

Roseville

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Playground gets makeover to become universally accessible for disabled children

By Megan Wood The Press Tribune
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The old West at Maidu Park is booming. After an extensive "make over," the first universally accessible park in Roseville is ready for its debut Saturday.

The four-month project involved renovating the western-themed playground to incorporate structures and features that both able-bodied and disabled children could enjoy.

"We looked at the park and felt it was time to update the structure to meet new playground standards and discovered an interest in a park accessible to all abilities," said project manager and Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Jeff Dubchansky.

The city has partnered with Shane's Inspiration, a nonprofit group aimed at building universally accessible playgrounds throughout California. Roseville will see two more parks like Maidu open later this year. Royer Park will undergo a renovation to include more accessible features and a brand new park will be built at Manahy.

"The goal has been to have a park that is accessible to families in their neighborhoods," said Tara Gee, senior landscape architect for the city. "We have a goal to create parks that can be accessible to all children to play together. With three, we have a pretty good start."

Although the grand opening isn't until Saturday, the park has seen its share of traffic since its completion last month.

"We come here every morning before preschool," said John Schindehette whose grandson Ricci Cuevas, 4, likes the swings the best.

The newly designed swings are meant for a disabled child to be able to easily get into the swing and play alongside other children. The bright color and soft plastic material make for a comfortable ride for park visitors.

Instead of the traditional sand or woodchip ground covering, Dubchansky said rubberized flooring was used creating a cushy landing for falls and a surface appropriate for wheelchairs and walkers.

But what park would be complete without a sandbox?

A table with two "sinks" lifts the sand above ground is perfect for kids to stand or wheel up and play. The sand table also has sand features that allow kids to bring their sand toys, like trucks and shovels to add to the experience.

Earlier this week Benjamin Rosen, 3, shared trucks and sand toys with Granit Bay twins Luke and Jake Gai, also 3, and took turns pouring sand down a long tube to fill up buckets and dump trucks.

"There are so many great things for the kids to play with," said Nancy Coehn, grandmother to the Gai twins. "(Jake and Luke) run from one thing to the other, but we tend to spend a lot of time at the sand table."

The western-themed playground is set up like a miniature town, complete with a train tracks and a stagecoach slide. Building facades are designed like town amenities including a hotel, saloon and a jailhouse and have moving parts like bells, tick-tac-tow games and windows that can slide open and shut.

Dubchansky said sticking with the railroad town theme but updating was a priority when renovating the park. Several of the train structures feature the logo of Union Pacific, a major sponsor of the project.

"He calls it the train park," said Renae Anglesey, auto to Carson, 2, "Even though we don't live close by, we're here every week because this is where he likes to go."

Dubchansky said for many families, this playground could mean the first time a child or parent is able to interact on a playstructure with other children.

"Whether it's a disabled child or disabled parents with children, it doesn't matter," Dubchansky said.

"What's important is they deserve to have a place to play. The motto at Shane's Inspiration is that playing at a playground is a birthright."

