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Smith Memorial Playground: Encouraging Imagination, Creativity, and Free Play

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Smith Memorial Playground: Encouraging Imagination, Creativity, and Free Play

PCOM

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THE COMMUNITY SITE

Smith Memorial Playground was established in 1899. After the loss of their young son, Richard and Sarah Smith erected in the playground in his memory, in order that children would have a safe and inviting play space free of charge. Smith's mission includes, "providing opportunities for unstructured creative play for children." Smith Memorial Playground offers 6.5 acres of play space which includes a playhouse for indoor fun and a plethora of unique outdoor equipment for a variety of ages. One of the community's favorites is the wooden slide, which has been around since the early 20th century, captivating children for generations.



PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- To encourage free, unstructured play in order to assist in healthy development of imagination, creativity, and motor skills
- To educate inner city youth on the nature that surrounds them
- To engage in community outreach for children in the North Philadelphia region
- To develop a link between Smith Memorial Playground and the community it encompasses
- To provide Smith with the voice of the community to allow them to develop an optimal play space



ACTIVITIES

- Rock painting
- Drawing
- Fort building
- Water play
- PlayDoh making
- Sidewalk chalk
- Hiking
- Nature play
- Bubbles
- Flag making

PROJECT OUTCOMES

The children gained a knowledge and appreciation for the nature surrounding them. Through the activities provided, they were able to explore their imagination and creativity. We hope the skills will allow them to see their worth within the community.

PERSONAL STATEMENTS

"Over this summer I have learned that play is an absolute necessary part of healthy growth and development for children. I have thoroughly enjoyed engaging with the kids and reminding myself of the clients I will one day serve. This experience has made me aware of my own privileges and emphasized that we all have our own unique stories." – Kelsey Hayden

"This summer has been less about diversifying myself in preparation for my future patients, but more about enlightening the youth on their possibilities for their own future.

Coming from a low income community, I have heard a lot of how we "can't" do something and how the obstacles were too high and difficult to overcome. I used my past experiences to help elevate the children we worked with so they could move past their own obstacles. I hope during this summer, I was able to impact at least one child in seeing that they can do anything if they put their mind to it." – Leyland Robinson

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