

# Volunteers to build playground in Bob's Park

By Kevin Haas

ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR

BELVIDERE — Volunteer teams from the Parks and Conservation Foundation and Kids Around the World were to build a playground over this week.

The new playground will be built in Bob's Park, bordered by Meadow and Locust streets and Warren and Nebraska avenues.

The park was named after Robert Howells, who died May 23 at the age of 62. Howells was instrumental in helping secure land for the foundation and conservation district.

"He was very selfless, I don't know if he made a nick-

el doing any of these things. He just enjoyed doing it," said Dan Roddewig, executive director of the Belvidere Park District. "He just loved doing things that would end up providing a public benefit."

The park was named after Howell before he died.

"We had hoped that he would be alive to see kids playing in his park, but his spirit is there with us. We think he'll be smiling," said Mark Luthin, president of the Parks and Conservation Foundation.

Luthin said the Park District and the foundation saw a need for a playground in the neighborhood.

"If you drive through

that neighborhood, there is a whole bunch of kids and they're playing in the street," Luthin said. "We thought this would be a good, safe place for them."

Two play areas will be built, one for toddlers and preschoolers and the other intended for elementary school-aged children.

The budget for the playground project is about \$75,000, Luthin said. The equipment was purchased with a \$52,000 grant sponsored by former Belvidere Township Supervisor Bob Turner, who died April 22, and the Belvidere Township Board. Additional monies have been raised by the foundation.

The land was purchased by the Belvidere Park District.

Kids Around the World constructs playgrounds using volunteer labor and community support. Dozens more volunteers from the neighborhood and throughout the community are providing meals, security and other service to help with the project.

"It's been good for the neighborhood because we've been able to bring together people who didn't know each other, but now do," said David Sliktas, vice chairman of the foundation. "There is a certain sense of community building. We want them to take ownership in this park.

We want them to protect the park, we want them to use the park and we want them to have pride in the park."

The workweek began Monday and volunteers will be on site from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. A dedication ceremony will be held at 5 p.m. Sept. 12.

Luthin said there are opportunities to help with the installation of the play equipment and landscaping the park. The foundation hopes this will be the first phase of the project and that more features, like basketball courts, could be added in the future.

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