

DOTHAN EAGLE

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LIONEL RICHIE INSPIRES STUDENTS



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Singer-songwriter Lionel Richie speaks at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Tuskegee's Hello Park on Thursday, April 18, 2024.

Music icon sees new park as a dream come true

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Tuskegee native Lionel Richie accomplished a lifelong dream on Thursday when he opened a park in his hometown.

Hello Park opened across the street from Tuskegee University as a part of a collaborative effort from Richie, Lowe's Hometowns and others. The ribbon-cutting ceremony attracted thousands of people, including Tuskegee University students and educators.

"This is my dream of coming back to my hometown and showing everyone else that here, the students on this campus just think big and everything's a possibility," Richie said. "The kids on this campus should feel that there are no limits."

Hello Park is one of 100 community revitalization projects Lowe's Hometowns launched in 2023. Adjacent to the entrance of Tuskegee University along West Old Montgomery Road, the park took nine

months to create.

Richie said the foundation of the park has been built, but they're making some finishing touches. For instance, they plan to add a globe in the back of the park.

The "Hello" singer told the crowd he grew up nearby and pointed to where he went to elementary school, high school and college. He said his neighbors use to live where the new park is located now.

When the houses were torn down, that space became an empty field. He saw an opportunity to create something that represented Tuskegee University.

Enhancing a historic place

Richie said a lot of people think you have to come from a big city to "be somebody," but you don't. As someone from the "tiny place" next door, he is a living testament to that.

"The inspiration here is that it's not where you start. It's how big you can

dream," he said.

Richie emphasized the importance of having a strategic partner involved in building the park. He found one in Lowe's Hometowns.

Launched in 2022, Lowe's Hometowns is a community impact program that committed five years and \$100 million to rebuilding and revitalizing community spaces nationwide.

"We are honored to have this opportunity to enhance this historic place. It's a place that has served as an incubator for so many of our country's greatest leaders and inspired so much positive change here and around the globe," said Sly Renard, the company's regional vice president.

Richie echoed that same sentiment. He said he has always been fascinated by the gates at the entrance of Tuskegee University and considering ways to accentuate them.

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JOHN MINCHILLO, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Celsius is a fitness drink that is supposed to accelerate metabolism and burn body fat.

Wellness-minded buyers drive frenzy for 'functional' drinks

Brands rush to quench thirst for beverages that do more than taste good

DEE-ANN DURBIN AND LOUISE DIXON
Associated Press

Supermarket beverage aisles are starting to look a lot more like a pharmacy.

There are sodas made with mushrooms that supposedly improve mental clarity and juices packed with bacteria that claim to enhance digestive health. Water infused with collagen carries the promise of better skin, and energy drinks offer to help burn body fat.

Welcome to the frenzy of functional beverages — drinks designed to do more

than just taste good or hydrate. What started in the late 1980s with caffeine- and vitamin-laced drinks like Red Bull has grown into a multibillion-dollar industry. Hundreds of brands are vying for attention with increasingly exotic ingredients and wellness-focused marketing.

Feeling stressed? Try a drink with ashwagandha, a shrub long used in herbal medicine. Want to enhance your workout? There are drinks containing chromium, a mineral that may boost metabolism. Want to get in a party mood without alcohol? Multiple companies are making non-alcoholic spirits and beers infused with ingredients like guayusa, a leaf containing caffeine and antioxidants.

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