



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

Evchich Family, Senator Ortt Cut Ribbon on Mason's Mission Playground

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TOWN OF PENDLETON – State Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I – North Tonawanda) today joined other elected officials and the Mason's Mission Foundation in Pendleton to cut the ribbon on a unique playground designed specifically for children who are differently abled. Senator Ortt has secured a total of \$263,040 in state grants in support of Mason's Mission Playground at 6570 Campbell Boulevard.

Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Senate Committee Chairman Senator Ortt said, "Mason's Mission Playground allows those who are differently abled to overcome certain challenges through an environment that promotes social acceptance and inclusiveness of kids of all abilities. I'm proud to help Mason's Mission make this project possible. This playground will help bring families closer together while enhancing the quality of life for children with or without special needs."

Jason and Jennifer Evchich started the project after realizing there were no playgrounds near their home for children with special needs. Their sons Mason and Matthew have an undiagnosed form of Hypomyelinating Leukodystrophy, a neurological disorder that prohibits them from walking, talking, crawling or playing on a traditional playground.

Jason Evchich, chair of the Mason's Mission Foundation, said, "Children everywhere – of all abilities – deserve the right to play and live as normal of a life as possible. Mason's Mission Playground, which is the only park of its kind in Western New York, gives them that opportunity. For the first time, children and parents of any ability will be able to play together in a truly 100 percent inclusive handicapped accessible playground"

The 12,000-square-foot playground is compliant with federal ADA guidelines and regulations. It features wheelchair accessible rides, including u-shaped and oodle swings that offer head and neck support. The playground also features slides, sensory play centers, and a rose garden to serve as a quiet area for those living with autism. A wheelchair accessible merry-go-round will be installed in the spring of 2018. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$500,000.

The Mason's Mission Foundation now plans to help other communities build similar playgrounds.