

## New Discovery Playground offers education through play

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Taylor Brazeau, 21/2, frolics through the splash pad at the Discovery Playground in Spokane Valley on Thursday.

Kids walking through the splash pad at the new Discovery Playground in Spokane Valley quickly figured out which bump to jump on to get the water started, shrieking with delight as the water splashed across their faces and clothing.

It was their first look at the park designed for children of different abilities that city of Spokane Valley organizers are hoping will become a regional draw. It was built just south of the CenterPlace event center at 2426 N. Discovery Place.



Becky Brazeau watched her 2 1/2-year old son Taylor splash through the water. "It's gorgeous," she said. "It's a great thing for young kids."

The park is built around the theme of "Exploring Eastern Washington" and there is something for every sense. Kids can visit a bear dozing in his den, touch a brightly colored trout, dig for fossils, pound on drums and sit in an oversize pumpkin and chair in the Secret Garden.

Bright colors are everywhere and a vivid pink dragonfly attracted its share of parents with cameras.

There are features designed for physical development, such as slides, swings and climbing rocks, as well as nontraditional playground activities for other sensory development, such as a fragrant herb garden and musical elements.

The playground has a picnic shelter and an outdoor classroom, but Spokane Valley Parks and Recreation Director Mike Stone said the city will not be accepting reservations or charging fees for use of the new park this year.

While it's designed for disabled children, everyone at the park's grand opening Thursday seemed to find something to like. Nicole Burrow lives on Spokane's North Side and brought her 2-year-old daughter and 3-year-old son. "I love it," she said. "There's all kinds of cool stuff for the kids, more so than any other park in Spokane."

Her son favored the bear and the giant pumpkin, but was sampling everything. "I wouldn't mind driving out here just for this," Burrow said.

Five-year-old Garrett Baumgartner used small mallets to bang oversized wind chimes. "He likes his music," said his mother, Jennifer Baumgartner. She lives in Valleyford and is already eager to bring Garrett and his older brother back to the park. "I like the bright colors."

The grand opening drew a large crowd, including six of the seven current City Council members and almost all the former council members and mayors. The park has been planned since before the city incorporated in 2003.

Before the ribbon was cut, park designer Carol Henry of Design Concepts said she worked to put interesting things in unusual places. "Our goal is for you to come back and come back and come back and really discover Discovery Playground."

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