

Rotary clubs building handicapped-accessible playground in Bend

Mother of child
 with spina bida
 initiated the project

By Anne Auran
 The Bulletin

Bend Metro Park and Recreation District to design the "Rotary Centennial Playground," a special-use area in Larkspur Park, near Reed Market Road and 15th Street, adjacent to the Bend Senior Center. They hope to have it built by spring of 2005.

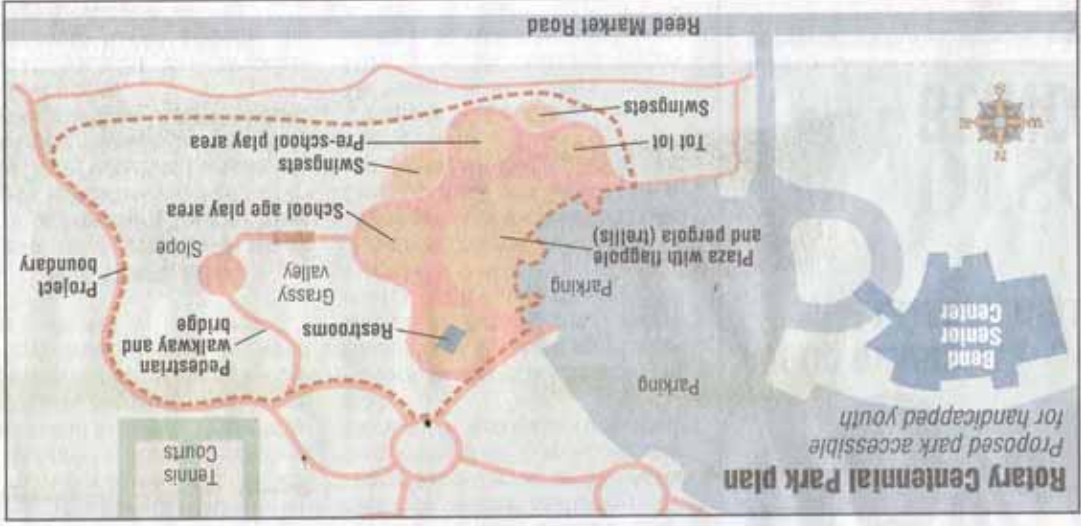
"This isn't a handicapped playground," said Gary Fish, executive committee chairman for the Rotary playground committee. "It is meant to provide a place for all kids to play."

The spinal column defect a walker most of the time. makes it challenging to play on a jungle gym or wheel through bark to get to a swing set.

When Anna started school, her mother, Diane Cole, noticed that Bend lacked special play equipment for a child with Anna's needs. She started a crusade to change things for Anna and other kids with physical disabilities.

Her efforts are paying off. Four of Bend's Rotary clubs are currently working with the

Rotary Centennial Park plan
 Proposed park accessible
 for handicapped youth



Greg Cross / The Bulletin

When Bend Mayor Oran Teater, a Rotary member, flew to Salt Lake City last year for a conference, he visited a similar park, took pictures and brought them back for ideas. Swings had wheelchair access. Straps were built onto various structures for safety and a rubberized surface, like a running track, covered the ground. Cole spanned the idea of that kind of park in Bend. But Rotary is raising it.

Years ago, Cole watched a segment on "Good Morning America" in which a girl raised a major project for the club to start in honor of the Rotary's Greater Bend, was searching for a member of the Rotary Club of At that time, Roger Fisher, a member of the Rotary Club of Bend, heard her plea. Mike Johnson, the Faith Christian Center pastor, who happened to be a Rotary member, needed to affect a broad base of people, and especially children, he said. Through numerous meetings about various project ideas, Cole's rose to the top.

Previously, Rotary had worked on the Boys and Girls Club and the Rosie Baretts Centennial year. "We wanted to make larger contributions to things that really count," he said. "It was a great chance for all the Rotary clubs to work together and get involved in a project." It needed to affect a broad base of people, and especially children, he said. Through numerous meetings about various project ideas, Cole's rose to the top.

See Playground / B8

