

**Neal Graham Stager Memorial
 Playground
 Rye Twp
 Perry County, PA**

Project Description:

Today, Rye Township Community Park in Perry County offers an inviting place for children to play. That was not always the case.

Before the Neal Graham Stager Memorial Playground was built in 2002, play equipment in the park was old and rundown. Noticing this, Todd and Michele Stager saw an opportunity to initiate a newer, safer, age appropriate playground for children in memory of their 20 month old son.

The Neal Graham Stager Memorial Playground is designed with two separate play

structures for children ages 2-5 and 5-14. The equipment includes a sandbox, oversized tic-tac-toe board, swings and two separate playgrounds with slides, tunnels and ladders.

"I know [the park] gets used a lot more now that the playground is there. The township holds more events there and there's been a better response now that there are activities for kids," Michele Stager said.



The park also boasts a community building, pavilion, basketball and volleyball courts, fitness stations and a hiking path.

"It seems that the playground is always being used by someone throughout the day," Todd Stager said.

"There are a lot of birthday parties and family picnics, too," added Michelle.

This project drew people together long before it was completed. Planning, fundraising and publicity work were done by volunteers, Rye Township authorities and the Parks and Recreation Board.

"Because it was all community efforts, the township had to put in a minimal amount of money from what we raised and what DCNR funded," Michelle said.

The \$33,000 Keystone grant from DCNR also helped fund a parking lot, walkways, safety surfacing and other site related improvements.

Quote: Michelle Stager, Neal Graham Stager's mother

"People who have lived here a long time said this was the first time the community really all came together like this. We had high school kids, church groups, people from outside Rye Township, people we never met volunteer to build [the playground]."

Amount of Keystone funding awarded, year and matching sources:

2002: \$29,700
 2005: \$3,300