

FROM THE EDITOR

We still have spots open for landscape architects and other environmental stakeholders to attend an upcoming symposium in New York on Tuesday, Oct. 27, 2009. Check out the program, speakers, time and location on the newsletter's first page. You do not want to miss this educational opportunity.

Enjoy the first part of a feature on an intriguing Outdoor Learning Center at Central Michigan University, where landscape architects and architects, in collaboration with the Outdoor Learning Center, have designed an engaging outdoor environment with creative play and learning spaces situated in a beautiful natural setting. The second part of the feature will describe the use of the outdoor spaces by the Learning Center's staff in their innovative early childhood programs.

The second story features a recent electronic playground created by collaboration between Layton City Parks and a local junior high school in Utah. This exciting playground has been receiving lots of attention and praise from the community.

Lastly, check out educational webinar opportunities from KOMPAN and let us know which topics interest you.

Cheers,

Helle Burlingame

Director, KOMPAN Play Institute, NA

UPDATES FROM THE **KOMPAN PLAY INSTITUTE**

IN THIS ISSUE

SYMPOSIUM: RECLAIMING OUTDOOR SPACE



Join us for a symposium in New York at the Manhattan Plaza on Tuesday, October 27, 2009.

[Read More →](#)

FEATURED PLAYGROUND: OUTDOOR LEARNING CENTER



Christy Summers and Carey Baker, Principals at Beckett & Raeder, Inc. in Ann Arbor, Michigan, describe the design of a variety of play and learning spaces that create a fascinating outdoor space for young children.

[Read More →](#)

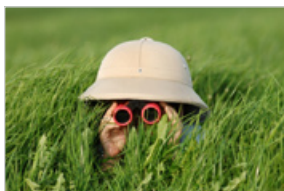
FEATURED PLAYGROUND: LAYTON CITY PARKS



Brock Hill, Superintendent of Layton City Parks in Utah, tells the story of how an exciting new electronic playground is benefiting both a junior high school and the community at large.

[Read More →](#)

KOMPAN WEBINARS



Check out educational webinar opportunities from KOMPAN and let us know which topics interest you.

[Web Link →](#)

IN THIS ISSUE

Reclaiming Outdoor Space • 1

Outdoor Learning Center • 2

Layton City Parks • 6

About Us • 9

UPDATES FROM THE KOMPAN PLAY INSTITUTE



FREEGAME acts as a meeting space for kids to hang out and organize their own play and sports activities. Here, kids play flag football at Nickerson Gardens, City of Los Angeles.

**KOMPAN PLAY INSTITUTE SYMPOSIUM:
RECLAIMING OUTDOOR SPACE FOR THE DIGITAL GENERATION**

PROGRAM

Please follow [this link](#) for program details, presenter bios and registration information.

LOCATION

Manhattan Plaza • The Ellington Room
400 West 43rd St, New York, NY 10036

DATE

Tuesday, October 27, 2009

TIME

9:00 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.

The KOMPAN Play Institute invites you to a symposium devoted to creating innovative modern landscapes that promote healthy, active living. Today, understanding human behavior is at the forefront of designing intriguing outdoor environments that will motivate high use, which is the ultimate success criterion when designing such spaces. A multifunctional approach to making the outdoors relevant for all generations and abilities will be presented through examples, concepts, and research. Kids' developmental issues, health, psychological motivation, and particular needs, as well as the needs of their families, will set the stage. Concepts regarding how this know-how gets translated into

playful environments will be illustrated through inspiring examples from across the world, in both architecture and layout solutions. Practical strategies and approaches to inclusive play will be discussed, rounding out the inside portion of the symposium. Lastly, we will venture outdoors on a playground tour, with tour guides discussing layout and design considerations.

