

Big Toy grant application turned in

By **CRAIG MURPHY**
Of the *Keizertimes*

All that's left now is the waiting.

Nate Brown, director of Community Development for Keizer, submitted the grant application for the second phase of the Big Toy play structure project at Keizer Rapids Park on Tuesday, March 29.

The second phase for the play structure, which opened to much fanfare last June, is estimated to cost about \$1 million. Of that cost, \$456,800 is being sought via a grant from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department's Local Government Grant program. The city's match is \$556,800, a bulk of which is \$506,800 in land acquisition costs as well as \$50,000 in Systems Development Charges funds.

Project leaders will give a presentation to an OPRD committee in June, with a decision expected sometime in August.

If approved, the grant would pay for a new rubber surface for the play structure, new restrooms with flush toilets – a first in any of Keizer's 19 parks – and a pathway to the play structure.

Members of the Community Build Task Force continued to meet after the Big Toy was opened, with the idea be-

ing to finalize the details for the grant application and to elicit community support.

Brown said the entire application was more than 100 pages.

"We got 40 letters of support, which is huge," Brown said Tuesday as the application was being uploaded. "I am feeling very good about our chances. I'm feeling very positive about this."

Keizer City Councilor Marlene Parsons, who chaired the task force, was feeling relieved on Tuesday.

"It's a feeling of accomplishment," Parsons said. "It's come a long way. It's been an arduous process. This is what we wanted to accomplish. We told Nate and the team working on this what our goals were. Nate and the team did a great job."

Waiting until August to hear the news won't be easy for Parsons and others who have been working on the project, which first got rolling at the end of 2012 and really got going in late 2013.

"It's going to be hard," Parsons said. "I feel some relief that the grant application has been submitted. We have done our due diligence to make sure we have everything we need for the grant. We feel confident we've done our job."

As such, Parsons can't wait to see the next phase completed.

"This will add so much to the park, especially with the permanent bathrooms," she said. "This also adds a safe pathway off of Chema-wa Road. This is really, really needed. It adds more amenities, both to the project and for the future of the park."

Having a rubber surface was originally part of the Big Toy project. However, due to budget considerations that got cut in early 2015 so that the project could be completed on budget and could start on

time. "This was always part of the project," Parsons said. "I was there after it was opened and I saw the special needs kids using it. It was a struggle for them with the bark chips. We knew we had to go for this grant. We knew we needed this surface to add to the value of the park."

"I'm glad we're hopefully able to do it now, cross our fingers," she added. "I hope the parks people will see what we're trying to accomplish, that we're trying to do a great thing for the entire region, for people of all ages."

Remembering Jaren



A small memorial has been set up along River Road where 8-year-old Jaren Nash was killed while crossing the street with his mother on March 11.

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Quilt display in Keizer



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Members of the Mid-Valley Quilt Guild once again had their work on display at the Keizer Civic Center as part of the annual Quilts of Keizer show, which went through the end of March.

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