



Wishing all our current, past and future clients Happy Holidays! May they be filled with family, friends and **fun!**

NEW...Leathers & Associates Website Forum

We recently launched a new website forum. The easiest way to access the forum is by visiting our homepage www.leathersassociates.com and click the forum button in the bottom right corner.

Anyone can access and read the forum, however, you must register in order to post or respond to a message. When registering, you will receive an e-mail requesting confirmation of your e-mail address. Please read the e-mail and follow the instructions for confirmation. Once this is completed you will become an active member of the forum. If you do not receive your confirmation a few minutes following sign-up, be sure to check your junk mail folder in case the message has been filtered. It may be necessary to close the website session and reopen it in order for the site to acknowledge your registration.

This forum is a place for individuals to share their stories and experiences. We hope our experienced playground building veterans will offer good advice and assistance to the newbies as well as sharing examples of the positive benefits of a community build.

Contact our office with any questions related to the forum. We hope you consider joining and participating!

PROJECT PROFILE: PROJECT PROFILE ■ PROJECT PROFILE ■ PROJECT PROFILE ■ PROJECT PROFILE

Puma Park, Truro, MA - October 2008

Bringing a custom-design community-built playground to Truro was an idea that General Coordinators Curtis Hartman and Rebecca Townsend came up with over two years ago. Together these two dynamic individuals recruited a 24-person steering committee to coordinate each detail of the project.

The project officially kicked off with a Design Day in March 2008. A designer from Leathers visited to conduct numerous brainstorming sessions with the children of Truro. These ideas, along with historical information and input from local artists and adults, were incorporated into a unique one-of-a-kind schematic design. Examples of several special features in the design include: a shark crawl-through, Highland Lighthouse, a fishing boat, a puma rock climb, a sea monster, and a tugboat. Local artists created the stained-glass cone, the puma rock-climb mural, and a sea-themed concrete mosaic wall.



Funds for the project were jumpstarted with \$60,000 in Community Preservation Act funds. The playground steering committee raised another \$80,000. Grassroots fundraising was an important part of the committee's efforts, and the Truro community supported the project each step of the way.

Following a visit for Organization Day, project manager and lead consultant Dave Iannello was confident this community had what it takes to successfully accomplish the high level of detail included in their dream design. "Each committee did their part and was well prepared for the build," says Dave. "Every segment of their community was well represented and what they may have lacked in numbers they would make up for with skill and enthusiasm. In the end the level of participation shown in this small community was overwhelming...this group was ready!" Exceptional work was done by the food committee who secured donated food to feed the army of volunteers that turned out each day of the build. We aren't talking about traditional donated food...we're talking about some of the best food we've ever encountered on a playground build! In addition to the great food, volunteers were well equipped with the tools needed to accomplish their tasks. The tools trailer was stocked full of tools—all donated or loaned to the project.

Construction began on a Wednesday with cold temperatures, rain and wind. Regardless of the challenging weather, there was good support from area contractors. The following day brought nicer weather and with that an increase in volunteer numbers. A whopping 253 volunteers showed up on Saturday and, overall, 850 volunteers worked on the project. "The skill level in Truro is extraordinarily high, and they were working for their kids," said Curtis.

"There are a lot of great stories," Curtis said. "It will be, for many people who worked there, one of the highlights of their life—certainly for me. I was on the brink of tears every day."

"It was definitely life-changing," says Rebecca, calling the project "a labor of love" and adding, "There are no words to describe what I feel." At Sunday evening's opening, Rebecca said the kids rushed onto the playground. "I'll never forget it," she said. "It was hard to keep the kids at bay. They had made a long paper chain in child care that they broke through. I didn't see a dry eye."





Swansea, IL

Swansea Kingdom, built in October 2007, received the Governor's Home Town Award in 2008. The playground won the top spot in population category 4 (10,001-15,000). The project was also one of 8 finalists for the Governor's Cup Award, the state's highest honor. The playground was built by 950 volunteers who gave 12,400 hours of their time over 5 days. Lyndon Joost, General Coordinator of the project, said that this playground "proves what a community can do if enough people are willing to come together." The award was presented on October 20, 2008 at a ceremony in Springfield.