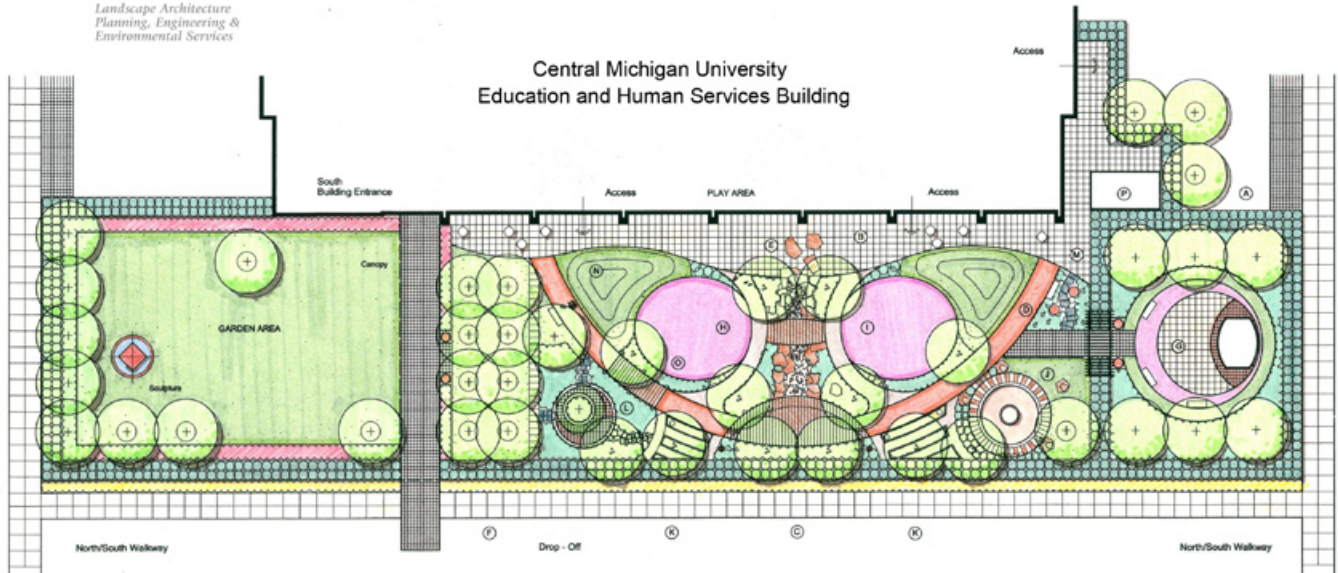
The symposium is free and accredited with the ASLA for four (4) hours of continuing education credits through the landscape architecture's continuing education system, LA CES.

The symposium is hosted by Tiki Recreation.

Follow [this link](#) to view a larger site plan that includes brief descriptions of each space.

B R i
Beckett & Raeder
Landscape Architecture
Planning, Engineering &
Environmental Services

Central Michigan University
Education and Human Services Building



CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY: OUTDOOR LEARNING CENTER

An interview with Christy Summers and Carey Baker, Principals at Beckett & Raeder, Inc. Ann Arbor, MI

This childcare center represents a collaborative process between the Central Michigan University Child Development Center, the SHWGROUPE and Beckett & Raeder, Inc.

The first part of this article about the new outdoor learning center at the Central Michigan University will describe the outdoor play and learning environment from the perspective of landscape architects. In the next issue of the newsletter you can read about the outdoor program and how the play environment is used by children and for the education of educators.

The Outdoor Learning Center is a children's play space that promotes active and imaginary play for preschool children of diverse cognitive and physical abilities. While the Outdoor Learning Center covers approximately 1.25 acres, the space is divided into several activity nodes offering differing experiences through the varied intimacy of the spaces.

The Outdoor Learning Center is positioned on the south building face, giving the space ample access to sunshine, which is most important on the cold winter days of mid-Michigan.

continued on page 3

Outdoor Learning Center, continued



At both ends of the arched bridge are formal play areas comprised of KOMPAN play equipment on poured-in-place safety surfacing of complementing primary colors.

Plants such as sedum and iris are nestled between the stacked ledge stones, along with irrigation misters. These add a water element for a bit of fun and surprise for the children, and can be closely managed and monitored by the staff.

The south face of the building is almost entirely glass, providing excellent integration of the outdoor and indoor environments. Immediately adjacent to the building is a concrete plaza with a wave-shaped perimeter, which immediately establishes an informal juxtaposition to the rectilinear building. The plaza is of ample size for group activities, but also provides a portion of the tricycle loop requested by the Outdoor Learning Center. The remainder of the loop is provided by a secondary arc spine comprised of reclaimed brick pavers, a wood boardwalk and a wood suspension bridge. The varied textures provide multi-sensory stimulation as children traverse the loop on foot or by trike.

