



For Immediate Release

Date: December 12, 2018
Contact: Kathy Powell, Event Director
info@waterfollies.com
Phone: (509) 783-4675

Emily Estes-Cross, Parks & Recreation Director
emily.estes-cross@ci.kennewick.wa.us
(509) 585-4258

Playground of Dreams halfway rebuilt; fundraising for completion underway

[Kennewick, Wash] –

The first phase of the rebuilt Playground of Dreams in Columbia Park opened for play Wednesday with the help of a significant contribution by the Tri-City Water Follies Association.

Colin Hastings, President of the non-profit Tri-City Water Follies Association, presented a \$75,000 check to help fund the first half of the playground replacement, which appropriately includes a hydroplane toy representative of the Columbia Cup event that has taken place on the nearby river every July for more than 50 years.

“Our mission is not only to put on an epic summer festival, we also are committed to supporting improvements to the shoreline and park,” Hastings said. “We are thrilled to donate to the Playground of Dreams so that generations to come can experience such a great regional treasure.”

Kennewick Mayor Don Britain acknowledged the community’s ongoing commitment to this Tri-Cities landmark, and the vision, participation and support that ensures the legacy of the Playground of Dreams continues for future generations.

“Since its inception in 1999, and rebuild in 2004 after it was burned down, our community has rallied around this playground,” Britain said. “When inspectors warned it was nearing the end of its life span, there was no doubt we would unite yet again to replace it. And with financial gifts from organizations like the Tri-City Water Follies, Columbia Center Rotary, Conover Insurance and the Permobil Foundation, we’re half-way there.”

The announcement jump starts a \$482,000 fundraising campaign for the remainder of the 1,600 square foot replacement structure, which the City plans to complete in the spring. In the meantime, Parks and Recreation Commission Chair Hahn praised the Water Follies for their contribution, along with donations by Columbia Center Rotary for an inclusive musical instrument feature, the Permobil Foundation and Conover Insurance.

The new design incorporates iconic elements and new features the community asked for during 2017 open houses and surveys, including the cable bridge, a lighthouse, a Lampson crane, and a hydroplane. Just a few of the new elements planned for Phase 2 include a zip track, a spinning sensory wave seat, and challenging climbing features.

The public also wanted an inclusive playground, Hahn said. First phase components are connected by ramps, and the second phase of the site will be poured with a surface that can be navigated by users with wheelchairs or mobility limitations. Features such as the Columbia Center Rotary Harmony Plaza musical instruments mean kids of various abilities can play side-by-side, and experience structured and unstructured play.

This re-imagined Playground of Dreams is constructed of durable, recyclable materials that will withstand decades of weather and play. During summer, aluminium posts won't burn or feel hot like steel does, and the powder coat finish and rubberized deck coatings help to insulate little hands from the heat. Additional safety considerations include an open concept layout that allows parents and kids to see each other from most vantage points.

The more than 1400 inscribed wood pickets that enclosed the previous playground were removed, and have been made available to those who purchased them as part of the original fundraising campaign. Small pieces and embellishments from the wood playground were salvaged to be incorporated into future projects or returned by request to the volunteers who helped build it.

Now the City is asking the community to once again pitch in and donate to help complete Phase 2 of the rebuilt structure. Major corporate sponsors in addition to generous individuals who see the benefit of the playground are being rallied to help raise \$482,000 to complete the rebuild.

As proposed, the cost of all equipment, surface and installation will total nearly \$1 million dollars. Of that, to fund this first phase, \$325,000 was paid by the city and nearly \$180,000 has been pledged by sponsors. Over the next three months, the Parks and Recreation Commission will be campaigning for nearly a half-million dollars to complete the project. Corporate sponsorships ranging from \$1,000 to a \$500,000 title sponsorship – payable over multiple years – are being sought to expedite the build.

Individuals can support the rebuild by purchasing \$10 wristbands, \$100 commemorative lapel pins, and \$250 "dream medals" that can be inscribed with a name or personal message and will be affixed to the pillars at the playground entrance. They are available for purchase at the Southridge Sports and Events Complex and Kennewick Community Center, and online soon at KennewickRecreation.com.

"The most successful donor-driven projects are those that are jump-started with a significant contribution, typically by a community champion that shares similar objectives and sees the value in giving back," said Parks and Commission Chair Ken Hahn. "The playground rebuild fundraising campaign is no different, and we're thankful for the catalytic investment by the Water Follies."

###