



In February, (L-R) John Lovick, Jared Mead, Brandy Donaghy and Vanessa Miewald met to inspect the 33-year-old Mays Pond Community Playground.

Mays Pond Community Playground Receives Funding

by Barbara Sleeper

Creative people are curious, flexible, persistent, and independent with a tremendous spirit of adventure and a love of play.

– French painter, Henri Matisse

“Are you sitting down,” gushed 23-year-old Bellevue College student, Vanessa Miewald, when she phoned me on Earth Day. “WE GOT THE FUNDING!”

A life-long resident of Mays Pond, and now a computer science major, Vanessa had volunteered to join the Mays Pond Playground committee when she was still in her teens. Having grown up playing at this popular playground, she was determined to help design and raise funds for a badly needed new ADA-compliant playground, for kids ages two to twelve.

“The existing Mays Pond Playground was built in 1990 but has been loved to death,” explains Vanessa. “Today, all that remains of this beloved playground are an old metal slide and a dented swing set sitting on an empty sea of pea gravel. But

even these two pieces of equipment are still heavily used, showing the community need for new, safer equipment.”

Working with the playground committee between her college classes and finals and her part-time job at PetSmart, Vanessa attended meetings with Snohomish County officials to discuss necessary permitting and wetlands mitigation. She personally tested playground equipment from Washington to Idaho, and she met with play equipment vendors to help design a new blueprint-ready playground.

After careful review, John Larson and Adam Basich from the reputed play equipment supplier, PlayCreation, were chosen to help develop the blueprint designs and cost estimates for the new Mays Pond playground, and Ann Dinthongsai of RWD Landscape Architects, well known for their expertise in Site Planning and Park and Recreation design, was selected to work with the County on permitting issues, site prep, new cement sidewalks and landscaping features needed to complete the project.

Probably the most challenging thing Vanessa did was to single-handedly organize a clothing drive in 2021 to attempt to raise funds for the new playground. She collected 7,000 pounds of clothing that filled a mountain of black plastic garbage bags. For all her hard work, the effort only generated about

\$2,000. At this rate, she realized, it would take a lot of clothing drives to raise the necessary funds for her dream playground.

Then, after researching every possible source of funding for playgrounds, and applying for several foundation grants, Vanessa sent 44th District Senator John Lovick a desperate email asking for help.

“His response was immediate,” beams Vanessa. “Within days, I was meeting with John Lovick and Snohomish County Council Chair, Jared Mead, in the middle of the old playground. They brought along Vicki Christophersen, Public Affairs Representative for Maverick Gaming that owns the nearby Silver Dollar Casino.

“One close look, and they could all see the immediate need for a modern new playground built to code. Best of all, they promised their full support for the project.”

“It’s impossible not to be inspired by Vanessa’s enthusiasm and dedication to her community,” explains Council Chair, Jared Mead. “All it took was a single visit to the playground site with Vanessa for her to convince me that we needed to find a way to help this community.”

Working closely with Lovick and Mead last fall, Vanessa filled out the necessary grant applications to apply for state funding. Then in February, she met with them again at the old playground. This time, they brought along 44th District State Representative, Brandy Donaghy, who took one look, and immediately committed her full support for a new playground.



Built in 1990, the much-loved Mays Pond Playground is in need of a long-overdue facelift.

“After what seemed like an interminably long, nail-biting wait for legislative budget decisions,” says Vanessa, “Jared called me on April 22 with the exciting news. He said it looked like our request for state funding was going to be approved.”

And it was. In the Washington State Capital Budget for 2023 to 2025, a total of \$650,000 was granted to build a new Mays Pond Community Playground. In addition, Eric Persson, owner of Maverick Gaming offered to donate ten percent of the total state grant, another \$65,000 toward the project. All of Vanessa’s hard work and imaginative thinking had finally paid off.

“At first, I didn’t believe it,” she said, reliving the moment Jared called. “I was literally in shock and started jumping around telling everyone in my family the exciting news! Then I started making phone calls.”

“This is beyond awesome,” enthused Adam Basich at PlayCreation. “On every level, I am so very impressed by the work you folks have put in to make this happen. There is a great deal of love in this project, and I know the kids are going to be over the moon when it is completed!”

Rain or shine, the Mays Pond Community Playground is used by multi-generational families from South Snohomish County, including kids from nearby preschools, condos, apartment developments and the YMCA. Even with most of the equipment removed, children

still delight in throwing pea gravel onto the ancient metal slide.

This historic site has served as a nostalgic backdrop for hundreds of children who have aged with fond memories into their 20s, 30s, and older. The announced state funding will now make it possible for a new wave of young kids to create their own special memories of playing, laughing and exploring this happy place.

Special thanks go to Senator John Lovick, Snohomish County Council Chair, Jared Mead and State Representative Brandy Donaghy for making the Capital grant possible. And a shout-out goes to Eric Persson and Maverick Gaming for their equally generous donation.

“As someone who raised a family in this neighborhood, I was absolutely delighted to see this community come together for such a great cause,” says Senator John Lovick. “This was truly a team effort led by a compassionate and impressive young woman! And a special thanks to Maverick Gaming for their generous donation as well.”

To follow the progress being made to complete the new Mays Pond Community Playground, please go to this website, also created by Vanessa Miewald: mayspondplayground.weebly.com.



Equipment and playground designer, PlayCreation, created the wonderful color blueprints for the new ADA-compliant playground.

Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning.
– Fred Rogers from Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood

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