

COMMUNITY

Lewisboro Town Park Fundraising Picks Back Up

By BRIAN MARSCHHAUSER
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SOUTH SALEM, N.Y. – A year after its founding, the Lewisboro Town Park Playground Improvement Corp. was prepared to ramp up fundraising efforts in March 2020—but COVID-19 had other plans.

More than a year later, the nonprofit organization is picking back up where it left off, starting in June with the first of three “Evening in the Park” events at the aforementioned Lewisboro Town Park.



The community events are scheduled to take place on June 4, July 10 and Aug. 6, and will feature food trucks, live music, and basket raffles (tickets are available to purchase at lewisboroplayground.com).

In her mind, the need for a welcoming outdoor community space in Lewisboro has only intensified over the last 14 months.

"People are comfortable going outdoors," she said. "They don't necessarily want people in their house, so let's meet at the park."

As its name indicates, the Lewisboro Town Park Playground Improvement Corp. has a plan for the town's flagship park to reach its potential. For its members, "inclusivity" is the goal.

The design that was approved by the Lewisboro Town Board in December 2019 "specifically welcomes children with differing physical and emotional needs," reads the organization's website. The improved playground would be divided into two areas: one geared toward younger children/children with physical disabilities and another directed at older children. For example, the playground would have a We-Go-Round, a wheelchair accessible spinner.

"It's beyond a playground in the sense that you're creating a space that helps children with all different disabilities," said Valerie Cancro, project manager.

"I think outdoor spaces are the most important feature of this area," Cancro added. "I think that's the saving grace for people."

It was important for the organization to design a space that caters to children of all ages and abilities. The park would also be "multigenerational," providing more resting areas for its older users.

"If we had a playground that would be a little better developed, we could be a community space," said Josephine Berisha, director of outreach/volunteers. "It was important to have all our kids go to the same place together."

The group was founded in 2019, choosing to focus its efforts on Lewisboro Town Park, the town's oldest, largest, and most centrally located park.



“We were really feeling that our town parks were neglected and not up to date,” Carelli said.

The final straw came when a resident turned to Facebook for park recommendations.

“Not one person commented that they should be bringing their child to a Lewisboro park,” Carelli recalled. “I think we’re well known for our outdoors. But the fact that people are taking their families to other nearby towns to just go to the playground, it really solidified the fact that we need to do something.”

The group is taking a phased approach to construction, with the 2 to 5 age group’s area up first. But how much work gets done ultimately depends on how much money is raised. The whole “shebang”—including the We-Go-Round—would cost around \$625,000. To date, without actively fundraising, \$10,000 has been raised. In addition to this summer’s fundraising events, government grants are pending.

“We are very grateful to the individuals who found out about the playground project early on and felt empowered to give,” Carelli said. “Now that we’ve been getting the word out more about the project and fundraising events, we’ve been so thrilled with the response from the community.”

On top of the summer events, the organization is planning an Oktoberfest. Donations can also be made in the form of sponsoring or adopting playground equipment.

Learn more by emailing lewisboroplayground@gmail.com or by visiting lewisboroplayground.com.