

Ann Arbor News“Your World” Submission for 6-26-06:

Research on children’s preferences shows that if youth had the ability to design their own playgrounds, these spaces would be equipped with trees, flowers, water, sand, animals, insects, and a wide variety of play choices – a natural environment ripe with opportunities to explore, pretend, and interact with nature and other children.

Visit County Farm Park this summer, located on the southwest corner of Washtenaw and Platt, and see what Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation is doing to enhance and encourage the natural creativity in children’s play. They have developed a unique space incorporating a discovery playground with a handicapped-accessible demonstration garden. These spaces intertwine with opportunities for young and old to interact, play and garden in a natural setting.

County Farm Park was primarily agricultural land prior to becoming a parkscape. Parks and Recreation has taken this history into account and developed a farm theme for the playground. A red barn structure, with many opportunities for adventurous climbing and crawling, stands at the center of the site. A stream made with blue rubber mulch and lily pad stepping stones runs throughout. Farm-style water tanks allow children to incorporate water into their sand sculpture creations. Every part of the playground has been designed to promote child-directed independence, allowing kids to move through a magical environment and invent their own stories.

Integrally intertwined with the playground is a handicapped-accessible garden, developed to increase community interest in gardening and demonstrate the many ways that working with plants can be therapeutic and fun for all ages and abilities. The garden, run in partnership with Project Grow, will feature a number of seed planter beds built at different heights, allowing those who cannot kneel the opportunity to garden at a preferred height. Gardening tables will give those in wheelchairs access to potting space and adaptive tools will provide wrist support to those with arthritis. Programs will be provided for children and adults to demonstrate planting techniques and creativity in gardening.

For more information on County Farm Park and summer programs incorporating the discovery playground and garden, visit parks.ewashtenaw.org or call 734-971-6337.

Submitted by:

Joanna Smither, Program Assistant
Washtenaw County Planning and Environment

Phone: 734-222-6874

Email: smitherj@ewashtenaw.org

Website: <http://recycle.ewashtenaw.org>

