



Athens County

Building Safe Places to Play with Local Partnerships

Summary

The Athens City-County Health Department, with support of the Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) grant, and Rome Township Trustees collaborated to create a plan to give the Savannah Park in Guysville, Ohio a much needed update and safety overhaul. This project aims to create a safe and healthy environment for local children and adults to have a place to be active in their community. In collaboration with township trustees, the Athens County Creating Healthy Communities program rejuvenated the playground at Savannah Park by replacing broken and worn out playground equipment to promote physical activity among neighborhood children.

Challenge

In Athens County 40.4 percent of third graders were overweight or obese from 2009-2010 according to the Ohio Department of Health's Report on the Body Mass Index of Ohio's Third Graders. Studies show that overweight and obese children are at a significantly increased risk of diabetes, hypertension, asthma and stroke. Childhood obesity can profoundly affect children's physical health, social, and emotional well-being and self-esteem. It is also associated with poor academic performance and a lower quality of life experienced by the child. Evidence shows that physical activity helps reduce obesity and risk factors for chronic disease. After the Ohio Township Association Risk Management Authority (OTARMA) conducted a visit to Savannah Park, the park was deemed not safe

for play. With quotes from playground companies estimating more than \$65,000 to fix and update the park, township officials had to look elsewhere. Through partnership and collaboration with CHC, a solution was proposed.

Solution

Communities play a vital role in the health and well-being of all people. With help from community partners, funding and time were leveraged to make this project a success. CHC worked with the township fiscal officer to review a recent risk assessment done on the park, where many safety issues and violations were found. With funding from CHC, equipment was purchased, such as rubber mulch and other materials needed to resurface the park, new swings, hardware, safety



mats, and new basketball rims and nets. Lowe's volunteered time to remove unsafe playground equipment, paint the swing sets and fill cracks on the basketball court. Through a contract with Hocking College, the park was able to be resurfaced.

Results

With all these improvements to the park, it is now a safe place for community members to visit and play. In September 2016 with help from Lowe's and Hocking College, the park was resurfaced, unsafe equipment was removed, swing sets were repainted and cracks on the basketball court were filled. A project expected to cost \$65,000, that a single township couldn't achieve, ended up being accomplished with more than 15 hours of donated time and resources from partners. Work continues to take place to replace the rusty, unsafe hardware in the park. Springtime will bring many new park visitors.

"Our park had a lot of issues and we didn't have the resources to fix them. I'm pleased we were able to create a partnership with the Health Department, Hocking College & Lowes to make this park go from an unsafe place to play, to a safe one. It was a great process to see unfold."

*— Willard Dunfee,
Rome Township Fiscal Officer*

Sustaining Success

The success of this project was due to the excellent participation and collaboration from those involved. The Rome Township Trustees are very proud of this park and are committed to keeping it a maintained and safe place for local residents. The Athens Creating Healthy Communities Coalition will continue to create partnerships like the ones seen in this story, to create more ways and safe places for the residents of Athens County to be physically active.

Your Involvement is Key

Join the CHC Coalition to help with similar efforts by contacting Athens City-County Health Department. Show appreciation for your local park and visit it often. This will show your community the importance of keeping the space well maintained and safe for all community members to use.



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