



# ROB HUTTON

STATE SENATOR | 5<sup>th</sup> DISTRICT

Wisconsin State Capitol | P.O. Box 7882 · Madison, WI 53707-7882 | (608) 266-2512 | [Sen.Hutton@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Sen.Hutton@legis.wisconsin.gov)

August 23, 2023

TO: Senate Committee on Universities and Revenue

FR: Senator Rob Hutton

RE: Senate Bill 390—grant to The Ability Center for a project to convert a park in southeast Wisconsin for the provision of recreation and rehabilitation opportunities for individuals with disabilities and making an appropriation.

I am pleased to be holding a hearing on Senate Bill 390. This bill appropriates a one-time \$3 million grant from DOA for the purposes of establishing a Universal Park – “Universal” meaning everyone can utilize all aspects of the park.

Currently there is no park in southeastern Wisconsin allowing those with physical disabilities and mobility challenges to utilize outdoor recreation space that many of us take for granted.

In light of the \$7 billion surplus during the recent budget this is a small portion of the largely privately funded project (\$16 million) to repurpose an existing park in Milwaukee County that will provide everyone with and without disabilities an opportunity enjoy an inclusive space for all seasons to improve mental and physical health.

A couple key points:

- Universal Park is a space for all ages and abilities.
- 190,000 people report a disability in SE Wisconsin.
- Nearly 12% of Wisconsinites report a disability.
- 54% of people with a disability engage in no leisure-time.
- Park will provide fitness and therapy equipment to facilitate recreation and rehab for children, young adults, adults, Veterans and the elderly.
- The legislation authorizes DOA to appropriate an additional \$3 million above what they are currently allowed with the understanding it would come from GPR, existing surplus dollars remaining in the budget.

In closing, when a space accommodates a wheelchair, and those with disabilities, it also works for a parent pushing a stroller, families bringing supplies for their picnic, or a grandparent using a walker or transfer chair. Universal means EVERYONE can benefit and participate.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration of this bill. I respectfully ask for your support.

*\*This proposal is supported by nonprofit and employment organizations such as physicians from the Medical College of Wisconsin, Froedtert, and Children’s hospitals, GameTime, YMCA, Hoppe Tree Service, and raSmith.*



# THOMAS A. MICHALSKI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 13<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

(608) 267-9113

Toll-Free: (888) 534-0013

Rep.Michalski@legis.wisconsin.gov

P.O. Box 8953

Madison, WI 53708-8953

According to the CDC, 27% of adults have a disability, whether physical or mental, and 2 in 7 families are impacted. Often these individuals are faced with stigmas due to their conditions, where bullying may be prevalent, and many feel less than their peers. For a family with a disabled child, the stress will impact every part of their life, and they will likely feel alone.

SB390 aims to help by converting an existing park in SE Wisconsin to provide an area where individuals with disabilities can rehabilitate, recreate, and play. For \$3 million, we can help lift the spirits of these families. This isn't to create a park exclusively for people with disabilities. The park will be open to everyone, all ages, with all conditions, or none at all. But importantly, the improved park will be a place where a family and their child will see and play with other children with and without special needs. It will be a place where everyone will recognize, they're not alone.

I believe a project like this can have a long-lasting impact on the citizens of Wisconsin. Many years ago, at Halloween, the pavilion at Hollar Park in Milwaukee was decked out as a wheelchair-enabled haunted house for individuals confined to wheelchairs. I had the opportunity to volunteer and push the wheelchairs with their families through the haunted house. My motivation to volunteer was that my 10yr old daughter was terrified of scary things like haunted houses, and I felt this would be a good opportunity for her to see behind-the-scenes operations and, in the process, would lose some of her fears. She was dressed as a captive child chained to a fire pit; I was dressed as a zombie. We played our roles for an evening, and I pushed a lot of wheelchairs and was with many families. As I hoped, when my daughter could see behind the sets, she learned it wasn't scary. After that, she took the time to look behind other things she found scary.

What I didn't expect was how the experience would impact me. Being with and talking with the families of the person in the chair I was pushing; changed me. I might have been a zombie dad, but I could see the joy in the family. I could see a dad, who was able (some for the first time) to share the haunted house experience with their child, but until that night could not; because of a wheelchair.

That night changed me. I gained a new perspective and a new compassion for the disabled and their families. I strongly believe that this project is needed. Everyone who spends time in the park will have an opportunity to

play, exercise, and have fun while gaining an enhanced perspective and compassion for others. Unless they are one of the walking dead.



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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 13<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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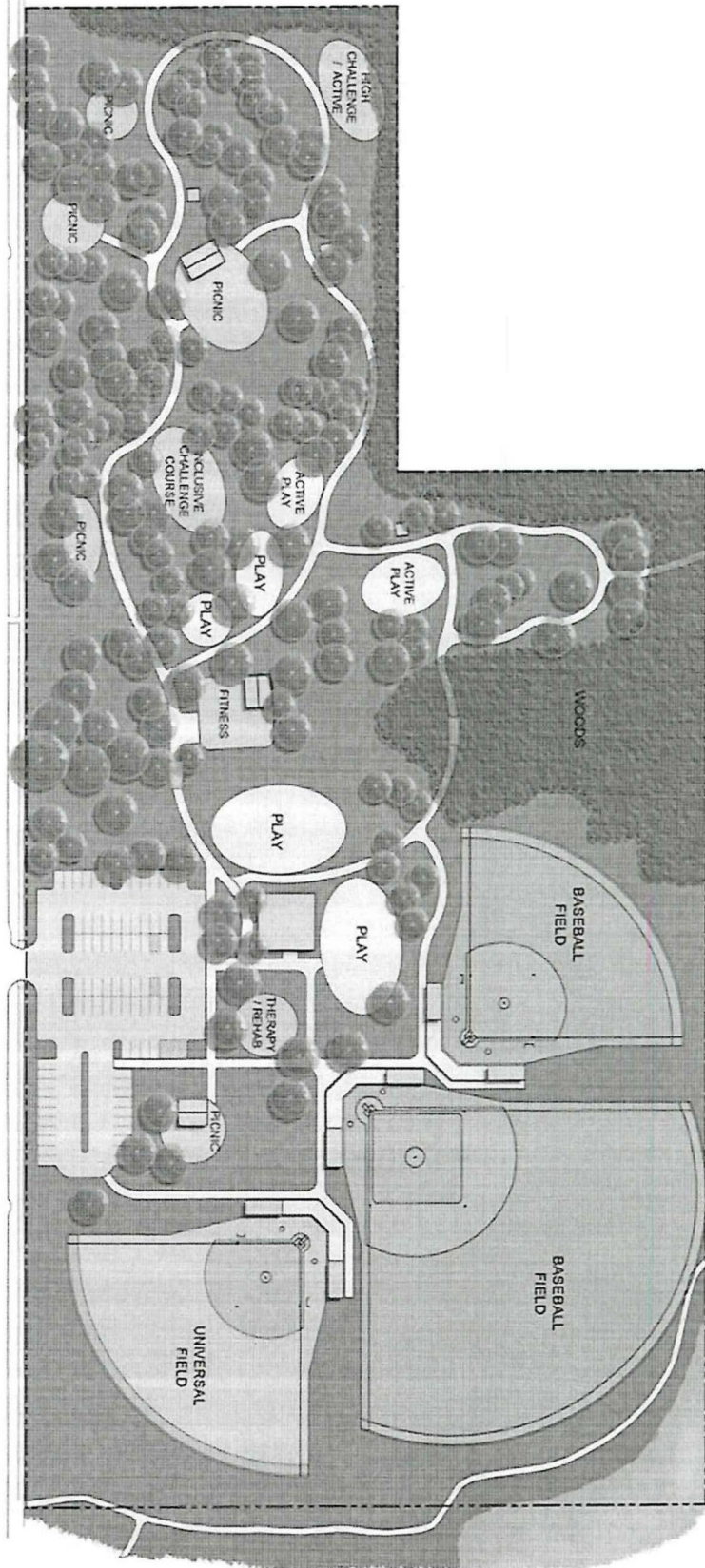
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WISCONSIN AVE. PARK MASTER PLAN  
10300 W WISCONSIN AVE, WAUWATOSA, WI





