

NEWSLETTER

National Program for Playground Safety



FALL, 2007

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Checklists to make your playgrounds 2

Planning outdoor play environments 2

NPPS Inspector Course 3

Online Training 3

Maintenance starts with you 4



National Honorees Are:

During National Playground Safety Week, April 23-27, 2007, NPPS Announces Two Recipients of our National Advocacy Awards. They are Jeanne Sanders and the Hawaii Department of Education

The Ahren's 2007 Playground Safety Advocate of the Year is Jeanne Sanders. Jeanne is a Training and Education Consultant in the Division of Child Care and Development at the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS). She has an RN and MS in Nursing, and she is certified SAFE through the National Program for Playground Safety.

Among other things, Ms. Sanders founded the Virginia SAFE Playground Committee in 1995. It has been responsible for raising statewide awareness about playground safety in child care facilities, elementary schools, and park and recreation departments. Jeanne has been responsible for leading the group to develop the Playground Safety Resource Manual in 1997, revised in 2000 and given to all public child care, elementary schools, and park and recreation de-

partments in their state. She has been an active member of the NPPS board since 1995.

With the department of education, Jeanne developed a manuscript in 2003 entitled, *From Playgrounds to Play/Learning Environments*. Annually, Jeanne conducts statewide playground classes for child care providers, licensing inspectors child care health consultants and others as needed. We thank Jeanne for making the playgrounds in Virginia safer for thousands of children.

The second award: The John Preston Playground Safety Award was presented to the Hawaii Department of Education. In 1999, they hosted NPPS's Playground Safety School. Since that time, the department, and especially the facilities division has assessed all of the state's playground equip-

ment, surfacing and accessibility on all elementary schools and has removed all unsafe and noncompliant equipment. The department also created an age-appropriate equipment replacement program; developed and distributed a playground safety video and curriculum linked to Hawaii DOE content Standards to all schools with playground. In addition, they have designated a playground safety specialist to coordinate the statewide installation, maintenance, repair and inventory of all DOE playgrounds; partnered with the Hawaii State Legislature to get funds for replacement of playground equipment and provide safety training. They also have incorporated regular playground inspections for each playground; and installed playground safety signage for each play area. NPPS applauds the work of the Hawaii Department of Education.

What's Happening

Heather Olsen is not just Heather, or Mrs. Olsen, but she is now Dr. Heather Olsen. Dr. Olsen completed the defense of her dissertation, *Considerations for Delivery of Online Training Courses for Childcare Professionals*, on July 6, 2007. She was officially granted her Ed.D. degree from UNI at the end of July. We are very proud of her. In addition, she was hired as an Assistant Professor of Leisure Services in the School of HPELS. So, next time you call, be sure to ask for Dr. Olsen.



Help keep America's play areas **SAFE**.

Every Child is entitled to a safe, positive, nurturing, and fun play experience in the play environment.

All children need to learn to play



Time to Check to Make Playgrounds Safe

Summer is a hot time of the year. Temperatures have soared to unheard of heights for the millennium. Since that is the case, it is a good idea to check the temperature of the playground equipment and surfacing before adults let children play on the playground. One easy way is to use your hand to determine the heat of the equipment or surfacing. Another possibility is to use a temperature gun that ascertains the heat of equipment. That item is reasonably priced, and when used, may prevent children from

being burned. Be sure to check the metal and plastic equipment and the rubber surfacing, in particular. If they are too hot, do not let children play on the playground.

As a preventative measure, consider planting trees in a south and western direction in order to provide some shade. Be sure that some of the trees are tall enough to give some shade before the children graduate from the play area located at the childcare center or school. Perhaps some

donors will be able to provide some funds that will give children shade. The larger trees (6'-7') may cost \$300.00, but they may prevent a trip to the emergency room. By the way, how many adults would like to sit on hot metal or plastic in order to work or play? Let's create a comfortable environment for children so that they can do what they do best—play.

2007 National Playground Safety School

NPPS hosted another National Playground Safety School at the UNI campus at the end of July. Even the weather cooperated as the 32 attendees did various safety assessments of local playgrounds during the three and half day school. People from six different states attended year's school. NPPS was fortunate to again have the assistance of Dr. Larry Bruya (Mr. SUPERvisor) from Washington State University join us on the teaching staff. If you have not attended a Safety School, now is the time to start planning for next year's session August 4-7, 2008.

