPR's approved bylaws. Meetings will be held regularly with an agenda. Minutes will be maintained, and financial and committee reports will be presented. The board will consist of a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. They will also enlist experts, such as attorneys, accountants, insurance agents, bankers, and business mentors, to serve as key advisors.