

Kids World: Donors, volunteers come to PlayScape's aid

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Ah, weather. Like it or not, it's this summer's unusually hot, humid weather — longer than usual stretches interrupted every so often by tor-



rential downpours — that has kept the core of volunteers building the Kids' World PlayScape in Shiawassee Park struggling as they push the roughly \$225,000 project toward completion.

But as of Tuesday, the report from the "front" looked promising: much of the play equipment was up, sections of the resident-sponsored picket fencing were being erected and the sidewalks were nearing completion.

As a concrete company crew poured and smoothed the walkway near the entrance in the boiling sun late Tuesday afternoon, PlayScape Committee member Bruce Lilley, along with fellow volunteers Jim Amish and Paul Goodman, were putting up the heavy picket fence, each slat of which bears the name of its donor.

There'll be enough pickets to put up back-to-back fences, the



Pound: Jim Amish pounds away as he installs the pickets.

men said.

To make the picket installation go more quickly, Amish, a mechanical engineer with A.M. General, which makes the popular Hummer sport utility vehicle, designed what he dubbed "PicketMaster".

It's a wooden form featuring pre-mounted, short, evenly spaced pieces of plastic pipe, between which are set the pickets. When all is ready, the trio use their electric power screwdrivers to attach each picket to wood railings. When a section is complete, it's mounted onto the big wooden posts anchoring the fence.

Adding another dimension to the work was the fact that Lilley, a stay-at-home dad, also was keeping an eye on sons David, 3, and Driscoll, 2, while Amish was watching daughter Amanda, 7. The trio of youngsters played quietly together on various

pieces of heavy duty equipment offering shade from the sun. Goodman, of Farmington Hills, who is looking forward to bringing his nieces to the PlayScape, said efforts recently were set back a couple of weeks by a rainstorm that left water ankle deep at the park.

Actually, the central crew of about a dozen volunteers have spent two weekends working in soaking rains, trying to put in wood chips and assemble equipment.

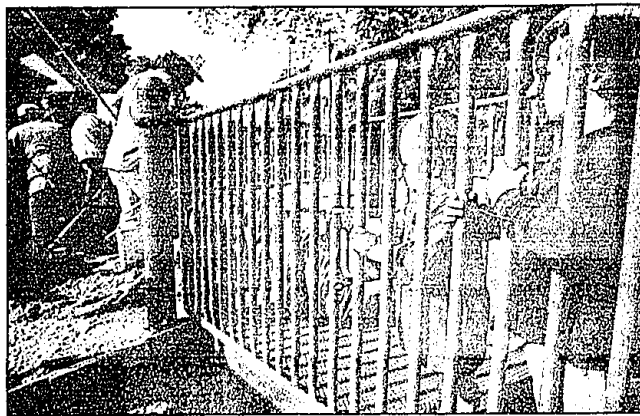
But televised forecasts have kept away a lot of volunteers, he said.

"When the TV says 'Come out' and then says 'If you go out, you're gonna die' from possible downpours, lightning and the like, that negatively affects a lot of would-be volunteers, Goodman said.

Others have loaned workers tools and materials to get the job done, he noted.

Among them are Alan Fondt of Fendt Building Supply, who donated over \$7,000 in bricks for the PlayScape, and Doug Peeling, owner of B&A Brick Paving, who brought in a three-man crew with him to lay the bricks — a \$12,000 donation in terms of labor and equipment.

"It's a question of getting it done," Goodman said. "If you had the skills, you used them. If you didn't, you learned them."



Audience: David, 3, (foreground) and Driscoll, 2, Lilley watch workers pour concrete onto a path at the playscape.

"If it needs to be done, do it." Lilley said he still is optimistic the ambitious PlayScape project will be open by early August for the children. The dedication is scheduled for Aug. 25.



Piece by piece: Bruce Lilley, left, and Jim Amish carry a section of picket fence to its installation spot.



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INFLAMMATION OR STRAINS?
A recent column discussed the importance of distinguishing between a joint that is painful because it is inflamed, from one that is painful because it is strained. If the joint is inflamed, your doctor will consider adding drugs to your arthritis regimen. If the joint is suffering strain, then medication for pain relief and a referral to an orthopedic surgeon are in order.
Inflamed joints often are swollen because they contain excess joint fluid. Palpation of such joints brings on additional discomfort. The joints hurt all the time though less at rest, and the pain may encompass several joints to an equal degree.
In contrast, a strained joint shows a marked deformity. In the hands the digits are severely angulated, a finding known as ulnar drift. The fingers are crooked, a deformity called swan neck change. Often the joints are not swollen, but if so, firm palpation will not bring more pain.
Laboratory studies and x-rays are not helpful in distinguishing the pain from inflammation from the strain of structural impairment. An exception is the sedimentation rate test, which if normal speaks in favor of structural not inflammatory change. However, a high sedimentation rate may occur for a number of reasons, and does not confirm the presence of joint inflammation.
At times, even the most experienced physician has trouble distinguishing the cause for joint pain. In such instances, doctors treat for inflammation. They observe the results not so much to test the efficacy of their medication but to confirm the diagnosis of active disease.