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# Former mayor to help raise funds for handicapped-accessible playground

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POCATELLO — Another extreme makeover project is coming to town, but this time the undertaking will involve a playground.

A very big and special playground.

Organizers of the planned Brooklyn's Playground project have enlisted the help of former Pocatello Mayor Roger Chase to lead the effort to raise the estimated \$400,000 that will be needed to build a massive community playground.

About 2,000 community volunteers will build the 20,000-square-foot playground at O.K. Ward Park in five days in September.

The project, which is being led by the community organization, Valley Pride, in conjunction with the United Way of Southeastern Idaho, is a grassroots effort to build a state-of-the-art playground that is accessible to everyone. The playground equipment will be soft and round and 100 percent accessible to children with handicaps.

Even children in wheelchairs will have access to all of the ground-level components. They can take their chairs up the ramps to the top where there are transfer points for easy access to the slides.

The project will be funded, designed and built by community members.

Organizers estimate at least 2,000 people will be involved in the effort. Students, local artists, historians, parents and professionals will be asked to help design, fund and create a playground customized to the community's needs.

Valley Pride co-chair Tim Forhan says he's grateful Chase agreed to help with the project and the former mayor's extensive list of contacts should come in handy for this project.

"He has the respect of the entire community for his many years of service, both as a state legislator and as mayor of Pocatello, and both his contacts and experience in organizing these kinds of large-scale projects will be invaluable," Forhan said.

While the official fundraising effort kicked off Monday with the announcement Chase would lead the way, a kickoff community event will be held Feb. 26 at Don Aslett's Museum of Clean in Pocatello.

The Feb. 26 kickoff event, "Brooklyn's Winter Picnic for the Park," will be for the entire community and will be organized around a picnic theme. The event will be held from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and will include live entertainment by several performers, food vendors and kid-friendly activities. Admission is \$5 for adults,

\$2 for children 12 and under and \$15 for a family.

Besides serving as a fundraiser, the event will be an opportunity for people to learn more about Brooklyn's Playground.

"We wanted the official kickoff event to be a fun, affordable event for the community's families," says Jonny Fisher, Brooklyn's Playground committee chairman and father of Brooklyn Fisher, whom the project is named after.

Brooklyn was born with spina bifida and has limited use of her legs. Her parents began envisioning an all-access community playground after Brooklyn sustained a concussion when she fell out of a swingset at a local park.

"Brooklyn's Playground will be a place where children of all abilities can come together to play, interact and grow, so we wanted the kickoff event to be in that same spirit — a fun day for families," Johnny Fisher says.

Project organizers say the playground will be filled with fun creative playground equipment that fosters learning through imaginative play. The playground will include features such as interactive panels, cooperative games, climbers, music areas, sensory panels and a phone system.



Chase