

# Town hopes new name erases park's stigma

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Timberline Park, which some [Brentwood](#) residents say is synonymous with violence, has a new name: [Roberto Clemente Park](#).

The [Islip](#) Town Board unanimously approved a resolution to rename the park after the iconic baseball player and humanitarian at its meeting Tuesday. Supporters of the change say it is a step in reclaiming a park in need of repair and a new identity.

"I think Roberto [Clemente](#) was a true leader who inspired lots of people to take action," said Maryann Pfeiffer, executive director of Youth Enrichment Services, one of several community organizations that wrote to the board supporting the change. "For our community, we need to step up and take back the park."

[Brentwood](#) residents have worked to rename the park since June 2009, when Wilson Batista Jr., then 13, was shot in the head while playing basketball there. Batista suffered brain damage and lost his right eye. The gunman, a gang member who mistook Batista for a rival, pleaded guilty this year.

The shooting galvanized community activists pressing for a crackdown on gangs and a reclaiming of the town park in southeast [Brentwood](#).

"Everyone wants a safe place for their kids to play," said Renee Ortiz, a [Central Islip](#) resident and town council candidate who led the movement to rename the park.

Ortiz said community members wanted to erase the "stigma" of violence associated with Timberline. Organizers hope the new name leads to improvements to the park's pools, sports fields and playgrounds.

Hall of Famer [Clemente](#)'s Puerto Rican roots, humanitarian efforts and death in 1972 while en route to deliver aid to earthquake victims in Nicaragua made him a perfect candidate, she said.

[Roberto Clemente Jr.](#), who lives in Las Vegas, spoke in favor of the change before the town board. "I hope the young people will take the time to learn not only about the baseball player but most importantly about the human being," he said. "Hopefully, they can look at how he lived his life and be motivated by him."

No dollar amount was specified, but [Clemente](#) said he plans to offer resources from the Pittsburgh-based [Roberto Clemente](#) Foundation to help revitalize the park.

Town Supervisor Phil Nolan applauded the change. "All good things [will] come from this," Nolan said. "This renaming is another step in the right direction."