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PHOTOS: JOHN HIDALGO, FLA. WILLDAM ENGINEERING



Top: The Taylor's Dream Boundless Playground sits on six acres, and was planted with a wide variety of plant material, including Serviceberry trees, Miss Kim Lilacs shrubs, Moonshine Yarrow and Feathered Reed Grass.

Above: Called an "Aero Glide," this playground equipment can hold up to a dozen kids and sways back and forth like a boat. The contractor mounted the Aero Glide to a heavy concrete foundation. As a moving piece of playground equipment it requires strict tolerances in its installation relative to the position of adjacent equipment and access ramps.

Located in Fort Wayne, Indiana, the Taylor's Dream Boundless Playground is a triumph of landscape contractor Harlow Enterprises, Inc. and the Fort Wayne Parks & Recreation Department. The project's purpose was to provide a state of the art playground facility for children of all abilities. To this end, the project represents a monumental success.

The secondary purpose of the project was to provide an improved Indiana outdoor recreation area per the Land and Water Conservation Fund through the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The project also had to provide natural storm-water retention. This latter requirement was achieved through the landscape contractor's installation of two large rain gardens.

Spearheaded by the dream of 11 year-old Taylor Reuille as well as demand from the greater Fort

A: The Tot Twister required the installation of valves and piping from the city water main; it was routed through an electrically controlled water distribution manifold, and finally piped under the splash pad itself to each water feature. Major excavation was required. The installation required technical skills both for assembly and for programming the electrically controlled water distribution manifold. The contractor installed more than 1,200 lineal feet of piping just for the splash pad itself.



B: The water park's concrete area covers more than 8,000 square feet with more than 100 cubic yards of concrete for this area. This section was formed and installed over the course of two days.



C: All playground areas were covered with 24,000 square feet of playground safety surface using ForeverLawn artificial grass turf. The artificial grass covers all three play pods. For its installation, workers laid a 6-inch stone base, then a 4-inch mulched rubber layer, and then installed the artificial turf itself on top. The planted material included "Variegated Miscanthus" and "Zebra Grass" as shown here.

D: Workers established a subgrade for one of the play pods, after which they installed the Keystone retaining walls.

Wayne area, the signature playground facility offers a play area for children of all abilities. Partnering with Boundless Playgrounds, Inc., the department brought nation-wide certification in accessible playgrounds to the residents of Fort Wayne.



From concept to completion, Taylor's Dream Boundless Playground took three years. However, the construction phase itself took 10 months. Prior to construction efforts, focus was placed on community ties and sponsorships through fundraising and by soliciting pro bono design services. Overall, the fundraising and design took two years.

Hundreds of workers were required to bring the project through to completion. From Taylor and her "Dream Team" who provided the initiative and brainstorming, to the fundraising staff, to the designers and engineers, to the laborers and skilled trades, to all the volunteers, sponsors and consultants, it was a collaborative effort throughout.

Harlow Enterprises, Inc. installed the sub-surface drip/seep irrigation in all the raised planters. 10 acres were excavated, graded, or otherwise modified for construction. The major excavation was done by earthmovers, bull dozers, and compactors. Building excavation and underground utilities were dug with a large excavator. Spring rains in 2011 caused some mudding and site access problems for heavy machinery and dump trucks. However, luckily, work delays did not become extensive.





The Playworld Systems, Inc.'s "T-Rex" play feature was secured and attached to concrete footings, which lie at a covered depth below the playground safety surfacing.

The Playground

Dozens of playground structures were incorporated into Taylor's Dream playground design. All the playground equipment was made and provided by Playworld Systems, Inc. and Acute Fence, Inc. performed the installation. Taylor's Dream Boundless Playground features three circular pods of playground equipment and activity areas, placed around a central splash pad. The site features changing elevations, accessible ramps, large and small shade structures, innovative and tactile play surfacing and landscape plantings designed to stimulate all the senses.

ADA Compliant

The restroom building is fully ADA accessible and has automatic door openers and touch-less features such as hand dryers and waterless urinals.

Pro Bono Contractors

In today's economy, many times the completion of a community project often comes down to pro bono work from civic-minded companies. And this project is one such example. Spearheaded by Alec Johnson, ASLA of the City of Fort Wayne Parks and Recreation Department, they were joined by a number of pro bono contributors, including Morrison Kattman Menzie Architects (restroom building design); Engineering Resources of Fort Wayne (structural design); Gensic Engineering (underground water and sewer design); Matson Consulting Engineers (mechanical and plumbing engineering) for the restroom building; Almet Fabricators (entry arch fabrication); Fetters Construction (general contractor).

What started as a dream project for an 11-year old girl, turned into a stunning example of what can be achieved for the greater good through hard work and pro bono supplied services. 