



**Free
Take One!**

"More of the Best of the Valley"

July 21, 2016



Volunteers build a playground for all in Ansonia

By Patricia Villers

Playground: "An area used for outdoor play or recreation, especially by children, and often containing recreational equipment such as slides and swings."

ANSONIA - Local children have a new place to run, climb, and use their imaginations, thanks to the generosity of Larry Janesky, CEO of the Seymour-based Basement Systems, Inc.

He brought his Basement Systems' and Dr. Energy Saver employees to the Ansonia Nature and Recreation Center at 10 Deerfield Road last weekend to build a playground he designed.

Members of the Valley United Way Corporate Volunteer Council also grabbed rakes and shovels and helped with the construction project.



The Nature Center's 25-year old wooden playscape was demolished in April for safety reasons, after a child was severely hurt by a splinter.

On Monday morning, after a weekend of hard work on three very hot days by many volunteers, Nature Center Director Alison Rubelmann said she was feeling thankful for all the help from the community.

"I'm just so grateful to Larry and his team," Rubelmann said as she sat down for a moment at one of the park's picnic tables.

"I've never seen men and women work so hard," she said.

The nature center has applied for a \$50,000 grant from the Valley Community Foundation to create a walkway that complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Ansonia resident Colleen Rondon was on hand Friday afternoon watching workers use heavy equipment to prep the area. Her sons, Henry, 12, and Sam, 9, were with her.

Henry said he liked the idea of having a new playground, and Sam said he was looking forward to using a tire swing.



Kellie Santiago, marketing coordinator, Basement Systems, said the playground features:

- A stage with amphitheater-style seating
- A kiddie area complete with playhouses, swings, slides, and a sandbox
- Tire swings, a balance beam;
- Five towers connected by bridges and tunnels with a firemen's pole, a rock wall, and three slides.

Nature center ranger and educator Dawn Sotir of Oxford said she was excited for her infant granddaughter to be able to use the playground.

"She'll benefit from this," she said.

Learn more about the Ansonia Nature and Recreation Center: <http://ansonianaturecenter.org>

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The next phase for the new playground: Community Accessibility

By Ralph Villers

ANSONIA - As a wheelchair user, I am very excited about the upcoming accessibility modifications being added to the beautiful new playground in the spirit of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA).

In an interview with Alison Rubelmann, Director of the Ansonia Nature and Recreation Center, she explained the process enabling this next step:

"The Friends of the Ansonia Nature Center have applied for a \$50,000 grant from Valley Community Foundation and have been interviewed for the second round of the application. Our application focuses on all necessary ADA equipment, including walkways, ramps and wheelchair accessible tables."

This project has three phases:

- Phase 1: The playground created through the generosity of Basement Systems,
- Phase 2: The addition of ADA walkways, playground pieces and picnic tables.
- Phase 3: Landscaping that integrates the playground within the natural setting of the Nature and Recreation Center

I look forward to wheeling up to the new playground, not to play - but to admire the inclusivity of the entire community this will allow. This new playground exemplifies the mission of the Ansonia Nature and Recreation Center: *To foster an ethic of environmental stewardship that will connect our communities to the natural world of the Lower Naugatuck River Valley, and balance the demand for recreation with the need for conservation.*



Nature Center birch tree's roots run deep



The birch tree when planted in 1994
Photo courtesy of Beverly Bomba



The beautiful Heritage River Birch continues to anchor the playground 22 years later

A triple-trunk Heritage River Birch tree stands tall and provides shade in the center of the play area. The tree has been there for more than two decades.

Seymour resident Beverly Bomba, former president of the Ansonia Garden Club said, “The tree was planted in September 1994 in loving memory of three longtime members of the club, Rose Hevesy, Agnes Fulton, and Lilian Hoyt, all [of] whom passed in 1994.

Family members of the three women attended a dedication ceremony on Sept. 18, 1994, Bomba said, “and received a Certificate of Appreciation in memory of their loved ones.”

The Ansonia Garden Club held its monthly meetings at the Nature Center for many years, she said. “On behalf of all (past and present) members of The Ansonia Garden Club, please keep this tree where its roots are. Its meaning is special - not only to us but to others, (children and adults) who have enjoyed the shade of this beautiful tree as it has matured throughout the years.”

