

Volunteers pitch in to build a playground

By: [Crystal Kang](#)

July 03, 2013

Two hundred volunteers and several children stood back and admired the newly erected \$100,000 playground outside Rochambeau School's parking lot in White Plains. The project drew on manpower from partners Morgan Stanley, Family Services of Westchester, Rochambeau School and KaBOOM!, a nonprofit focused primarily on bringing play sets to children.

The nonprofit Family Services of Westchester (FSW) hatched plans two years ago to build a playground that would serve not just the 100 students in their Head Start and universal prekindergarten programs but the community as well.

"Nonprofits have come to depend a great deal on the financial resources and equity of the volunteers at corporations," said Gerry Goldberg, director of volunteers and development research at FSW, whose office is in the Rochambeau School. "As government funds are decreasing for projects, we're challenged to seek other sources of funding."



Photos by Crystal Kang

Before the playground was built in this predominantly Hispanic neighborhood, children had no other community parks that were close enough for everyday use. Now residents feel that the children have a safe place to play when they go outside.

"They worked hard to get this playground for the Spanish community," said Araceli Rodriguez, a resident of White Plains who has four children. "I feel the unity of the people working together ... I feel so pleased that this dream came true. We're going to visit often."

Volunteers from Morgan Stanley who contributed to the project said they are committed to giving back to the community and want to encourage each other to get more involved in volunteer opportunities on their own.

“For our business, this is one of the biggest volunteer projects,” said Adalisse Rodriguez, from the Morgan Stanley Foundation. “We do thousands of projects in June, which is volunteer month for our company. This is just the springboard for volunteers to sponsor year-round projects across the country.”



Volunteers from Morgan Stanley collaborate with White Plains residents to build the main play set on Rochambeau’s school grounds.

The day involved mulching, hammering, cementing and drilling for five hours under the scorching sun with a DJ playing popular music. Volunteers formed teams and split up to work on their part of the playground. Some built planter benches out of pressure-treated wood and planted flowers. Others poured cement into the ground to secure all the playground equipment, which included monkey bars, slides and climbers.

On one side of the playground facing the school is a wooden platform that serves as a stage for kids and a chalkboard for drawing and word games. Behind the playground, volunteers fashioned a mural with paintings created Rochambeau School students on thin pieces of square wooden boards. The word “Friendship” is painted on a sign that hangs in the middle.

Benches surround the perimeter of the playground, offering a place for parents to rest while they watch their kids play. There’s a good reason for this added touch to the playground, according to one Morgan Stanley volunteer.

“These days a lot of people are out of work,” said Jeanne Iodice, an executive assistant at Morgan Stanley. “This bench would give the kids a place to come and relax with their parents and get some energy. And the parents have an opportunity to network with other adults who are on the playground. You never know if one interaction can lead to a job.”