Bisecting the tricycle loop is the

dry river bed, comprised of stacked ledge stones and Mexican river rocks, depressed in the center of the active space. Several ledge stones are placed in the concrete plaza, affording the appearance that the dry river bed originates from within the building. Opposite the building is a large wood boardwalk overlooking the dry river bed. Plants such as sedum and iris are nestled between the stacked ledge stones, along with irrigation misters. These add a water element for a bit of fun and surprise for the children, and can be closely managed and monitored by the staff. An arched bridge traverses the dry river bed, providing opportunity

continued on page 4

Outdoor Learning Center, continued



Traversing the arched bridge represents a passage to greater physical abilities among the children.

for imaginative play over and under the bridge, as well as a challenge for traversing the arch by foot or by trike.

At both ends of the arched bridge are formal play areas comprised of KOMPAN play equipment on poured-in-place safety surfacing of complementing primary colors. The Outdoor Learning Center was particularly interested in providing play equipment that promoted imaginative and interactive play, with an aesthetic that avoided molded, brightly-colored plastics. The play equipment in one area targets three to

four year old children, while the play equipment in the other space targets four to five year old children. Traversing the arched bridge, therefore, also represents a passage to greater physical abilities among the children.

On either side of the formal play equipment spaces are simple landforms that provide additional vertical relief in the space, imaginative opportunities for “king of the mound” type play, and slipping and sliding opportunities in the winter months when snow cover abounds. To the far west of the space, adjacent to the canopy-covered entrance walkway, is an “enchanted forest” space, providing tightly spaced honey locust trees over lawn. Nearby is the “secret garden,” an intimate and secluded teaching or play space surrounded by dense plant material and a concrete seat wall, with a flagstone access path from the tricycle loop and the “enchanted forest.”

Flanking the overlook bridge are garden plots for vegetables or flowers, offering a myriad of seasonal teaching opportunities. Water spigots are provided nearby, promoting hands-on watering of the “crops” and the resulting ownership of the agricultural bounty. Just east of the garden plots is a large sand play area, with both concrete surround and central island. The concrete surround is stained in alternating black and white to resemble piano keys.

The eastern-most portion of the Outdoor Learning Center is a performance area, with an architecturally unique

continued on page 5

Outdoor Learning Center, continued



Above: Carey Baker (left) and Christy Summers.
Right: Concrete surrounding a large sand play area is stained black and white to resemble piano keys.



Reading Pavilion. The Reading Pavilion provides a small stage area, as well as a window for puppet shows. Seating is provided informally on stacked stone, boulders and bermed lawn surrounding the pavilion. The performance space is heavily landscaped to reinforce the space's intimacy and separation from the remainder of the Outdoor Learning Center.

The landscape design of the Outdoor Learning Center promotes substantial diversity through the use of dozens of different trees, shrubs, perennials and ground cover. The design provides color, textural and seasonal variety, providing an ever-changing environment for the children to experience, play in, and grow in.

The project was sought and was awarded LEED Silver certification from the United States Green Building Council. Elements in the Outdoor Learning Center that contributed to the project's LEED certification and sustainable design practices include:

- Use of drip irrigation system to greatly reduce potable water use for plant irrigation
- Use of tall fescue seed mix instead of traditional lawn mix to greatly reduce potable water use for lawn irrigation
- Use of FSC-certified wood materials for all wood incorporated into the Outdoor Learning Center
- Reuse of brick roadway pavers for tricycle loop



A school and park collaboration creates a cutting-edge playground for tots, teens, and the kids in between.

LAYTON CITY PARKS: ELECTRONIC PLAYGROUND

An interview with Brock Hill, Layton City Parks Superintendent • Layton, UT

It is Layton City's adopted ordinance and it is in our municipal code to have a neighborhood park within three quarter miles walking distance of every home.

Since Layton is the area that has been growing the fastest with new homes and schools, the need for a new park was becoming evident. So when the property became available to us through the school district and our cooperative agreement, we jumped right at it. It was a mutual deal between us. Three acres of the site was dedicated to the city in exchange for development and impact fees.

