



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 · MADISON, WI 53708

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 1, 2008

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
Representative Gary Hebl/608-266-7678
State Senator Mark Miller/608-266-9170

PRESS RELEASE

HEBL AND MILLER PRESENT \$25,000 GRANT FOR FIREMAN'S PARK IN THE PRAIRIE

MADISON - State Representative Gary Hebl (D-Sun Prairie), State Senator Mark Miller (D-Monona) and Children and Families Department Secretary Reggie Bicha presented a check for \$25,000 in funding for "Fireman's Park in the Prairie," a handicapped-accessible playground on the City of Sun Prairie's southeast side.

Bicha, Miller and Hebl presented the check to park organizers during a presentation attended by students who have been involved in the park, as well as Sun Prairie School District members and city officials.

"I am so pleased the State of Wisconsin could support this truly remarkable and worthwhile effort," Hebl said. "Fireman's Park in the Prairie is a park unlike any other anywhere else in Dane County. This park will allow children of all abilities to play together and bring families from around the area to see how we value *all* children - regardless of their ability - in Sun Prairie."

The mission of the Firemen's Park in the Prairie is to establish a nearly 100 percent handicapped-accessible play environment that is physically and mentally challenging to children of all abilities, which is designed, built and maintained by every segment of the community. The playground in the park will give the children who are wheelchair bound, blind and hearing impaired, not only the ability to actually play but to play in and amongst children of all abilities, organizers of the park said.

"We have been so impressed by what everyone here has done to get to this point," Miller said. "I am honored to have joined Rep. Hebl in authoring the legislation to provide this grant to Sun Prairie and more specifically, to the children of the Sun Prairie area."

Anita Holcomb, one of the main organizers of the project, said the state grant would pay for three main elements: re-paying Chase Lumber Co. for the lumber used in the construction of the park's playground equipment, construction of a new parking lot and renovation of the park's bathrooms to make them handicapped accessible.

(MORE)

“Having these resources means so much to the people of Sun Prairie and all the folks who have been involved in Fireman’s Park in the Prairie,” Holcomb said. “I want to thank Rep. Hebl, Sen. Miller and Secretary Bicha for bringing these state resources to Sun Prairie. It is because of their efforts and the generosity of the taxpayers of the State of Wisconsin that this important funding is possible.”

The 12,000 square-foot playground includes a two-story pirate ship, giant tree house and a music area. Americans with Disabilities Association-approved ramps and ground cover, take children to every piece of playground equipment in the park.

Holcomb said total cost of the project is \$168,000, and so far, the park has raised nearly \$100,000 in donations from groups such as the Madison Community Foundation, General Casualty, Ritter Insurance Agency, Kwik Trip and many other businesses, groups and individuals.

According to the Fireman’s Park in the Prairie’s website, a handicapped park built in Janesville receives over 50,000 visitors a year - including bus loads from area schools. Organizers say that given the fact that Fireman’s Park is located in a larger area and is located near interstate highways could mean more than 100,000 visitors from around the area.

“The strongest indicators of child success are positive interactions between children and their parents and social interaction among all children,” said Bicha, who was recently appointed Secretary of the Department of Children and Families, a recently formed cabinet-level agency. “Fireman’s Park in the Prairie will provide an opportunity for all children to play together regardless of ability.”

###