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New playground in the works

By [James Gonser](#)
Advertiser Urban Honolulu Writer

The residents of Honolulu's largest public housing complex, Kuhio Park Terrace and Kuhio Homes, are using bricks to build a playground for the 1,000 children who live there, and they need some help.

The red bricks are not for the slides or swings, but will be engraved and sold to create a pathway of supporters helping to fund the project, which is about \$100,000 short of its goal.

There has never been a playground in the 40-year-old complex. For years the children have invented their own play places, using neighborhood streets and elevators, rooftops, and even a stream that runs by the property.

The non-profit Good Beginnings Alliance met with the two resident associations as part of their educational support efforts in 2003. More than 400



Construction workers with Henkels and McCoy Inc. removed old concrete last week to make way for a new playground foundation at Kuhio Park Terrace. The state's largest public housing project has not had a playground in its 40 years.

JOAQUIN SIOPACK | The Honolulu Advertiser

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parents and youths took part. The residents said the lack of play areas for children and toddlers was the greatest need in their community.

The result is a planned \$250,000, 4,500-square-foot playground with two structures, one for children up to 5 and the second for those 5 to 12 years old.

KPT resident Piko Lolotai is a parent and grandparent and helped plan the playground.

"For the longest time, all there was was talk," Lolotai said. "Nobody knew how to go about it. Good Beginnings helped us get the grants and get the ball rolling. It's so exciting.

"I think the faces of the kids and the parents upon completion will be so touching. These kids deserve it. Just because they live in a project doesn't mean that they are not entitled to a safe, healthy place to play."

The colorful playground will also have 8,000 pounds of climbing rocks, security lights and a covered community meeting place with tables and chairs.

"If you think of children (being) safe, healthy, and ready to succeed, one of the most important things is physical exercise in a place that is safe," said Liz Chun, executive director of Good Beginnings Alliance. "The community really felt ... that was something they could do to help their children."

Grants had been secured from HMSA, the Atherton Family Foundation, Aloha United Way, the Housing and Community Development Corporation of Hawai'i, Parents and Children Together, the Cooke Foundation and NFL Charities. In the past year, residents have held eight fundraisers, including car washes, plate-lunch sales, and door to door



HOW TO HELP

To donate to the Kuhio Community Playground Project, visit the Good Beginnings Web site at www.goodbeginnings.org and download the sponsorship form. For every \$100 donated, two lines of text with 18 characters each line will be engraved on a brick that will be used to create a pathway to the playground.

Donations, which are tax deductible, can also be sent to: The Kuhio Community Playground c/o Good Beginnings Alliance, 33 S. King St. suite 200 Honolulu HI 96813.

For more information, call Alicia Maluafiti at 224-3648.



An Island Recreation illustration shows the structures planned for the first playground at the Kuhio Park Terrace complex.

collections.

Island Recreation

A team of military contractors led by Fluor Federal Services LLC last week broke ground for the playground. The contractors are donating labor and supplies valued at more than \$40,000 and will clear the area, install utility lines, lights and fencing, and pour the concrete slab.

"By literally clearing the way for the community playground, we hope to jump-start the project and help the community create something very special and lasting for the residents of Kuhio Park Terrace," said Alan Mockler, Fluor project director.

Mike McFarlane, president of Island Recreation, the company providing the playground equipment, said residents and organization volunteers will help put the equipment together, by the end of the year, if the funds are raised.

"It is a great project," McFarlane said. "This is a lot of people joining hands here and everybody is doing their part to make it happen. It tells me there is no difference in any community. There is an instinctive concern about their children's well being."

Reach James Gonser at jgonser@honoluluadvertiser.com.

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