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The Valley Press

A colorful wonderland

By: Julie Drake



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PALMDALE - Desert Rose Elementary School's new kindergarten playground is a colorful wonderland with places for boys and girls to climb over and under things and slide to a landing on the soft, spongy play surface.

The 3,000-square foot playground cost \$669,639 to construct. The playground includes a grassy area for children to relax and four square

benched areas that surround trees. There is a giant red, yellow, and blue playground structure on the soft playground surface made from recycled tires. There are heavy blue and yellow squares secured together for children to climb over. There is also a red bridge children can climb. The ground is covered with bright graphics including two hopscotch games, a giant caterpillar with a green head and numbers for his body parts, green, red, yellow, and blue square grids, and colorful bubbles.

Students have been using the new playground since October.

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Six-year-old Jaylanni Gomez deemed the playground good and said her favorite feature was the slides.

Student Alfred Binuya, 6, also liked the playground.

"The slides," he said when asked about his favorite feature.

The black iron fence that surrounds the playground is decorated with pictures of baby animals including kittens, puppies, rabbits, and koalas. Flowers drawn last year by teacher Angie Montellano's second graders, who are now in the third grade, decorate the outside perimeter of the fence.

"This is one the most exciting days to be here," Principal Melanie Pagliaro announced Friday morning at a ribbon cutting ceremony in front of approximately 140 transitional and kindergarten students. There were also 21 third graders who drew the designs on the outside fence last year when they were in Montellano's second grade class.

Palmdale School District Superintendent Raul Maldonado and members of the district's governing board including President Nancy Smith and other district officials and dignitaries were also on hand.

Maldonado said the playground has transformed the corner of the school.

"It's your responsibility to take care of it, can you help me with that," Maldonado asked the boys and girls.

The children responded with a resounding yes.

"I know we have another 18 elementary schools and guess what they want? They want this playground," Maldonado said.

Representatives from Congressman Steve Knight (R-Palmdale), Assemblyman Tom Lackey (R-Palmdale), State Sen. Scott Wilk (R-Santa Clarita), presented certificates of recognition in honor of the ribbon cutting ceremony. Representatives from the Palmdale and the Antelope Valley Hispanic chambers of commerce also recognized the schools.

Members of the Palmdale City Council were also on hand to present a certificate.

"You guys are my neighbors What a fabulous opportunity you have here; it's such a pretty playground," Councilwoman Laura Bettencourt said.

The district paid for the playground with Emergency Repair Program funds.

Desert Rose's playground upgrade is part of the district's Facilities Master Plan.

"We're going to be investing another \$800,000 to paint the school, to upgrade the playground, to also upgrade the playground equipment inside the school, and then to modernize the portables," Maldonado said after the ceremony.

The construction project expanded the playground site.


"They utilize all of this," Pagliaro said after the ceremony. "We have kids sitting on the benches and they respect the trees; they don't climb the trees."

The former playground was about half the size of the new playground. There was sand, no grass and dirt that turned into mud after a rain storm.

"We've been working on this together for the last few years. (Maldonado) made it happen," Pagliaro said.

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