

While much progress has been made, volunteers and donations still atop needs list

Elba Playground Project only four months away from proposed build week

by **Linda Hodge**, Editor

Fund raising for the Elba playground project received much attention during 2005, and as 2006 begins, fund raising will remain a top priority. However, other wheels also will begin turning as the project's much anticipated May build week draws closer.

The project began making progress in early March 2005 when John Dean, a representative from Leathers and Associates of Ithaca, N.Y., visited Elba to help design the desired playground. During his visit, Dean interviewed approximately 400 children and used ideas from the children in designing the proposed playground.

Once he completed the interviews and design plans, local citizens were invited to hear a presentation on the project and get a first hand look at the

design as suggested by the local youth. This meeting also revealed that in order for Elba to meet the playground needs, fund raising would have to be a top priority.

The Kiwanis Club of Elba and several other interested citizens quickly made it a priority to make sure the project became a reality. A playground committee was formed, and all plans focused on a build date of May 2006.

According to playground committee board member Laurie Chapman, at least \$96,709.41 is needed to build the desired playground. At this point, she said \$53,290.59 has been raised.

While the playground committee still needs the help of the community in raising the remaining funds, Chapman said the committee also currently is applying for grants that will hopefully bring in extra funds.

"We will be having a fund raiser in the Spring, but the details are not yet nailed down," she said. "Also, we are trying to partner with several other major businesses to get three or four more 'title sponsors' (gifts of \$10,000 or more)."

For those who want to make donations to the playground project other than monetary, Chapman said the project has reached the point where other needs are beginning to surface.

With the build week now only four months away (May 2-6, 2006), Chapman said it is time for volunteers to begin signing up to help with the build. She said volunteers are needed for a wide array of things including: construction, food preparation and service and childcare - just to name a few.

Chapman said the committee also is looking for people interested and able to donate "gifts in kind." She said this includes donations of nuts, bolts, nails, shingles, trees, tires for the tire swings, lumber products, etc.

"We also are seeking people that may be willing to let us borrow their tools for the build," Chapman said. "The policy is to return the tools in as good or better condition."

In regards to the "gifts in kind" and tools, Chapman said a materials list and tool list each have been created, and she can provide that information to anyone interested in making these type donations.

Chapman also continues to remind those interested in supporting the playground project that several items are for sale on an on-going basis, and the committee would appreciate all support. The items on sale include: handprint tiles (\$35), pickets (\$25) and playground equipment (\$400-\$950 for the stuff that is left).

Also, she said the website for the playground project has been totally re-done, and she urges everyone to visit the site at: www.elbaalabama.net/playground.



THE SITE CLEARING PROCESS is progressing at the old Elba High School location to make way for the construction of the proposed Elba Playground designed in March 2006 by representatives of Leathers and Associates of Ithaca, N.Y. The playground design is created from suggestions by many of Elba children. In order to keep a bit of the old in with the new, the front facade of the old high school is part of the playground's design. It reportedly will serve as an entrance into the playground. While fund raising continues for the playground project, the build date is scheduled for the week of May 2-6, 2006. Local residents are encouraged to volunteer their time during the build week.

According to Chapman, this website is filled with lots of valuable information regarding this project.

"We will have a "rally" of volunteers some time in January or early February to get every-

one excited and to let them know everything that is going on with the playground," she said.

Anyone interested in volunteering for the build week, making any type of donation or sim-

ply in need of additional information regarding the playground project is encouraged either visit the website at www.elbaalabama.net/playground or contact Laurie Chapman at (334) 897-1152.

New postage rates effective January 8

A new year often brings changes, and customers of the U.S. Postal Service will experience several changes in only the second week of 2006.

An approximate 5.4 percent across-the-board increase in most postal rates will take effect Sunday, Jan. 8.

The rate increase - the first since 2002 - reportedly is needed to fulfill the requirement of a federal law passed in 2003. The law requires the Postal Service to establish a \$3.1 billion escrow account, with use of the funds to be determined by Congress at a later date.

According to the postal service, it would not have been necessary to raise the rates in 2006



On behalf of the Wachovia Foundation, Tonya Jones (left) presents Laurie Chapman (right) with a \$2,500 grant check designated for the purchase of a vertical tire tunnel and wavy slide for the Elba Playground. The items were included on an equipment needs list created for the proposed playground scheduled to be built this year.