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Mayor

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**MAYOR STRATTON, COUNTY CHAIR SAVAGE,
CHILDREN CUT RIBBON FOR \$1.1 MILLION
PLAYGROUND AT CENTRAL PARK**

*“Three Angel’s Dream” Comes True with Play Equipment that is Fully
Accessible to All Children*

SCHENECTADY – Mayor Brian U. Stratton and County Legislature Chair Susan E. Savage were joined this morning by state, city and county officials along with groups of children to cut the ribbon and officially dedicate the new, fully accessible playground at beautiful Central Park.

The playground, one of New York’s first fully accessible playgrounds, was built in memory of three girls – Alyssa and Sabrina Barbiero, and Nora Allegra Holiday-Harder – classmates who all passed away in 2004 due to complications related to congenital birth defects. The girls all used wheelchairs, which made it nearly impossible for them to use any of the equipment in the old playground. All of the equipment in the new playground is fully accessible to any child. This morning, the playground was dedicated to the girls, with a plaque placed on a boulder near the playground’s entrance that reads “Three Angel’s Dream” and lists the girls’ names.

“This is a great day for the children of the City Schenectady and Schenectady County. We are so pleased to partner with Schenectady County and the State of New York to make possible a wonderful playground that is truly accessible for children of all ages and every ability to enjoy,” the Mayor stated.

“This playground offers a valuable recreational opportunity for children with - and without - disabilities,” said Diana Jones Ritter, Commissioner of the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD). “But for children who have disabilities it gives them the freedom to play with their peers in a way that accents their abilities - and not their disability, allowing them to truly live richer lives.”

Funding for the playground came from City, County, State and private sources, with the City, County and State each picking up about one-third of the \$1.1 million project, and CVS donating an additional \$11,000 through their CVS Caremark All Kids Can initiative. But the initial idea came from Sabrina Holiday-Harder, mother of Nora Allegra. Holiday-Harder read about an organization called Boundless Playgrounds in a local paper, and she began to make phone calls. Mayor Stratton formed a Playground Committee, and the project took off from there. CLA SITE Landscape Architecture designed the playground.

Holiday-Harder said, "I am just a mother who fought for the best quality of life for my daughter while she was alive. I felt driven to continue to do so for children of all abilities. This playground is part of her legacy."

Schenectady County Legislature Chair Susan Savage stated, "This is not just a playground, it is a place where families from throughout the County can come to have an enjoyable experience regardless of their abilities. It is a tribute to the three exceptional young girls we are honoring here today, Alyssa and Sabrina Barbiero, and Nora Allegra Holiday-Harder, whom I was fortunate enough to know through my own children. I am proud that the county was able to invest in this tribute to them and to make the full playground experience accessible to all children. This is just one more way we are able to make Schenectady County a great place to live work and raise a family."

"I want to congratulate everyone involved with this playground for making such a huge contribution to Schenectady's children," said U.S. Rep. Paul Tonko. "The fact that this playground will be accessible for all is a fitting legacy to the three who inspired it -- Alyssa and Sabrina Barbiero, and Nora Allegra Holiday-Harder. It's a great example of citizens coming together with government and business to enrich the local community and teach valuable lessons as well."

Boundless Playgrounds, a company founded by Niskayuna native Amy Jaffe-Barzach, is the leading national nonprofit developer of inclusive playgrounds where children, with and without disabilities, gain the important developmental and physical benefits of unstructured play. On a Boundless Playground, children learn to appreciate the abilities of others, regardless of any perceived disability. To date, there are more than 150 Boundless Playgrounds in 28 states, the District of Columbia, and two Canadian provinces. For more information, visit www.boundlessplaygrounds.org.

All Kids Can, a program of the CVS Caremark Charitable Trust and CVS Caremark, is a five-year, \$25 million commitment to support children with disabilities. The goals of All Kids Can are to support children with disabilities by raising awareness in schools and in local communities about the importance of inclusion, creating greater opportunities for physical activity and play, and providing access to medical rehabilitation and related services. CVS Caremark and its more than 210,000 employees help children with disabilities learn, play and succeed through partnerships with leading local and national nonprofit organizations such as Boundless Playgrounds and many others across the country. For more information, visit www.cvsallkidscan.com.

The event today includes a face-painting booth, clowns, free refreshments, a bouncy bounce, and fishing demonstrations, and will last until 1:30 PM.

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