

Wood River Opens New Accessible Playground and Challenge Course

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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WOOD RIVER - Wood River's Central Park celebrated its new playground with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Tuesday, July 25. The playground is more accessible and offers a challenge course, which is a unique addition to the Riverbend area.

“We’ve been thinking about it, visualizing it, and to see it actually come to fruition is exciting for us,” Parks and Recreation Director Jason Woody said. “I think the kids are going to love it, and the community, and even some teenagers who get out there on the challenge course and try it out.”

The Central Park playground was updated with a new swingset and play structure with many slides. New poured-in-place rubber surfacing makes it possible for wheelchairs to easily access the space.

But the most popular attraction so far is the challenge course. This course includes climbing nets, monkey bars and jumping platforms. Kids can press a button to start and stop a timer, which allows them to time themselves as they go through the course. Many new playgrounds are building courses like this, but Wood River’s will be the first in the area.

The challenge course is intended for older kids and teens, but it’s fun for all ages. Before the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Woody announced to the crowd that he beat Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation Pat Minogue the day before with a time of 40 seconds — at least, until Minogue ran it again and made it in 28 seconds. But Minogue’s victory was not without sacrifice; Woody teased him about a fall he took while rushing through the course, and Minogue held up his hands, which were covered in bandages.

Woody thanked Mayor Tom Stalcup, City Manager Steve Palen, the City Council, the previous Parks and Recreation administration, the Public Works department and the Park Maintenance department for their support and work to make the playground possible.



Mayor Stalcup voiced his excitement for the playground. He took a moment to recognize several attendants at the ceremony, including State Senator Erica Harriss (56th-Glen Carbon), State Representative Amy Elik (111th District) and multiple members of the Riverbend Growth Association.

The playground has been in the works since 2019. Woody explained that the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the process. Construction by Custom Playgrounds started on Monday, June 5 of this year.

“It’s been a long time coming for this park to renew itself, more or less,” Stalcup told the crowd. “This is great. If you’ve seen the people, kids that were playing in the park in the last few weeks, it’s been great.”

The playground is located at 633 North Wood River Avenue in Wood River, next to the Wood River Roundhouse and near the new recreation center that the city hopes to open by the end of the year. You can read [an update](#) on the recreation center’s progress and watch an [exclusive video](#) of the interior.

For more information about the Wood River Parks and Recreation Department, visit their [official website](#).



