



MEDIA RELEASE

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Inclusive playground at Horizon School will let an entire community continue to play

For Immediate Release, March 5, 2015: Nothing will keep people with developmental needs from enjoying a new playground once it opens in Olds this summer – including their age!

The inclusive playground is designed for the specific needs of the students at Horizon School, but its unique design meets the needs of varying age groups. The wheelchair accessible structures will be built on a non-slip flooring that will appeal to anyone with mobility challenges. In this way, in addition to the students at Horizon School, the playground will give 200 adults with disabilities in the community the chance to enjoy outdoor fitness and fun.

“Lots of playgrounds are appropriate for children younger than 12, but this one is designed specifically to accommodate adults. Just because you have another birthday doesn’t mean you can’t still have fun and be active!” said Kathy Owens, Parent Council President. “Play is functional and therapeutic, and we know young people develop many skills through play. At Horizon, each student strives for as much independence as possible to reach their highest potential – this playground will help them discover more of their ability. It will make great things happen for our kids and for many others in our community.”

Kathy has received a provincial volunteer award from the Alberta School Councils Association for her efforts. She has always become involved in her children’s activities, but the playground project took on a particular priority for her. Her son Kevin, the youngest of four children, has been a student at Horizon School for the past eight years.

“Many students at Horizon aren’t able to speak for themselves and they’re not the type of kids who would complain about not having a proper playground. I believe some of their progress may be delayed further by not having a playground, and having this specialized equipment could make the difference to an independent life for some of them. The need for kids and adults in our community to have this choice for physical and leisure activity will always be there – and we’re looking at this playground to serve the community for the next 30 years. It is big enough, safe enough and active enough for everyone to enjoy.”

The school community, led by Kathy, has worked hard to raise funds for the \$180,000 playground. Along with a provincial grant of \$70,000, there has been a great deal of interest and generosity from private donations and service clubs in Olds and surrounding communities. The playground is built for a range of ages, sizes and capabilities, and has a highly functional plan - from an entrance that is level with the sidewalk to a wheelchair accessible slide. It utilizes bright colours, components that focus on different muscle groups, different textured surfaces to aid visual accessibility, an auditory station with bells and chimes, and cozy cocoon for quiet moments. The community playground, scheduled to open in mid-August, is being created through a joint venture with the Town of Olds.

“The Town has provided great support and collaboration, and they’ve been wonderful partners,” said Kathy. “Horizon School does such a great job in serving their students and families – no other school could offer us what Horizon has. Now we’re creating more great things for our kids and for the whole community.”

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