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## **Junior League Awards \$50,000 to Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department for Urban Parks Partnership**

*Local women's leadership organization announces partnership with Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation to provide a safe new play space in SE urban area.*

**Grand Rapids, Michigan – Wednesday, April 24, 2019** – The Junior League of Grand Rapids ceremonially presented a \$50,000 check yesterday at City Hall to the Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department. This project is the culmination of years of fundraising and planning by the Junior League, which is committed to improving children's physical health in Grand Rapids. Now in its 94th year, the Junior League of Grand Rapids chose the Ted Rasberry Field as the site for its third urban playspace in the past several years. The Junior League chose the park, which currently hosts a baseball field near the intersection of Division Avenue and Hall Street SE, due to the large population of children and the lack of safe play facilities in the immediate area.

Within a 10-minute walk of the park, 30% of the population is under 18 years old, and 60% of renters are spending over 30% of their monthly household income on rent. In addition to the \$50,000 grant, the Junior League will provide volunteers to join the Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department in building the playground in September 2019. A full 100% of the grant will be used to purchase playground equipment for the space. The Parks and Recreation Department will cover additional construction and landscaping costs, insurance, and upkeep.

The play space will feature state-of-the-art playground equipment designed to inspire movement, fitness, and interaction. The play space will be just beyond the outfield fence of Rasberry Field, which is named for Ted Rasberry, a former baseball player, manager, and owner in what was the Negro American League, including with the Grand Rapids Black Sox. The field's current diamond was renovated in May of 2016 through a grant from the Baseball Tomorrow Fund. The rectangular area west of the diamond will be the boundary for the Junior League's newest "Wellness Adventure Yard" revitalization project.

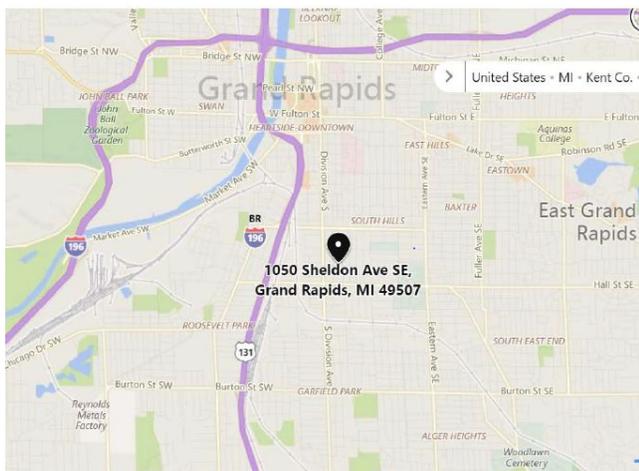
The Junior League of Grand Rapids has previously built Wellness Adventure Yards at the Wege Soujourner House (formerly known as the YWCA Domestic Crisis Shelter) and the Grand Rapids Child Discovery Center, an urban charter school. The Junior League

researches the needs of the specific population and customizes every play space with the goal of improving children's physical health in that particular community. Access to healthy food and safe play - which are central to the Junior League's mission - are directly connected to a child's ability to concentrate in school, develop emotional and mental wellness, and create healthy lifelong habits.

"This \$50,000 grant is the culmination of months of research, planning, and fundraising," said Lauren Jacoby, the 94th President of the Junior League of Grand Rapids. "We are so excited for this new partnership with the City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department. We can't wait to see this plan come to fruition, which will make such a direct impact on the health and wellness of the many children within walking distance of Raspberry Field."

"With this generous project contribution of \$50,000 from the Junior League," stated David Marquardt, Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Director, "we are able to make a significant impact to an underutilized park space. We are grateful for the partnership with such a well-known and respected organization that shares a similar mission to increase health and wellness opportunities for children in our community."

#### **Location of Ted Raspberry Field (1050 Sheldon Ave SE, Grand Rapids):**



Members of the Junior League of Grand Rapids presenting the \$50,000 check at City Hall to the Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department:



The Junior League of Grand Rapids building a previous Wellness Adventure Yard at the Grand Rapids Child Discovery Center downtown:



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### **About Junior League of Grand Rapids**

The Junior League of Grand Rapids is a non-profit organization committed to developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable. The Junior League of Grand Rapids is open to all women with a desire to learn, lead, and serve.

[www.juniorleaguegr.com](http://www.juniorleaguegr.com)

### **About City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department**

The mission of the City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department is to provide the community with inspirational experiences through the responsible management and collaborative stewardship of the city's natural, educational, and cultural resources.

[www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Parks-and-Recreation](http://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/Government/Departments/Parks-and-Recreation)