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# Playground designer looks for public input

BY TAMMY SCARDINO  
For the Journal

POCATELLO — There is no doubt that monkey bars, slides and swings will be incorporated into Dennis Wille's configuration for Brooklyn's Playground.

The all-accessible playground designer from New York is set to meet with local children today. After gathering their input and considering recommendations from playground committee members, he will immediately create a blueprint design and reveal it to the public at Wilcox Elementary at 6:30 p.m.

"We basically start with a blank sheet of paper," Wille says.

The Design Day Celebration serves as a way to get more members of the community behind the effort to construct a park where children with all sorts of disabilities can safely play. Jonny Fisher spearheads the project that is named after his oldest daughter who has spina bifida.

"We've had a great response," Fisher says. "Overall, we just want to make sure the playground is as inclusive as possible, that's mostly what I'm interested in. I want this to be accessible to as many children as possible."

The wheels started turning about a year and a half ago when Fisher's 4-year-old daughter, Brooklyn, was injured. He says the mishap really opened his eyes to the fact there was no facility in town that was accommodating to children with special needs.

After a committee was formed, Wille swung into the picture, by request, to get the ball rolling. Over the past 20 years, Wille says that often times the volunteers who construct the playground gain a better understanding of how powerful teamwork can be.

"In the end, you've got a structure that represents what a community can do when they're pursuing a dream and creating something that will help the next generation," Wille said.

A lot of different themes can be infused into the design. In the past, Wille says people have requested a custom rocket or castle-like structure, robotic scarecrows and tree houses. He points out that not all parks he has created have a lot of ramps necessarily. Moreover, he puts onto paper what children, parents and



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Designer Dennis Wille will be creating a blueprint design of Brooklyn's Playground after hearing recommendations from the public and playground committee members. He plans on revealing the design today at 6:30 p.m. at Wilcox Elementary.**

The playground committee a place to go for those in member's goal is to provide wheelchairs, for those who

have autism or some sort of cognitive issue and for those who have hearing or visual impairments.

The location has been scouted out. Brooklyn's Playground will be built near OK Ward Park in Pocatello. Right now, they are aiming for construction

to begin on Sept. 19. From start to finish, it is estimated to only take 6 days to complete.

With \$50,000 raised thus far, the group has a ways to go. The bill adds up to a total of \$400,000.

Volunteer sign-up and donation booths will be set

up at the Design Day Celebration.

The next opportunity to support the effort is on Saturday, Feb. 26, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Don Aslett's Museum of Clean. There, everyone will have access to a carnival for a fee at the door.

therapists conjure up based on the need.

According to Wille, 11 percent of the school district's student population in Pocatello have some sort of disability based on criteria stemming from the Americans with Disabilities Act.