

## Local woman helps build park in south Cheyenne

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Ebelenny Munoz raised money through the Parent Leadership Training Institute to fund the kids' play area off of Factor Lane.

By [Josh Rhoten](#)

CHEYENNE -- Ebelenny Munoz saw a need in her community and decided to act on it.

While dropping her daughter off for day care at her sister-in-law's home in south Cheyenne, she noticed how many children in the area were out playing in the street, despite a large green space nearby.

While it was just a long stretch of grass, she knew that with a little effort, a safe and convenient play space could be set up for the kids.

"It was disappointing going there in the summer and seeing all the kids scattered around when there was a great space right there for use," Munoz said. "I thought maybe I could do a project with fundraising to get them something small, but that also would keep them entertained."

Munoz earned funds for her project through a two-part grassroots effort. With no nonprofit status, she used traditional methods like raffles and cooking to earn cash.

"A lot of the families in that community are Hispanic, and we all got together to make tamales

and sold them around," Munoz said. "We also held a raffle -- just any way to raise funds."

With the funds collected, Munoz bought a wooden multipurpose gym set with swings, which now sits proudly in the middle of the green space and is in near constant use by local children.

The project was the final step in a 20-week leadership course Munoz was involved with through the Parent Leadership Training Institute. A national organization, the Wyoming branch of the Parent Leadership Training Institute works through the Wyoming Department of Health to encourage parent leadership and community service. The program is currently statewide.

Anne Siebert, the program's state director, said the final project that students in the course choose to pursue often is very personal.

"Our program is free to those accepted, and we make a special effort to make the classes easily accessible to parents. The one thing we ask in return is for them to do a community service project like this at the end," Siebert said. "Each project is unique because of how each graduate identifies or defines the service portion of it. For Ebelenny, it was bringing a playground to her community, which increases neighborhood partnerships and is something very tangible for everyone to enjoy."

Siebert said other graduates have done projects that increase literacy or school readiness.

Dawn Hamilton, a classmate of Munoz, said her work was an inspiration.

"She saw a need and made it happen, and now there are kids playing on it," Hamilton said. "We had a lot of great projects in our class, but we all rallied behind her. She is an awesome person that saw the need to bring a play area to a group of children that had nothing to occupy their time, and now her vision is being utilized by the children there."

Hamilton also said there would be a dedication ceremony for the play set at 10 a.m. on Oct. 22 with a few guest speakers and members of the community.

Munoz is currently planning to make other additions to the area, including space for a volleyball court, and is still collecting donations. There is no definite timeline for new additions, but Munoz said she hoped it all would be in place by next summer.

"I feel like I have done a lot, but I could have done more. I guess little by little I'll be satisfied," Munoz said. "It's kind of small, but you have to start somewhere."