Planning Children's Outdoor Play Environments

The Claude and Dolly Ahren's Foundation of Grinnell, Iowa is sponsoring a series of workshops on Planning children's Outdoor Play Environments across Iowa. NPPS has already conducted four of the seven workshops in Sioux City, Dubuque, Grinnell, and Cedar Falls. Registration for a fifth workshop, to be held Oct. 11 as a pre-conference session of the Iowa Association for the Education for Young children, is now filling up. The remaining two workshops will be held in Ankeny and Waverly, Iowa in November and December. There is no charge for attending the six-hour workshop but pre-registration is required. For further information, or if you would like to host a planning workshop in your state, please call 1-800-554-7529.

Online Training

Online Training: Early Childhood Outdoor Play Inspectors Program

This interactive online course will give you knowledge and understanding to inspect the outdoor play area for safety. The pictures, discussions, readings, and assignments will help create an experience level necessary to be considered an early childhood outdoor play inspector expert.

Course Title: Early Childhood Outdoor Play Inspectors Program

Length of Course: You are allowed 4 weeks (completed on your own time!)

Cost: \$495.00

***Includes:**

- Course
- Certification (good for 3 years)
- CEUs
- National Registry List (upon passing course)
- Course Materials
 - *NPPS's Child Care Assessment Manual
 - *SAFE Play Areas: Creation, Maintenance, & Renovations Textbook



Compare the Differences in Playground Inspection Courses!

NPPS INSPECTOR COURSE

NPSI INSPECTOR COURSE

- Designed to inspect early childhood outdoor play environments
- Combines standards/guidelines from NAEYC, NHSPS, CPSC, & ASTM
- Teaches you how to inspect the total play environment:
 - Supervision
 - Age appropriate equipment
 - Fall Surfacing
 - Equipment maintenance
- Teaches you how to inspect for environmental hazards: plants, toxic, chemicals, shade, & electrical hazards
- Offers an online chat room and technical assistance
- Offers certification by professionals in early childhood development, schools, and park management
- Opportunities to network with colleagues across the world
- Receive professional development hours
- Offers a 3 year certification
- Provides course materials including NPPS's childcare Assessment Kit and SAFE Handbook (\$140.00 value)

- Designed to inspect playground equipment and surfacing only
- Focuses only on CPSC guidelines and ASTM Standards
- Evaluates physical play structures and surfacing
- Does not address
- Must wait to take course when offered by NRPA
- Certification offered by the National Recreation and Parks Association
- Does not provide network
- None offered
- Same
- Not available

Maintenance Starts with You!

It is estimated that poor maintenance is a contributing factor in at least 30% of playground injuries. Therefore, it is essential that all community agencies and organizations develop written maintenance and inspection policies for the ongoing maintenance, repair, and replacement of playground equipment and surfacing. The following items have been developed to help create a logical and comprehensive playground safety maintenance program.

The basic function of maintenance is to insure the safety of the users by maintaining the playground area and the equipment in a safe condition. Maintenance also keeps the equipment functioning, the area hygienically clean, and aesthetically pleasing.

There is no magic formula for determining how often to perform inspections. The frequency of use and the age group are two of the common considerations used to determine the schedule for inspection. The vandalism rate in an area will also dictate how often the playground needs to be inspected to maintain safety. Type of materials is another consideration. For example, wooden equipment will need to be checked more frequently than metal and sand surfacing will need to be maintained more often than rubber mats.

In conclusion, a well designed safety maintenance program should be pro-active in responding to needs before a crisis occurs. Performing regular preventive maintenance can help insure the safety of children., extend the life of the equipment, and reduce the cost of repairs.

Upcoming National Conferences

September 25-28th: National Parks and Recreation Congress, Indianapolis, Ind.

October 8-10: National Association of Regulatory Administrators, Richmond, Va.

***November 7-10:** National Association for the Education of Young Children, Chicago, Ill.

(*Note: NPPS in conjunction with Grounds for Play is sponsoring a 6 hour planning session on Planning Outdoor Play environments. Cost is \$45.00. Must be pre-registered to attend. Call 1-800-554-7529 for more information and registration.)



