



## **Our newest project! Nature Playscape Campaign**

In recent years, the days of kids playing in the woods behind their houses turned into expanses of asphalt filled with colorful climbing structures. Nature deficit disorder, increased screen time, and time indoors have left our children rootless and unconnected to their natural environment. Deschutes Children's Foundation's nature playscape campaign seeks to create the opportunity for the special moments in childhood that become the roots of environmental connection, cooperative play, and creative endeavor.

The East Bend Campus of Deschutes Children's Foundation provides early childhood opportunities for many families. The current playground does not meet the needs of staff, educators or its young users. Each day over 95 children from 8 classes share a small playground centered on a large donated play structure. It is easily mastered by Head Start preschool students, but is too big and daunting for the smaller children at MountainStar Family Relief Nursery. The play structure is often empty while children play in the grass or ride tricycles on a small concrete pad. The current playground lacks physical challenges and imaginative opportunities that combine an appropriate level of discovery and confidence-building risk.

**The nature playscape is an opportunity to match the quality of care, play experiences, and learning during class time with the children's time outdoors by developing spaces for unstructured play, creative play, and play-based exploration.**

Elements of nature play will also be added to the Becky Johnson Community Center in Redmond and La Pine Community Campus. These facilities are owned by Deschutes County and the Bend La Pine School District, respectively, and managed by DCF through long-term operating agreements. While this limits our ability to completely redesign the play areas, the need is compelling. Becky Johnson Community Center is home to four Head Start Classes where up to 75 children play daily and La Pine Community Campus houses five preschool classes comprising approximately 75 children a day.

At East Bend Campus, the new plan features a variety of areas and activities to accommodate the children's various ages and developmental stages. To build gross motor skills there will be a trike path that includes tunnels, hills, rumbles and bumps as well as a web climbing net, boulders and rock walls. Children will grow their own snacks and cultivate a deeper understanding of nature through native plants and an expanded garden. Opportunities for imagination and collaborative, creative play abound.

Deschutes Children's Foundation values the potential of every young life that enters our doors. The nature playscape will ignite the imagination and build the confidence of every child who plays there. These are the building blocks of childhood memories: discovering the natural world, playing freely, getting your hands dirty. Remember for a moment how you played outdoors as a child. That sense of freedom – fresh air on your face and sunshine on your shoulders – is the gift we plan to give the children who play at our facilities.

This project aligns with our core values to create welcoming and comfortable environments for the children and families who access services at Deschutes Children's Foundation. Children who play here face an astounding number of challenges and risk factors in their home lives. We propose new challenges and subtle risks for these kids: let them climb, play, jump, build, imagine, dream, run, bike, and grow. The nature playscape is the launching pad of new discoveries, increased confidence, healthy bodies, and discovered potential.

**Please join us in welcoming these special children to the wonderful world of the outdoors.  
To learn more about this project, please call Kim McNamer or Amy Ward at 541-388-3101.**