

PLAYGROUND PROMISES



Jessica Boisclair • Daily Times

A backhoe equipped with an auger prepares to dig a hole for one of the posts that will serve as the skeleton for new playground equipment being installed at Coventry's Tiogue Elementary School yesterday morning. The construction will be done on Saturday, and volunteers are needed to help complete the job.

Tiogue Elem. is getting new equipment

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COVENTRY— Even before school started yesterday morning, members of the Parent Teacher Association and the Playground Committee for Tiogue Elementary School were digging up the playground to make way for a new structure.

Ed Bove, Co-Chair for the Playground Committee, explained that three years of fundraising and \$12,000 later, the new equipment for the students to enjoy can be installed.

Yesterday morning, volunteers were beginning the process of digging holes for the posts of the structure.

With the help of O'Brien and Sons, Inc., Bove said the playground equipment was designed to build the upper body strength of the five- to 12-year-

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Rev. Ed Bove and Meghan O'Brien get to work finishing the work begun by an auger yesterday at Tiogue Elementary.

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Playground equipment will be installed this Saturday

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old students and help improve their balance.

Meghan O'Brien, of O'Brien and Sons, explained the company works within the six New England states to design playgrounds alongside Landscape Structures out of Minnesota.

"They are the manufacturers who building the playgrounds and we're the New England representatives who help install the playgrounds," she added. "We work with towns, cities and school departments to design the structures they want."

If the funds of the municipality, school department, or organization are limited, she said, the company will host a Community Builds event to save them money.

Through the Community Builds event the company will have an on-site meeting with the committee, explain the step-by-step process, supervise the process, provide red ribbon for the opening ceremony and provide tools for construction and digging.

"Ed and Kerri [Bove's wife] came to me looking for help so we designed something that can be added to this playground and would compliment the playground; something exciting with a lot of play value," she added.

The newest addition to the playground will include climbing pods attached to metal chains, giving students the chance to move from one object to the next without touching the ground. It also consists of a cargo net, a balance beam and a spinning element.

"It's made for safety and it's a circuit so the whole point was that they can get on at the first part and get to the end without putting their feet to the ground," Bove said. "And the reason we have a spinning element is because kids

who are sensitive, like autistic kids, when they spin it helps them."

The committee was started three years ago. It took that much time to raise the money for the new structure.

Bove said there are currently eight people on the committee who work tirelessly to improve the school grounds for the 400-plus students at Tiogue Elementary School.

Because of the kindness of people in town, he said, the committee was able to get a forklift donated by Coventry Lumber to assist with removing the structure from the truck.

"We were also able to go to the public works department for the town and get a backhoe with an auger attached donated and we had a driver to assist us in digging the holes for the posts," he said.

While the focus of Wednesday morning's event was digging holes and removing dirt, Saturday will be the day the complete structure is put together and Bove said volunteers are desperately needed.

"In the spirit of supporting our children here and sending the message to them that play is important, I ask people to volunteer," he explained. "This new structure will build their physical body, their balance, their motor skills; so volunteer to support the children." Bove, who's the pastor of the Cornerstone Faith United Methodist Church, said he's been working with his church to "affirm the mission within the community," by asking his parishioners to help with the construction on Saturday as well.

Anybody interested in volunteering can arrive at Tiogue Elementary School at 7 a.m. on Saturday or contact Bove at 615-2259.