

Playground Magazine

JULY 2008

Wet and Wondrous!

The aquatic zone

The Sun's Out

Is your protection IQ up?

Leathers & Assoc. Goes to Oregon

*Corvallis school gets
new playground*

The **Consequences** of Play **Deprivation**

Good reason for concern

The Leathers playground was designed from the imaginations of the children of Wilson Elementary, which includes some local touches like the replica of the Corvallis courthouse tower.

Rebuilding Wildcat Park

Oregon community pulls together...again

Photos and Story by Brady L. Kay

The original Wildcat Park was built by volunteers in 1989 at Wilson Elementary School, where the elaborate wooden structure did double-duty as a playground for the school and the community. The Leathers & Associates playground served the community well in Corvallis, Ore., but last year it had to be dismantled for

district was to learn the new safety codes that had changed since building the first playground.

This committee raised \$80,000 to begin the project and once again, Leathers & Associates of Ithaca, N.Y. was hired to facilitate the design, organize and construct the new Wildcat Park. The playground/park was designed

Three Sisters are three volcanic peaks of the Cascade Volcanic Arc and the Cascade Range in Oregon and are the ideal background for a climbing wall. Leathers incorporated the children's ideas into the design, which was built under the supervision of the New York-based manufacturer by over a thousand volunteers in this close-knit community.



safety reasons after nearly 18 years of continual use.

It was then up to a group of neighbors, Wilson school students and parents, and those in this Oregon community to form a committee to raise money, design and build a new play structure. The first step for the city and school

from the imaginations of the students and includes some local touches like the replica of the Corvallis courthouse tower that is the focal point of the play structure.

Painted on the climbing wall is the Three Sisters mountain range that adds local flavor to the park's design. The

The volunteer general coordinator for the project was Mark Hoffman who works at the Department of Nutrition & Exercise Sciences at Oregon State University.

"We liked the 'community-build' aspect so that's why we contacted Leathers again," explains Hoffman. "They

Painted on the climbing wall is the Three Sisters mountain range that adds local flavor to the park's design. The Three Sisters are three volcanic peaks of the Cascade Volcanic Arc and the Cascade Range in Oregon—and form the ideal background for a climbing wall.

"THREE SISTERS"
ELIZABETH BLACK
FROM The Arc 2007

more than met our expectations and we knew going in what a detailed-oriented company they are."

Through other fundraising efforts, donations and sponsorships, the community was able to come up with the additional money needed to complete the \$260,000 play structure in June of last year. The 12,000-square-foot playground even has a toddler section. "It's a completely fenced-in tot lot, which is a new playground standard where events for younger kids need to be separated from events for older kids," Hoffman said.

Other unique play features include the DNA Climber that is based on the DNA double helix spiral graphic symbol and is a favorite for kids who love to climb.

The custom, one-of-a-kind designs are a trademark of Leathers & Associates as it strives to build playgrounds that are unique to each community that it works with directly.

Many community groups helped in fundraising as children and the community collected 1.5 million pennies and covered the gym floor at Wilson School.

The Corvallis Rotary Club conducted a silent auction and dance with Johnny Limbo and the Lugnuts, which raised \$15,000. Collecting bottles and cans, a quilt show and spaghetti dinner were some of the other fundraising efforts.

Volunteers were grouped into committees defined as public relations, volunteers, food, childcare, tools and children representatives. When the time came to build the park, volunteers were assigned duties according to their expertise. Some used loaned hammers and saws to do the actual building, some

sanded or painted, some prepared food for the volunteers and some took care of the children so adults could work four-hour shifts. The entire park was built in five days and the community celebrated its completion. The new playground is constructed with recycled structural plastic and plastic composite lumber, making it much more maintenance-friendly than the previous playground built with pressured-treated lumber.

Leathers & Associates is a company that helps with everything from the playground design to organizing the



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Wilson Elementary Principal Jeff Brew takes his turn on the DNA Climber with students from his school. Brew is happy the new playground is busy all the time with students as well as other kids from the Oregon community.

build for communities. The manufacturer has been in business for nearly 40 years. The community-built aspect of the company gradually evolved after Bob Leathers undertook a volunteer-built playground at his children's elementary school in Ithaca in 1971. When he first opened his architectural business, Bob planned to specialize in residential design and construction, but the direction of his company changed after news of the project's success quickly traveled to nearby communities. Soon more and more, people were asking his firm to help them create playgrounds and thus began

his community-built career, which has now spanned more than three decades.



The volunteer general coordinator for the project was Mark Hoffman who works at Oregon State University. Hoffman, along with Nason McCullough, helped organize the Corvallis, Ore. community-built playground through Leathers & Associates.

Today Bob's son Marc owns and runs the firm.

"At this point, we have worked with more than 2,000 communities on volun-

teer-built projects," says Marc Leathers. "We have at least one playground in every state as well as in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, India and the United Kingdom."

Wildcat Park is the perfect reflection of what a community is capable of doing when determined to replace a worn down playground. With the help of Leathers & Associates, everyone in the city of Corvallis had the opportunity go contribute.

"Leathers is committed to having something for any volunteer to do," Hoffman said. "All you need is the desire to volunteer, and you can contribute."

For more information on Leathers & Associates visit www.leathersassociates.com or call 877-564-6464. To learn more about the Corvallis, Ore. playground visit www.newwildcatpark.org.