Blog Week of July 17th

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**A New Playground and New Supplies for Students in Richmond**

**Donors pitch in to provide fun items to G.H. Reid Elementary School**

Last November, Children Incorporated staff members Renée Kube, Chuck Smith, and Shelley Oxenham help rebuild a playground at G.H. Reid Elementary School in Richmond, Virginia, where we partner with Communities in Schools of Richmond to support sponsored children in and around the area where our office is located. Just a few months before, over summer break for the children at G.H. Reid, an arsonist had set the old playground on fire, which spread around the equipment, melting and disfiguring most of it, and leaving the 750 Richmond, Virginia public school children with few options for outdoor play.

**Partners in Rebuilding**

Renée, our Director of U.S. Programs, explained that the playground rebuild project was able to happen thanks [KaBoom](https://kaboom.org/), a national nonprofit that builds playgrounds, especially in low-income areas. The CarMax Foundation also stepped up to put in money and materials for the build, and Kube turned up to work, along with her Children Incorporated coworkers Shelley, U.S. Programs Specialist; and Chuck, U.S. Sponsorship Manager, and about 250 volunteers who built the playground from the ground up in just one day. One of the jobs Kube, Oxenham, and Smith were tasked with was painting maps and game boards onto the playground surface.

**A Big Initiative**

In early 2017, Children Incorporated promoted the story of Renée, Shelley, and Chuck helping to rebuild the playground at G.H. Reid Elementary. We told our sponsors and donors about the new equipment, but we also took the opportunity to mention another initiative – we wanted to provide additional funding to the school for upkeep, such as new mulch and repainting at the end of the school year, so that the playground could stay new and fresh for the children. But by early spring, that initiative grew beyond just helping with maintenance thanks to a special sponsor, Micah Greer – it turned into a campaign to raise funds to purchase playground supplies as well.

Micah Greer is the founder of [Operation Optimist, a web-based clothing company in Austin, Texas](http://icrowdnewswire.com/2017/03/13/austin-united-states-operation-optimist-positive-minded-brand-mission-spread-hope-love-positivity-also-contributing-need/), and a personal trainer with an interest in health and wellness. Micah has been a sponsor through Children Incorporated for more than a year, and he decided to take his involvement to new heights by making the generous offer to [donate ten percent of all of his merchandise sales](http://operation-optimist.com/)to our organization. When Micah sent Children Incorporated a check for $500 in April, we decided since his focus in his career was on healthy activities, that we would use the funds to purchase supplies for children to play with and support healthy living, and that we would also ask our donors to match it – which they so gratefully did! By the end of May, we had $1000 to donate to G.H. Reid, and we couldn’t wait to get present them a check and a few supplies to get them started.

**The Dream List**

With the funding in place, Renée asked for a “Dream List” of playground supplies from G.H. Reid, which was provided by Mr. Vickers, the physical education teacher at the school. Mr. Vickers had told our volunteer coordinator, Sydney Capito, that the children could use detachable hurdles, a handled parachute, dumbbells, basketballs, footballs, soccer balls, kick balls, and hula-hoops. Renée purchased some of the items, included a flag football set and wiffle ball bats, and last week, we were so excited to take fun supplies to the school, and present a check to Sydney, while also getting to meet with our sponsored children, who can’t wait to play with the new gear in the upcoming school year.

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**HOW DO I SPONSOR A CHILD in Richmond, Virginia?**

You can sponsor a child in Richmond in one of two ways – call our office and speak with one of our sponsorship specialists at 1-800-538-5381, or go online to our donation portal, create and account, and search for a child in Richmond that is available for sponsorship.