

# STROLL®

Del Rio

**ANNE JACKSON &  
HER DAUGHTER  
ELIZABETH  
ROBBINS**

CELEBRATE THE SEASON

DELIVERING NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

# AWESOME SPOT HEROES

Awesome Spot Playground at Beyer Park will provide the children who play here a new language driven by independence and the nature of play.

FAMILY PHOTO BY SARAH BRATTON OF LOREDO PHOTOGRAPHY

**Laughing children are a balm to the soul.**

— author unknown

Hearing your child laugh has a visceral effect, and most of us would do anything to hear it again and again. That is where the story of Awesome Spot Playground began for a young family with four children in Modesto.

Tommy and Rachel Loredo had their second son, born November 15, 2007. Young Tommy was born with physical and congenital health circumstances that would create a need for multiple surgeries and a life saturated with doctor visits and therapy. His mobility is made possible with wheelchairs or a walker. Through these challenges, Tommy has been the same, mentally and emotionally, as any child. He loves to play, laugh, and engage. As Tommy grew, his desire for independence grew with him. His intellect has never been questioned, and despite his physical challenges,



The Loredo Family

he is witty, smart, caring, and energetic. He faces limitations in public play areas that make fun and inclusion out of reach.

When Rachel Loredo heard about a park playground that was built in Palo Alto, California, that was designed to be socially inclusive and physically accessible to all children, she was compelled to write a letter of gratitude to its founders for having created a playground that children like Tommy could enjoy, where he could play and laugh. In April 2015, the

Loredo family was included in the grand opening of the Magical Bridge.

This was when the idea of possibilities began to take root for her and her family. It was something completely new that opened a river of hope.

Rachel's first step was to reach out to the Modesto Parks & Recreation Department, which supported the idea of bringing an inclusive playground for children with disabilities to the Modesto area. The work then began to

garner support, raise funding, and design a playground. Landscape Architect Chad Kennedy was introduced to facilitate the design of the play space.

Chad has advocated for equal play opportunity for many years, and his support of this project has required trailblazing the group never imagined. The process has been long and has had as many victories as roadblocks, but the effort has had a core group of private and corporate supporters determined to see the fruit of this process. In 2022 there was ground broken at the playground site in Beyer Park. It has been a seven-year journey and continues to have more steps. Tommy Loredo is now 16 years old, and he and his family are still working to build this space for children whose early life experiences can be changed by something as impactful as an inclusive playground.

**Inclusive Playground: Uses a comprehensive approach that includes social and emotional inclusion, sensory integration, graduating levels of physical and mental challenges, cognitive simplicity, and opportunities for discovery and exploration.**

— Chad Kennedy

The children who play here will learn a new language driven by independence and the nature of play. The genius of the playground is it piques all imaginations and nurtures a sense of self, creates special experiences, and cultivates social inclusion and sensory integration.

The Loredo, Gloria, and Kennedy families are heroes with heroes. They would tell us that the community involved in building and maintaining a child kingdom like Awesome Spot is the definition of altruism. Allowing a child to have and experience their own freedom when their body binds them is to be a hero that makes heroes.

**“The Porges Family Foundation believes that everyone has the right to play.”**  
**“We feel that the strength of a community is judged by how well it takes care of its people, ALL of its people.”**  
— Evan Porges

To see the project and become a sponsor, go to <https://www.theawesomespotplayground.com>

YouTube: 3D Virtual Tour of The Awesome Spot Playground in Modesto, CA



Rachael and Chad Kennedy