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For immediate release:

Bayonne to Rededicate Special Needs Playground in Honor of Handicapped Activist Al Sloatsky at Ceremony on August 15

Mayor Jimmy Davis announced that the special needs playground on the lower level of Di-Domenico-16th Street Park will be rededicated to honor the late Al Sloatsky, who ran Bayonne's Ability Day Camp for more than thirty years. The event will take place at the playground in the park on Tuesday, August 15, at 11:00 a.m. Mayor Davis said, "Al Sloatsky was one of the pioneers of the movement to provide programs for wheelchair-bound athletes and others with special needs. He was an outstanding leader of recreational programs in Bayonne from the 1950's to the 1980's. Al was known for encouraging handicapped children in sports by telling them, 'You can do it.' We are very proud of the positive impact that he had on so many lives through our Recreation Division."

Albert Alvin (Al) Sloatsky was born in Bayonne in 1925 to Moses (Moe) Sloatsky and Ida Simon Sloatsky. When he was three years old, Al was stricken with polio, which left him wheelchair-bound. He built up tremendous upper-body strength, and was able to do rope-climbing in gym class.

In 1954, Al Sloatsky was a member of the National Wheelchair Basketball Association New Jersey Wheelers championship team. The Wheelers played in state, national, and international tournaments. He was selected for the National Wheelchair Basketball All-Tournament Team four times. He assisted in the formation of the Jersey Jr. Wheelers Team, and was a co-organizer of the New Jersey Special Olympics. Sloatsky was a member of the New Jersey Wheelers Team that was invited to tour Puerto Rico. He assisted in the start-up of four teams in Puerto Rico in 1973-74.

Locally, Sloatsky joined the Bayone Recreation Division as an aide in the 1950's. He served as an umpire and a score-keeper. He was assigned to the Ability Day Camp, a special needs recreational program, which became a full-time activity under his leadership.

Al Sloatsky also worked in the private sector as manager of the Bayonne Lanes Bowling Alley. He served as a campaign manager for Mayor Francis G.

Fitzpatrick, and ran later as an unsuccessful Third Ward candidate for the Bayonne City Council.

In 1951, Al Slootsky married Phyllis Fornelius. They had three children: George, Jill, and Dawn.

In the 1980s', the Slootskys retired to Florida. Al Slootsky passed away in 1992. Phyllis Slootsky was married again to Albert Stein in 1996. She passed away in 2013.

At a previous ceremony in 1994, a recreational facility at Juliette Street was dedicated to Al Slootsky. That facility was adjacent to the Bayonne Bridge. Due to the reconstruction and expansion of the bridge, there was a need to honor Al Slootsky at a different location. The Davis Administration believes that the handicapped-accessible playground on the lower level of DiDomenico-16th Street Park is an appropriate place to honor Mr. Slootsky for his leadership in recreation.

DiDomenico-16th Street Park is located between Avenue A and Newark Bay.