

Leveling the playing field



CJL School Principal Sherri Baron, supported by PTA Co-Presidents Amy Boyce Sevigny, left, and Lydia Lehoux stand in front of the equipment from 1990 that will be replaced by a new structure in primary colors, which will match the newer equipment behind the elementary school, right.

Carl J. Lamb School gets long-awaited equipment upgrade

At least eight annual Color Fun Runs and countless bake sales later, Carl J. Lamb School students will soon have a new major playground structure to climb and swing from.

The new set is in production now and should be delivered Oct. 5-6 and installed shortly after, replacing the original structure built in 1990 behind the building.

“We’re very excited to see it all come together,” said Lydia Lehoux, mother of three and president of the PTA. “The old playground was 32 years old and many parts were original. It is well-loved and “frankensteined” back together, but she’s had a good life and needs to be replaced.”

Drainage work funded and completed by the school department will be done later this month, setting the stage for the new \$40,000 structure funded by the Parent-Teacher Association, led by co-presidents Lydia Lehoux and Amy Boyce Sevigny.

“Year after year we hosted fundraisers for the playground, so to finally see it come to fruition is so amazing,” said Lehoux. “It is so exciting!”

“At this point,” agreed Superintendent Matt Nelson, “there are a lot of bake sales that went into this effort!”

Principal Sherri Baron said there are 429 students in Pre-K through fourth grade at the school, with 29

classrooms, and 7 self-contained classrooms for special-needs students. The new structure will have a primary-colors scheme and will feature more inclusive equipment with activity panels and different options on the same footprint.

“I can’t wait to see the look on the kids’ faces, the look on the parents’ faces, the look on the building partners’ faces!” said Carl J. Lamb School Principal Baron. “It’s kind of a big deal!”

Just as these plans were set in motion, Lehoux received some additional good news. Through the Sanford Schools Legacy Foundation, the Gerard and Gertrude Genest Charitable Trust has given an additional \$50,000 to enhance the playground.

They made that donation largely because of the PTA’s strong involvement and enthusiasm for the playground project, said Gerard and Gertrude Genest Charitable Trust’s Maura Herlihy.

“We know it’s up to the PTAs to do the fundraising. We knew about the efforts they were making toward the playground, and in talking with other family members, my cousin Matt Genest and Uncle David Genest, they were really on the top of the list, in large part because they made such a strong effort,” she said.

With this additional money, other updates are on the table. “We are

going to use these funds to expand the playground and push it over the top, especially on the Pre-K and kindergarten playground.” They also want to get some canopies for shaded play on those hot days, as well as some more inclusive equipment for the autistic population placed in this school.

Legacy Foundation President Kendra Williams said the new additions will equalize the playgrounds across the schools. That also factored into the Genest family’s decision.

“There are so many needs in schools today, so it’s difficult to ask for playground funds from the taxpayers, said Herlihy. “CJL was the school that wasn’t really touched during the school renovation projects, so this equalizes the opportunities. Playgrounds are hugely expensive, and we’re excited they can finally make a plan!”

Lehoux and Boyce Sevigny credit all the parents and supporters through the years, especially the PTA presidents who kicked off the fundraising effort some eight years ago, Amy Turgeon Sevigny and Sarah Ouellette.

“Every family made this happen,” said Boyce Sevigny. “Every time they ran in the Color Fun Run, or they bought something at the bake sale, they made it happen. We made it happen!”