

Dreaming up a playground

Kids brainstorm with designers on recreation area to open in June

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Imagine a rock-climbing wall that leads to a trampoline the size of a basketball court. Imagine a jet pack that would shoot you to the top of a tree house with your friends.

Imagine a dark, low tunnel leading to a twisty, fast slide.

Central Dauphin School District elementary school students imagined their dream playground and brainstormed with designers from Leathers & Associates, a firm from Ithaca, N.Y., specializing in custom community playgrounds.

At a celebration Thursday, designers unveiled a playground schematic drawing to a group of about 60 parents and kids eager to play.

Designers couldn't use all the ideas from hundreds of kids, but the finished design included an airplane, a large tree house with ramps to different levels, a recording studio and stage, a sandbox, monkey bars, slides, swings, and a kaleidoscope in a lookout tower.

The playground is scheduled to become real next June in George Park off Nyes Road in Lower Paxton Twp.

The playground will be accessible to people with a variety of disabilities. Janis Creason imagined that part.

Creason, 51, the mother of four daughters, wanted a playground where her friend's disabled son could play.

Since she couldn't find one in the area, she began researching accessible playgrounds online and on trips.

She wanted a playground all kids could use and all parents and grandparents could visit.

And she wanted a playground that would be fun.

Creason and about 15 other parents formed the Possibility Place Committee. They hope to make all of Lower Paxton Twp.'s playgrounds accessible.

For now, they need to raise money to pay for the new playground and recruit adult volunteers to help build it.

The playground will be built of recycled lumber, which doesn't splinter, said Ann Phillips, who dreamed of a playground in George Park and combined forces with Creason.

It will have cushiony material on the ground instead of tan bark mulch and railroad ties, which are difficult to traverse with a wheelchair or crutches and hard to play on after rain or snow, Phillips said.

"It looks fabulous," Creason said of the designers' drawing.

“I’m thrilled. They got it,” she said. “They definitely got it.”

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