

# IN DEPTH

## Community rallies to build accessible playground

By Amy Tucker  
The Eagle

Construction has wrapped up on Centennial Park, the new home of the town's second and latest inclusive playground.

The current playground is at the end of its life and lacks reduced mobility-friendly aspects.

With the new equipment, children with disabilities will have more access to the park features including a climbing net with seats, two ground-level trampolines and low-rise musical equipment.

The group behind the initiative, Variety, the Children's Charity of Alberta, has raised over \$350,000 from the community, including \$40,500 from the Rotary Club and the Monumental Tournament of Aces.

"Variety is so grateful and happy to be part of the community to help increase inclusion," said Larry Horeczy, a managing director with Variety.

The group will also be piloting an educational program in Cochrane schools called "Just Like You" which teaches children how to be more inclusive to their peers with disabilities.

Sascha MacDonald, 19, is one of the educators for the program and was at the park's construction kickoff.

MacDonald moved to Cochrane only a few weeks ago from Fort McMurray, but while growing up in the northern community, she said she faced multiple barriers because she is in a wheelchair, including not having any nearby playgrounds that were accessible to her as a child.

"We really don't have an inclusive town (Fort McMurray), it's very much old and they don't really fix the sidewalks or anything like that. To see that Cochrane is actually making an effort to make sure that everyone gets to be included - it's great."

Variety originally had a fundraising goal of more than \$600,000, which would partially go toward upgrading the current park, re-surfacing and the pathways leading up to the park. For now, just Phase 1 - the inclusive playground - will be taken on.

To learn more about the park or to see a complete list of donors, visit [www.varietyalberta.ca/centennial-park-in-cochrane](http://www.varietyalberta.ca/centennial-park-in-cochrane).

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Volunteers worked on the construction of Centennial Park in Cochrane on Oct. 19 and Oct. 20. Variety the Children's Charity organized the construction of the new Centennial Park, which is being built to be accessible and inclusive to all. **Clockwise from top:** Nicholas Man, left, and Kenzie Hamilton, right, work on a seated merry-go-round. Taylor Stienwand, left, and Larry Horeczy, right, dig a hole where ground level, inclusive trampolines will be placed. Community organizations such as the Rotary Club of Cochrane, who donated \$41,500 thanks to funds raised through the Monumental Tournament of Aces, helped raise \$350,000 to build Phase 1 of the park. Cameron Hulkenberg works to connect the netting at the top of the accessible climbing net.



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