Hernando, MS

Congratulations to the City of Hernando, which has been named a 2008 Playful City USA community. The citizens of Hernando completed a community-built playground project in the Fall of 2001.

Emporia, KS

The concept that ultimately led to the Peter Pan playground was born 16 years ago when Denise Dorcey was covering a similar community-built playground project for Kansas magazine. She and her husband Mike moved to Emporia 5 years ago. Mike was involved in a Leadership Emporia class, and together the two decided that a playground was what Emporia needed.

After many bumps along the way, the Peter Pan playground was built in five days in May 2008. The steering committee was honored with a proclamation by the city commission. "The playground was a watershed event for the community, as we hoped it would be," said Mike Dorcey. Mike very kindly gives a lot of credit to Leathers' plan. He says that if communities or organizations follow the Planning Guide, they can have a great experience. "It still amazes me that we had approximately 800 people working on the site over the five days, and there were no fights, no bickering, and no backstabbing. What a great experience! Thanks for helping us make it happen."

Celebrating 5 Years

Mitchell, IN

On October 15, 2003, volunteers were charged with making the impossible happen. "Looking back, it seems crazy," said Vicky Schlegel, one of the playground General Coordinators, along with Teresa Hamilton. "Man, we got off to a bad start," said Sharon Tanksley, the fundraising coordinator. "We couldn't even find an auger to dig the holes, and it looked like we weren't going to have enough volunteers to even build the thing. There was so much time and energy put into the planning process, but when it got to build day, we slowly started getting discouraged. That first day was rough." But the community came through. By the weekend, hundreds of volunteers of all skill levels were working on site, and the playground opened at the end of five days. "It was crazy and fun, and I've never been so tired in my entire life, yet so happy at the same time," said Schlegel.

Since it was built, the playground has undergone a few changes. Two families collected donations to expand the park in order to honor the memory of two children who passed away. A second tire swing honors Zane Lobosky and a life-size dollhouse memorializes Lexi Hembree. Pickets also surround the park with engraved names of those who contributed toward the creation of the park.

Accessibility Focus: The Story of Daniel's Den



General Coordinator, Denise Halderman and her husband have 3 children; Dana, Dylan, and Daniel. Daniel, their youngest, has cerebral palsy. After taking a class called C2P2 (Confidence and Competence in Partners in Policymaking) through Temple University, Denise took on the challenge of making a difference in her community by helping children with disabilities.

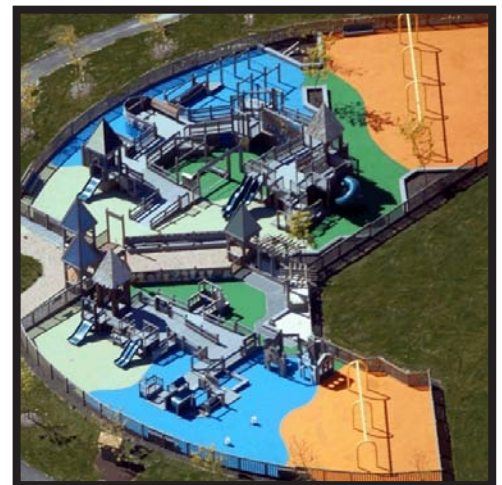
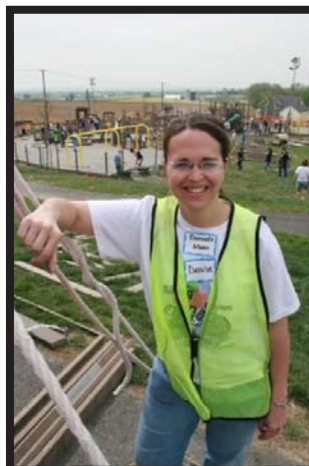
When Daniel received his first wheelchair at the age of 2, Denise realized the many obstacles that individuals in wheelchairs face. She became especially frustrated that communities didn't provide accessible playgrounds. "Being a child with a disability often means being left out. My goal in life is to ensure that this doesn't happen to Daniel," said Denise. At that point, with the help of Special Kids Network and Janiece Seldomridge from S. June Smith Center, the brainstorming process began for an accessible playground. After visiting Possibility Place, a fully accessible playground in Lower Paxton Township, PA, and really liking what she saw, Denise turned to Leathers & Associates for design assistance.

