

# Community works together to build shade structure



Students gather around the newly built shade structure at Hopkins Hill Elementary. The structure which will keep kids safe from the sun's UV rays was built under the concerted efforts of parents, businesses and students.

## Shade structure to protect students from ultraviolet rays

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COVENTRY- Students, committee members, and State Representative Lisa Tomasso gathered at Hopkins Hill Elementary School yesterday to pay dedication to the opening of their Shade Structure.

Tomasso, who currently has a child enrolled at Hopkins Hill, explained to the students that this project has been going on for more than 20 years.

She said that the Hopkins Hill Parent Teacher Association (PTA) has been committed to creating an outdoor environment for the students

where they can learn and be active.

She explained that the shade structure is one step on the milestone for the Hopkins Hill PTA to fulfill their mission.

Tomasso gave the students a brief history of their playground explaining that in 2005, parents came together to install the playground's metal arch and red slide because they thought the children needed a better place to play.

Along with the arch and slide, monkey bars were installed in 2006, swings in 2007, a zip line in 2008, and now the shade structure in 2011.

Tomasso explained to the kids that many parents, students, and businesses have worked hard to give them a safe area to run around.

She wanted to let them know that "there are people out there, outside of your classrooms and outside of your schools that support your commitment to be successful," she said.

One of the people responsible for the beginning steps of the shade structure idea was Lisa James, vice president of the Coventry Public Education Foundation.

She said that she found the original grant back in 2009 for

the structure and thought it would be beneficial for the children at Hopkins Hill because "the kids could not come outside on some days because it would be too hot."

She explained that many of the children on the hotter days would hide underneath the playground equipment in order to get shade.

Principle of the school, Tracey Whitehead said that Lisa James had applied for this grant from The American Academy of Dermatology's shade structure program but unfortunately had not received it.

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# Shade structure a welcome addition

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In 2010 however, she said that her, James, and Diane Kowal had revised the original grant and resubmitted it.

They then received notification in August of that year that

they were awarded the grant for the amount of \$8,000 to build the shade structure which was handed over to Jared Nunes' company, RT Nunes & Sons Construction Company.

To conclude the event,

School Committee Member Judith Liner explained to the kids "how fortunate you are that you have a wonderful group of staff, teachers and parents who have pulled together to build this beautiful shade structure."