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## Kid-designed playground going up

By MICHAEL NEWSOM  
[mmnewsom@sunherald.com](mailto:mmnewsom@sunherald.com)

**OCEAN SPRINGS** - A playground will open in the Fort Bayou area Saturday, and it offers relief to parents in the neighborhood of about 1,500 homes that never had many safe places for children to play.

Area children helped design the playground that will be built next to Ocean Springs Hospital thanks to a donation of time, equipment and labor from about 150 volunteer workers from KaBOOM!, AmeriCares and the city of Ocean Springs, according to a news release.

City Assistant Parks and Leisure Services Director Geri Straight said the playground is a big improvement to the area.

"The kids don't have a park in the neighborhood," Straight said.

The children were given the chance to design their dream playgrounds at an event last month, and some of their plans were used. The project is the third and final playground built jointly by KaBOOM! and AmeriCares. The two groups built one in New Orleans and another in D'Iberville.

KaBOOM! undertook a two-year initiative on its own to build 100 playgrounds in the areas affected by Katrina and Rita, according to the release.

Darell Hammond, CEO and co-founder of KaBOOM!, said in the release Gulf Coast children are owed "a sense of normalcy and a chance to still be kids in the aftermath of the storm."

AmeriCares, a nonprofit relief group, has given more than \$8.6 million in grants to organizations in Louisiana, Texas and Mississippi to address a variety of hurricane recovery needs.

Trish Tweedley, AmeriCares' vice president of Hurricane Recovery Programs, said parents and the community at large would also benefit.

Mayor Connie Moran said she was "thrilled" about the playground and she thanked Jackson County, which donated the land.

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### ***If you go***

*Workers will break ground Saturday at 9 a.m.; a ribbon-cutting ceremony is slated for 3 p.m. beside the Ocean Springs Hospital on U.S. 90.*