

Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation Unveils Inclusive Playground at Little Buffalo State Park

To create more inclusive playgrounds, it's essential to prioritize accessible equipment, adaptive play features, and barrier-free environments.

CAMP HILL, PA, UNITED STATES, October 16, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF) is proud to announce the dedication of a new accessible playground at [Little Buffalo State Park](#). The playground, which prioritizes inclusivity, is designed to offer all children, regardless of ability, the opportunity to engage in meaningful play experiences.



PPFF holds a ribbon cutting for the new inclusive playground at Little Buffalo State Park. Pictured left to right: Jessica Fischer (Park Manager), Mike Weaver (Chair, Friends of Little Buffalo), Sue Adams (donor), Marci Mowery (President of PPFF), and Gre

According to the UNICEF and the American Academy of Pediatrics, play is a fundamental aspect of childhood that supports cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development. Through play, children learn to explore the world, experiment with problem-solving, and engage in creative thinking. When children engage in unstructured play, they build critical thinking skills, improve their memory, and enhance their language development.

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We are proud that this playground reflects our commitment to diversity and inclusion.”

Jessica Fischer

Moreover, play is essential for social and emotional growth. Studies consistently highlight how play contributes to a well-rounded, healthier childhood, enabling children to thrive both academically and personally.

“Play is not only essential for cognitive and emotional

growth, but also for fostering social connections,” Marci Mowery, President of PPFF, stated, highlighting the importance of play in childhood development. “With this inclusive playground, we aim to provide every child with the chance to play, explore, and thrive. This project reflects

our mission to ensure that Pennsylvania's outdoor spaces offer meaningful experiences for everyone."

Yet not all children have equal access to play. Using a wheelchair in a playground presents several challenges that can limit a child's ability to fully engage in play. To create more inclusive playgrounds, it's essential to prioritize accessible equipment, adaptive play features, and barrier-free environments.

The playground's creation is the result of a collaborative effort between community sponsors, the staff of Little Buffalo State Park, and the Friends of Little Buffalo State Park (a chapter of PPF). Significant funding came from the Partnership for Better Health, Globus Medical Equipment, Hershey Memorial VFW Post 3502, VFW Post 34 of Newport, Blain Barshinger Post 882, and other generous donors. The benches were donated by DuMor Inc. in Mifflintown.

Craig Bachik of Navaro and Wright Consulting Engineers, Inc. provided pro-bono services for the design of the rubberized surface of the play area. Park staff provided valuable service to the project throughout the various stages. [The Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps](#) also helped with the final site work to prepare the area for the rubberized surface.

"State parks offer invaluable spaces for families and individuals to experience the outdoors, and this new inclusive playground is a shining example of how we are making sure those experiences are accessible to all," says Jessica Fischer, Park Manager at Little Buffalo State Park. "With around 270,000 visitors each year, many traveling from surrounding states, we are proud that this playground reflects our commitment to diversity and inclusion, and will serve as a model for future projects within the Bureau of State Parks."

In addition to celebrating the new playground, Mowery acknowledged the continuous efforts of the park and Friends Group in expanding inclusive recreational opportunities. "In 2020, we unveiled an ADA-accessible canoe and kayak launch, and today we take another step forward with this playground. We look forward to future projects that make Pennsylvania's parks accessible for all."

This new playground stands as a testament as a part of PPF's mission to help remove barriers and open up opportunities for everyone to have access to the outdoors as well as the power of working together to achieve shared goals. If you would like more information about accessible opportunities in PA's state parks and forests, donate towards other inclusive equipment, or ways you can get involved, visit PAParksAndForests.org.

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About the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation

The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation supports 124 state parks and 2.2 million acres of forest by coordinating volunteers, activities, and donations through its 45+ chapters. The mission of the foundation is to inspire stewardship of Pennsylvania's state parks and forests. To

learn more about PPF, visit <https://paparksandforests.org/>.

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Photo caption: PPF holds a ribbon cutting for the new inclusive playground at Little Buffalo State Park. Pictured left to right: Jessica Fischer (Park Manager), Mike Weaver (Chair, Friends of Little Buffalo), Sue Adams (donor), Marci Mowery (President of PPF), and Greg Wileman (Park Maintenance Repairman 2).

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