

New Playground and Much More at Ross Township Park

It's not easy to take an overlooked, sleepy rural park and make it still quiet and peaceful, but with lots to do outdoors. But the Ross Township Park on the east side of Gull Lake has aced that transformation.

With grants from the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation and the Gull Lake Area Rotary Club, the local community has rallied efforts to install a new children's playground, woodland trails and improved facilities. Volunteers from the GLARC, Eagle Scouts and township residents have spent hundreds of teamwork hours to assemble, rehab and landscape the park by planting perennials. Another family donated a volleyball and net.

Eagle Scout Nolan Greenwood, of Troop #294 of Richland, has marshalled the playground project, from approaching the GLARC to pitch the project, to ordering materials and coordinating installation work with volunteers.

Eagle Scout Luke Larson, of Troop #239 of Augusta, with I.S. Gilmore grant funding, constructed and installed a Little Library by the playground and placed a bench donated by the Poth family and John Daughterty. Parents and grandparents can relax with a story after the kids play. Luke also led clean-up workdays at the Park in May and September with volunteers included from his troop and the neighborhood. They cleared and mulched pathways in the woods, pulled up invasive plants, cleared and raked the lawn and planted flowers.

The GLARC's strategic plan for Ross Township included this as a means of bringing more young people to the park as well as making it accessible to all ages. Visitor Jim Proost notes that he liked to bring his elderly mother, using her walker, for the fresh air and view. Ross Township plans to make accessibility an ongoing effort. The Pavilion will now have a hexagonal ADA picnic table and memorial benches throughout the park. Visitors have affirmed that they would like the beach accessible and exercise apparatus for seniors. Families come to Ross Township Park for birthdays and other celebrations. Visitor, Nancy Nesbitt, recently explained "It's a generational thing. My mother brought us here as kids and she came here as a child too. I grew up on Sherman Lake and we would ride our bikes here and swim all day. I don't want to see it change. I love the breeze and clean park".