

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Accessible Sprayground Opens May 21

The region receives its first fully accessible sprayground courtesy of local non-profit Joey Pizzano Memorial Fund

Alexandria, VA--The water will bubble, spray, and flow as *Our Special Harbor*, a zero-water depth adaptive sprayground, opens May 21.

A part of the Lee District Family Recreation Area, the sprayground is the first of its kind in the DC metro area. *Our Special Harbor* is specifically designed to accommodate individuals with disabilities by providing natural inclusion opportunities in a fun-filled, barrier-free zone.

The design of *Our Special Harbor* encourages interaction while taking disabilities and sensitivities (noise, crowd, wetness) into account. A beach area is quieter with soft bubblers and interactive water tables. A computerized water maze and water-dumping crab basket will accommodate more boisterous play. The custom skipjack and crab boats have wide entrances from both sides plus wheelchair cutouts eliminating the need to transfer. *Our Special Harbor* provides families and children of ALL abilities a safe place to play and have fun together.

The sprayground was built recognizing the challenges that families raising children with disabilities face. Understanding the importance of feeling comfortable in public settings and enjoying new experiences together, *Our Special Harbor* reflects a Chesapeake Bay theme.

Built by the Joey Pizzano Memorial Fund (JPMF), *Our Special Harbor* will be operated free of charge to all individuals by the Fairfax County Park Authority. Accessibility and inclusion were key factors for building the sprayground. “We wanted to make it easy for families of children with disabilities to enjoy a wonderful outing while out in the community. We hope *Our Special Harbor* will be a place where disabilities will melt away and children of all abilities will enjoy each other, regardless of their differences,” explains Bob Pizzano.

The project has been funded largely through JPMF’s grassroots fundraising efforts including local splash-a-thons hosted by area swim clubs and high school swim teams, Fairfax County and various grants. “The Board is pleased to provide funding for this inclusive recreation project. We hope this innovative model will be replicated throughout the mid-Atlantic,” added Heidi Lawyer, Executive Director of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities, which awarded JPMF a \$250,000 matching grant. Board funds are available through the Administration for Developmental Disabilities under the federal Developmental Disabilities and Bill of Rights Act.

JPMF is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children with disabilities and their families. The fund was formed after the tragic drowning of Joey Pizzano, a wonderful six-year-old with developmental disabilities who touched many lives with his bright smile and zest for living. JPMF has focused on helping children with special needs through their signature water safety program, **JPMF Splash**, and through select projects. *Our Special Harbor* is dedicated to Joey and all children like him.



SPECIAL KIDS • SPECIAL FAMILIES

For more information about *Our Special Harbor* visit: <http://jpmf.org/osh/index.html>

