

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 20, 2017

CVB Contact: Alana Cooper

Phone: 318.387.5691

E-mail: acooper@monroe-westmonroe.org



WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE PLAYGROUND TO OPEN IN WEST MONROE

West Monroe, LA—Smiles Park is a new playground in development at Kiroli Park. The inclusive $\frac{3}{4}$ acre playground allows children with and without disabilities to play together. An opening date has yet to be set but is likely to open within a few months. Wheelchair accessibility and ease of access for children with leg braces are the main adjustments for this playground. This is the first playground of its kind for Ouachita Parish.

The West Monroe Civitan Club is the sponsor of the park, and has worked on the project since 2013.

The theme of the playground is a fair, inspired by the Civitan Club's annual fundraiser the Ark-La-Miss Fair. This will include a pretend Ferris wheel, animals constructed of fiberglass and concrete, a 5-12 year old play area, a 2-5 year old play area, a 6-24 month old play area and a "ZipKrooz." All of the play equipment was manufactured by Landscape Structures Inc. out of Minnesota.

Pieces of the park have already begun to arrive. On Tuesday, January 3, equipment rolled in on 4 semi-trucks. The delivery included four life-like sensory animals— Betty the Elephant, Xavier the Seal, Zeus the Lion, and Gummie the Bear.

Designs for the playground were created by Shane's Inspiration, an organization whose mission is to create inclusive playgrounds for children all over the world. In 2000, they opened their first park "Shane's Inspiration Playground" in Los Angeles, California. Now, they have assisted in the creation of 63 inclusive playgrounds with another 75 being developed. "Our vision is to foster a bias-free world for children with disabilities. Our mission is to create inclusive playgrounds and programs to unite children of all abilities," they say on their website.

For more information on this project or to learn how to get involved, visit the West Monroe Civitan Club's website, www.wmcivitan.com. Like their Facebook page, Civitan Smiles Park, for updates on progress and an official opening date.

###

Extra information: In a video shared to the Civitan Smiles Park Facebook page, Ella Ecker, a seven-year-old girl, reacts joyfully to the news that the park equipment was delivered. She is a child with spinal muscular atrophy, which causes her to be bound to a wheelchair. This park will allow her to play alongside her friends. It's a tear-jerker. The link is below.

<https://www.facebook.com/jennifer.coon.315/videos/1821845498070271/>