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Overpass named for South Point mayor

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SOUTH POINT, Ohio -- More than 20 years ago, South Point Village Council voted to name the overpass over U.S. 52 to the village in honor of Mayor Bill Gaskin. He turned down the honor for two decades.

But his daughters worked behind the scenes to get the bridge named in honor of the man who has served South Point as mayor for 30 years. Gaskin, 79, also has served as president of the Ohio Municipal League and the Ohio Mayor's Association.

Gaskin has two years remaining on his term as mayor and hasn't made a decision as to whether he'll seek his ninth term as mayor in 2011. He still has several goals he would like to accomplish before he leaves the office.

"I have no plans to retire," Gaskin said. "I take it day by day. The Point (industrial park) is our biggest chance of making something happen. I would like to see thousands of people working there."

He also has worked to increase funding for the South Point police department. He pushed for a levy that residents rejected. "People want more police, but they don't want to see increased taxes," Gaskin said. Gaskin also would like to see more volunteerism and community involvement in South Point.

"I'd like to see something like the Coal Grove Betterment Club or Ironton in Bloom here in South Point," he said.

Village Administrator Pat Leighty said Gaskin worked for years to get the overpass built. He eventually got several Ohio Department of Transportation officials to check out the need for the overpass as South Point school buses were trying to get across the four-lane, divided highway.

"That did the trick," Leighty said. "They agreed to the project not long after that visit."

"He's low key and he works well with others," Leighty said of Gaskin. "He's gotten lots of grants for the village of South Point over the years. When we received a \$100,000 windfall, we could have used it to increase wages, but he wanted to use it to buy property for a park and make improvements at another park."

"He's always been able to do things like that," Leighty said. "He moved here in 1959 from

Brown County. That was our gain and their loss. He's been quite a statesman for South Point."

Village Council member David Classing called the Bill Gaskin Bridge an honor for the mayor.

Bob Armstrong, another village council member, has worked with Gaskin for some 30 years on village council. "He's done a good job as mayor and on council," Armstrong said of Gaskin. "He's a nice guy. He's tried to keep our utility rates down and to get grants for the village."