



Linn County Parks Commission member Rachel Maynard of Sweet Home talks about development of a new playground at Waterloo County Park during a dedication ceremony Thursday afternoon.

County celebrates opening of new Waterloo playground

WATERLOO — The gleeful sound of children playing on new playground equipment nearly drowned out guest speakers Thursday afternoon at Waterloo County Park.

And everyone was OK with that.

A dedication ceremony marked the opening of the \$110,000 project by the Linn County Parks & Recreation Department.

Parks Director Brian Carroll said vandals had damaged the old playground equipment to the point it had to be closed in 2019.

But that's when Sweet Home resident Rachel Maynard started a grassroots effort to replace the fun zone at the park she said was her son Zach's favorite place to play. Zach, 6, was killed in an accident on Foster Reservoir last summer. His brother William was among several children who broke in the new playground equipment installed last fall by parks employees.

Maynard talked with area residents and spearheaded fundraising to get new equipment.

"We had a hot dog sale, we met with community members to see what they thought was important to them in terms of playground equipment," Maynard said.

Maynard said the playground is designed for children ages 2 to 12 years old.

"I was out here at least once a week," Maynard joked about her

interest watching the playground come to life. "My son William calls it his Waterloo."

Her experience with the project led her to become a member of the Linn County Parks Commission.

Carroll said the playground is important to community members.

"We certainly heard from community members when it was closed down," Carroll said.

Carroll said he was pleased when Maynard stepped forward to spearhead the effort and with his staff's dedication to the project.

Numerous Parks Department staff members worked on the project, including Tristan Davis, Wes Pike, John Hefty, Adam Brenneman, Kade Pulliam and Blake Nightengale.

Carroll said the majority of funding came from the county's Transient Lodging Tax and the effort was fully supported by the Board of Commissioners.

Linn County Commissioner Sherrie Sprenger said she enjoyed hearing the sounds of laughter coming from the children playing on the new equipment.

"I love when people see the problem, step up and say what can we do about this?" Sprenger said. "This is truly a public-private partnership."