



Stephanie Franklin
Executive Director
Madison Parks Foundation
cell (608) 333-3369
sfranklin@supportmpf.org
madisonparksfoundation.org

May , 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Madison Parks Foundation Announces W. Jerome Frautschi Foundation & Oscar Rennebohm Foundation Naming Gifts for Fully Accessible Playgrounds

The spirit of giving and philanthropy is nothing new for the Frautschi Family or for the Oscar Rennebohm Foundation, but it is the sentiment of access and inclusiveness that is really inspiring.

According to the US Census Bureau, 1 in 5 people are affected by a disability, whether it be physical or cognitive. That's an incredible 20% of our population. July 26, 2020, marked the 30th anniversary of the passing of the ADA – the Americans with Disabilities Act. In recognition of the principles represented by the ADA, the Madison Parks Foundation has made it their priority to make parks, playgrounds and programs accessible and equitable for all.

Currently, two *Fully Accessible & Inclusive Playgrounds* provide the opportunity for children of all abilities a chance to play together. That means, there are only two places to go if you have a child or grandchild that has mobility or cognitive challenges where they can come together to play, to share, to learn, and to make connections with other children with different abilities which is so meaningful in childhood development. The City of Madison Parks Division has committed a substantial amount of \$1.7 million to complete five fully accessible playgrounds and the Madison Parks Foundation has committed to raise funds to bridge the gap for these five playgrounds that cost \$420,000, which is 4-times the installation cost of a standard playground.

Long-time Madison Parks donor, W. Jerome Frautschi Foundation was asked to support the project and committed an incredible \$100,000 to name a fully accessible playground at Warner Park for the Frautschi Family.

It was this spirit of giving that inspired another well-known community and supporter, the Oscar Rennebohm Foundation to also give a \$100,000 gift to name a playground at Rennebohm Park to recognize, Jeff Erlanger, one of Madison's great champions of the rights of all citizens.

When Jeff was just 7 months old, he was diagnosed with a tumor on his spinal cord. The tumor was successfully arrested but left Jeff with a disability that required him to use a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Jeff was an amazing person who connected with everyone he met. Jeff was invited to appear on Mister Roger's Neighborhood at the age of 10. Actor Tom Hanks said that seeing the clip of them singing was the trigger for him accepting the role of Mr. Rogers in "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood." Jeff went on to graduate from Memorial High School and then Edgewood College. After graduation, he worked as an intern for then-Representative Tammy Baldwin and Senator Russ Feingold, and also worked on Kathleen Falk's successful campaign for Dane County Executive. He became active in Madison politics and served as a member of the Economic Development Commission, chair of the Commission on People with Disabilities and chair of the Board of Directors of the Community Living Alliance. He also played a major role in gaining accessible taxicab services for Madison. Jeff passed away in 2007 when he was 36 years old. At the time of his death, the Mayor and City Council created the annual Jeff Erlanger Civility in Public Discourse Award in honor of his commitment to community-building advocacy.

Construction of the Frautschi Family Fully Accessible Playground at Warner Park and the Jeffrey Erlanger Fully Inclusive Playground at Rennebohm Park are scheduled for construction in early 2022.

"We are incredibly grateful for these very generous leadership gifts from the W. Jerome Frautschi Foundation and the Oscar Rennebohm Foundation to add more fully accessible playgrounds to our park system making it more inclusive for our community," said Stephanie Franklin, Madison Parks Foundation Executive Director.

Part of what makes Madison so special is our parks and playgrounds. There are still sponsorship opportunities and donations are still needed to add more of these inclusive playgrounds. You can visit madisonparksfoundation.org for more information or to make a gift.

"It doesn't really matter that much what I can't do, it's what I can do – that's how I live my life." – Jeff Erlanger
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USWXF1XW2zo>