

Published May 17th, 2017

All-Access Playground is a sure thing

By Sophie Braccini



There are very few playgrounds in the Bay Area that offers kids, regardless of their abilities, the opportunity to play side by side. As a Lamorinda parent of a disabled child puts it, some of the hardest realities when raising a disabled child are the isolation created by the difference, the difficulty to find playmates and play opportunities, and the disruption to the other siblings.

But now, thanks to a group of Moraga Rotarians that did not believe their dream was too big for them, an accessible and inclusive playground will open this fall at the Moraga Commons Park. The club reached its \$250,000 goal this month and Moraga Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram plans to bring constructions bids to the town council

Thumbs up for the all-access playground. From left: Cliff Dochterman, Tony Schoemehl, John Erickson, Frank May, Kevin Reneau, Evie Michon, Jay Ingram and Ann Damaschino. Photo A. Scheck

in June

Moraga Rotary club members are justly proud of their achievement. Just over six months ago the group of passionate Rotarians started fundraising for the park. Some were skeptical, even within the club itself, that this

would be feasible. Club president Kevin Reneau stresses that this was a group effort reaching out all over Lamorinda.

The list of donors is long and includes some big contributors such as all the area Rotary clubs, the Moraga Valley Kiwanis, the Orinda Community Foundation, the Lafayette Community Foundation, and some smaller but nonetheless meaningful contributors such as the Lafayette Youth Council, as well as middle school and high school kids contributing to help other kids.

Lafayette resident Steve Parlatt, whose disabled son is involved in a lot of structured sports activities available in the larger Lamorinda community, says he is very excited to see the opening of a recreation option for free and unplanned fun. He notes that the reaction of other kids to his son who has very different abilities has always been good and he looks forward to a space where able as well as disabled children can interact. Parlatt who has been a constant supporter of the Moraga project, believes that the new park's design is intelligent and adapted.

Ingram hopes to take the bid documents to award the construction work to the council in June. The town has committed close to \$200,000 to study and grade the site that the new playground will occupy. The money comes from development fees earmarked for recreation and Ingram does not think that other financial challenges in town would impact that project. Ingram anticipates breaking ground after the Fourth of July celebrations, with a ribbon cutting in October.

Moraga Rotary will continue to raise funds until June in an attempt to get to \$300,000 to accommodate the town's wish for an upgraded fence, any potential cost overruns and to possibly aid the town for some part of the grading and preparation costs for the site.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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