

NEWSLETTER

AGE
APPROPRIATE
DESIGN

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The National Program for Playground Safety

America's playgrounds
Make them safe



JUNE, 2006

One Size Does Not Fit All



Child development experts and parents agree that play is an essential part of childhood and healthy development. Playgrounds help children to develop physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually. To meet children's developmental needs it is important that play equipment is age appropriate in its design. Not all playground equipment is appropriate for all ages of children, since children are developmentally different in size and ability.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), over 200,000 playground related injuries requiring emergency room visits occur each year. Many of these injuries have been linked to children using equipment that is not appropriate for their age and abilities. We suggest that supervisors take an active role in selecting age appropriate equipment for children to play on. Prior to doing this, it is important to under-

stand what factors influence age appropriate design. We suggest play areas designed for three age groups: ages 6-23 months, ages 2-5 years and ages 5-12 years old. Important factors fall under these four developmental categories:

Select equipment appropriate for physical development.

- Equipment for children ages 6-23 months should be in the ground level, and no higher than 3 feet.
- Equipment for ages 2-5 should promote balance and the ability to climb and manipulate objects, and not be higher than 6 feet.
- Equipment for age 5-12 should encourage development of arm strength and other gross motor skills, and also not be higher than 8 feet.

Select equipment appropriate for emotional development .

- Equipment such as appropriately-sized slides and swings encourage children to explore new methods of playing and taking challenges.
- Adults can help nurture positive emotional development by observing, supervising, facilitating, and complimenting, but not intervening in the play of children.

Select equipment appropriate for social development.

- A good play area offers children opportunities to play alone or with others.
- Suggested equipment for play areas for children ages 6-23 months includes tunnels, manipulatives, and foam equipment.
- Suggested equipment for play areas for children ages 2-5 should offer both single use equipment, like a spring rocker, and more social pieces, like a multi-user spring device or a sand box.
- Play equipment for school-aged children should encourage cooperation, such as tire swings and special manipulative equipment that requires more than one user.

Select equipment appropriate for intellectual development..

- Playgrounds should offer opportunities to learn problem-solving skills, to be creative and to manipulate their environment.

(Article continued on page 3).

Congratulations to The Environmental Risk Management, Facilities, and Construction Divisions of Lee's Summit Community Schools.



Members of Lee's Summit R-7 School District, from left to right: Mark White, Brian Sloan, Amy Rice, Katy Betz, Kelly Seitz, Marsha Bailey

According to Mark White, "The 'Safe Playground of the Year' award is presented annually to the elementary school of the year with the best record that is within the Lee's Summit R-7 School District."

The National Program for Playground Safety has recently created the John Preston Safe Playground Award. This annual award is in honor of John Preston, a tireless worker for the safety of children, and will be given annually to an organization or agency who exemplifies the care and concern for children by creating safe play environments!

John was an engineer for the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. He was responsible for promoting playground safety in a number of ways by: (1) Being responsible for compiling the CPSC Handbook for over 20 years, (2) being sure that appropriate research occurred at CPSC regarding playground safety; (3) contributing to all of the ASTM Playground Standards and after careful and thoughtful consideration made significant contributions; and (4) serving faithfully on the National Program for Playground Safety Board of Directors for nine years.

The second annual John Preston Playground Safety Award was given to Lee's Summit R-7 School District in Lee's Summit, Missouri. The journey into playground safety for the Lee's Summit R-7 School District (Lee's Summit, Missouri) began in early 2000 when newly hired Environmental / Risk Manager, Mark White, evaluated the loss exposures for the school

district and found that a significant number of students were being injured on the playgrounds. Armed with statistics on these injuries he went before the Superintendent and Board of Education and asked is such losses were "normal" for the District? Support was immediately given to form the "Playground Safety Initiative" (PSI) and to send Mr. White to the NPPS Playground Safety School. A total of 5 District personnel have participated in Playground Safety School and completed the S.A.F.E. Certification.

