**Perry Hall’s Angel Park to be built this summer, calls for volunteers**
- By Devin Crum -

With just seven weeks left before the scheduled start of construction for Angel Park in Perry Hall, the wheels are now turning full speed to get everything ready to build the new community facility.

And while several things are still needed to bring the project to completion, the biggest thing on that list is volunteers.

An estimated 2,000 total volunteers are needed to finish the community playground and 200-seat amphitheater on schedule during the 10-day build-out period from July 8 - 18, according to organizer Kelli Szczybor. And with only about 300 people signed up to participate as of Friday, May 13, there is quite a long way to go to ensure Angel Park is ready on-time for kids to play.

Angel Park has been designed using input from the community to be an all-inclusive playground which will allow children of all abilities to use the equipment and interact with others.

The idea was born out of the loss of Szczybor’s 15-month-old son, Ryan, to leukemia 18 years ago. From that loss came the Szczybor family’s desire to create something meaningful to better the lives of others.

“When you lose a child, when you lose anybody in your life, you just try to find anything to do in their memory so you can talk about them so they’re not forgotten,” Szczybor explained, adding that Angel Park has become the family’s way of healing after Ryan’s passing.

Angel Park has been modeled somewhat after Annie’s Playground, an all-inclusive playground in Fallston which was named for a child who was killed in a drunken driving collision. After participating in the construction of Annie’s Playground, Szczybor began to think of a way to bring such a project to Perry Hall in memory of her son.

Szczybor and several supporters took the idea to County Councilman David Marks and members of the Perry Hall Recreation Council where it was well-received. And the work began in earnest two years ago after Baltimore County granted approval to use land next to the Perry Hall Library along Honeygo Boulevard for the project.

They decided to name the project Angel Park instead of Ryan’s Playground because “angel” can mean a lot of things and a lot of people have lost loved ones, Szczybor said.

“Everybody can relate and build this playground in memory of someone they lost, and maybe building it would provide some peace and hope and feeling for them,” she said.

The ideas for what to include in the project came from surveying about 4,500 children in nine local schools to see what they would like to have in their “ultimate playground.” Then they took the most popular of those ideas and had an architect design it.

The price tag for that design came to $1.5 million, which includes the playground, amphitheater, remembrance garden, park benches, parking lot - everything. And they have nearly reached that goal, only being about $100,000 short to date.

While the park’s organizers are still diligently collecting donations to close the remaining funding gap, their big task now is to recruit volunteers for the build. And believe Szczybor when she says they have a job for absolutely everyone, no matter their skill level.

The playground will have of 17,000 square feet of area and 75 different components which need to be built and painted, according to Szczybor. On top of that, there are 1,100 fence pickets which have been purchased through donations and need to be painted and engraved.

So the project will require skilled labor from local artists and those experienced in construction. But there is so much to do that there will be a job for everyone.

Also needed are porters to carry materials around the site, food servers for volunteers, nurses and even child care staff.

Kids aged 14 and older can help with tasks on the site during construction, and those ages 10 - 13 can do so if accompanied by an adult. Those under 10 cannot be on the site itself, but there will even be jobs for them in the child care tent such as painting, assembling things and other activities for fun.

“We just need people to come out and we’ll find you a job,” Szczybor stressed. “Everybody has some kind of a talent, so we need everybody.”

Anyone interested in helping can find answers to frequently asked questions and information on how to sign up on the project’s website, [www.angel-park.org](http://www.angel-park.org), and they can email specific questions to organizers through the site.

And if you are not able to come out to help, you will still be able to find a way to contribute by donating funds, tools or materials, or even volunteering to call and recruit other volunteers. Information about methods of donation and needed materials can also be found on the site.

However, those who are able are highly encouraged to sign up for a shift - or multiple shifts - to help build. Because the more volunteers they get, the sooner the project will be finished and the sooner the children will be able to play.

Construction will take place from 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. each day, with crews breaking on Monday July 11. Following the community build portion, the flat rubber playground floor will be poured into place and the whole thing will be inspected. It is expected that children will be able to use the new facility within two or three weeks after the build.

“The best thing about the project is we’re creating something that will last a lifetime,” Szczybor said, noting that it will bring families together, kids will meet new friends and some disabled children may be using a playground for the first time. “It truly is going to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience to build it.”