

NO CHILD SITS ON THE SIDELINES! Park Plans to Build Two Inclusive Playgrounds

Anderson Township – Years ago, children with disabilities had to sit on the sidelines watching their able-bodied friends or siblings laugh and play on neighborhood playgrounds. Today, there is an increased awareness of this issue as communities around the country are building play structures suitable for children with varying levels of abilities.

Anderson Township is one such community.

The Kiwanis Club of Anderson Hills is helping to raise money for one of two inclusive playgrounds to be built in parks within the Anderson Park District.

The current playground at Veterans Park, built over 15 years ago, was the first playground in the Anderson area designed with the physically-challenged child in mind. It has a unique place in the heart of the Kiwanis Club as they raised the money in 1988 to build the original All Children's Playground. It was dedicated to Ward "Lucky" Lanier, a well-known community activist who volunteered extensively for Anderson youth.

Since then, types of adaptive play equipment have dramatically improved, while the condition of the play structure at Veterans Park has deteriorated. To date, The Kiwanis Club of Anderson Hills, led by President Mike Wesselman, has raised approximately \$12,000 to replace the play equipment at Veterans Park.

From the total raised so far, \$5,000 is from The Kiwanis Club of Anderson Hills, \$2,500 was a gift from Union Savings Bank and \$2,500 was given by Guardian Savings Bank. Provident Bank contributed \$500. Individual donations and various fundraisers comprise the remainder. However, despite the generosity of businesses and individuals, the donations fall short of the \$40,000 goal.

“If each family and every area business would simply take a moment to donate five dollars today,” says Wesselman, “this summer could have children with disabilities laughing and playing on this playground instead of sitting on the sidelines. We don't want to make them wait.”

Once the funding is secured, the current play unit will be replaced by a larger up-to-date structure with a variety of features to stimulate imaginative play. The renovation will also consist of re-galvanizing and painting the swing structure, and replacing the sand surface with an ADA approved wood fiber surface.

The Beech Acres Park Playground Committee is another group partnering with the Anderson Park District to create an exciting play setting that is truly inclusive. The group consists of residents, parents, and friends of children with disabilities who are working hard to fund a boundless play area at the re-developed Beech Acres Park.

“These playgrounds are not just for the children” says Molly McClure, APD executive director. “These playgrounds allow parents in wheelchairs and elderly grandparents to participate along side their child as well.”

Both the Beech Acres Playground and the Veterans Park Playground will be built once additional funding is obtained. Gifts from the community are important because the Anderson Park District’s budget is only assisted by tax dollars; alternative funding sources are the only way these important capital projects can become a reality for the community.

“It is said in the area of education, ‘Let no child be left behind’”, commented Wesselman. “When it comes to a quality of life issue such as recreational opportunities, no child should be left behind as well.”

A tax-deductible contribution can be made to the Anderson Foundation for Parks and Recreation at the APD’s office in Juilfs Park at 8249 Clough Pike, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45244. The office is open Monday-Friday from 8:30am –5pm except holidays. For convenience, log onto andersonparks.com or call Nancy Pennington at 513.388.5083 to contribute!