

Media Advisory – May 30, 2008

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County grants leverage \$1 million in park projects

Standing before a half-finished playground at Forest View Elementary School on Friday, Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon announced a list of grant recipients under the county's latest effort to spur construction of new park amenities.

Ten projects, including the completion of Forest View's playground, are being funded with about \$450,000 in county seed money, matched by more than \$500,000 in community funds and volunteer labor.

The county money, distributed through the newly established Youth Amenities and Recreation Development (YARD) grant program, gives nonprofits, school districts and local municipalities a funding source to complete much-needed parks projects throughout Snohomish County. About 50 representatives from winning groups were present Friday.

"These groups are already an instrumental part of the community fabric," Reardon said over the sound of students enjoying recess. "We are pleased to partner with them to improve the quality of recreational opportunities available to our residents."

The program is part of the Community Enhancement Initiative proposed by Reardon as part of the 2008 county budget. Reardon announced plans Friday to continue the program in the 2009-2010 biennial budget.

Applications were solicited in February and March by the county's Parks and Recreation Department. A total of 13 applications were received and 10 met the grant requirements.

County Council members, who give final approval to individual grants, have been supportive of the program from the beginning.

"I am proud of the executive for his leadership in the creation of this program," Councilman Brian Sullivan said. "I look forward to making YARD grants a permanent cornerstone of future budgets."

The Mukilteo North Little League, located in Sullivan's council district, will use \$50,000 in YARD grant money to improve existing baseball and softball fields at Paine Field Community Park. The Little League has secured \$45,671 in matching funds and labor.

In total, matching funds and volunteer labor for this year's projects come from four school districts, two cities and 10 nonprofits, including various parent-teacher associations and the YMCA.

“The biggest benefit of this grant is that we don't have to ask our children to go sell candy bars and raise money to purchase playground equipment,” said Brenda Fuglevand, principal of Forest View Elementary. “And to have this kind of equipment available for them to climb, play and swing benefits their education.”

The Forest View PTA is combining \$24,100 in YARD grant money with another \$41,252 to complete the playground climbing structure now partially completed at the school.

Other grant-funded projects can be found throughout Snohomish County, including Arlington, Everett, Monroe, Mountlake Terrace and Sultan. Grants vary from a little more than \$6,000 to the maximum of \$75,000. Projects include sports field improvements, playground equipment and a ropes challenge course.

“We're putting county money to work and building up this community,” Reardon said. “This small amount of seed money becomes a considerable investment without a tax increase to Snohomish County residents.”

For a complete list of this year's grant winners, go to:
www.snocoparks.com.

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