

## **Red-Tailed Hawk News Release**

### **For District 5450 Newsletter**

The Rotary Club of Aurora has embarked on project that not only benefits their hometown, but the wider region, as well.

Working with the City of Aurora Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Department and Arapahoe County Open Space, the club has proposed the building of an inclusive playground that can meet the needs of all children regardless of physical, social or cognitive ability.

The idea for the playground arose in October last year when the Make-a-Wish Foundation contacted PROS about a wish they'd received from a 6-year-old boy who lives near Red-tailed Hawk Park (in southeast Aurora). He wished for a playground where he could play with his family and friends. This could be no ordinary playground because this boy and three of his sisters have disabilities which meant that their playground needed to be something special.

At about the same time a small group of Rotary Club of Aurora Rotarians began to talk about how our club could help the Aurora community. These Rotarians talked about a playground for children and then an inclusive playground for all children to use. It was clear that an inclusive park for children with disabilities would be something the Aurora community could use for its children, a park where all children could play together, an inclusive park. There are very few places for a disabled child to play and be with friends in an environment safe for them. These Rotarians approached the City of Aurora's PROS Department to see if there might be space in one of Aurora's parks where an inclusive play area could be placed, having no idea the city had been previously approached by Make A Wish and a family asking about the same type of park.

The Rotarians met with several PROS leaders and learned that the family had a son in a wheelchair, as well as other disabled siblings, and were wondering if an inclusive

playground could be built in Aurora for children like theirs. The family had contacted the Make a Wish Foundation for their approach to the City of Aurora. PROS, with the addition of the Rotary Club of Aurora's commitment and pledge from the Aurora Rotary Foundation of *a minimum of \$100,000*, was now able to apply for an Arapahoe County Open Space grant. PROS was informed in August that, with the Rotary pledge and the City commitment, they would have enough community support to receive this grant.

Without the Rotary Club of Aurora, the playground could not be in development. While the city by itself did not have the funds to create such a playground, with the commitment by the Aurora Rotary they were able to begin moving ahead. It is amazing that several groups of people came to together at the same time with the same idea to build this inclusive playground. It was clearly a project meant to happen! The playground is on track to be completed in the summer of 2019.

With the Club's commitment –we hope to raise more than \$100,000 to enhance the playground even more – the project can move ahead. In addition to the Rotary commitment, the project has received a grant from Arapahoe County Open Space, from the Make-a-Wish Foundation, from Aurora's Art in Public Places Commission, plus a major contribution from Suss Buick-GMC.

We'll continue to reach out to other civic minded businesses and organizations and are confident we will be able to not only reach, but *exceed* our goal, thus ensuring a truly great all-inclusive park for the children of Aurora.

Those interested in contributing to the playground can go the Aurora Rotary website: [www.aurorarotary.com](http://www.aurorarotary.com) and click on "Support Red-Tailed Hawk Park." You can also give a check made out to the Aurora Rotary Foundation to any Aurora Rotarian, or send it to the Aurora Rotary Foundation at P.O. Box 440567, Aurora CO 80044-0567. Your contributions are tax deductible.

Contact: George Peck

[www.aurorarotary.com](http://www.aurorarotary.com)