

Valparaiso citytalk

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A CITY OF VALPARAISO QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

ValPLAYso—The Next Generation So Many Heroes!

For happy Valpo kids, ValPLAYso is an amazing new place to play. But for the community, ValPLAYso is more than a park. “Valparaiso’s spirit has transformed ValPLAYso from a park to an event to a movement,” said Parks Director John Seibert. Nearly 4,000 people have touched ValPLAYso, from contributing ideas and donating funds to swinging a hammer or feeding hungry volunteers. Here are just a few of the stories of heroes. Many thanks to ALL who have been a part of the ValPLAYso movement.



3,000 on the Job. 3 are Paid

Rob Thorgren agreed to co-chair the ValPLAYso leadership team a year before the build. “I knew that 2,500 people came together to make the first ValPLAYso happen. I felt there was even more potential this time,” said Thorgren, who serves as President of Thorgren Tool and Molding.

Along with Rick Urschel, Thorgren camped out at ValPLAYso for nine days, serving as security and making them the first and last workers on site each day. “It was like groundhog day,” joked Thorgren. His 7-year-old son, Sam, also got his hands dirty as an active volunteer from start to finish.

“It said so much about our city when I would look around and realize that only three people on that entire job site were being paid for their work and they were the playground designers themselves,” said Thorgren.



My Favorite Job

Shawn Hardin lives near ValPLAYso, often riding past on his bike. “I saw the project happening and really wanted to be a part of something. Actually I have never done that before,” said Hardin, a 2014 graduate of Valparaiso High School.

After stepping up to help one day, Hardin ended up returning for five days, assisting in any way he was asked. “Shawn really had a purpose that week,” said Parks Director John Seibert.

On the final day of the build, volunteers unanimously named Hardin a Team Leader, presenting him with a plaque and Team Leader shirt. “That gave me recognition that I never had when I was growing up, like a trophy,” said Hardin who accepted the recognition from Mayor Jon Costas. “Working at ValPLAYso was my favorite job of any I’ve ever had,” said Hardin.



A Twice-in-a-Lifetime Experience

Many know Dr. Tom Ludwig as a kind pediatrician. Yet, he’s touched the lives of children in another way: He was a dedicated volunteer for both the 1994 (pictured above) and 2014 ValPLAYso projects.

In 1994 he worked alongside sons, Kevin and Patrick, who were 9 and 11. This time he served as a Team Leader, dedicating the entire week to the project. “I worked with people from college students to moms and kids to retired journeyman carpenters,” said Dr. Ludwig.

Recently Dr. Ludwig’s grown sons returned to Valpo and admired the transformed ValPLAYso. “So many energetic, brilliant, and knowledgeable people made this happen. For me it was a twice-in-a-lifetime experience,” he said.

So Many Heroes Continued on page 2

Dear Citizens:

This issue of City Talk is a celebration of the spirit that has made ValPLAYso happen – twice! This spirit says so much about Valpo. We set out to create a fully accessible play space. To date, nearly 4,000 people have touched the project and more than \$1 million has been shared, including:

- 51 companies, organizations, and individuals sponsored ValPLAYso with a gift of \$2,500 or more.
- 16 companies, organizations, and individuals donated park benches.
- 64 made general donations.
- 70 families have purchased faceplates (so far!)
- 45 companies, restaurants, organizations, and individuals made in-kind donations of services, labor, food, and supplies.



During the build week, I was fortunate to work alongside many great citizens and I love to share stories -- new residents who got to know Valpo during the project, people who stopped by on Monday and were still there on Friday, new friendships formed, new skills learned. We could have filled a catalog with all the heroes! It's no wonder other (and bigger) cities are looking to us as an example.

Visit www.valpo.us for City News, Announcements & Events

Join me in celebrating ValPLAYso and Valparaiso and learn how you can help us complete this jewel of a park in the way our kids have envisioned. This spirit of cooperation and inspiration truly defines our city. Many thanks to all who share the dream!

Sincerely,

Jon Costas

Jon Costas, Mayor

So Many Heroes! Continued from front page



Generations Working Side-by-Side

Decades ago, the Crumpacker Niedner family fell in love with a charming playgrounds they spotted on a Florida vacation. "Our kids, Rebekah and Micah called them the 'brown-house' playgrounds for their distinctive wooden roof peaks," shared Barbara Crumpacker Niedner. In 1994, when Valparaiso contracted with the designer of these playgrounds, Crumpacker Niedner stepped up as a volunteer coordinator.

Fast-forward 20 years. The children have grown, but ValPLAYso needed a volunteer coordinator and Crumpacker Niedner was in. ValPLAYso became a family affair as husband Fred Niedner assisted with construction, Micah and Rebekah returned to help, and sister Tisha Sisamis traveled from Michigan, along with her mother-in-law Tula Fedorchak to assist. Crumpacker Niedner's mother, Louise Crumpacker, worked the volunteer tent each day of the build. "At 87, Mom may have been the oldest volunteer on site. Her energy was endless."

