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## **New playground donations sought**

The Topsfield Playground Committee appeals to the community to support the effort by donating without delay toward the construction of a new and improved Proctor School playground.

The project is attracting the interest of young and old; families and businesses; locals and beyond, in a cooperative effort to support a new community park and playground at Topsfield's current Tot Lot and Proctor Elementary school. However, much more is needed. TPC hopes the cracked wooden structures with 20 years of wear and tear can be replaced as part of the new initiative. The current playground was constructed by a similar group of volunteers - the Park-It Playground Committee.

Proctor Elementary School's only playground has been closed to its 294 students since spring 2008 over safety concerns. The adjacent "Tot Lot" playground is in disrepair and does not conform to current safety codes. Besides lacking safe equipment, the parks lack cohesion and there are few welcoming areas for families to gather. TPC envisions current, safe equipment, a freshly painted basketball court and pavement games, an updated sandbox (a perennial town favorite) and the creation of an inviting park atmosphere to be enjoyed not only by young children, but by residents of all ages.

Topsfield faces budget shortages and lacks provisions for playground replacement. TPC relies on individual contributions to raise appropriate funds privately. Community fundraisers, individual and local businesses, corporate sponsors and private foundations are the key to success amidst budgetary woes.

Topsfield resident and EBSCO Publishing President Tim Collins, generous contributor through both EBSCO and personally, said "Both EBSCO Publishing and our family are pleased to be able to assist the Topsfield Playground Committee. Providing an environment where children can safely play in groups is crucial to their development and health. I hope the community comes together and is able to provide such an environment at Proctor School this fall."

TPC hopes this project creates a unique opportunity for Topsfield families providing a multi-age recreational area, while also ensuring Proctor School students participate in adequate physical activity during their school day. Topsfield Rail Trail runs adjacent to both playgrounds, creating an additional recreational opportunity for surrounding communities.

The playground, as envisioned by TPC, will provide invaluable and unique opportunities for Topsfield children to explore the largest variety of movement experiences, essential for a well-rounded motor development. Children learn through play. The new playground will allow children to engage in a vast array of positive social and physical interaction, which modern day life with its over-abundance of indoor, television and computer distractions, sorely lacks.

The project is currently at \$41,000 in cash donations toward Proctor's equipment costs. Including almost \$10,000 pledged through in-kind donations and the value of a planned community build, TPC is approaching 80 percent of its goal for Proctor Playground. With an additional \$30,000 raised through contributions by August 1, 2009, Proctor students dreaming of a place to explore and climb during recess and after school should be able to see hopes become reality by late next fall. Originally planned as a spring 2010 installation, if the money can be raised by August 1, it is realistic to complete the project a full six months ahead of schedule. The asphalt lot as a play space may not be the only option for next year's students. TPC, founded by a group of concerned parents, is committed to set in place ongoing fund-raisers such as the recently completed Walk-a-Thon, to ensure maintenance of the park.

For more information about TPC, to make a donation and/or for assistance with in-kind donations including landscaping supplies and services, shipping of new equipment and disposal of current structure, visit [www.topsfieldplaygroundcommittee.org](http://www.topsfieldplaygroundcommittee.org)