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**For Immediate Release**

**April 11, 2017**

**Be Part of Something Big!**

**Community Build Scheduled for Civic Center Playground: 130 Community Volunteers Needed**

**Traverse City** – Grand Traverse County Parks and Recreation is recruiting volunteers to help build the long-awaited new playground at Civic Center Park on Tuesday, May 9 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Between 100 and 130 participants are needed to help construct the nearly 10,000-square-foot “Campbell Community Playground,” which includes a zip line; a “crest climber,” which is similar to a rock wall; “rail climbers;” swings; and recreational stations with roofs, slides, bridges, and ladders. In return for their contribution, volunteers’ names will be included on the donor board to be displayed at the playground.

“Only basic construction skills are needed to build something really, really wonderful for our community and beyond,” said Parks and Recreation Director Kristine Erickson. Erickson hopes the invitation to participate in the build will appeal to service organizations, trade class/school students, parents, and anyone who wants to “give back and make a difference at our community’s park for generations to come.”

“It’s been a long journey getting to this point,” said Erickson, “and we’ve been through a lot as a community, losing and mourning one beloved play structure at the Civic Center that served the community well for nearly 18 years, and waiting for another one for well over two more.”

In fall 2014, the former, 18-year-old playground at Civic Center Park was closed for noncompliance with national playground safety standards and elevated levels of arsenic found in the soil. The structure was removed in spring 2015. Since then, the Parks and Recreation Commission and Department have been committed to constructing a new, unique play structure for our community.

During the first quarter of 2016, Parks and Recreation surveyed the community about components they desired and a theme for a new playground. Based on survey results, three playground vendors submitted designs. The community voted on them, and the winning design was also voted in favor by the Parks and Recreation Commission. Later that year, a new site for the structure, just west of the former location for Kids Kove, was identified at the Civic Center.

In August 2016, Parks and Recreation successfully raised \$50,000 from community members and others throughout the state and nation for the "Get Out and Play Project" to fund a new playground. The State of Michigan (MEDC and MSHDA) matched that amount with a \$50,000 grant. Today, there are \$170,886 in total funds (comprised of donations and two wellness grants from Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Michigan) earmarked for the new, nearly 10,000-square-foot play structure.

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In fall 2016, playground “naming rights” were awarded to Dan and Meridith Falconer of the Mahogany Foundation, after they made three playground donations, totaling \$80,000, between late 2015 and 2016. The new play structure will be called the “Campbell Community Playground,” in memory of Bruce Campbell Falconer, Dan Falconer’s father and a Traverse City community leader who passed away in 2015.

Last week, during its regular monthly meeting, County Commissioners approved the release of raised and granted playground funds from Parks and Recreation’s budget so that equipment and surfacing could be ordered.

Erickson, who placed the order today, says “things are coming together quickly” to make the playground a reality. “We’ve set the build date and received generous commitments from some area businesses, such as TruMark Contracting, which will donate excavation services, and Elmers, which will donate site preparation materials.” Because nearly \$21,000 more than what Parks and Recreation originally planned to spend for Phase I of the playground project was raised, Erickson said that the additional funds made it possible to order even more “poured-in-place” rubber surfacing. “This will make it even easier for individuals of all abilities to move through the playground,” she explained, “something we thought we’d have to wait for until Phase II.” The original design selected by the community includes a mixture of rubber surfacing and manufactured wood chips.

“Now,” said the Parks Director, “all we need are some kind-hearted community volunteers – over 100 of them – to commit to a full day’s work on May 9 to help make it possible for our children to get out and play again at the Civic Center!”

Anyone aged 14 and above may volunteer for the playground build to be held on Tuesday, May 9, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., rain or shine. Lunch and water will be provided during the build. Volunteers are asked to bring their own work gloves. Volunteers may sign up on line on the County Parks and Recreation Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/GrandTraverseCountyParksAndRecreation/>) or on the County Parks website ([www.grandtraverse.org/parks](http://www.grandtraverse.org/parks)); send an e-mail to [kerickson@grandtraverse.org](mailto:kerickson@grandtraverse.org); call 231-922-4818. When signing up, volunteers are asked to please provide accurate information for their names to be included on the donor board.

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