



Recess in Full Swing

Restoring play in schools,
one playground at a time.

BY MICHAEL A. MILLER

The smoke has cleared from July's bombastic festivities and September is closing in fast. Soon, students will wrap up their summer book reports and prepare for days filled again with school bells, tardy slips, and recesses on the playground—at least, if they have a space to play.

Sadly, many children don't. In some cases, a school's playground is deemed too old or unfit for safe play. In other cases, schools don't have a playground at all, nor the funding to build one. Myriad factors reduce children's opportunities for free play including lack of municipal support and lower tax funds for city parks. "Too much screen time, shorter school recesses, overly structured schedules, and a lack of safe spaces to play all contribute to inadequate play and recreation," said Carter Oosterhouse, CEO of the nonprofit Carter's Kids.

For children, the playground is more important than having a place to unwind with friends or swap the latest fad collectable, even if they don't know it. "Just 60 minutes of play daily has been shown to provide a variety of health benefits, and yet children often don't achieve that," said Oosterhouse. Research shows free play supports their physical, emotional, and cognitive advancement.

But there is hope. Two paladins in the struggle for children's health—Nordic Naturals and Carter's Kids—have teamed up to build a playground for kids in need. Carter's Kids gives children the opportunity to improve their fitness and self-esteem by building playgrounds and community parks all around the country. After 53 completed playgrounds, they're looking at Webster Elementary in Long Beach, California as their next school in need.

What's Nordic Naturals' part in all this? They're heading fundraising and awareness efforts. Building a playground at every school isn't exactly child's play, after all, they can cost upwards of \$75,000. But to the fish-oil supplement giant, the physical and mental health of our youth is priceless, and they're donating a portion of their proceeds to the cause through September 30. They also hope to

leave a lasting impression of Carter's great work on the public long after the promotion ends. "Nordic Naturals and Carter's Kids share a commitment to the health and well-being of children. We are very excited that by all of us working together, the kids at Webster Elementary will have a brand-new playground to use," said Joar Opheim, founder and CEO of Nordic Naturals.

Omega-3 benefits for children

Studies suggest that polyunsaturated fatty acids (like omega-3s) can:

- Improve behavior in children with ADHD
- Lead to enhanced cognitive development
- Support optimal visual function

Once you recognize the health and developmental importance of playgrounds, the missions of these two companies start blending together. "A well-designed playground features play equipment that will develop and improve a child's cardiovascular health, their core strength, balance, hand-eye coordination, and overall leg and arm strength," said Helen Galvin of Nordic Naturals. And children deserve not only playgrounds, but also "supplements that are suited for them, taste great, and they will ultimately take." The fish oil capsules in question contain omega-3 fatty acids—good fats that are shown to improve cardiovascular and cognitive health and defend against cancer, but appear infrequently in the Standard American Diet.

To help afford kids the opportunity to let their imaginations run wild on jungle gyms and build their confidence on swing sets, purchase Nordic Natural's fish oil for kids, and do them a dietary favor in the process. To learn more about this program, visit carters-kids.org and nordicnaturals.com/consumers. 