

Park plans include handicap accessible playground

Written by Darci Tomky

Phillips County has so many things to offer, but one thing it is lacking is a universally accessible playground, and a group of volunteers is hard at work making that a possibility.

“Yes, Everyone Can Play!!” is a project of the Phillips County Commissioners with volunteers Brooke Dirks, Shannon Schlachter, Michelle Vieselmeyer and Andrea McCallum.

The idea is to build a playground facility for all children, including those with disabilities. In addition to the playground, the project will include an all-weather turf field and a frisbee golf course.

With the recent completion of the brand new Phillips County Event Center at the fairgrounds in Holyoke, it seems the only thing missing is an up-to-date playground.

Traffic has increased due to local programming and community events hosted at the Event Center, and of course the first thing children want to do is play on the playground, said Dirks.

Homesteaders Park was established in 1976 in honor of the county’s first landowners. A playground was added later in 1980.

With old wood boards and metal slides, the 30-year-old structure is unsafe and currently not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Project volunteers said parents have voiced concerns about the safety of the playground.

They have been asking each other, “How cool would it be if there was a playground that was handicap accessible?”

Project organizers don’t want to take anything away from the other Holyoke parks, but they do want to provide another option in the community.

