



Lipscomb students Haylo Puentes and Joseph Seeman hang out on the school's new playground. Photo by Robert Bunch

FULLY EQUIPPED

Parents, teachers and neighbors banded together to make sure Lipscomb students have a place to play

Anyone who recently has driven along the streets of Junius Heights probably has noticed a few new splashes of color decorating the grounds of Lipscomb Elementary School. The bright blues and greens and reds make the school's new playground equipment hard to miss, and Lipscomb students spent the last portion of their school year enjoying every swing and slide and monkey bar during recess.

The new playground was a long time coming. The former wooden equipment had been installed in the 1980s, and after about 20 years had grown unsafe for children. A few years

ago, the Lipscomb PTA began raising money to replace it and ultimately wound up with nearly \$6,000 thanks to carnivals, T-shirt sales and the snow cones that stained students' mouths and clothes every Friday afternoon.

But Lipscomb principal Yolanda Gonzalez knew that the PTA alone could not raise enough money to give the children the playground they deserved. She had a hunch that the Swiss Avenue Historic District Association, which donated the first set of playground equipment to Lipscomb in the 1980s, might be willing to help once again.

Gonzalez knew that Jon Dahlander, who works for Dallas ISD, lives on Bryan Parkway within the historic district, so she approached him, saying: "You know, we really need a new playground. If you can find some money in your budget to make a donation, then it would certainly be appreciated," Dahlander says.

That was in 2003. The association noted Gonzalez' request, and that fall voted to spend \$6,000 of the funds it raised from its Mother's Day home tour on newer, safer playground equipment for Lipscomb students.

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"It's really a wonderful way to give back to our community, and Lipscomb Elementary has played a vital role in our neighborhood since it was opened in the 1920s," says Tom Bonifield, who headed up the association committee that determined how the funds would be spent and donated.

Lipscomb was able to use the association's donation to persuade other groups for matching funds, Bonifield says. With the Dallas Exchange Club also stepping up to the plate and donating \$6,000, the school raised \$18,000 and purchased the equipment this year. Lipscomb settled on modular equipment, which will allow the school to easily build onto its playground year after year. Landscaping was finished in late April, and the school held a formal playground dedication recently.

"The donation from Swiss Avenue Historic District is such a boost to our efforts," Gonzalez says. "We're excited about the possibility of forming a permanent partnership with the district." — RITA COOK

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