



The current play structures at Debert Elementary are showing their wear and the PTA is currently fundraising for a new playground in memory of teacher Lisa McCully. This will involve three phases of development. Left to right- PTA Co-President Alisha Johnson, PTA Vice President Kyle Slack, Erica Slack, Avery Johnson, Penny Devine, PTA Secretary Katie Devine. Also on the equipment is Audrey Johnson.



Penny Devine, Avery Johnson, Audrey Johnson and Erica Slack enjoy a turn on the swings at Debert Elementary. The PTA hopes to replace these swings with a more modern and accessible structure, including two bird nest swings.



Debert Elementary PTA is looking at adjacent land owned by the County as possible area to utilize for an additional student play area. This area has a bank, pictured here, which would be a great coasting hill.

Playground to be Dedicated to “Lisa McCully”

Debert Elementary PTA Begins Fund Raising for Memorial Playground (Harrington Photos)

Story by Linda Harrington

The Debert Elementary School Parent Teacher Association has a monumental fundraiser ahead of them, but they are hoping community support will help them bring a three-phase playground project to completion. One hundred and twenty students attend Debert Elementary from Pre-primary to Grade Six. The playground was last updated about 16 years ago and there is no equipment that can be safely used by Pre-primary students.

“We have been talking about upgrades to the playground for a few years now,” says Alisha Johnson, Co-President of the PTA. “The new Covid protocols for students on the playground and lack of safe equipment for the Pre-Primaries are two of the reasons the PTA decided it was time to look at the project more seriously.”

For social distancing, Covid protocols at Debert Elementary require students to rotate around the play area in class cohorts over three zones. One of the zones does not currently have any equipment for students to use.

“Another important reason to proceed with the plans now, is the new playground will be dedicated to teacher, Lisa McCully’s memory,” says Alisha.

Lisa McCully lost her life in the mass shooting last April. Loved by all her student, Lisa had been a Grade 3/4 teacher at Debert Elementary for the past five years. PTA Secretary Katie Devine, whose mother Heather O’Brien also lost her life during the shootings, says the PTA felt the playground

would be a nice tribute to Lisa McCully, reflecting her passion for the outdoors and her love for teaching. The school has already installed a lovely wooden bench in Lisa’s memory inscribed “Let your faith be bigger than your fear”.

Cobequid Consulting has presented the PTA with some design prospects for the new playground. The first phase would focus on a natural playground component with outdoor classrooms, accessible features, music garden, a sand kitchen and more. The second phase would include 5 bay swings and 2 bird nest swings, and the third phase would replace the existing play structure.

While the pandemic has prevented many traditional means of fund raising, the PTA is moving forward with their goal. They have been applying for Provincial and Municipal grants, there is an ongoing GO-FUNDME campaign and supporters have been innovative with other ideas, including a recent 50/50 draw.

Katie Devine says she is holding a fundraiser through

“We are really hoping for support from the surrounding community and local businesses to help reduce the overall costs”
Alisha Johnson.

her photography business by offering an Easter Mini-Photo Session on March 13th & 14th with all proceeds going to the playground fund. Email Katie at devineke21@gmail.com for more information.

“We are really hoping for support from the surrounding community and local businesses to help reduce the overall costs,” says Alisha Johnson. “This project will benefit the whole community. There are not many play areas in De-

bert and all kids will be welcome to use the equipment outside of school hours. Colchester Signs & Promo have offered to donate any signage we may need, which we greatly appreciate. Every donation, big or small, cash or supplies, will help see the project completed and tax receipts can be issued.”

Kyle Slack, Vice-President of the PTA says the committee is hoping to get started on the project this spring and summer and some initial work may only require volunteer labour. “We have discovered the play area is larger than we expected. There is a wooded area, once cleaned up a bit, might be perfect for the natural playground. We have also been in contact with the County about utilizing an adjacent vacant property which has a hillside, and once cleared, students could use for sledding in winter.

Anyone wishing to donate to the Debert Elementary Playground may visit the GO-FUNDME page or contact the school at 902-662-4400.

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