

# New Playground At Los Perales a Community Project

By Sophie Braccini



Cathy Harris, left, and Sara Mooradian help with construction of the new playground at Los Perales Elementary School. Standing immediately behind them, Kiwanis Past President Jason Evans gives them moral support. Photo Sophie Braccini

When some parents see a way to improve something at their children's school, they do not linger complaining about it, they take action. Los Perales Elementary School mom Sara Mooradian did just that. Noticing that the higher-grade playground was in a state of disrepair and constant need of fixing, Mooradian asked the school principal Amy Black if she could start a campaign to replace the structure. The project was launched and managed by a team of parent volunteers, and on April 24-26 the new equipment was built with the help of many other community members. Inaugurated on May 1, it is now open for fourth and fifth graders to enjoy.

"The old playground had dry rot and was falling to pieces," says Cathy Harris, a Los Perales mom involved in the project. "Sara started a playground committee that put together a fundraiser." The group's main fundraiser was a tile wall. Each child who purchased a tile individually painted it with the help of Color Me Mine. The wall memorializes the children's passage in the school. The playground tile wall raised \$22,000.

A group got together to choose the right model for the kids. "We chose the same vendor, Miracle Play System, which provided the play structure at Rancho Laguna Park and the two playgrounds at Rheem Elementary," says Mooradian, who has a second- and a fourth-grader at the school. "We wanted to finish the project this year so the fifth graders could enjoy it. The student council has this great program called Friday Freeze, selling fruit Popsicles on Friday for \$2, and they gave \$1,000 of the money they raised toward the

project." "It was amazing to see the community getting together for our kids," said Principal Black. "We started talking about it with Sara a year ago when she was PTA president. The project was approved by the school district board, the parents raised most of the money, the school district contributed, the PTA reserve was used, and the whole community got together to build it." The business community contributed as well with SummerHill Homes being a major donor, Allied Waste also making a donation, OSH and Quickrete providing concrete, Safeway feeding volunteers and Starbucks giving them coffee.

On the morning when construction started, a group of Kiwanians, parents and community members gathered with hired construction workers and started putting together what looked like a huge jigsaw puzzle with pieces stretching over more than 100 square yards. Then the rain came in and somewhat delayed construction, but the volunteers came back, close to 100 in all. "I think it was a bigger job than we anticipated," commented Harris after the construction was completed. "Saturday was very muddy and the bobcat machine got stuck in the mud for an hour. We thought we were going to finish on Sunday, but we ran out of time. All of the volunteers were amazing. We finally made it across the finish line on Monday evening."

The new large playground is about the same size as the old one, but with many more fun activities for kids, such as a DNA climber, a climbing wall, bongo steps, slides, bridges and a lot of shade. It is approved for children ages 5 to 12.

## Another Moraga Valley Kiwanis Project

Being a construction worker must be a requirement to join the Moraga Valley Kiwanis Club, considering the number of building community projects the volunteers are tackling. In the weeks preceding the Los Perales playground project, service group members worked on the replacement of the hardwood floor of the band shell in the Moraga Commons Park. The floor had deteriorated to a point where there was concern about losing performers through the cracks. The first weekend, Saint Mary's students earned community service points by helping demolish the old floor, and the following weekend, Kiwanians built a brand new redwood floor for the popular venue, under the supervision of Andy Boggeri of AB Construction.

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