The next step was to secure a site. After approaching township supervisors without success, Denise put out a media release sharing her dream and asking for assistance. One week later, she received an email from Bryan Gerlach at Manor Church offering to donate land adjacent to the church.

From there, she formed a steering committee and hired Leathers to design Daniel's Den. A Leathers designer visited Lancaster in May 2007 to gather ideas from the children as to what they would like in their playground. The design not only incorporated children's ideas, but also included ideas from parents and therapists. The result was a schematic design for a fully accessible playground. Much organizing and planning took place from Design Day through Organization Day in February 2008, when a Leathers consultant met with the playground committee to help them prepare for the playground build week.

With much anticipation, build week began on April 22, 2008. The weather was absolutely gorgeous, and over 2,000 volunteers turned out to help. Denise felt that "it was truly an amazing and exhausting week for a lot of the people who helped, but I heard many say they would do it again in a heartbeat."

In Denise's words, "Daniel's Den is proof that anything can be accomplished when people work together. Daniel's Den encourages positive action to change rather than focusing on needs and problems. Acknowledging community weaknesses and strengths is important, but attention should be given to using available assets and opportunities to support and sustain community development rather than using a deficits-based approach. Lastly, Daniel's Den generates a sense of ownership and enhanced community capacity for others. A special thank you to those who adopt this positive approach model to encapsulate our work not as individuals, but as a community."



Windham Wonderland

Windham Wonderland Playground Renovation

The Windham Wonderland Playground was built in 1991 with the help of many Windham volunteers. For many years, it was the only playground in Windham, and attracted many families with small children. The park is shaded with large trees and located near the center of town next to baseball fields. The playground has a playful atmosphere, and charming, castle-like appearance. From the parking lot, the first thing one sees upon entering the park is a towering wooden archway with two tall towers on either side connected with a small rainbow-painted bridge. The rest of the park is no less exciting, as it sprawls out beyond this entryway to include a small toddlers section, swings, monkey bars, slides, wobbly bridges, nearly-life-size models of cars, a spinning tic-tac-toe board, and a vast network of crawl spaces, tunnels, spires, platforms, and bridges. The playground has many designs painted throughout, ranging from larger-than-life trees, cheetahs, and alligators, to small families of rabbits, smiley faces, dinosaurs, and some classic cartoon characters.

However, in recent years Windham Wonderland Playground fell into slight disrepair. So Windham Senior Girl Scout Troop 1007 decided to start a project to renovate the playground in 2006. This project would help the troop earn the Gold Award, which is the highest award in Girl Scouting and is based upon community service and leadership skills. The Gold Award is a three-year process that requires a minimum of 65 hours of community service per troop member (Troop 1007 has four members) as well as many hours of leadership courses. After a year of planning and hard work, the renovation of Windham Wonderland began in the summer of 2007 and was completed by August 2008.

The project consisted of four basic areas of improvement: (1) touching up the old painted areas; (2) replacing the old, damaged donation plaques; (3) building a few additions to the park; and (4) brightening up the landscaping. Each hand-painted design in the park was carefully repainted to make the park look more vibrant, and some new painted designs were added. Two of the life-size, stand-alone cars were painted, and a 'scavenger hunt' was created with the letters of the alphabet and the numbers 1 to 10 painted into hidden places throughout the structure. Each donation plaque was redone, as they had cracked and faded with age. A handicap-accessible picnic table, two new benches, and a stroller ramp were also built and will be installed in the playground by Spring 2009. Also, many new flowers and bushes were planted to give the park new life.

An official Reopening Celebration was held in August 2008 and Troop 1007 received the Gold Award in September. There is another park with a playground and ballfields in town. Although there is much "competition" between the two parks, it seems Windham Wonderland Playground is still considered a quieter, more peaceful place for families to bring their children. It is even common for teenagers who live in the area and who grew up on the playground to bring their younger siblings on a nice summer day. Without a doubt, the renovation of Windham Wonderland Playground has had a significant impact on preserving a small piece of Windham history so that perhaps other generations will be able to appreciate and enjoy it long into the future.