Camped Out and Committed

Rick Urschel was in high school during the 1994 ValPLAYso build. "My mom and I ended up constructing together. We had a great time," said Urschel.

Today Urschel is President and CEO of Urschel Laboratories Inc. He has less free time than in 1994, yet he stepped up to serve as a Team Leader, even camping out at the job site for nine days. Once again, Mom Nancy Urschel was frequently by his side. "She came down for an 'afternoon' and ended up staying for four days. It was fun to work with her again."

The Urschel family name has become synonymous with generosity to Valparaiso park projects. In addition to volunteering, the Urschel family has donated \$3 million to fund the William E. Urschel Pavilion, which will be a cornerstone of the Central Park Plaza expansion, due to open in 2015.



What's Left? Grand Opening to be this Spring!

Work remains before ValPLAYso's grand opening, scheduled for Spring, 2015. \$250,000 more is needed to complete the project to the level Valpo has dreamed, including paving, concrete work, lighting, bathrooms, ball fields, and landscaping.

There's Still Time to Make a Difference

To get involved:

1. Purchase a Faceplate (See page 4.) Act now as sales end April 1.
2. Purchase a personally engraved tribute bench.
3. Consider a cash or in-kind gift of necessary services.
4. Purchase naming rights. Opportunities remain to have portions of the park named for your organization or family, including the naming of Face Place!

Contact Valpo Parks at 462-5144 to learn more!

A City That Plays Together

More than \$1 million in private donations make ValPLAYso possible

In addition to the hundreds of ideas and thousands of volunteers, more than \$1 million in funding had to come together to make ValPLAYso possible. "Our city has demonstrated its generosity in so many ways," said Kaye Frataccia, co-chair of the ValPLAYso leadership team. The fundraising effort got an early jump start with a \$250,000 donation from Family Express, followed by two contributions of \$100,000 from two anonymous donors, and more than 1,000 individual donations, from people and organizations.

"Each contribution has made an impact, from our Champion Sponsor Family Express to the smallest gesture," said Frataccia. A total of 452 pickets were sold for a fence that borders the playground, raising more than \$18,000. A special thanks goes to Karen Vogelsang, Fundraising Chairman; Melanie Trowbridge for heading up picket sales; and Monica Decker and Kevin Kosek, co-chairs of the Children's Committee.

"For one week, adults dominated the ValPLAYso site with the booming sounds of drills, hammers, and table-saws. These sounds have been replaced with the sounds of kids laughing and enjoying the gifts our community has to offer."

- Alex Olympidis, Family Express



Alex Olympidis, Vice President of Operations-HR for Family Express (left) was on site at ValPLAYso each day, along with Parks Director John Seibert (right). Not only did Family Express contribute the lead gift of \$250,000 to the project, but they served breakfast to the volunteers each day, and also volunteered on site daily.



Meet Izzy

Meet Izzy Murphy, a 9-year-old Valparaiso hero. Izzy took a special interest in the ValPLAYso project and wanted to make a difference. She set up a lemonade stand to raise funds for the community-led, fully accessible playground. When people learned of Izzy's mission, they joined in, matching the funds she raised. In all, Izzy's lemonade stand raised more than \$6,000 for ValPLAYso! To honor Izzy, Valpo kids, and generous volunteers, consider creating a Faceplate as a permanent way to show your support and raise funds.

See page four for more details.



So many Valparaiso companies assisted in creating ValPLAYso through their financial gifts and by inviting employees to work at the playground in lieu of the traditional workday. AM Stabilizers closed their offices on Day 4 of the build so each employee could help (pictured left). Other companies, such as: Urschel Laboratories, Inc; Task Force Tips, and Douglas Koeppen and Hurley Law, among others, also showed their generosity in this way.

Share Your Smile by April 1

Help Make the Face Place Possible

Adding your smile as a permanent part of ValPLAYso also helps fund the completion of ValPLAYso. To Share Your Smile, visit valplayso.com and click on "Faceplates" at the top of the page.

Then follow these simple steps:

- step 1** Choose the size and orientation of your picture. Prices range from \$80 for a 2" by 4" picture to \$500 for an 8" by 8" picture (perfect for groups!)
- step 2** Upload your high-resolution photo (it can be an individual or a group).
- step 3** Crop your image.
- step 4** Add a caption and description. The caption will be printed on the picture you've chosen. The description is a special message you choose and will appear when you scan the QR code that will be printed on the picture.
- step 5** Submit payment and you're done!



Share Your Smile

Gifts to the Valparaiso Parks Foundation are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

The Future for Valpo Parks

Beyond ValPLAYso, Valparaiso can look forward to the upcoming opening of the Central Park Plaza expansion. The expansion will also include a dining plaza, conversation areas, and extensive green space. The enhanced park is scheduled to open in August 2015, with the skating pavilion opening just three months later. Like ValPLAYso, the Central Park expansion will be funded largely through public-private partnerships, jump-started with a \$3 million gift contributed by the Urschel family.



CENTRAL PARK PLAZA EXPANSION