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The Leon Levine Foundation Awards a Challenge Grant to Charlotte Jewish Preschool

By Elka Bernstein

We are building something special at Charlotte Jewish Preschool this summer. It is something which truly embodies our community spirit and our love for what matters most - our children. It is an exciting new park featuring a brand new, state of the art playground. As I watch the bulldozers and construction crews at work each day and see the plans for this custom designed playground take shape, I am in awe of the effort it took to get to this point and how all of us at Shalom Park are working together to finish this job.

At Charlotte Jewish Preschool, we know the importance of children having dedicated time outside each day. Our new outdoor recreation area, currently named Katan Olam Park, is expertly designed to exercise our children's gross motor skills on every level. There will be more room to do just that because instead of the current 10,000 square feet, our new playground will encompass 18,000 square feet. What this expansion does is allow our youngest preschoolers aged one and two, to play adjacent to the space as our older kids do. The area which was previously home to our playground for the threes, fours, and five will be reinvented. Children

will delight in several new sensory stations, climbing structures, slides, turf mounds, and even a rubberized track area. The park will also be home to beautiful natural areas as well as a dedicated teacher's garden. New overhead shade structures will be in place to shield kids, parents, and teachers during the hottest days of the year. Construction crews will also be able to repurpose the existing play equipment and other existing structures as we bring in the new additions for the playground.

We, at Charlotte Jewish Preschool, have been dreaming of this new playground for years. However, we are fortunate to have received several generous donations to make this dream a reality. In June, The Leon Levine Foundation awarded our school a \$50,000 challenge grant which has enabled construction to get rolling this summer. In addition to The Leon Levine Foundation grant, there are other visionaries whose generosity also made this project possible. They include the Levine Jewish Community Center, The Gorelick Family, Amy



The designer's rendering of the future Katan Olam Park.

and Mark Vitner, Larry Schwartz, and the CJP Parent Teacher Association. Now, we are working diligently to do our part of the bargain which is to raise an additional \$33,000 to complete the playground. To that end, we are working with our parents and our Shalom Park community to raise the necessary funds. For more than 20 years now, Charlotte Jewish Preschool has provided a home for young families looking for quality care and education for their children. This new park will allow help us continue our mission to provide the best in preschool education but we need everyone's help to get this project to the finish line. We appreciate the donations we have received and high hopes of receiving more in the weeks and months to come.

Once completed, Katan Olam Park will benefit more than just the children of the Charlotte Jewish Preschool. The park will also serve Shalom Park agencies as well as the visitors to Shalom Park. All agencies, along with their constituents, will also be able

to enjoy and use the new playground on weekends and during non-preschool hours. Preschoolers who attend synagogue will be able to use this space to explore as their parents worship.

"Katan Olam" is Hebrew for "small world." We hope our creation of this "small world" behind the Charlotte Jewish Preschool will be a special and safe place for our kids to play and discover with friends as they visit Shalom Park and attend preschool. Our new playground is symbolic of our commitment to

the community as a whole and the children we serve each day. It will offer a valuable space for our kids to Grow, Connect, and Learn. As you can see, it is that ideal that is woven into every aspect of this project. We at Charlotte Jewish Preschool cannot wait for the playground's completion and to introduce all of its features to our new and returning young students. If you would like more information on how to help with our playground effort or on enrolling your child in Charlotte Jewish Preschool, please contact me at EBernstein@shalomcharlotte.org or 704-944-6777. ☆

Operation Pillowcase



www.flagsacrossthenation.org



During Camp SOAR this summer this summer, campers made pillowcases to be sent overseas to the troops in action. For more information on Operation Pillowcase, contact Eileen Schwartz at eschwartz@flagsacrossthenation.org.

Dee Griffin, a camper and a volunteer, shows off the pillowcase she created for the troops. Camp SOAR covered the cost of materials and shipping.

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