Since 2000, White and the R-7 School District's PSI team have received local, regional and national attention as a success story for keeping children safe on the playgrounds of public schools. By incorporating the NPPS four cornerstone concepts (S.A.F.E.) into district best practices and procedures the frequency and severity of playground injuries have decreased an average of 27% over the past 6 years. Old, outdated and non-compliant (CPSC) equipment has been removed. Newer, more age-appropriate equipment has been installed. Improvements in loose-fill surfacing have been made as well as on-going preventative maintenance program. The District has recently incorporated S.A.F.E. into its Standard Facility

Guidelines (SFG) for Playgrounds. This will ensure that all future playground renovations and new playgrounds in the District will have safety as the first objective.

Supervision training has been one of the main keys to their success. Annual training and on-going coaching of Playground Supervisors conducted by S.A.F.E. Certified District personnel has been crucial to their success towards lower injury accidents to students. NPPS training materials are used for new "rookie" supervisors as well as seasoned "veterans." The "Safe Playground of the Year" award is presented annually to the elementary school with the best record. Once school in particular, Underwood Elementary, has won the award twice in a row with only 2 accidents reported in 2 years. Underwood is on the way to earning this award again this year.

The success achieved by the Lee's Summit R-7 School District has been a team effort. Administrators, staff and support departments have all contributed to making their playgrounds an asset rather than a liability. NPPS is extremely proud to honor the Lee's Summit R-7 School District with the John Preston SAFE Playground Award!

Product Highlight: Planning

To increase your ability to plan appropriate and safe playgrounds and outdoor learning environments, NPPS has developed several products. These include pamphlets and a video.

The pamphlet, *Planning a Play Area for Children*, offers a series of orderly steps to follow in order to plan an appropriate play area.



Spotlight: St. Theresa School Dedicates New Playground



St. Theresa School, New Cumberland, PA, celebrated National Playground Safety week with the grand opening of their new Playground on April 23, 2006. A blessing and dedication were part of the official grand opening ceremony for the new St. Theresa school playground. The ceremony was held in conjunction with the start of National Playground Safety Week. Governor Edward Rendell has proclaimed the week of April 24-28 to be Playground Safety Week in Pennsylvania.

The playground was dedicated in the memory of the late Mrs. Marie Carr, who taught kindergarten at St. Theresa for 13 years and had more than 20 years of service at the school before she passed away unexpectedly last summer.

"Mrs. Carr was such an important part of the educational and developmental

experience here at St. Theresa," said Mrs. Margaret Barrett, school principal. "Her memory was a driving force for everyone involved in this project."

The new playground project was led by dozens of community volunteers who worked diligently over the past 12 months. These volunteers did everything from raising more than \$41,000 through various events and private donations, to the dismantling and disposal of the old playground equipment, to site and surface preparation and installing a new perimeter fence. Volunteers did get a helping hand from Lowell Hartzell Construction who performed the site excavation and installation. The new playground was designed by Playworld Systems Inc. of Lewisburg, PA and it replaced an outdated 15-year old structure. The new 3,500 square foot playground contains two sliding boards, a climbing wall and a turbo climbing structure -- equipment designed to work all of the body's major muscle groups.

Members of St. Theresa School and the New Cumberland Community took playground advocacy a step father as they used this opportunity to educate the community about playground safety.

Professional playground safety experts representing the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) and the Pennsylvania Department of Health participated in the

ceremony and used the new playground to illustrate steps that can be taken to make playgrounds safer. Those steps include proper supervision, using age-appropriate equipment, using proper materials to soften falls and performing equipment maintenance.

"We are happy and excited to have a new and safer playground on which our children can exercise and experience such an important part of their elementary school years," said Barrett. "Mrs. Carr touched the lives of so many children over the years. With the playground dedicated in her memory, she will continue to watch over our children in the years to come."

The National Program for Playground Safety would like to applaud St. Theresa School and all the individuals who helped with the playground project. We admire your determination and commitment to keeping children safe. Way to go St. Theresa



One size does not fit all...article continued.

- Large composite structures pose decision making opportunities for getting on/off equipment.
- Play houses allow children to be creative.
- Water wheels, sand boxes, and sand diggers allow children to manipulate things in the environment.

Playgrounds should provide opportunities for all children. It's important to consider age appropriate equipment, but also equipment for all ability levels. With the 1991 passage of the American with Disabilities Acts, many play areas are being planned or modified to give children with disabilities an opportunity to play on equipment with other children.

