



United Way, GMC and Community Volunteers Join Forces to Install Playground Equipment at a School that Hasn't Had Any Equipment for Almost a Quarter of a Century

(Kansas City, MO)-----Twenty-three years, two-and-a-half decades, a quarter-of-a-century. However you measure time, it has been many years since children at Melcher Elementary School in Kansas City, Missouri, have had the opportunity to climb on playground equipment at their school. Well, no more. With the help of United Way, GMC and more than 30 community volunteers, the students at Melcher Elementary have new playground equipment for the first time since their parents attended school.

The special equipment, designed to build upper body strength, balance and agility was donated by GMC as part of a Monday Night Football Tour. GMC is working with United Ways throughout the country to install new playground equipment at a local school in every city that is hosting a Monday Night Football Game this year. Since the Kansas City Chiefs played the San Diego Charges at Arrowhead Stadium last night, United Way of Greater Kansas City was asked to pick a worthy school and recruit volunteers to install the equipment.

When approached about participating in the project, Kansas City Public Schools quickly suggested Melcher Elementary at 3958 Chelsea, knowing that the school has been without playground equipment since an addition to the school was completed in the mid-80's. The playground at Melcher had an area specifically designed for playground equipment, but the school district hasn't had the funds to purchase and install the equipment. School officials recognized this as being a perfect opportunity to get the job done.

Community volunteers from United Way, FedEx, P.B. Hoildale Co., Conklin Fangman Cadillac Buick GMC, Friendship Baptist Church, Construction and General Laborers Local 264 joined the parents of children attending Melcher Elementary, working shoulder to shoulder for more than six hours to get the playground equipment installed. By four o'clock in the afternoon, the children from Melcher Elementary were able to use their new playground equipment for the first time.

In addition to giving the kids something new and exciting to do, the playground equipment will challenge kids and give them something fun and healthy to do outdoors. *The United Way Healthy Kids Zone---Driven by GMC* will provide the students with an opportunity to climb, build their upper body strength, improve their balance and agility and develop endurance.

Since the 1970's the number of overweight children has tripled in the U.S. to the point that community health experts say one out of five children is now overweight or obese. United Way is trying to do something about that by encouraging young people to eat healthy and get at least 60 minutes of exercise each day. The community playground building project fits in perfectly with that effort. United Way has set a goal to increase the number of youth who are healthy and avoiding risky behavior by at least one-third, by the year 2018.

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