



## THE CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

MAYOR DOMENIC J. SARNO

*HOME OF THE BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME*

### PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, May 5, 2016

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#### **Ribbon Cutting Ceremony to Open the Completed Clifford A. Phaneuf Environmental Center**

**Who:** Mayor Domenic J. Sarno; School Superintendent Daniel Warwick; Park Commission Chairman Brian Santaniello; Executive Director PBRM Patrick Sullivan

**What:** Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for Clifford A. Phaneuf Environmental Center

**When:** Thursday, May 5, 2016, 11:00 a.m.

**Where:** Clifford A. Phaneuf Center, Forest Park, 200 Trafton Road

**Contact:** Patrick Sullivan, Executive Director, (413) 787-6444

Springfield, MA - Mayor Domenic J. Sarno, School Superintendent Daniel Warwick, Park Commission Chairman Brian Santaniello and Executive Director of PBRM Patrick Sullivan will host a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Clifford A. Phaneuf Environmental Center. The event will take place on Thursday, May 5 at 11:00 a.m. at the Environmental Center in Forest Park and is open to the public.

The renovation project, totaling \$4,019,991, encompassed a complete renovation of the present facility. The improvements included increased classroom space, additional outdoor classroom space, new ADA compliant restrooms, conversion to natural gas, energy efficiencies for heating, cooling and lighting, life safety equipment, a kitchen facility, removal of the septic system, landscape enhancements, and improved access to Porter Lake.

Mayor Sarno stated, "I am thrilled to complete this project. My city team, along with the School Department, has developed a first class environmental center for our students. It is very important to engage our youth at a young age to have an understanding of the importance we play in protecting our

environment. I am proud to be celebrating the 46th anniversary of ECOS with a state of the art facility. We should all be appreciative that Cliff Phaneuf had the foresight to initiate this program for the youth of our city.”

Daniel Warwick stated, “The School Department is pleased to be part of this initiative. ECOS has played a significant part in teaching the importance and understanding of our urban environment. Everyone always speaks of their recollections of attending ECOS as a child and the school district recognizes its responsibility in developing an appreciation for the science in our environment. Cliff Phaneuf would be proud that this program is still strong and carrying out his mission started in 1970.”

Brian Santaniello stated, “The Park Commission is proud to have hosted the ECOS program for the past forty-six years. All of us need to participate in protecting our open space. ECOS allows our youth at a young age to be cognizant of their urban environment and gain an appreciation of the importance to protect and respect open space. I look forward to the opportunity to also open the facility to the public on weekends and host events here for everyone to gain insight into what Springfield’s urban environment has to offer and what we all can do to protect it. Thank you to the Phaneuf family for continuing to share in your father’s dream for our city.”

Patrick Sullivan stated, “I was lucky enough to be one of the first classes to attend ECOS in 1970. To this day the lessons taught at ECOS are a great memory but more important these lessons instilled the importance of environmental stewardship. We all have the responsibility to protect this earth and this is what Cliff’s Phaneuf message was to everyone who attended. Springfield is fortunate to have had the opportunity to continue this program as it teaches skills that will last a life time.”

The late Clifford A. Phaneuf Sr., considered the father of Springfield's environmental education, was teaching at Myrtle Street School in Indian Orchard when he became a team leader in the National Teacher Corps in 1969. He had already taken students out to his farm in Brimfield for summer nature activities. He was friends with Park Superintendent Baldwin Lee and was active in the district’s science department. He collaborated with the head of Elementary Science, Lorraine Ide, and began a pilot program in Forest Park in 1970, the year of the first Earth Day. The program started at the former Camp SECO grounds and soon moved to the Porter Lake Skate House. He was able to utilize some of the Teacher Corps’ interns to be the first ECOS teachers. The former skate house now houses the Environmental Center for Our Schools, which teaches nature studies and wilderness courses to fourth, fifth, and sixth-graders in public schools. Phaneuf was the ECOS coordinator for seventeen years.

In January 1988, the Springfield Park Commission voted to name the building "The Clifford A. Phaneuf Environmental Center." A plaque, which will continue to hang in the Center, is inscribed with a poem Phaneuf wrote:

A Child Asked

Please tell me, teacher, what it's like  
to watch a swallow in its flight,  
Or to see an eagle soar so high  
it fades into the cloudless sky.

Please tell me about a country road  
along whose waysides wild flowers grow,  
Or can you tell me why lichens die

just because we pollute the sky?

Describe to me a field of green,  
with crystal dewdrops reflecting the sun's gleam,  
I've heard the elm tree was a majestic thing,  
It reached further skyward every spring.

What was a picnic? Were they easy to hold?  
The parking lot's pavement is too hot or too cold,  
Was there ever a place a child could look  
into the bottom of a clear mountain brook?

Did ever wild animals live not in a cage?  
Please tell me, teacher, of that other age,  
Tell me about the love affair  
between the butterflies, the flower, and clean fresh air.

You'll have to tell me, teacher,  
because I can't see,  
None of these things  
are left for me.

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