

## Hope springs eternal at Riverside Park

By [Joyce McKenzie](#) | The Tampa Tribune

For six years Beverly Hurley's days have been driven by one simple motto: If you build it, they will come.

The South Tampa resident was able to witness the reality of the centuries-old adage at the Oct. 4 dedication for the Angel of Hope Memorial Garden at Riverside Park.

She looked on in admiration as volunteers unveiled a bronze statue of an angel atop a granite monument that read: "Our Children Loved, Remembered and Missed."

Hurley, whose daughter Debbie died of cancer at age 22, made the project her mission in 2003 after visiting a similar site in South Bend, Ind. She yearned for a place close to home where she and other area grieving parents and family members might go to honor their loved ones whose lives were cut short.

In search of an appealing place for a memorial garden in the Tampa Bay area, she and others on the committee she formed to assist with the project researched several parks and parcels of land. Her first choice, she said, was the Temple Terrace site.

"We fell in love with this place, and we're so grateful to the city for making this possible," said Hurley, who noted the memorial garden on Riverhills Drive just east of 56th Street is among only six in the state and 100 throughout the country.

"Temple Terrace has taken us under their wings and this site, with its serenity and beauty, is a perfect fit," she said.

The city donated the land for the memorial and its Leisure Services Department provided countless hours preparing the new park for the monument and its dedication.

"So many wonderful groups worked with us and it's beautiful," said department director James Chamber.

In addition to the many in-kind donations, proceeds from the sale of \$100 engraved bricks and a spring fashion show helped see the project to fruition. Bricks are still available for purchase.

Mayor Joe Affronti, who has suffered through the deaths of two infant grandchildren, called the effort a "labor of love."

"We're very grateful for those who have played a role in making this possible," he said. "And how appropriate it is to have the angel looking over our children in this beautiful park."

Temple Terrace resident D'ee Griffith, whose sons Charles and Scott have passed away, said the memorial "is one of the best things to come to Temple Terrace."

She and her husband, Jack, were among the crowd of 375 who attended the dedication and placed carnations in the arms of the angel and at the base of the monument.

Sherry Daly was there in honor of her daughter Lauren, a second-grade teacher at Lewis Elementary who died of a brain aneurism in 2005.

"She was cremated, so we and her friends really had no place to go before," said Daly, who is in awe of the park's beauty, especially its canopy of grand oak trees. "I want to thank the city and the committee for making this possible."

Dawn Cepero, who lost her 4-year-old daughter Caylee to leukemia in 2005, watched her niece Riley Boehning, daughter Kennedy and son Corbin rub sand over a brick near the statue to enhance Caylee's engraved name.

"This is good for the children because it's been hard on them," she said. "It's nice, too, because Caylee was cremated and we don't have a gravesite to visit."