



How a City Got a Kiwanis Playground...2007 Presentation

Children in the Williamsburg area have a special treat on its way this summer. A special ceremony was held at the Kiwanis meeting, February 8, at the Cumberland Inn, to present a \$10,000 check to the city for a state-of-the-art playground. On hand to accept the gift were Williamsburg Mayor Roddy Harrison, and Alvin Sharpe, Director of Tourism. David Bergman, Kiwanis, described the gift as an “unprecedented amount by any club or organization.” Funds for the donation were raised over a three year period through the Kiwanis “Cruise for Kids” motorcycle jamborees, and memorial Harold Mauney 5K Run/Walks.

Bergman, one of the early organizers for the project, summed up why members got involved: “...I do believe as a Kiwanian, and as a member of this community...as a taxpayer... as just someone who really believes in children, and what it means to bring children of affluence, as well as children of poverty together on a common ground...a playground can do it like nothing else. A playground allows a person to forget about the problems at home, to forget about anything that’s wrong in their life...and they can really set their mind free, be creative, be in a state of motion, share their joys with their parents if they come to the playground...Children grow on a playground...are active on a playground. Activity is good for the mind, the body, and the soul...the spirit of Williamsburg is alive again with this new playground.”

Alvin Sharpe, Director of Tourism, played a key role in writing a series of grants to finance the playground, and improvements on other Williamsburg parks. The \$10,000 grant will be used, along with other matching funds, to bring in over \$87,000. The site for the playground will be near the old city swimming pool, in a spot between 3rd, 2nd, and Ridge Streets. One of the grants will provide a rubber chip surface, made from recycled tires. Sharpe described how the playground was originally going to be built over the old swimming pool. When the area was found to be sinking, an alternate location had to be found. The old tennis courts were then selected. New plans call for the pool to be filled in and used as a parking lot.

Mayor Harrison, another key person who backed the playground efforts, described the growing excitement of city residents who were watching construction. “I’ve gotten letters from small children that have already written us and thanked us for the new park. Mothers would be driving their babies by, rolling down the windows and saying, ‘you gonna put in swings? ...Gonna put in a slide?’ There was just so much excitement...I can’t even tell you how excited these kids are about this new playground...it blew my mind away! I didn’t know how much they were looking forward to it!”

David Bergman later praised the playground gift as an example of “public/private partnership” between the city and a private civic organization.



The Playground arrives at Williamsburg...2008

Briar Creek came next in 2009...

