

Hoxie women one step closer to playground remodel

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

The two women who took on the challenge of updating one of Hoxie's city parks' equipment watched their goal start its completion.

Michelle Foote and Lola Baalman formed a two-person committee to research playground equipment and meet with company representatives before talking with city officials about their dream for an updated "Kiddie Park."

Located at the corner of Noble Avenue and 14th Street, the park is owned by the city; however, the local Rotary Club maintains it except for mowing.

"I think this is going to be an awesome addition to our community," Baalman said.

"I'm excited and my kids are excited."

Baalman said she and Foote take their children to Colby and Oakley



Baalman



JAN KATZ ACKERMAN/Colby Free Press

Bill Bonner of Clearwater, Fla., second from left, outlined directions to volunteers for installation of a steel ramp to one of several pieces of handicap accessible playground equipment going into the newly named James L. Johnson Memorial Park in Hoxie.

to play on modern playground equipment prompted them to start

the project for Hoxie.

In just under six weeks late last

year, the two women raised almost \$40,000 of the \$80,000 project, with the city putting up the balance of the money.

"The total amount of time to get it together shows how this community comes together," Foote said.

"For the future, this park shows how people come together to support the future leaders."

An average of 15 volunteers assisted city workers and project manager Bill Bonner of Clearwater, Fla., Wednesday and today setting poles in concrete and erecting equipment.

Work will continue through Sunday. Besides equipment, the project includes fencing on the north and parts of the west side of the park which currently lack chain-link fence.

Other aspects of the project Foote and Baalman are working on are to have the restrooms open year round; they are currently closed each winter.

Foote said Nex-tech has agreed to make the park a 'hot spot' so people can use their laptop computer from the park and Midwest Energy has been contacted about enhancing the lighting equipment.

Both Baalman and Foote said

support for the project "has been overwhelming."

"Businesses have donated meals for all the volunteers," Baalman said.

In addition to updating the park's equipment and facilities, the name of the park has been updated.

Mayor Lori Horesky and Commissioners Jim Irwin and Troy Dewey approved renaming the park in honor of Sheriff Jim Johnson who

was killed in the line of duty in October.

The renaming was subject to the late sheriff's wife's approval, and Linda Johnson wanted the park named the James L. Johnson Memorial Park. "I appreciate everything everybody's done," Johnson said. Baalman and Foote are planning a dedication event and grand opening of the revised park sometime in May.

Brewery celebrates versatility of mustard

LAWRENCE (AP) — It's becoming a mustard pilgrimage of sorts.

The past two years, Rick Martin has driven 500 miles to Mount Horeb, Wis., to buy about 500 jars of mustard from the Mount Horeb Mustard Museum.

Martin, chef at Free State Brewing Co., used to order the mustard online for his restaurant's Mustard Madness, which features around 40 different varieties of the condiment to serve mainly on sandwiches, French fries and onion rings.

But now, Martin is taking the ordering to a new level.

"I've got it refined," he says. "It's nice to be able to taste them if you're going to buy 500 jars of mustard."

There isn't much to making a simple mustard — just mustard seed, vinegar and water.

It's the add-ons that separate the 500 varieties the Mount Horeb museum sells. There are barbecue mustards, curry mustards, garlic mustards, kalamata olive mustard, cranberry mustard, tangerine-habanero mustard.

"It's a great pretzel dip," Barry Levenson says of the last item. "It gives you the bite of mustard, but it also could be used over ice cream."

Levenson calls himself the CMO — that's chief mustard officer — for the museum. A former assistant attorney general for Wisconsin, he founded the site in 1986 when looking for ways to cope when his beloved Red Sox lost in the World Series.

In addition to the 500 varieties the museum sells, Levenson has a personal collection of 4,700 different types of mustard on display.

"There's a lot of bizarre stuff from all over the world," he says. "Most people think there's yellow, brown and maybe Grey Poupon mustards. But there's a whole world out there of great mustards, with great flavors."

He says sweet, hot mustards are among the most favored, in part because they're good for pretzel-dipping. But others such as fruit mustards are gaining in popularity.

Levenson says the trip made by the folks at Free State is "a little unusual."

"Those guys really know their mustard," he says. "They have a really good palate when it comes to mustard."

Martin has a little advice when it comes to mustard-food pairings.

"There are a lot of contrasts you want to pay attention to," he says.

"I think the food has to be pretty plain to handle a mustard pretty well."

That makes foods such as sausage, pork chops and corned beef and cabbage prime options for a good mustard. And he says he's surprised how many patrons dip their onion rings in the condiment.

The most popular varieties at Free State tend to be spicy mustards, made of jalapenos or horseradish. Martin prefers simpler kinds.

"I like mustards with a little more finesse," he says.

Free State isn't the only business in Kansas and the Kansas City metro area to take advantage of the mustard madness.

Grandma's Homestyle Mustard has been available in Peabody for

13 years, owner Mike Berger says. It offers both a mild jalapeno mustard and a sweet mustard.

"We've had several customers come from car clubs that travel across the U.S.," Berger says.

Berger also owns the Sausage House in Peabody, which is about 55 miles southwest of Emporia.

"A lot of our meat products is what we tend to suggest our mustard for," he says. "With the polish sausage or bratwurst, it works real well."

While there's not much to the ingredients of mustard, Free State owner Chuck Magerl says it can be a little temperamental. For example, adding peppers that are spicier than you expected could end up making mustard that's too hot for even brave taste buds.



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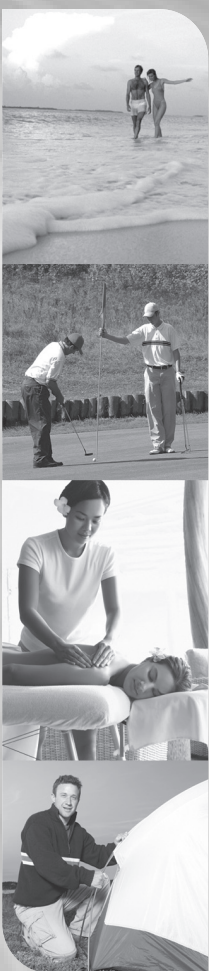
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