August 23, 2023

## Support for the Ability Center Universal Park Grant (Senate Bill 390)

Chairman Hutton and members of the Senate Committee on Universities and Revenue—Senators James, Nass, Ballweg, Cabral-Guevara, Larson, Roys, and Smith—I am State Representative Robyn Vining, and I represent the 14th Assembly District, which includes the people of Wauwatosa and West Allis. I am honored to submit testimony today after years of meetings at what will become the nation's first universally-inclusive park—these have been years of many people hoping, years of many people dreaming for the day that universally-inclusive parks become a reality both in Wisconsin, and across the country.

When I first visited the future home of this universally-inclusive park with Damian Buchman (who created The Ability Center) a few years ago, we walked the park—or, well, tried to. Damian showed me that for many people, the park ends where the pathway ends. Some of us can walk through the grass, and others on wheels see their access to the park end with the pavement. **The park didn't work for everyBODY.** Access to the park ends, where the paved pathway ends, and he explained how he'd work to empower people to access this entire park.

We also looked at the playground through an accessibility lens, and Damian explained how all parents and grandparents and caregivers weren't able to join children on the playground. **The park didn't work for everyBODY.** Damian explained that each of us could be that caregiver, or that child, for whom life may change, and suddenly we aren't able to be on that playground with our loved ones. And he explained how he'd work to empower people to access this entire park.

Also planned for the nation's first universally-inclusive park is the thoughtful and innovative mental health valley and sensory escape. Through discussions and planning, Damian heard about the need for space where people could escape sensory overload, sit in nature, relax, and enjoy the time and space needed for personal restoration and mental health. As the Ranking Member on the Assembly Committee on Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Prevention, I appreciate seeing a park thoughtfully and intentionally incorporating an avenue for both physical *and* mental health.

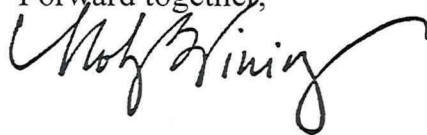


STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**ROBYN VINING**  
14TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT  
WAUWATOSA • WEST ALLIS

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Over the years I've joined Damian in dreaming of, and working hard for, **a world fit for everyBODY**. This park features all-inclusive play, and avenue for physical and mental health, making it **a park that works for everyBODY**. Damian did his part, and now it's our turn to do ours. Our communities are strongest when people of all abilities can participate in life, work, and play, and passing this bill will show Wisconsinites that the state legislature values an accessible world for everyBODY. Passing this bill will also show the nation how Wisconsin leads—Moss Universal Park will be the first universally-inclusive park, but will no doubt not be the last. I invite you to join me in supporting this park, and **leading our state and nation forward toward a world for everyBODY...**

My esteemed colleagues: **this is how we move Wisconsin forward, *together*.**

Forward together,  


Robyn Vining  
Wisconsin State Representative  
14th Assembly District

My name is Raena Vrtochnick. I am the mother of an eight year old boy, Gunnar, and a six year old girl, Raegan.

Gunnar has Spastic Paraplegia as a result of a pathogenic variant of his KIF1A gene.

Gunnar is an ambulatory wheelchair user, requiring a wheelchair for distance and to play sports. Gunnar's mobility and ambulation fluctuate with fatigue. Spinal surgery and surgery on both of his legs have left Gunnar wheelchair dependent during recovery.

It is disappointing to take the children to a playground to find that Gunnar is unable to access the one piece of accessible equipment due to concrete curbs and woodchips. Conventional parks and playgrounds are not safe for Gunnar.

Adaptive play and sport through The Ability Center has been instrumental in keeping Gunnar active and healthy while providing mentorship and peer support that has built Gunnar's confidence and self-esteem.

During a recent KIF1A conference in New York, a parent of a teenage boy with Spastic Paraplegia disclosed that a very difficult part of their son's diagnosis is that their son has never been able to play sports as their family resides in an area with no adaptive sport programs or inclusive park for their son to play. This boy's mother said that she would do anything to watch her son play a sport, which brought to home how incredibly fortunate we are to have The Ability Center and how impactful Moss Universal Park will be to our community.

Moss Universal Park will not only provide Gunnar with a safe and accessible place to play with his sister and friends of all ages and abilities; it will afford Gunnar the opportunity to engage and participate in continued sports, fitness, and social events as he grows, all of which are crucial to his mental and physical health.

Thank you.



