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Joliet Park District Unveils Inwood Park as a PlayCore/GameTime National Demonstration Site for Inclusive Play and PlayOn!

Joliet, IL — April 27, 2026 — The Joliet Park District is proud to announce that Inwood Park has been designated a PlayCore/GameTime National Demonstration Site for Inclusive Play and PlayOn!, recognizing the District’s commitment to creating high-quality, research-based play environments that welcome children of all abilities.

The playground was thoughtfully designed by Cunningham Recreation using research-based best practices for inclusive playground design, ensuring that every element supports meaningful play, social connection, and physical activity. The layout encourages children and families to move more, play longer, and engage in healthy, active lifestyles together.

This national designation highlights Inwood Park as a model for communities seeking to expand equitable access to play. The newly enhanced playground integrates evidence-based design principles that support physical activity, social engagement, sensory exploration, and inclusive recreation for all ages.

A Fully Inclusive Play Destination

At the heart of the play space is an accessible, ramped GameTime play structure featuring multiple slides, varied climbers—including a naturalistic rockscape—and integrated shade to support comfort and usability throughout the day. The design ensures that children with mobility devices can access elevated play experiences alongside their peers.

The playground also incorporates a rich collection of sensory-friendly features, including:

- A cozy climber designed for retreat and self-regulation
- Outdoor musical instruments that encourage creative expression
- A ShadowPlay™ TriRunner that blends movement with visual stimulation

To support a wide range of motion and developmental needs, the play area includes traditional swings, adaptive swing seats, and the popular Expression Swing®, which allows adults and children to swing face-to-face—promoting connection and shared joy.

Additional elements such as a balance beam, imaginative play house, and turf safety surfacing round out the space, ensuring a safe, engaging, and developmentally supportive environment.

Expanding Active Play Opportunities

Inwood Park also features a GameTime Challenge Course, offering youth and families an exciting way to build strength, agility, and confidence through obstacle-style play. This addition supports the PlayOn! National Demonstration Site designation by encouraging active, outdoor recreation aligned with national physical activity guidelines.

A Community Investment in Play

“The Joliet Park District is committed to creating parks and facilities that reflect the needs of our community,” said Sara Kolodziej, Superintendent of SRJC (Special Recreation of Joliet and Channahon). “Inwood Park’s designation as a National Demonstration Site underscores our dedication to inclusive, innovative, and accessible play for everyone.”

As a National Demonstration Site, Inwood Park will serve as a resource for other communities, educators, and recreation professionals seeking to learn from its design and programming. The site will also be featured in PlayCore’s national registry of exemplary play environments.

Phase I of the project was completed as part of the 2025 Healthy Play Initiative, a collaborative effort between the Illinois Park & Recreation Association (IPRA), GameTime, and Cunningham Recreation. This initiative was created to help park and recreation agencies across Illinois integrate research-based design principles into new or renovated play and fitness spaces. Through a combination of professional development, design guidance, and funding support, the Healthy Play Initiative empowers communities to create environments that promote physical activity, social inclusion, and lifelong wellness.

The Joliet Park District Park Board and staff gratefully acknowledges support from the Healthy Play Initiative, Special Recreation of Joliet and Channahon, and grant funding supported by State Senator Meg Loughran Cappel and State Representative Natalie Manley. Enhancements to Inwood Park will continue in the next phase, which will include the addition of a new ADA-accessible washroom.

About Joliet Park District

The Joliet Park District has been enriching the quality of life in the Joliet community since 1922 by providing exceptional parks, facilities, programs, and recreational opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities. Serving one of the largest and most diverse populations in Illinois, the District manages more than 65 parks and natural areas, multiple community centers, athletic complexes, nature center, greenhouse, regional airport, three golf courses and a wide range of year-round programs that promote wellness, play, and community connection.

With a mission to foster healthy lifestyles, protect open space, and create inclusive environments where everyone can thrive, the Joliet Park District remains committed to responsible stewardship, innovative recreation, and accessible experiences for all.