



Whitehall at Reservoir Park Opens First Upgraded Trail Focused on Early Literacy

The Town of Southern Pines invites the community to celebrate the opening of our newest trail - the Story Walk at Whitehall at Reservoir Park! The story path starts at the Whitehall parking area at 490 Pee Dee Rd and follows the story and new upgraded path around to Elizabeth Rounds park, ending at the playground.

The festivities begin at 4pm on Wednesday, January 10th with a ribbon cutting led by the Moore County Chamber of Commerce, along with hot cocoa, cookies, and kids crafts. The first book, “Something, Someday” by Amanda Gorman, centers on giving back and contributing to our community, so town staff asks those who are able to bring items like coats, hats, and gloves to donate to the local Coalition for Human Care.

When the Town acquired Whitehall in 2020, the property already connected to both Reservoir Park and Elizabeth Rounds Playground. Now the connection between Elizabeth Rounds and Whitehall is further reinforced with the new Story Walk Trail, combining literature and nature and extending more activities for parents with young children in Southern Pines.

Under the leadership of Library Director, Amanda Brown, Southern Pines Public Library (SPPL) staff successfully obtained a grant to fund the Story Walk. This grant program is through the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) as administered by the State Library of North Carolina, a division of the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The Story Walk installation was completed by Town staff, a collaborative project with the Town’s Parks & Recreation, Parks & Grounds, and Library departments.

“I was thrilled when Amanda brought us the idea for this project,” shares Assistant Town Manager Jessica Roth. “The Story Walk Trail is a perfect example of the passive recreation that we’re working to enhance at Whitehall at Reservoir Park. The project also highlights the collective talents, interests, and skills of our Town departments, as they worked together on the installation and ribbon cutting event. We describe our organizational culture as ‘The Southern Pines Way,’ which centers on teamwork and pride in our work. We empower our employees to lead and contribute their skills, enthusiasm, and ideas. We accomplish so much more when we collaborate across our entire team and the Story Walk definitely exemplifies this.”

The celebration, scheduled for January 10, 2024 at 4pm, is open to the community and is planned around the theme of building forward together. The first book, “Something, Someday” by Amanda Gorman shows that each of us have the power to make a difference and, with the help of some friends, can create long lasting change. To reinforce the feeling of giving back and contributing to our community, town staff will also be collecting coats, hats, scarves, and other cold-weather gear during the event to donate to the local Coalition.

The event will also include hot cocoa and cookies, a kids crafting project to create winter bird feeders to hang along the walk, and other festivities. Parking will be available at either 490 Pee Dee Road or Elizabeth Rounds Playground at 570 Pee Dee Road.

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“The Town’s acquisition of the Whitehall property has been celebrated across all departments,” adds SPPL Director, Amanda Brown. “Through our Strategic Plan, the SPPL team works to develop versatile, user-friendly, welcoming spaces. This project was an opportunity to do that beyond our main building, providing another location in Southern Pines to foster self-directed learning with an emphasis on early literacy. We’re so proud that the State Library of North Carolina recognized the value of this project and provided the funding to make it happen.”

Going forward, the Library aims to change out the story at least quarterly. The library also maintains a Story Walk at its main building located at 170 W. Connecticut Ave. The StoryWalk® Project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and developed in collaboration with the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. StoryWalk® is a registered service mark owned by Ms. Ferguson.

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