# RampUp<sup>4</sup>

*Universal Community*

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The Ability Center's Universal Park

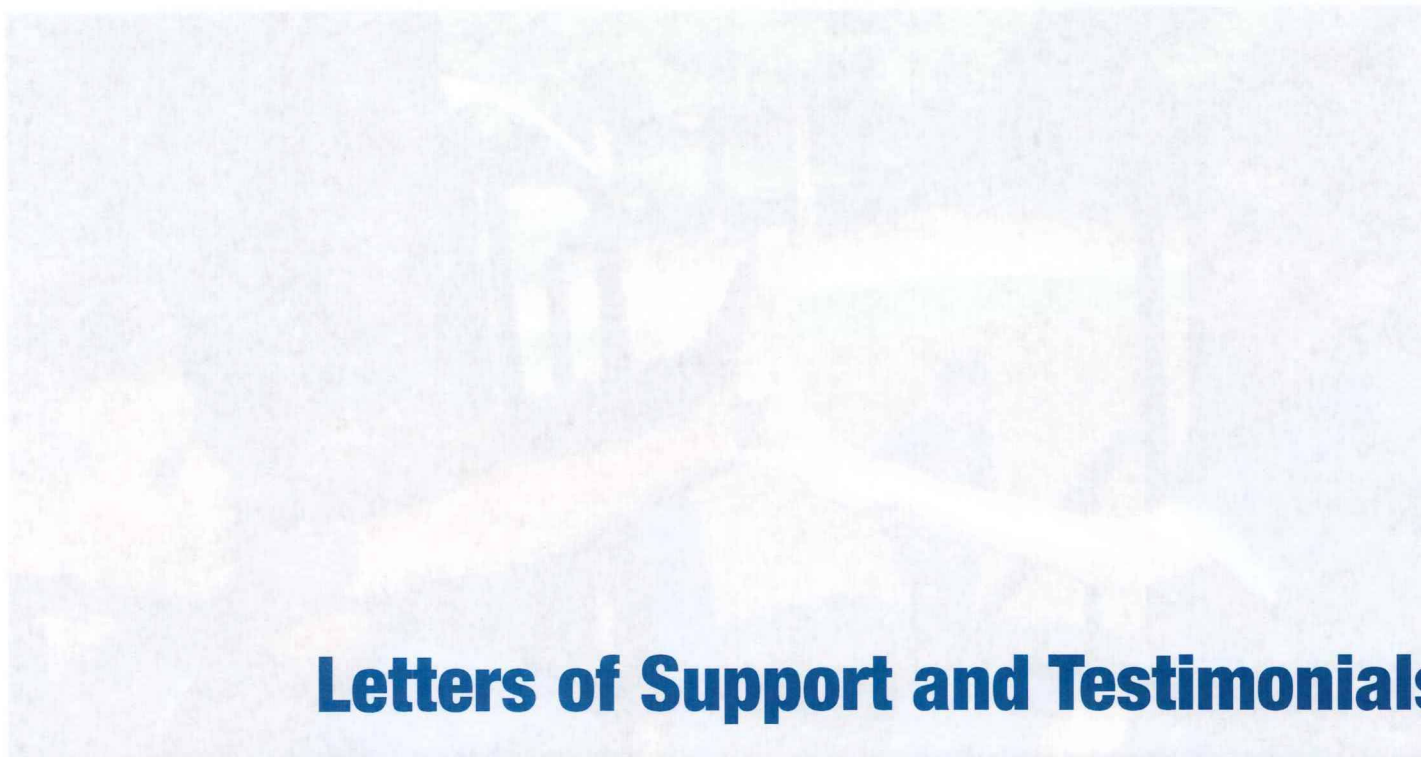
## **The Future of Play, Parks and You**



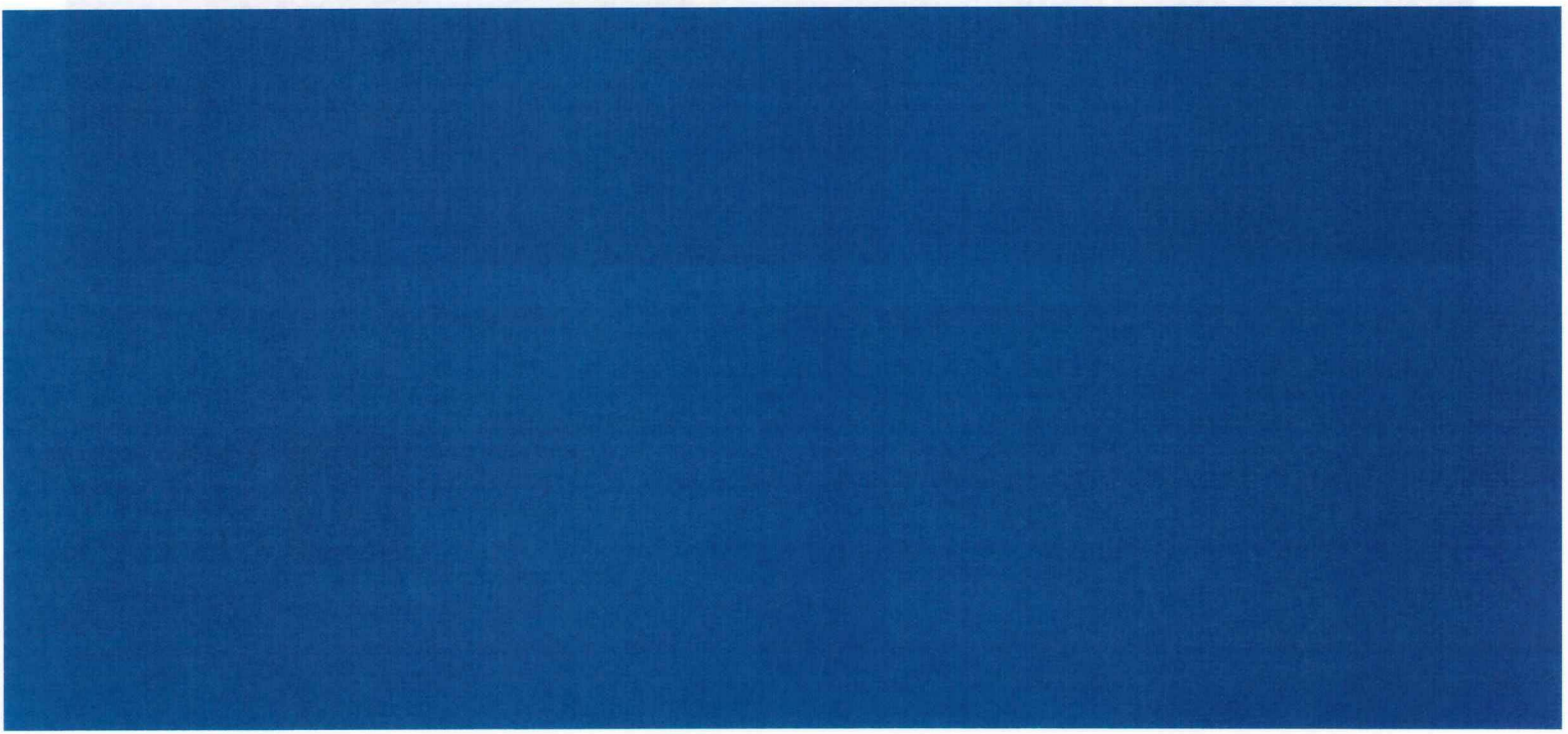
**THE  
ABILITY  
CENTER**  
Play together.