Ja Eggett, landscape architect, did the design for the neighborhood park.

He did all the construction drawings and Layton City acted as the general contractor, with our skilled staff taking care of the construction management of all the phases, from grading and irrigation through the planting and everything. It made the school park a very economical solution, helping out the local economy. Another benefit of the cooperative agreement is that the school and the park were able to share contractors for things like the bathroom using contractors that were already on site. It is just a much better use of tax payers, money.

continued on page 7

Layton City Parks, continued



Video Link: Click on the image above to learn more about ICON.

Equipment choice

We were looking for something uniquely different. We have been using the familiar blue, red and yellow playground structures and they are kind of old and tired. The Legacy Junior High is in close proximity to the playground, and we were excited to focus on the teenage group, as well as the younger families with younger children. Both age groups were the driving forces behind the equipment choices. In focusing on the teenage group, we found that the KOMPAN electronic play equipment, ICON, lends itself very well to that age group. We wanted to attract teens and tweens to motivate them to get outside and to get them to think outside the box in their play. The equipment is not structured. You do not climb down this rope,

slide down the slide or go through this tunnel. ICON really leaves it up to kid's imagination to use it how they see fit. In Layton City we are pretty aggressive in our forward thinking and mindset, and fortunately we have an administration that is very supportive of our department, having the same attitude about being on the leading edge of play and the future of parks.

Why is it important for parks to be on the leading edge of play?

We really need to attract this new generation of kids. Kids nowadays use all their environments in very dynamic ways, and it is changing so rapidly that we've got to stay competitive with all

continued on page 8

Layton City Parks, continued



Follow [this link](#) to view a larger site plan.

those other things that are grabbing their attention, like the electronics and the gaming. We have to get them outside the house and away from the computer to get them to exercise. Today because of the electronic age, they wait for somebody to entertain them. We believe that the electronic equipment we have chosen is a way to get their curiosity enticed, and soon, as we have experienced with this playground, you find them out there moving and thinking in play.

Feedback from the community and students at Legacy Junior High

The playground has been very, very well received by all. Parents tell us that school does not start before 8:10 a.m. but that the kids want to be dropped off at 7:30 a.m. so they

are there early, which gives them time to play before they go to class. They are out there again during their lunch break and then again after school when they are waiting for their parents to pick them up. We have seen as many as fifty kids on the ICON components we have picked for our playground. Saturdays are pure craziness. While the older kids are at school, we also see plenty of young children and their mothers utilizing their part of the playground. I probably should not reveal this, but we have had the parks department maintenance guys down at the playground (myself included) and we will get going on it every once in awhile. A lot of laughs. Thankfully no pictures were taken. See what the maintenance park people do during their day – they play!

At our open house and ribbon cutting event, we had kids and parents play together. Some of the dads really got into some of the games together with their kids. Lastly, I would like to emphasize that the technical assistance from KOMPAN has been great. KOMPAN's technical manager, Troy Kunkel, and Eric Wride, KOMPAN's certified installer have both been amazing. Anything we needed, they took care of it. We think the world of your products and we are happy to have them in our city. Both the city council and the city administrators are very positive and give us all the support we need. It has been great a great planning process.

For more information, contact Brock Hill: bhill@laytoncity.org

CONTACT

Helle Burlingame
Director, KOMPAN Play Institute, NA
helle.burlingame@kompan.com

KOMPAN Online
www.kompan.com

LINKS

Find Your KOMPAN Play Consultant
Environmental Statement
CAD Library

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Editor: Helle Burlingame
Designer: Sarah Kuck
Database/Website: Terra Moreland



Outdoor Learning Center, Central Michigan University



Helle Burlingame

ABOUT KOMPAN PLAY INSTITUTE

The KOMPAN Play Institute is a network of international specialists in active outdoor environments for children and young people. We keep an eye on trends in society and look at how they affect children and teenagers and their playgrounds and outdoor spaces all over the world. We initiate research projects and collaborate with researchers internationally. Our goal is to share our knowledge for the benefit of children and young people as well as the adults who work in this field. We do this through seminars, conferences, articles and our website.