

After the fire: Y Stadium Place Community Playground Reopens

By Cari Nanton

The sound of children filled the air as the Y Stadium Place campers did their morning warm-ups. Children from the community slowly gathered in anticipation. The Y stadium Place held the official grand opening for their playground on July 2, 2009. Originally opened in April of 2005, the playground was built by the Y of Central Maryland, Friends of Our Playground at Stadium Place and over 3000 community volunteers. The playground was the vision of a local grandmother—in 1998—that wanted neighborhood children to have somewhere safe to play like those in suburban areas.

Although the playground is a community built playground, is managed by Y of Central Maryland. Regardless to management community children enjoyed the playground.

"Upset, devastated" was how Lynn Byrd, area resident, described the community after the first playground destroyed by a fire on September 10, 2008. Determined to make a grandmother's vision continue over 200 people gathered and committed themselves to rebuild.

"I have never gotten a quicker yes in my years of public service," said Delegate Maggie McIntosh (D-Dist. 43) about Governor Martin O'Malley's willingness to help rebuild the charred playground. The Y of Central

Maryland had insurance that covered much of the replacement cost. The remaining funds came from state funding and community donations.

Nearly 2000 volunteers built the new playground in May 2009. Forrester Construction donated not only time coordinating subcontractor work on the playground, but they pitched in on the rebuild and donated many of the tools used. The new playground is improved with more flame resistant materials—for instance, instead of wood chips in-place ground cover was installed.

The investigation into the arson is still ongoing but John Hoey, president and CEO of the Y of Central Maryland says with the improvements to security the playground is more protected than even. Crediting McIntosh securing grant funding for these improvements, Hoey warned that those intending harm to the playground should think twice—cheers erupted in the crowd.

Congressmen reminded the audience of the importance of our future. Cummings said this not only taught the children about being compassionate to fellow man but about determination.



(Left to right) John Hoey, president and CEO, Y of Central Maryland; Marisa Canino, president, Friends of Our Playground, Stadium Place; Congressman Elijah Cummings; Delegate Maggie McIntosh; and City Councilman Bill Henry officially open the rebuilt playground to the public. (Below) Children enjoy the new Y Stadium Place Community Playground. Photos: Cari Nanton