The Adult Center's Universal Park  
The Future of Play, Parks and You



## Letters of Support and Testimonials



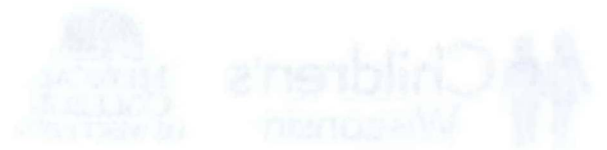


To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to express support for the Universal Park being proposed by Damian Buchman of The Ability Center.

Our team had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Buchman on 07/18/22 to hear about the plans for the development of the new Universal Park located close to the medical complex. Our Complex Care Program currently works with 750 medically complex children and their families throughout the state of Wisconsin and is comprised of providers, nurses, care coordination assistants, and social workers. Damian listened to our experiences and thoughts as to how a park like this would be most helpful for our families and was open to our suggestions for how to improve the experience for all children. Damian also took the time to meet with our Family Leadership Committee on 07/12/22 to discuss what a park like this would look like and how it would directly benefit their families. The conversation was very productive and our families reported feeling respected and most importantly heard and their experiences validated. The families encouraged Damian to also look into park development in other areas of the state so that more families would have access to a place like this.

Our program is very familiar with Mr. Buchman and the incredible work he and his team have done throughout the Milwaukee area with The Ability Center in providing access to people of all abilities. We provide information for TAC to many of our families and encourage them to utilize the programs created to promote activity, socialization, and sense of community and belonging. Several of our patients have participated in their wheelchair basketball programs. Their families have shared with us the wonderful experiences and opportunities that this has provided not only their child, but their family as a whole. We are hopeful that with the addition of the Universal Park in this area, our families will have increased opportunities to find some normalcy in a world where they are often forgotten. By having a park like this, ALL kids, regardless of their abilities, would have a place to go to be kids – a safe space to spend time with their people, meeting new people, improving connection and the mental health and wellbeing of all. We believe that many of our families while inpatient would utilize this park as an area for escape and respite from the challenges of hospital life. So many of our kids are here for weeks or even months at a time and their families are often reluctant to leave the hospital. The closeness of a park like this is ideal so that it might function as a bit of respite from the hospital. It could be a place to take a walk, spend time with siblings, or perhaps even take the inpatient child on a therapeutic pass. It is also a benefit that this park would be open and accessible all year round and provide experiences not found anywhere else. This park would give the families in our program



a great place to meet and build organic supports and develop an increased sense of community.

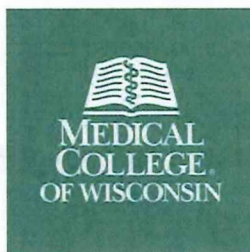
We are looking forward to continuing to partner with Mr. Buchman and The Ability Center to ensure that needs of the families and children we serve will continue to be at the forefront of program development. We believe that the Universal Park will be an incredible gift to our community as well as those who visit our community for any reason.

Sincerely,

K. Jane Lee, MD

Amy Morgan-Tautges, MSW, LCSW

Medical College of WI | Children's Wisconsin/Complex Care Program



knowledge changing life

Department of Pediatrics

October 14, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Medical College of Wisconsin/Children's Wisconsin (MCW/CW) Community Pediatrics Training Initiative (CPTI), I am writing to enthusiastically support The Ability Center (TAC) and its RampUp: Universal Park project. There is no denying that TAC is deeply committed to building a community where all abilities are provided a universal opportunity for health, wellness, and recreation, and it is for this reason that I strongly endorse the RampUp: Universal Park project.

The MCW/CW CPTI has partnered with TAC over the last year. CPTI pediatric medical residents engage with TAC staff and community members monthly during the academic year in their Open Gym-Adaptive Programs. This program provides an opportunity for people of *all* ability to play *together*. Additionally, Damian Buchman, the executive director of TAC, led a noon conference for all pediatric residents this past year on Sports for *everybody*. Through experiencing "a different pair of shoes" by playing wheelchair basketball and education during the noon conference, future pediatricians learn about the importance of language and that regardless of "ability", *everybody* is *capable*.

The MCW/CW Community Pediatrics Training Initiative heartily endorses The Ability Center's current request for support. It is clear that TAC has already made a profound impact on the community through their Open-Gym-Adaptive Programs, Adaptive Scholastic Athletic Program for schools, and RampUpMKE Programs at Bradford Beach and local parks. TAC builds on community assets to create sustainable change; however, they cannot do it alone. Partnership and funding support is needed to support their vision of the only universally inclusive community park in the country which will benefit our health systems, the community, and our patients for generations to come.

Thank you for reviewing this letter and for considering The Ability Center's request. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Constance Gundacker, MD, MPH  
Assistant Professor, General and Community Pediatrics  
Director, Community Pediatrics Training Initiative  
Medical College of Wisconsin  
(414) 337-3264  
cgundacker@mcw

Children's Corporate Center  
Post Office Box 1997  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201-1997  
(414) 337-7770  
www.mcw.edu

To: Children's Wisconsin  
From: Rosa Seymour, Patient & a Member of the Family Partnership Program  
RE: Universal Park  
Date: October 12, 2022

# Seymour Family



To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Rosa and I have two children. Sebastian, my 12-year-old son, who is a typical boy and is growing into a young man and a daughter, Rachael, who is medically complicated. She is diagnosed with Trisomy 18 and is 6 years old. This is a diagnosis that can manifest itself in many ways systemically, but in brief, for my daughter it means that she has global delays, is nonverbal, has low muscle tone otherwise known as hypotonia and wheelchair bound. She needs many therapies and one on one assistance to help her with all her daily activities. That is just a very brief overview of who Rachael is and how she is viewed by medical professionals, but in our family, she is so much more. Rachael has taught me how to become an advocate for the ones that can't advocate for themselves. She is funny and has so much character that she lights up a room with her happiness. She can make you laugh without saying a word. When I heard of the Universal Park, I was excited to get involved and help any way that I can.

I have been to several parks in the past with my children over the years. When my son was a little boy the parks we went to were fun. They were constructed for kids that can hop, jump, and run. I enjoyed watching him play and interact with other kids. Conversely, when I take my daughter to a park, she is limited by what is available to her to play with and how she can interact with other children because of her disabilities, and she cannot play like a typical child. It saddens my heart to see that she can not do the same things as other children, but it hurts more because she is ignored too.