The Recreation Advisory Committee of the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board has guidelines on the accessibility of playgrounds. For further information concerning these standards contact the Access Board at www.access-board.gov



What we're doing: Playground Safety Week was a Success

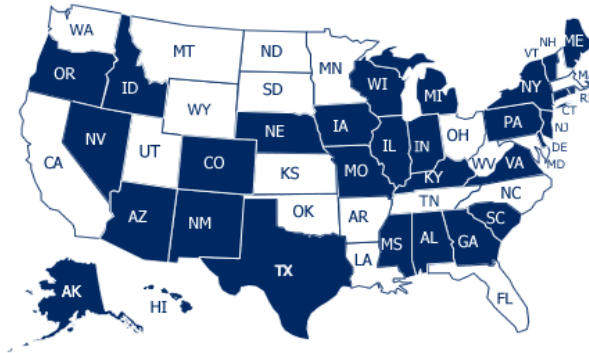
Playground Safety Week, April 24-28, 2006, was a success! National Playground Safety is a time for focusing on children's outdoor play environments, a time to pledge to use good judgment when playing, a time to acknowledge all the people who work tirelessly to maintain safe playgrounds. The theme for this year's Playground Safety Week was celebrating 25 years the Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC) 25 years of involvement with playgrounds safety.

Twenty-five years ago the CPSC published its first two handbooks on playground safety. Today the CPSC's guidelines regarding playground safety are voluntary. However, 15 states have adopted these guidelines either in part

or in full. The impact these guidelines has had nationwide is amazing. NPPS wanted to take the week to recognize the tremendous influence CPSC

Week by signing a proclamation. Thanks to your help, 33 states proclaimed April 24-28, 2006 National Playground Safety Week!

Countless schools, classrooms, and childcare facilities took time during the week to educate and practice S.A.F.E. playground activities. To everyone who celebrated and everyone who continues to advocate for playground safety NPPS salutes your persistent effort and hard work. THANKS for all you do to keep America's playgrounds S.A.F.E. For more



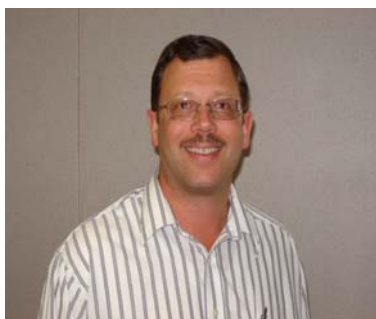
The darkened states above declared Playground Safety Week 2006

has had on playground safety over the last 25 years.

In honor of National Playground Safety Week, we encouraged you to write your governors requesting the declare this week Playground Safety

information on National Playground Safety Week visit <http://www.playgroundsafety.org/safetyweek/>

Congratulations Earl Colella, 2006 Ahrens National Playground Safety Advocate of the Year



Earl Colella
2006 Ahrens National
Playground Safety Advocate of

During National Playground Safety Week (April 24-28, 2006), the National Program for Playground Safety recognized an individual that has dedicated his time and energy to advocating and educating for playground safety throughout Connecticut and Michigan.

This year, NPPS had an overwhelming number of nominations from highly qualified advocates. NPPS wants to thank all the individuals that are helping us raise awareness about playground safety.

The fifth annual Playground Safety Advocate of the Year Award was given to Earl Colella. Earl is currently working as an engineer for the Safety & Industrial Hygiene Environmental Health and Safety division of the Global Research and Development for Pfizer, Inc. Earl has a lengthy history in playground safety.

In Connecticut Earl served as Playground Safety Chairperson for New London County Safe Kids. While he was there, Earl conducted many training sessions for members of the

Playground Safety Committee who in turn took the information back to their respective towns and communities. Earl conducted SAFE orientation trainings for playground supervisors in Montville Public Schools, and for PTO's in many towns in New London County as well as for numerous elementary schools and Girl/Boy Scout Troops. He was also a resource for Schools and Public Works in New London County and assisted with many new playground projects including installing Boundless Playgrounds.

Thanks for all your hard work Earl! NPPS is proud to award Earl Colella with the Ahrens National Playground Safety Advocate of the Year award!