

Santino “Stixz” Chambers

It was skateboarding that helped Stixz come to terms with the untimely death of his stepfather and suddenly becoming the son of a single, disabled mom. Stixz (a shortened version of Sticklet, the nickname he received from his father) was only 13 when his family, including an 8-year-old sister, lost their anchor, protector and provider.

Looking back, Stixz believes skateboarding helped him grow up quickly and accept more responsibility than he ever thought possible. Perfecting the art and action sport of skateboarding, while building relationships with other skaters, helped form his character and future priorities in life.



Stixz was engaged with the project while in Afghanistan (2013)

A flyer caught his interest

Stixz was born and raised in Syracuse, with the family settling in Eastwood ten years ago. His introduction to skateboarding came at a vulnerable time for this teenager who was now the only man in his family. “I started skateboarding in 7th grade,” he said, “and it became a big part of my life.”

While skating at Henninger High School two years later, Stixz was handed a flyer inviting him to a meeting of the new Skate Park Research Committee. As part of the Eastwood Neighborhood Association (ENA), the Committee was formed to explore the possibility of building a park in Eastwood where skateboarders could have their “very own place” to practice and perfect their moves.

Skating and becoming a man

That first meeting began Stixz’ involvement in the East Woods Skate Plaza project. Over the last eight years, he has been one of the most engaged skateboarders-often from a distance-while serving in the Armed Forces with two deployments in Afghanistan. “There were several of us who were really committed,” he said.

“We went door-to-door in Eastwood getting 1,000 petitions signed and raising money for the project.”

In a very real sense, skateboarding helped lay the foundation for Stixz’ personal growth and future leadership skills. He explained, “The values we learned in the military, based on the acronym LDRSHIP, are the same ones you’ll find in the skateboarding community: loyalty, duty, respect, service, honor, integrity and personal courage.” Like soldiers, skaters never give up or leave an injured comrade behind.

Committed to ending the stigma

It has taken years for skateboarders to overcome the stigma associated with their sport, which is one reason Stixz committed to the East Woods Skate Plaza project from the start. “As skateboarding became more popular,” he said, “many adults had the mistaken impression that we were all misfits and drug addicts that played loud music. The only places we had to skate were sites like the Everson Museum, the fronts of businesses, churches, and parking lots.”

Skaters would also ask Eastwood residents for permission to use their concrete steps and ledges.

As the sport became more popular, police officers often trailed skaters and issued tickets for skateboarding in public spaces. In fact, just before he entered the Army, Stixz was ticketed and handcuffed by one overly zealous policeman. With no formal, designated venues to practice their sport-unlike those who play baseball, basketball and football-skateboarders had to be creative and improvise. That led local skaters to develop the Ormond Spencer site in downtown Syracuse, which Stixz supported enthusiastically.

Investing in the future

Stixz can't wait to celebrate the East Woods Skate Plaza opening in June. "Right now, it still seems like a dream because it has been a long time coming," he said. "For many skateboarders, it won't settle in until the ribbon is cut and the first person pops a trick." Stixz views the Plaza as a gift to the entire skating community, but especially to today's young skaters and future generations that will have a great place to "session or jam."

Skateboarding will remain a passion

In April of 2014, Stixz will leave the Army after seven years of service. Using information technology skills acquired in the military, he will return to Syracuse and seek employment in that field. Stixz will also continue to make skateboarding a prominent part of his life. "Skateboarding sure isn't for the faint of heart," he said, "and I plan on doing it until I can no longer stand."