Having a universal park with guided play and activities would benefit not just my family, but many other families like mine by providing a play space that will allow inclusivity amongst children who just want to play and have fun. I would like to see more parks like this one everywhere, but I think having the park near Children's Hospital would be a good start by giving families a break from the stress of their routine lives from medical treatments, hospital stays or even long days of appointments. I also see it benefiting siblings, too, by giving them a place to play and allow them to be kids as well. I saw my son practically grow up in the hospital alongside with my daughter. We spent many months stuck in a hospital room waiting for the moment my daughter was well enough to be discharged. He has accompanied us to appointments and worried about his sister when he couldn't come along. When we were inpatient for Rachael's big surgeries, it took months of recovery before we could all go home. In the summer months me and Sebastian, 5 years old at the time, would roam the hallways of Children's hospital to pass the time or we would attend the special events or activities to help us get our minds off what was happening even if for a moment, but it was always on campus so there was always a reminder of why we were there. It would have been nice to have a place I could take him and have a ride to and from the park because at the time our family had one vehicle and we would get dropped off by my husband and he would take the car to go to work.

If this universal park gets the go ahead and is built it would benefit so many people. It would allow children and adults to have access to a space that was designed for everyone no matter their abilities. It would beautify a space that urgently needs to be updated and renewed. It could have the potential to change the way people interact with the disabled community by facilitating children to play alongside each other and normalize interacting with one another so that when these kids grow up to be adults, they will have empathy for the disabled community and maybe it won't just be parents and caregivers advocating for the basic needs of their children who need more support than others do.

Thank you for your time listening to me and I greatly appreciate the opportunity to voice my opinion in this matter.

Sincerely,

Rosa Seymour  
Complex Care Program, Patient Family



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

**DAVID CROWLEY**

MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

April 19, 2023

To Governor Evers and esteemed members of the Wisconsin State Legislature:

As a lifelong Milwaukee-resident and as Milwaukee County Executive I know first-hand the impact our County Parks have on quality of life, on physical health and on mental health.

Last year, I launched the Healthy County Challenge – calling on all Milwaukee County residents to join me in activities in our parks and trails. The response was phenomenal as we walked, biked, hiked and exercised in our parks. Standing with me in the initiative was The Ability Center, as we made sure all of the activities were inclusive and accessible to residents of all abilities.

Furthermore, The Ability Center has been a longtime partner of Milwaukee County, helping make Bradford Beach the most inclusive beach in the country through a comprehensive accessibility effort, and by providing wheelchairs, hand cycles and ice sledges for residents throughout County Parks.

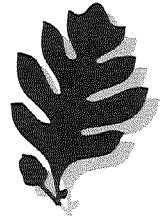
I write this letter in strong support for The Ability Center's Universal Park Capital Project campaign. This public-private project is a major step toward ensuring residents of all abilities can enjoy and take advantage of the tremendous physical and mental benefits of parks and continues moving us toward achieving my vision of making Milwaukee County the healthiest county in the state. Our residents with disabilities have some of the highest barriers to enjoying our world-class park system, and The Ability Center will represent a sea-change in creating a Milwaukee County that is inclusive to all.

Thank you for your time, and please take my support into consideration as you review the project and assess for budgeting.

Respectfully,

David C. Crowley  
Milwaukee County Executive

March 10, 2023



Governor Tony Evers  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 7863  
Madison, WI 53707

Sen. Devin LeMahieu  
State Capitol  
PO Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707

Rep. Robin Vos  
State Capitol, Room 217 W  
PO Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Governor Evers and honorable leaders of the Wisconsin State Legislature,

I am writing to demonstrate my strong support for state funding to bring The Ability Center's Universal Park Capital Project to life in southeastern Wisconsin – in Wauwatosa.

The Universal Park project will create unprecedented opportunities for individuals with disabilities to enjoy a Milwaukee County Park built intentionally to meet their unique needs. Everyone deserves access to recreation and quality of life amenities. This project will transform this park for the betterment of all – but especially this underserved community of families.

I'm grateful that my City of Wauwatosa colleagues unanimously support the park, and I anticipate similarly strong support from my colleagues on the Milwaukee County Board. This bold public-private proposal strikes me as an initiative that anyone should believe in.

I hope this letter finds you well. Best wishes with the budgeting process and the deliberative process to follow. Please keep this proposal in mind as you search for big-win ideas that can win consensus and create meaningful change in people's lives.

Sincerely,

*Guy D. Smith*

Guy Smith, Executive Director



MilwaukeeCountyParks

[countyparks.com](http://countyparks.com)

9480 W. Watertown Plank Road  
Wauwatosa, WI 53226





## RESOLUTION R-23-31

Resolution supporting The Ability Center's request for State Funding for its Universal Park Capital Project WHEREAS, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that more than 1 in 5 Wisconsin adults have one or more disabilities;

WHEREAS, adults with disabilities are three times more likely to suffer from secondary health concerns (such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer) compared with those without disabilities, and physical activity reduces the impact of these diseases, yet nearly half of all adults with disabilities get no leisure time aerobic activity;

WHEREAS, The Ability Center's goal is to provide a higher quality of life for people of all abilities by transforming metropolitan Milwaukee into the world's most universally inclusive recreation destination;

WHEREAS, the City of Wauwatosa supports the partnership between The Ability Center and the Milwaukee County Parks to promote opportunities for residents with disabilities by constructing, operating, and maintaining the Universal Park project in Wisconsin Avenue Park in Wauwatosa;

WHEREAS, the City of Wauwatosa recognizes the need for, and value in, furthering access, inclusion, and accessibility for people affected by disabilities within Wauwatosa and beyond;

WHEREAS, the Universal Park project will provide accessibility and recreational programming and promote good health for those with disabilities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Wauwatosa does hereby urge the Governor and Legislature of Wisconsin to support The Ability Center's request for state funding for the Center's Universal Park Capital Project.

RESULT: APPROVED [UNANIMOUS] MOVER: Ernst Franzen, Alderperson District 4 SECONDER: Meagan O'Reilly, Council President, Alderperson District 6 AYES: Meindl, Moldenhauer, Arney, Dubinski, Makhlof II, Brannin, Franzen, Lewis, Phillips, O'Reilly, Fuerst, Dolan EXCUSED: Lowe, Tilleson, Morgan, Wilke



COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

# Milwaukee County



**MILWAUKEE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**Supervisor Shawn Rolland – District 6**

Governor Tony Evers  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 7863  
Madison, WI 53707

Sen. Devin LeMahieu  
State Capitol  
PO Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shawn Rolland".

