



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2022.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Orange County, Virginia
Program Title: Barboursville Community Park Playground Renovations
Program Category: Parks & Recreation

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Stephanie Straub
Title: Assistant County Administrator
Signature:

2022 VACO Achievement Award Nomination

Category: Parks & Recreation

Nominee: Barboursville Community Park Playground Renovations

Brief Overview

Playgrounds reflect a community's commitment to its young people. Barboursville Community Park houses the only public playground for miles and is an important resource for many residents living outside of our incorporated areas. Though under Orange County authority, it



developed, largely organically, over several decades with volunteer support and its condition had reached an unacceptable level.

As COVID-19 shut down the world, the Orange County Parks & Recreation Department hit the ground running with funding to renovate the playground. Pouring pent-up energy into this location, Parks & Recreation creatively worked with a limited budget and forged partnerships to create a playground of which the community can be proud.

Executive Summary:

The importance of playgrounds to a community is difficult to ignore. They serve as tangible demonstrations of a commitment to healthy childhoods. COVID-19 served to illuminate this truth, as families regularly turned to passive outdoor recreation as a less-risky method to keep their kids active. Barboursville Community Park lies in an unincorporated region of Orange County, and it is the only public playground for miles, even looking beyond county borders.

Despite its importance, the park had developed largely organically through volunteer support over many decades. Though under the authority of Orange County Parks & Recreation, by 2020 its condition had deteriorated, and it did not reflect the goals or reputation of the department. Thankfully, Barboursville Community Park had already been identified for renovation in our capital improvements plan. Approval was received in April 2020, which could not have been timelier. Deprived of programming opportunities by the virus, staff were able to transition and focus their attention on improving facilities.

Though the budget was limited, staff negotiated with several potential vendors and worked to minimize cost by decreasing the playground's footprint. Through creative placement, play opportunities actually increased despite a drastic reduction in necessary surfacing. Through a strong working relationship with the Central Virginia Regional Jail workforce, Parks & Recreation was able to handle all demolition work in-house, further reducing expense. The innovative solutions employed by our staff, as well as their impressive results, are deserving of recognition.

Main Nomination:

Barboursville Community Park had already been identified as a location of need in the Orange County capital improvements plan in the years leading up to the pandemic, and the process of funding its renovations had begun. Thankfully, it received approval in April 2020, just weeks after the virus had begun making impacts in the United States. At the time it would have been difficult to estimate the upcoming rise in the value of outdoor recreation opportunities.

This was especially true in the village of Barboursville, in which Barboursville Community Park was an island of recreation. Even looking beyond Orange County's borders, it is the only public fixture with a playground in the area. Unfortunately, in 2020, the condition of the playground at Barboursville was unacceptable. A dilapidated fence encircled an area much larger than necessary. Boards frequently fell off the fence, and it required almost constant attention. Surfacing was virtually non-existent; the wood carpet (specialized mulch suited for playground surface) had decomposed to the point that it required regular mowing to avoid becoming overgrown. This mowing regularly caused damage to playground equipment; the mower deck often contacted playground decking, and the rollover bar would snag swing chains. Once damaged in this way, staff would replace, repair, or remove the equipment to reduce risk. In short, the situation was dire and unsustainable.

Once funded, staff approached the prospect of revitalizing the playground with vigor. Still reacting to the new normal of the pandemic, including severely-reduced programming, it was a welcome relief to refocus energy on a capital improvement. This was especially true considering the park's condition, which existed in stark contrast to the

department's goal and reputation of maintaining quality facilities. After funding was confirmed, staff quickly set to work getting quotes from playground vendors. After reviewing a plan with several vendors, Site Concepts LLC & Miracle Recreation proved able to provide a quality refit plan with value well beyond the \$25,000 available for the project. Maintaining minimal costs required that our staff handle demolition work themselves and reduce the overall footprint of the playground significantly.

The reduction in size was not a concern; the sprawling arrangement of the equipment utilized much more real estate than needed to house the onsite amenities. Working with the vendor, we planned to reduce the area from approximately 7,500 sq. ft. to around 3,500 sq. ft., which drastically reduced the amount (and cost) of wood carpet surfacing without sacrificing play opportunities. Removing an aged plastic playground structure, strategically relocating smaller spring-rider pieces, and consolidating toddler swings with standard belt seats on one frame made the adjustment possible. A fringe benefit was the creation of additional greenspace from the former playground area for picnicking and passive enjoyment.

Demolition of outdated equipment and the wooden fence were more of an obstacle. Though willing (perhaps even eager) to perform the demolition work in-house, Parks & Recreation staff were aware that additional skillsets and labor would be required. Thankfully, the department had developed a strong working relationship with the Central Virginia Regional Jail (CVRJ)



Workforce and was able to secure two crews for a full day. Equipment and additional labor support from our Public Works and Landfill staff were the final pieces to the puzzle. In preparation, the playground closed on October 19, 2020, with demolition completed on November 5. Aside from employee time, this coordination allowed the removal of two roll-off dumpsters' worth of debris in a single day for just the cost of some fried chicken provided at lunch. We believe this approach could be applied to other localities. Many correctional facilities offer programs similar to the CVRJ Workforce, but officials often apply the opportunity only to road cleanup projects.

In January of 2021, we took delivery of the new equipment, which was installed by Cedar Creek Run Construction. New equipment included additional brachiating and balancing pieces, as well as a barrel spinner to allow for individual or group spinning. These additions added play opportunities that were largely missing from the prior layout. A modern playground border has forever removed the need to mow near the playground equipment, to the relief of those mowing and the frequently buffeted playground equipment itself. The construction work and the delivery of new wood carpet took place over an exciting couple of weeks. The contractor and our department were shocked to receive a delivery of substantially more wood carpet than was expected. At first, it was unclear how best to handle the surplus, which was blocking parking spaces. However, staff were able to turn lemons into lemonade by requesting the extra be deposited in the area outside of the playground border, between it and the park's bathroom. This creative solution both reduced the mud being tracked into the bathrooms, and filled sinkholes caused by the removal of fenceposts.

With the playground now complete and spring approaching, a substantial pressure washing was in order. This simple act seemed to give the older playground equipment new life, and those items no longer seemed out-of-place next to the new amenities. After cleaning, staff repainted all playground decks, swing set frames, and (most impressively) spring riders, using in-house labor. Dented or cut playground decks were repaired and refinished.

Finally, a grand opening event was scheduled for March 16, 2021. Though limited in attendance due to ongoing pandemic concerns, the event was truly joyful. Rather than a ribbon cutting, staff suggested that Supervisor R. Mark Johnson (the Supervisor representing the district in which Barboursville Community Park resides) and County Administrator Theodore “Ted” Voorhees engage in a ceremonial “first swing.” The smiles on the faces of these two grown men foreshadowed the renewed promise of future joy to our community’s youth achieved by this renovation project.





Barboursville Community Park Playground before renovations.



Barboursville Community Park Playground after renovations.



Demolition required the cooperation of several Orange County departments and the support of the Central Virginia Regional Jail workforce. Two roll-off dumpster loads of old fencing and outdated equipment were removed in a single day.



New equipment added spinning, balancing, and brachiating elements that were previously absent.



Pressure washing revitalized equipment that was still in otherwise good condition.



Staff cleaned, repaired, and repainted older equipment to give the entire playground a fresh look and feel.



The grand opening on March 16, 2021 was a joyous occasion! Months of work came to fruition resulting in a facility of which we could be proud.