

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. SPORTS CENTER

WHERE DREAMS COME TRUE

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Sports Center is a place for families, of all cultures. — Elzie Odom, Arlington's first African-American Mayor.

The Martin Luther King Jr. Sports Center opened in April 1999. On January 17, 2000, in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Mayor Elzie Odom threw the first pitch to commemorate the official dedication and grand opening.

The 100-acre center features baseball fields maintained with organic pesticides and herbicides. A scenic nature trail, a playground made of recycled materials and an extensive drainage system that filters water into Sublet Creek preserves and protects the environment. These innovations in park design and environmental stewardship were recognized when the Martin Luther King, Jr. Sports Center became the first sports facility in the world to achieve the prestigious Audubon International Signature designation in October 2000.

The center is named for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who was born in Atlanta, Georgia on January 15, 1929. His father was a Baptist minister and his mother was a school teacher. King graduated from Morehouse College in 1948 at age 19. Three years later, he earned a bachelor's degree from Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, graduating at the head of his class. He entered the Graduate School of Theology at Boston University in 1951 and was awarded a Ph.D. in systematic theology in 1955. While studying at Boston University, King met Coretta Scott who graduated from Antioch College and was studying at the New England Conservatory of Music. They married in 1953 and four children were born.

While pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, King was elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association, which organized a successful yearlong boycott against segregated bus transportation in Montgomery, Alabama. He subsequently organized the Southern Christian Leadership Conference as a base for nonviolent marches, protests and demonstrations for civil rights. In 1963, he organized the "March on Washington" where he delivered the famous "I Have a Dream" speech. In 1964, he became the youngest person ever awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

While planning a multiracial "Poor People's March" for antipoverty legislation, King made the second of two trips to Memphis, Tennessee to rally support for better wages and improved working conditions for garbage collectors. On April 4, 1968, an assassin shot and killed King as he stood on the balcony of a Memphis hotel. His legacy continues to inspire generations of people.

Through the development of facilities such as the Martin Luther King, Jr. Sports Center, Dr. King's vision of equality is alive in Arlington. This center unites children and adults of all ages, races and ethnicities. It is where dreams come true.



First pitch thrown by former Mayor Elzie Odom at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Sports Center Dedication on January 17, 2000