Shawn Rolland  
Milwaukee County Board Supervisor – District 6  
Representing neighborhoods in Wauwatosa and Milwaukee's Washington Heights

**P.S. Enclosed you will find an Urban Milwaukee article highlighting the benefits of the Universal Park Capital Project.**

*Cc: Sen. Rob Hutton, Rep. Robyn Vining*

ROOM 201, COURTHOUSE • 901 NORTH 9TH STREET • MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN 53233 • TELEPHONE 278-4223

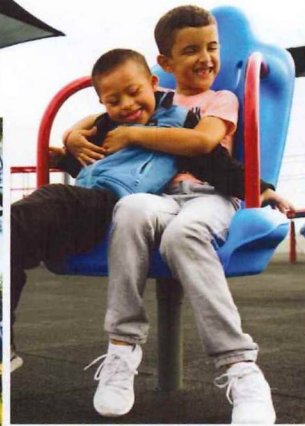
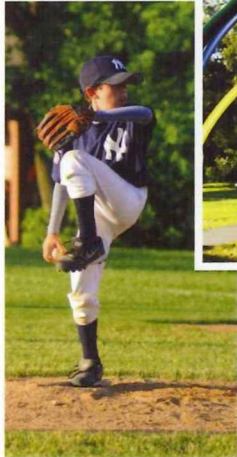


Moss Universal Park:  
**Play for everyBODY**



Moss Universal Park:

# Play for everyBODY



Dr. Mike Levas, MD, MS,  
Associate Professor of  
Pediatrics, Medical Director,  
Project Ujima

**“The idea of an inclusive ability park being in such close proximity to the hospital is amazing. Often our patients need opportunities to explore and grow in adaptive ways and this park would offer a great opportunity for our patients to have an outlet nearby that promotes health and accessibility. The thought of having patients actively rehab in an outdoor playground is enticing for our providers and would add innovative opportunities for comprehensive care and wellness.”**

# The Ability Center (TAC)

## Overview

Founded in 2008, The Ability Center's 14 year history is rich and has led an inclusive recreation movement in greater Milwaukee unlike any other in the country. Seen as a thought leader for universal play, wellness, and recreation, The Ability Center has been sought out by national brands such as PlayCore and The Sports Facilities Companies to help change the way we all play from K to Gray (kindergartners to grandparents), able-bodied to disABLED, peers to communities.

### Mission

to provide people impacted by disabilities with a daily opportunity to be fit, active, healthy, and to play.

### Vision

to build communities where all abilities are provided a universal opportunity for health, wellness and recreation.

### Goal

to provide a higher quality of life for people of all abilities by transforming greater Milwaukee into the most universally inclusive recreation destination in the world.

Today, in collaboration with our partners, The Ability Center leads the country's most inclusive community recreation programs through our unique and integrated programmatic pillars:

### RampUp

Universal Community – Projects to provide greater access throughout the community

### Adaptive Sports

Open gyms, wheelchair basketball, and more

### TAC Social

Social outings and mental health support for kids with physical disabilities

### ASAP (Adaptive Scholastic Athletic Program)

Inclusive education, disability awareness assemblies, and adaptive physical education classes

### Program partner locations:

- Milwaukee County Parks
- Harry & Rose Samson Family Jewish Community Center
- YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee
- Wauwatosa Recreation Department
- United Community Center
- Pius XI Catholic High School



**“Hands down the best assembly we have ever had at school. For the first time ALL students felt a sense of belonging.”**

Sadie Brown, Adaptive Physical Education Teacher speaking about The Ability Center's Adaptive Scholastic Athletic Program

# The Project

## Moss Universal Park at Wisconsin Avenue Park

### What: America's Most Inclusive Park

The Ability Center's Moss Universal Park project will become America's first all inclusive, multigenerational park. By partnering with community-based nonprofits, industry leaders, and parks and recreation professionals, we're leading a **\$10MM+ project** that will create play opportunities where nobody is left on the sidelines.

Moss Universal Park is NOT simply another limited accessible playground located within a multi-acre park. This is a project that mirrors its name — an all-inclusive park where everyBODY will be empowered to play throughout all of its 18 acres.

### Where: Wisconsin Avenue Park

In partnership with the Milwaukee County Parks, The Ability Center selected the site because of its capacity to serve our primary demographic: families impacted by disabilities. With access to the MCTS Gold and BRT lines, along with the Transit Plus system, Wisconsin Avenue Park is a highly accessible destination.

Located at 10300 W. Wisconsin Avenue, this is a premier destination-based location that will serve children, veterans, hospital and rehab patients, and seniors and older adults, among others. This location ensures it will be a sustainable and accessible recreation destination for years to come.

### The Park is located:

- At a major cross section of Milwaukee, just off the Zoo Interchange.
- Near the border of Milwaukee and Waukesha County.
- Across the street from Froedtert's Rehab Hospital and St. Camillus retirement community.
- Within a mile of the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center.
- Five miles from the Zablocki VA.

# Project Partners



## Why does it matter?

Physical inactivity increases the severity of many chronic diseases and is the underlying cause of over **10% of deaths in the US.**

**1 in 5**  
people in Wisconsin  
have a disability.

**54%** of people with disabilities engage in no leisure-time.

**2/7** families are impacted by disabilities.

**\$15.8B** disability healthcare costs in Wisconsin, 34% of the state's healthcare spending.

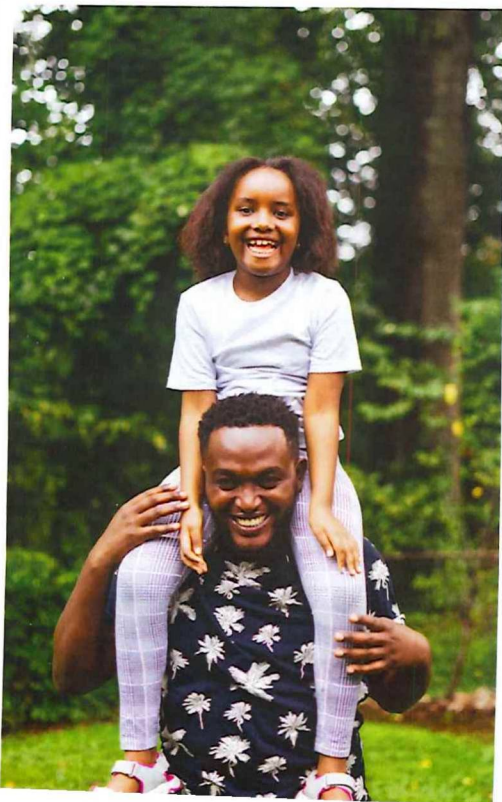
## The Reality

There are 23,000 children in southeast Wisconsin with disabilities who don't have a park to play in.

