

# Gladiator News

Bradenton Gladiators Volume 1, Issue 2

Posted by The Herald Tue, June 23, 2009

## Volunteers create safe haven with community playground

by [Michael Wilmering](#)

BRADENTON - A community playground built over the weekend at Village Central Apartments is a positive sign of redevelopment in an otherwise blighted area.

Village Central Apartments, a new, affordably priced community in Bradenton Village, is at the corner of Fifth Street West and 13th Avenue in central Bradenton.

The Bradenton Housing Authority, Manasota Commercial Construction and Telesis Corp., a national housing developer that focuses on affordable housing, developed Village Central Apartments. New Hampshire-based Learning Structures Inc., a professional community-built playground contractor, designed the playground based upon the creative input of children in the community.



Volunteers helped build this community playground over a three-day period.

Joe Cicirelli, a representative of Learning Structures, said 12 to 16 community volunteers helped with construction on Thursday and Friday and more than 50 volunteers and children attended the construction and barbecue Saturday afternoon.

"The process is just as important as the product," Cicirelli said. "We had people who had never met each other, and they were having a good time and getting to know each other and breaking those invisible barriers, building social capital. It's been terrific."

Winston Sale, playground director at Telesis, traveled from Washington, D.C., with his brother, Bonner Sale, and some other volunteers to help with the construction

of the playground. Sale said the community involvement in the project also helps create a sense of ownership.

"Basically, we could've just bought something off the shelf and had it installed here and been done with it," Sale said. "Frankly, it would have been a lot easier, but doing it this way not only brings the community together to welcome the people who live here, it also creates awareness of the need for affordable housing and the investment the community is making in affordable housing."

Sale said the 25 units in Village Central Apartments are filled mostly with single mothers.

"This playground is really for their kids," Sale said. "This community playground build is a part of our approach to providing housing. It's not just a place to live, it's creating a community."

"Every project is unique," Cicirelli said. "There's not another playground like this in the world, so these kids have their own identity here."

Local high school students, members of the Bradenton Rotary Club and members of the Bradenton Gladiators football team also helped with the event.



Winston Sale of Telesis Corp., and Joe Cicirelli of Learning Structures Inc. admire their effort.