



Lewisburg Area Recreation Authority's (LARA) Destination Park

Union County, PA



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roject Description:

Lewisburg Area Recreation Authority (LARA) is a regional recreation authority serving Lewisburg Borough and East Buffalo Township in Union County. With assistance from Keystone funding, LARA was developed through DCNR's Peer to Peer and Circuit Rider Program. This program entails hiring a consultant to work with two or more municipalities to form an inter-municipal cooperative agreement for the purpose of hiring a professional recreation director to serve more than one municipality. In 2000, LARA hired its first Executive Director, Greg Weitzel.

Through Greg's leadership and the support of a very effective board, LARA formed a partnership with Playworld Systems, Inc. Playworld Systems is the third largest manufacturer of playground and recreational equipment in the world and is based in Lewisburg. In 2004, Playworld approached LARA to discuss renovating the 22-acre Lewisburg Area Recreation Park located on Saint Mary Street in Lewisburg. At that time, Playworld Systems was embarking on the introduction of new product lines geared for all age groups and was looking for a site to create a world class destination park for the purpose of using the site to showcase a variety of their products. The site would be featured in 2006 catalogs and other marketing and advertising materials. Playworld Systems was interested in forming a partnership with LARA in which it would donate approximately \$800,000 worth of equipment and other important funds to help repair roofs and correct drainage problems at the park. In return, Playworld Systems requested that LARA secure other funding to complete the approximately \$2.5

"As an East Buffalo Township Supervisor's point of view, the Township has experienced a tremendous amount of increased activity in the use of the Lewisburg Area Park. We have a fair amount of seniors as residents of the Township, and with the addition of the "Life Trail," a brand new experience/edition to the park, our residents have discovered that they can get out and enjoy the fresh air and do some light exercise at the same time. The community has also developed little groups to meet and exercise together. The skate park is another unbelievable addition to the park. Skaters come to the parks from as far as Allentown and State College to use the facility, and although they may only purchase a Coke and a Sub at nearby fast food restaurants, they are spending money, and what we consider new revenue to the area. "

Hank Baylor, East Buffalo Township Supervisor



million renovation of the Lewisburg Area Recreation Park using Playworld Systems donation as match, and then agree to maintain the park once it was completed.

In 2005, LARA applied to DCNR's Community Conservation Partnership Initiative for \$500,000 and received this funding through Keystone in 2005 and 2006. Currently phases one and two have been completed, which included the active playground areas for ages two to five and five to 12, a climbing wall, skateboard/BMX facility, and the Life Trail. These phases were completed in approximately 18 months. The final phase entails developing a passive area of the park at the west end of the park. Phase III work entails stream bank restoration on



Buffalo Run as well as addressing drainage issues, landscaping, parking lot development, and extension of the pedestrian trail and walkways. LARA recently received an additional \$300,000 in DCNR Keystone fund to complete this phase of development.

Amount of funds awarded, year and matching sources:

2005-2006: \$500,000 Keystone funding

Matching funds Playworld Systems, Inc. (\$800,000)

2006-2007: \$300,000 Keystone funding

Matching funds \$100,000 DEP's GG2

\$120,000 Playworld Systems, Inc.

\$50,000 NE Pa Community Forestry

\$35,000 DCED, Shared Municipal Services

\$50,000 Union County CDBG