Disability rates highest among...children living in poverty: Over three million children (4.3% of the under-18 population) in the United States had a disability in 2019, up 0.4 percentage points since 2008.

Southeast Wisconsin is home to nearly 190,000 people with a disability, including 23,000 children, and just over 123,000 in Milwaukee County alone. Unlike their able-bodied peers, people with and impacted by disabilities are unable to enjoy an equitable community play experience. There are 169 Milwaukee County parks, spanning 15,000 acres. **None of these parks, not a single acre is universally inclusive.**

# Parks contribute to positive mental health, provide an escape from daily life, and an avenue for physical health.



### 90 min.

People who went on a 90-minute walk through nature reported lower levels of rumination and anxiety.

### 120 min.

Those who spent just two hours per week in nature reported higher psychological well-being.

Increasing physical activity can reduce heart disease, diabetes, and obesity eliminating the underlying causes of disability.

# 26%

of Americans Report a Disability

# 1.5M

Residents in Greater Milwaukee

# 190,000

People with a Disability in Southeast Wisconsin

# 169

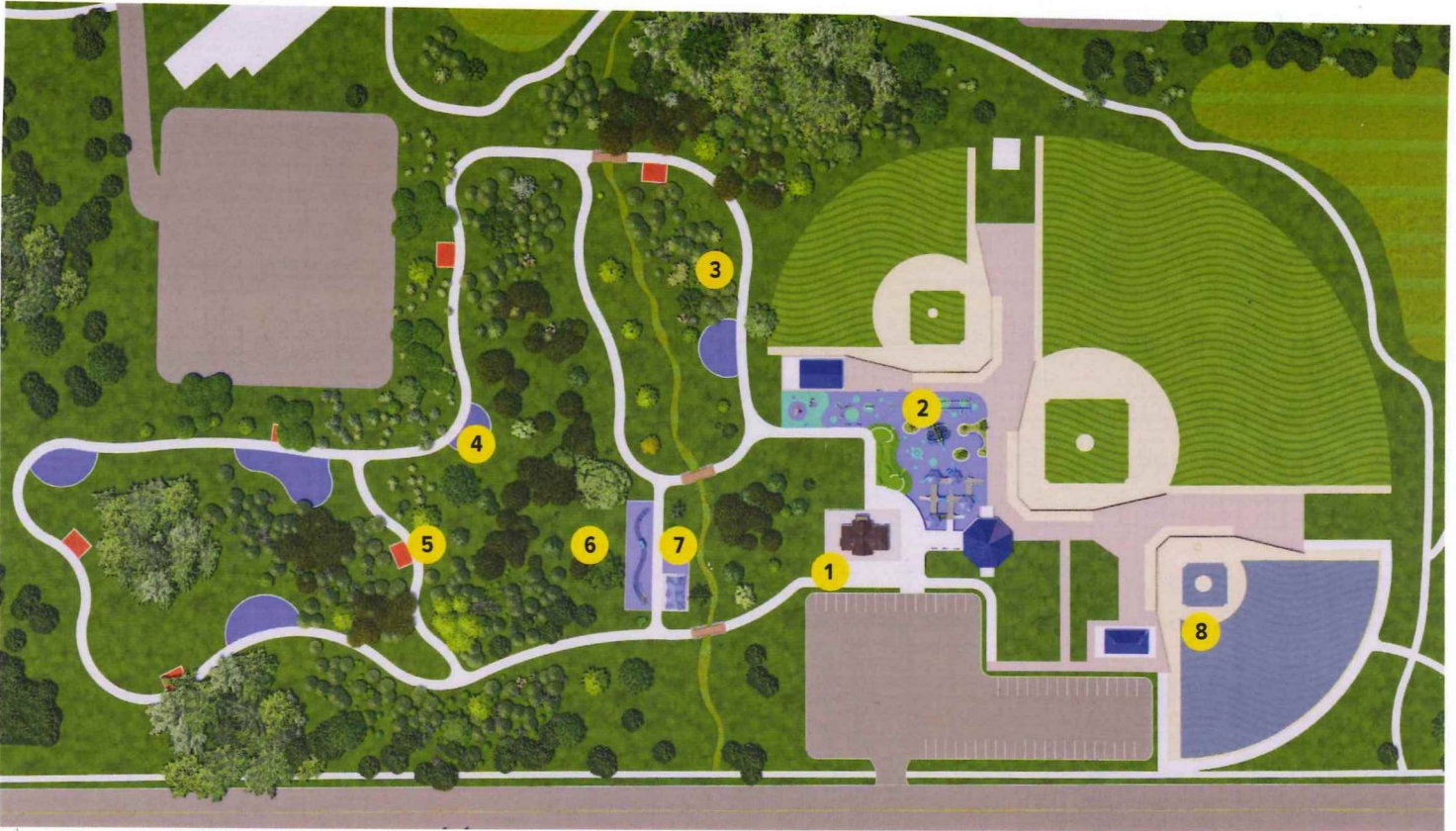
Milwaukee County Parks

# 15,000

Acres of Milwaukee County Parks

# 0

Universally Inclusive Parks



- 1 Park Entry and Clubhouse
- 2 Inclusive Play Area
- 3 Explorer Trail
- 4 Play Pockets
- 5 Fitness Pockets
- 6 Family Fitness Area
- 7 Inclusive Challenge Course
- 8 Universal Field



**“Both our daughters are amputees—life looks different for them, but it doesn’t mean they have to sit on the sidelines.”**

- Jennifer Cosgrove, mother of Anna and Ivy



## Timing & Fundraising

The Ability Center is leading a **\$10MM+** effort that will cover two phases of a several year transformation of Wisconsin Avenue Park.

**Phase 1** will break ground in 2023. It will improve the east side of the park which includes the clubhouse, baseball fields, playground, and parking lot.

**Phase 2** will improve the west side of the park which includes the walking paths, fitness and play pockets, and inclusive challenge course.

### As of spring of 2023, more than **\$4MM** has been committed thanks to the generosity of:

George F. Moss Foundation Trust	\$2,500,000
Metropolitan Milwaukee Sewage District (MMSD) Grant	\$1,162,325
YMCA of Metropolitan Milwaukee	\$500,000
Daniel M. Soref Charitable Trust	\$100,000

**“French was a very unique individual — he was the kindest, most gentle man you could ever meet...”**

-Beth Peterson, Niece to George French Moss



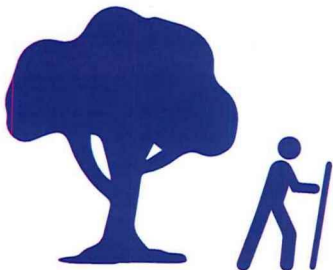
Incorporated into the budget is a **\$500,000 endowment** to ensure long-term maintenance of the park is considered.

