

Student Leaders...“Blue Ribbon Fact Finding Trip”

Winnebago Public School Student Leaders, in grades 6-8 participated in a Blue Ribbon Fact Finding trip to ascertain the park needs for the Winnebago Community. Student leaders included, Alyssa Wolfe, Kalief Harden, Skylar Kennedy, Adavia Harlan, Marquel Harlan, Jorge Surez, Teisha Snyder, Justis Wolf Leader, and Jaleel Mangum. The group visited Cottonwood Cove Park, Oddfellows Park, Bermans Park, Sioux City Riverfront Park and Emerson Community Park. Keely Bassette Clark,



Project Coordinator said “students were encouraged to play on the equipment, swing, and generally use the equipment to see if it met their needs and expectations. Students were to look at the pros and cons of the equipment and to discuss with each other and the chaperones the benefits of certain equipment. Students also met with an associate from a

park equipment company to learn about the structures, lifespan and safety of the park equipment.”

The student leaders found many interesting things that they liked about the parks that were visited including the “Skyrunner” as well as the “Excellerator.” While most slides only have an 8 foot fall zone the Skyrunner had a 15

foot fall zone. This is due to the whirling nature of the equipment. Students liked the merry-go-round, the volcano rock wall, the boingy horses and the swings. At one of the parks the children especially liked the 3-slides that encouraged children to run up the center slide. With the slides the children thought wider slides would better serve our community so that elbows and knees do not get bumped. The students especially enjoyed the Zip line as well as the log roll. Student leaders were concerned about maintenance

of the new parks and if the adults would be helping to take care of the parks by removing trash and having trash cans available as well as keeping the grass nice for them to play. Signs with posted hours were also discussed but there was no consensus within the group.

Considering the needs of smaller

Con't. on page 2 ...

Student Leaders... *Con't. from front page*

children, the students concluded that the bongo drum set, a lower slide and musical playground would be good for the pretend nature of small children as well as meet the needs of some of the communities' special needs children. The students agreed that the stations around the parks that had activities for smaller children and special needs children to discover were an excellent part of the equipment.

All of the student leaders agreed that all of the community parks needed to include at least 2 diggers for the children to enjoy digging into the dirt and sand.

Students found several things that they thought could be improved upon when they design and build their community parks including widening the size of the slides, making the swings longer to fit bigger kids, a larger monkey bar unit and getting rid of the really steep slides for the smaller children. All of the children agreed that they disliked the parks that used a clamp system due to the rust, and the number of cracks and chipped paint that surrounded the area. Bassette Clark said “none of the kids liked the wood chips or the flat rubber mats. What they noted was that the wood chips caused splinters and their experience with the rubber mats was that things were getting stuck between the mats including upright pencils that a child could fall on. To a limited degree the kids liked the sand but agreed that the pea gravel would better suit our community needs”

In Winnebago, the Student Leaders

found several neighborhoods in need of a park, including Hochunk Village, Rainbow Projects, Sheridan Drive, BIA Housing area, and Thunderway and the Youth Shelter.

The leaders visited the Rainbow Projects neighborhood and the kids loved the large monkey bars and concluded that the bars could stay up if they were repainted and the area underneath cleaned. The students would like the debris removed from the area and the leaves swept up. They would like park equipment suitable for kids ages 2-12 for the area. The kids also noted that the basketball court was still in useable condition except for the hoops and posts. They would like those replaced.

The kids noted that the entire area was great to for playing year around, for instance you could roll down the hill in the summer and slide down on sleds in the winter. There were some low spots where water gathered and the kids would like that area to be properly drained as well as having some of the branches on the trees cut back.

Winnebago Public school had donated several thousand dollars worth of equipment to the Winnebago Housing authority and it is stored at Sheridan Drive. “I would like to work with housing to fill in the gaps for a park in this neighborhood” said Bassette Clark.

The group traveled to Thunderway and White Stocking Lane neighborhood, south of Winnebago, and drove all the way around so that we could count kids in the neighborhood. “Our estimate

was that over 60 kids lived in the two neighborhoods combined.” said Bassette Clark she continued saying “we talked about the fishing and the mercury concerns that the tribes EPA had, we talked about a walking path and the kids took me on their path halfway around the pond, the students talked about how their parents didn't come down to the pond when they played there and that it would be nice if they did. They talked about the turtles and other animals in the area and how even deer would come and drink from the water. The kids were very interested in using the pond area as a destination park with a playground area, fishing dock, paddle boats, walking trail for exercise around the pond, a park for kids to play on and a parking lot for people to park if they wanted to spend time at the Thunderway Park”.

Finally, the group visited the Youth Shelter. While the children in the shelter are near two parks, one at Headstart and the other at St. Augustine's School the shelter kids do not have access to the park at Headstart and with staffing issues are not able to go to St Augustine's. Director, Terry Snowball said “When parents come to visit, there is nothing to do, making the visits seem unproductive for the families”. One of the kids spoke up saying “I have stayed at the youth shelter and a park is needed for the kids, they have done nothing wrong and need a good place to play.” All of the kids immediately agreed that a park for the shelter would be the first priority for the group.