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Plans made for Liam J. Perk Playground

Facility dedicated to boy who was killed by his family's pet dog

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A playground planned at a Cape Coral park will be named after a local toddler who was fatally bitten by one of his family's pet dogs in December.

The Liam J. Perk Playground will be built at Rotary Park, located at 5505 Rose Garden Road. The playground is the result of the efforts of the Perk family, the Cape Coral Rotary Club and the Liam J. Perk Foundation, among others.

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[Artist rendering of the playground](#)



[Perk family statement](#)

The dedication for the playground is scheduled for May, during National Bite Prevention Week.

"I believe that their mission and their story is a perfect fit for the Rotary Park, where we have the Waggin' Tails Dog Park," Steve Pohlman, director of the Cape Coral Parks and Recreation Department, said. "It's the city's only dog park, and their mission in dealing with the education of families is best served at that location."

On Dec. 22, 2-year-old Liam Perk was severely bitten in the neck by Lloyd, the family's 8-year-old male Weimaraner, at their home on Southeast 45th Terrace. Liam was transported by ambulance to the Cape Coral Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Lee County Animal Services removed Loyd from the home along with Chessy, a female Weimaraner also owned by the Perks. Lloyd was euthanized the next day after the family surrendered over custody, but Chessy was returned to Liam's parents, Joey and Carrie Perk.

According to Beth Sanger, executive director of the Cape Coral Community Foundation, the Perks received an outpouring of support following the tragic death of their son and a bank account was opened in Liam's name.

"The family wanted to pay tribute to their son and do something positive with such a sad moment in their life," she said.

The Perks created the Liam J. Perk Foundation Fund, under the umbrella of the Cape Coral Community Foundation, to honor Liam with a playground built in his name and to support educational projects for families with pet dogs.

"They want to move forward as time goes on and create educational programs for people in the community to have a better understanding of how to create a safe environment for both animals and children," Sanger said.

The plan is to educate parents and dog owners through seminars, school presentations and events to provide a safe environment for children and dogs as a family. She added that the fund is in its beginning stages and the family is first focused on bringing the plans for the playground to fruition.

"When the news gets out that there's a fund at the foundation for this purpose, I think a lot of people will come forward and want to be a part of that," Sanger said.

"I'm amazed at their strength and desire to honor their son in this way," she added. "They've just got an amazing passion to want to do something in their son's memory."

Sanger said the foundation became involved because the project is "about enhancing the quality of life in Cape Coral," which the foundation aims to do.

"But, as a foundation, our main purpose is to help donors with what they're passionate about, with their philanthropic goals," she said. "We have a family and they want to make something positive happen in their community. We can assist them in making this happen."

Prior to the tragedy, the Perk family often visited Rotary Park, which made it the ideal location for Liam's playground. It was designed by Carrie Perk, the boy's mother, and it is "not just a bunch of swings and slides put together either. Every detail has symbolic or real meaning," Joey Perk, the boy's father, said in a prepared statement.

"There is a double slide, when Carrie took Liam to the park they would slide together. There are four stars, four blades of grass and four hibiscus flowers - one for each member of our family," he said.

The Perks have an infant daughter, Lyla.

"It will be the first public playground west of Four Freedoms Park, south of Cape Coral Parkway and east of Chiquita," Pohlman said. "It's a very large residential area that's under served with any type of playground."

He added that the city is only providing the land for the playground.

"We don't have any dollars in the project, per say," Pohlman said.

A portion of the playground was donated by Playworld Systems Inc., a family-owned playground company based in Lewisburg, Pa. Additional donations were provided by Playmore Recreational Products and Services, Kobayashi Dojo Inc., H.L. Posey Builders, Paint Misbehavin and J. Heather Harris Photography.

Sanger said she hopes the community will embrace Liam's playground.

"And hopefully take away something special from a community project like this," she said.

To donate to the Liam J. Perk Foundation Fund, contact the Cape Coral Community Foundation at 542-5594 or visit: capecoralcf.planyourlegacy.org.

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