## Donation and Sponsorship

If you have questions or need a pledge form please contact [universalpark@tacwi.org](mailto:universalpark@tacwi.org). A member of our team will reach out to make payment arrangements for your pledge. Individual checks can be made out to The Ability Center and mailed to:

**The Ability Center**  
10300 W. Wisconsin Avenue  
Wauwatosa, WI, 53226

[universalpark@tacwi.org](mailto:universalpark@tacwi.org)  
414-373-9500



### More than a playground.

Moss Universal Park is 18 acres of recreational space for individuals of all ages and abilities. From play to fitness. Athletics to picnics.



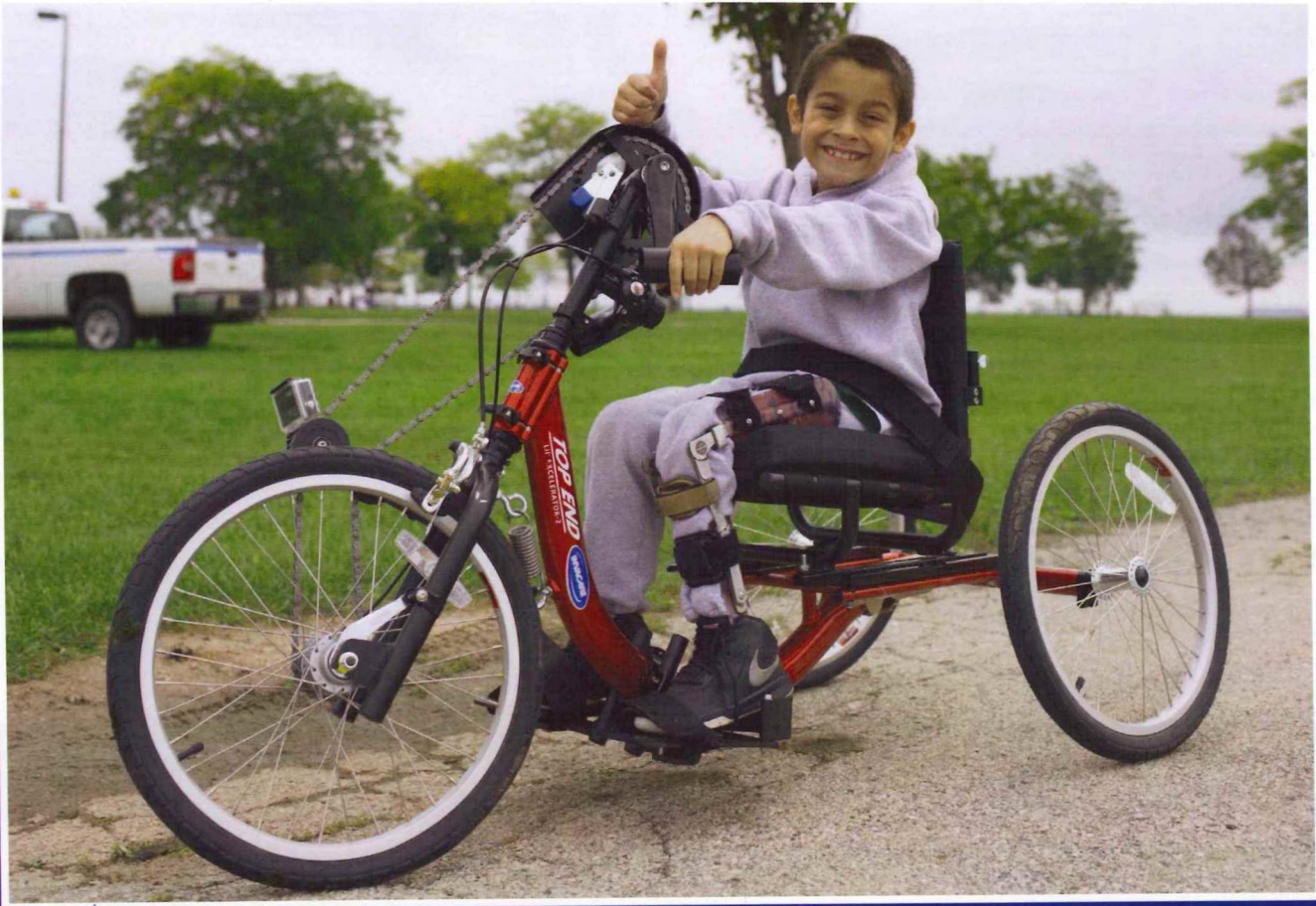
### Focus on fitness and recreation.

Fitness pockets throughout the park will be built into the half mile accessible path, as well as, open areas for yoga and meditation.



### Activities and equipment for the whole family.

For playground equipment to an inclusive challenge course there are options for everyone in the family—regardless of age or ability.



**“There’s certain things that you feel that your child probably won’t be able to do... The Ability Center focuses on all the things that he can do and it gives you hope.”**

- Tiela Quintero, mother of Gianni

The future site of Moss Universal Park is located at  
10300 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Wauwatosa, WI 53226

Learn more:

**[universalpark.org](http://universalpark.org)**

Contact:

**[universalpark@tacwi.org](mailto:universalpark@tacwi.org)**



**THE  
ABILITY  
CENTER**

Play together.

## Be First: to impact play for everyBODY

The Ability Center (TAC) aims to provide people impacted by disABILITIES with a daily opportunity to be fit, active, healthy and to play. Your commitment to Moss Universal Park will help us build America's most inclusive park in Wauwatosa Wisconsin. By partnering with community-based nonprofits, industry leaders, and recreation professionals, we're leading a \$10MM+ project that will create play opportunities where nobody is left on the sidelines.

A.F.A.R. Inc., d/b/a The Ability Center is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization, Tax ID: 26-3510832

If you have questions please contact [universalpark@tacwi.org](mailto:universalpark@tacwi.org) or 414.373.9500. A member of our team will reach out to make payment arrangements for your pledge. Individual checks can be made out to The Ability Center.

Please fill out and return the form below to: **The Ability Center, 10300 West Wisconsin Ave, Wauwatosa, WI, 53226**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

### Pledge Details

Intended contribution: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Circle pledge type:**

One time    Quarterly    Annually    **for:** 1    2    3    years

A check is enclosed payable to **The Ability Center:**    yes    no

Please publicly recognize this gift from: \_\_\_\_\_

This gift is in honor of / in memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

Please do not recognize this gift publicly. I would like my gift to be anonymous.



**THE  
ABILITY  
CENTER**  
Play together.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_