

## **It Takes an Entire Community to Maintain Darrell's Dream Boundless Playground** **By Jim Cornell**

On a cool Saturday morning, November 2nd, a large group of community volunteers gathered at Darrell's Dream Boundless Playground to do some fall housekeeping. Located in Warriors Path State Park near Kingsport, TN, Darrell's Dream was the first fully handicapped accessible playground in the United States to be located in a State Park. The Playground opened initially in 2007 with major additions in 2009, 2010 and 2012.

The volunteers represented a number of community service organizations: Friends of Warriors Path State Park, Northeast Tennessee Master Gardeners, Kiwanis Club of Kingsport, Kingsport Lions Club, Remnant Yuchi Nation, United Way Youth Leaders Society, Palmer Center Foundation, Alternative Corrective Services and Dobyys-Bennett and Sullivan South Key Clubs. The volunteers were assisted by members of the Warriors Park staff. In all, 56 people came with gloves, rakes and other tools to clean the Playground after a very busy summer.

Cleaning 10 acres of playground in a few hours required a lot of planning and preparation. The Friends of Warriors Path Park put together a list of tasks, along with the supplies and equipment needed to accomplish each task. Friends asked the local Wal-Mart to donate most of the cleaning supplies such as bleach, detergent, scrubbers, sprayers and trash bags. The Park and volunteers brought the equipment needed: wheel barrows, pressure washers, hoses, rakes, shovels, ladders, gloves and buckets. Lots of buckets to wash down every stationary object in the Playground, including the dozens of signs and three bridges.

As volunteers were recruited, the Friends organizer put together the Teams that tackled each of the major tasks on the list. Team 1 added gravel along the Braille Trail and raked the rubber mulch to ensure it was placed where it belonged. Team 2 washed the three bridges in the Playground, the 10 park benches, 7 trash cans and signs. Team 3 blew and raked all the leaves from the playground, depositing the leaves in the woods for use next year to mulch plants around the Playground. Team 4 leveled the sand in the Sandbox play area and washed down all the equipment. Team 5 cleaned the equipment and signs on the Braille Trail and interactive signs on the Treehouse trail. Team 6 pressure washed all the Playground equipment, the Picnic Pavilion and Entry Pavilion. Team 7 planted new shrubs, pruned old growth, weeded and removed invasive plants.

One very important task was handled by the Friends of Warriors Path State Park – keeping the volunteers hydrated and fed! Again, a local merchant was asked to donate the drinking water and food. After 5 hours of hard work, the Playground was again pristine and ready to continue serving the hundreds of children that come every day - children with all levels of ability.

As the volunteers gathered to begin their morning of work, Friends of Warriors Path State Park Playground Chair, Mary Steadman, said: “Last year Darrell's Dream hosted over 180,000 visitors. It takes an entire community to maintain a Boundless Playground. Thanks to each of you for answering the call.”