

Laborers International Union of North America Local 1076 employees donate funds for new special needs playground in Holly

by Amy Mayhew | The Fenton Press

Friday July 25, 2008, 4:00 PM

HOLLY, Michigan -- Holly School District special needs students have something to cheer about -- a new state-of-the-art play structure at the Karl Richter Campus, provided courtesy of the Pontiac-based Laborers International Union of North America Local 1076.

Students, parents and staff participated in a dedication ceremony Wednesday.



Janet Stack-Miller, director of special services, recognized physical therapist Amy McDonald for contacting Local 1076.

Amy Mayhew | Fenton PressHolly Area Schools Superintendent Kent Barnes helps student Michelle Axford cut the ribbon on a new special needs playground at Karl Richer Campus. The playground equipment was provided by Laborers International Union of North America Local 1076.

"Amy is the person who initiated this relationship with Local 1076," Stack-Miller said.

"Thank you so much, Amy -- you're the one who got this started for us."

The Local 1076 Labor Management Trust was established in July 1993 and is funded by a cents-per-hour contribution from every labor hour worked in the field. The trust has sponsored many community events including the Pontiac Veterans' Memorial, Carl's Family YMCA pavilion, the Burt Elementary playground, and the special needs playground at the Karl Richter campus.

Stack-Miller said the specialized equipment, valued at \$68,000, will benefit students with physical, auditory, visual and sensory impairment, as well as autistic students or students who are behavior-challenged. Paul Gassel, a Local 1076 representative, said it was a pleasure for the members of his organization to see a meaningful project like this come to fruition.

"Although Local 1076 Labor Management Trust has been involved with several playgrounds in the past, the Karl Richter Campus was a very special project for us," he said. "Both management and union trustees were excited to be a sponsor for this project because every child, regardless of the circumstance, deserves a place to play."

"Through the generosity of Local 1076, our dreams of an accessible playground have been realized," Stack-Miller said. "It was just amazing to see the students' excitement when we gave them a 'sneak preview'

yesterday."

Stack-Miller also thanked two key individuals responsible for constructing the play structure: Gary Keehn and George Esler from the Outdoor Funstore. Having taken the better part of two weeks to construct the equipment, Keehn and Esler said it was gratifying to see the smiles of students as they checked out the play structure for the first time.

"A play structure like this is just going to make all the difference in the world," Esler said.

"Rarely have I ever been without words, but if one looks at this," Superintendent Kent Barnes said, gesturing toward the play structure, "Wow!"

Barnes said his expectations for the play structure had been exceeded.

"Words cannot express the thanks to all of you," Barnes said. "But I think the thanks will be reflected in the smiles of our parents, our students and members of our community. Thank you so very much on behalf of the Board of Education, all our staff and our community. Thank you so much for what you've done for our students."