--Cynthia Simonoff, member of Troop 1007

LEATHERS & ASSOCIATES

GC Spotlight

Mardy McGarry and Sue Mayer, Port Washington, WI

Mardy McGarry and Sue Mayer had the right attitude and more than ample knowledge to coordinate an “all access,” community-built playground in Port Washington, Wisconsin. Not only did they spearhead the creation of a one-of-a-kind, fully accessible playground at Upper Lake Park overlooking Lake Michigan, they did so with a staggering amount of community support. The playground incorporates unique play components and ensures unprecedented access for children and caretakers with special needs.



Mardy, a beloved special-education and early-childhood teacher for 29 years, had long dreamt of creating a unique playground to accommodate children with special needs. Beyond that, she wanted to incorporate learning opportunities as well as serve parents and caretakers who have their own disabilities, but still want to play alongside their children. Working with the Port Washington Kiwanis Club, Mardy put her dream in motion but quickly realized she could not do it alone—enter Sue Mayer.

Sue is the mother of three children, two of whom have learning disabilities. Sue has a background in marketing and is the Director of the Wisconsin Chapter of the National Association for Childhood Development (NACD), an organization that empowers parents to work with their children and help them reach their full potential. She also home-schools her son Sam, who has Down syndrome, and they sometimes use playgrounds as their classroom and as a reward for accomplishing goals.

When these two skilled and determined women combined their energies to focus on one goal, magic happened. The unique nature of the community-built process led to some interesting opportunities for Possibility Playground, including the participation of local artists who expanded the design palette. Leathers’ designer and project manager Dennis Wille created several new components for the playground. The ball pass, cognitive processing panel, infinity mirror, and kaleidoscope were designed specifically for the playground with direct input from Sue and Mardy. Possibility Playground also features a rocking platform, construction and racecar activity panels, therapeutic swings, sign-language panels, and high and low apparatus.

Construction consultant Doug Hanauer said that many of the volunteers on the build site said that “Miss Mardy” had been their teacher. And if it wasn’t a student, chances are it was the parent of one of Miss Mardy’s students, hard at work to help build her dream. Evidently, Mardy’s work has had a true impact on her students as so many said “thanks” by showing up to lend a hand. Our consultants were amazed by the volunteer turnout in Port Washington, which is the result of good coordination, a strong committee, and quality leadership.

Thanks to Sue and Mardy’s perseverance from their May 2007 Design Day (and before!) to their September 2008 build, and nearly 2,800 volunteers, Possibility Playground is now a reality. Not only did these two help unite their community in the spirit of helping others, they worked hard to meet the needs of their population and brought together children of all abilities, giving them the opportunity to learn, play, understand one another, and build lasting relationships. Well done, Mardy and Sue!



The Hybrid Playground

That's the answer to the question: "What do you get when you mix the best custom-design playground company in the world with the best of the manufactured playground world?"

For nearly 40 years, Leathers & Associates has been well-known for its innovative, creative designs. We've worked with communities to design playground environments throughout the world—rich environments that help stimulate the developmental needs of children through play.

Only Leathers & Associates can offer you the option to bring together the best of custom-design and manufactured components. In doing so, we provide additional opportunities to design and create playground environments that go beyond one's imagination! Good design is a balance of many factors. Why limit your opportunities?

Still custom designed...Still community built....new HYBRID playground!

Active Play

Child obesity is a growing concern for our parents and care takers. Playground environments are a perfect place to captivate and challenge children while keeping them ACTIVE. With our ability to design and build unique solutions, we are promoting active playgrounds. These designs have a greater focus on children's developmental needs and keeping them physically active for hours through play.

Still custom design...still community built.....more ACTIVE play!

Go Green Initiative

Leathers & Associates has always been at the forefront in research and the use of new materials. We are conscientious about our planet, too! We now offer communities the opportunity to build green. Using 100% post-consumer materials, we can all make a difference.

Same custom design...still community built...GREEN materials.

Unlimited Accessibility

So you're looking to design a play environment for children of all abilities, an environment where all children can play shoulder-to-shoulder? Looking for one-of-a-kind solutions? How about starting with the design flexibility that has no limitations so you can actually design customized solutions based on your wishes! We can deliver an unmatched play environment, maximizing play opportunities for all children.

Still custom design...Still community built....unlimited ACCESSIBILITY!