

# BEAVERTON VALLEYTIMES

## Let the games begin

*Business alliance teams with Habitat for Humanity on playground*

BY SHANNON WELLS

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**In the hopes of transforming a tragic loss into an inspiring legacy for children, a group of Beaverton-area businesspeople took time off work on Wednesday so children in the Vance neighborhood may play in style.**

Altering the format and location of their weekly meeting, members of the Westside Economic Alliance participated in an all-day “Executive Build” to construct an elaborate children’s play structure in a low-income housing area at Southwest 160th Avenue and Farmington Road in Aloha.

The alliance developed the project with Willamette West Habitat for Humanity as a memorial tribute to Brody Borlaug. The 3-year-old son of business alliance member Jeff Borlaug died in early June while awaiting a bone-marrow transplant to counteract the effects of a rare immunodeficiency condition.

In memory of their beloved son, Borlaug’s family started the Brody Borlaug Foundation to support the Doernbecher Children’s Hospital’s mission in the area of pediatric immunology.

Jonathan Schlueter, the Westside Economic Alliance’s executive director, on Tuesday called the building project a labor of love.

“It hit us pretty personally,” he said of the alliance members. “We wanted to memorialize Brody, to honor the memory of our colleague’s young son. We’re donating a play structure to benefit nine low-income families who might not otherwise have an opportunity to play outside either.”

In addition to Brody, who battled his condition for a year and a half, Schlueter is dedicating the massive new play station to another spirited boy. Tomas, a 10-year-old resident of the Vance neighborhood, took a keen interest in the project when Schlueter first arrived at the fledgling playground.

“I met him during the site preparations and was introduced to his mom,” he said. “Tomas found out I was the guy (coordinating) the play structure, and he came out and started working with me. He was a hard worker. He could’ve been indoors doing what would be more interesting to a 10-year-old, but instead he chose to help me.”

Willamette West Habitat for Humanity got involved in the project after Al Vance, a longtime supporter of the charitable homebuilding organization, died on a habitat construction site earlier this year.

“He had volunteered for habitat through several projects in at least three different neighborhoods,” Schlueter said. “In his honor, they named the neighborhood and a street after him.”

Measuring 23 feet wide and 25 feet long and weighing 1,600 pounds, the \$2,500 play structure includes a climbing wall, a “clatter” bridge, tire swing, hanging bars, slide, picnic table and even a telescope, all under a roof structure.



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Jim Valois, Norm Eder, Mark Forker and Craig Dirksen build a play structure for the children of nine low-income families in the Habitat for Humanity development at 160th and Farmington.

“It really spreads out,” Schlueter said. “It’s not your normal backyard swing set.”

The set’s 103-page manual calls for nearly two working days for its assembly. Schlueter said he hopes the sheer manpower of volunteers can beat that time frame.

“No reasonable offers of able-bodied people will be refused,” he said.

Although a travel engagement prevents him from participating in the build, Beaverton Mayor Dennis Doyle said he was impressed with the business community’s commitment to honoring a child’s memory while enhancing the lives of others.

“It’s a way to give the group esprit de corps, and for something that’s never been done before,” he said after Tuesday’s City Council meeting. “I’m really proud of the organization for taking it on. Anything that can help someone offset the loss of a child is a great thing to do.”

Schlueter notes the Vance neighborhood is ripe with opportunities for Eagle Scout projects and other volunteer efforts to enhance its vitality and livability.

“We’re hoping Boy Scouts in the neighborhood take a look at this project and get some ideas as well,” he said.

While the prospect of assembling such an elaborate contraption on the verge of the Northwest’s rainy season is a little daunting, Schlueter said he’s confident the alliance has the chutzpah to get the job done.

“We’re hoping to construct it in a day, with 20 hours of man-time between us,” he said. “I’m an optimist. We’re hoping to have it up in time for kids to start swinging when they come home.”

For information on donating to the Brody Borlaug Foundation, visit the foundation’s website at [www.brodyborlaugfoundation.org](http://www.brodyborlaugfoundation.org).