

## Community members work together to improve park

By [Jason Scott, Sentinel Reporter](#), June 16,



*Jason Malmont/The Sentinel Newport Revitalization and Preservation Society board member Fred Wertz, front, and volunteer Dick Linn, back, spend their Wednesday morning spreading mulch around the playground equipment at Veterans Memorial Park.*

It started with some mulch and new plants at the entrance to Veterans Memorial Park, but that was only phase one.

For more than a month now, a group of about 30 to 40 community volunteers have come together on a plan to completely revamp the Newport park, entirely through donations.

"It's about fixing up what's here and adding to it," said resident Ruth Ann Linn, one of the co-organizers on the project, which has included replacing playground equipment, painting pavilions, repairing park benches and installing new basketball nets.

Linn and other local grandmothers came up with the idea last fall while watching their grandsons play baseball at the park, which is located off North Second Street.

Knowing the borough couldn't afford to make all of the repairs and additions the group had in mind - at least not anytime soon - Linn, or "Grandma," approached the Newport Revitalization and Preservation Society (NRPS), a nonprofit organization she is a part of that includes several local business owners.

Among them is Frank Campbell of H.F. Campbell & Sons Inc. in Millerstown, who serves as the organization's vice president.

Upon getting approval from borough council, Campbell and Linn immediately got to work on getting the community involved in this process, which took on the name of "Grandma's Plus Playground Project."

Residents young and old have stepped up to work on painting, weeding and repair work around the park.

### *Bringing people back*

As of June 1, the volunteers have done everything from removing old fence, replacing a missing board on a park sign and repairing cement around the concession area to repairing and painting swing sets, installing a new net for volleyball, painting a small slide and putting in new trash cans, among other work.

"We felt there was a need to do several projects to make it functional this year," Campbell said Wednesday, as volunteers worked to spread new mulch at the playground area.

The group is also in the process of installing new equipment at the playground, repairing picnic tables and restrooms and installing a net on the tennis court, in addition to other cleaning, repair and painting work.

Linn, who said many of the repairs were made to address safety issues, hopes the project will get people to come back to the park.

"It's something to try to get people back here to see that it's better," she said.

The park was opened in 1948. Over the years, maintenance has been an issue, volunteers said, citing issues with playground equipment, park benches and tables deteriorating to the point they really couldn't be used.

"People were just so hungry for a change," Linn said.

### *Recognition*

These community efforts to make the park a safe place to play are being done without any borough funds.

Organizers could not provide a figure on how much has been raised to support this revitalization project. However, many have donated both money and time to make it possible.

A community day is being planned for later this summer to thank all those who have contributed, Campbell and Linn said.

Anyone who would like to help at the park should contact Linn at 567-3062, Rick Koontz at 319-3206 or e-mail Campbell at [fcampbell@camel-express.com](mailto:fcampbell@camel-express.com). Work days are typically held every Wednesday from about 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Funds are also still needed to purchase supplies and equipment. NRPS is handling the funds, which are tax deductible.

Donations should be marked with "Playground Project" and mailed to: NRPS, P.O. Box 13, Newport, PA 17074.

Updates on the project can be viewed at [www.nrps.pa.net](http://www.nrps.pa.net).