



Stephen Schmitt/The Journal News

Brandon Herrera, left, and Alberto Rios both age 3 from Yonkers, play yesterday in the new playground at Clemens Park in Yonkers.

YONKERS

City reopens cleaned-up park

Site once strewn with litter will now be children's play area

Ernie Garcia
The Journal News

Dogs once ran wild in the tiny, fenced-in park near Leighton and Berkeley avenues. It was an overgrown sand lot littered with broken bottles and empty crack vials.

"We used to call it sand park. It was nothing but sand and weeds and kids would not play here," said Yonkers Councilman Wilson Soto, R-2nd District, who once lived on South Broadway near the park.

Today Clemens Park has a new life, celebrated at an official rededication yesterday by municipal and Jewish community leaders

The renovated park, which reopened during the summer and features a new children's jungle gym, was part of private-public collaboration between the Westchester Jewish Community Services, the Jewish Council of Yonkers and the city of Yonkers.

The WJCS raised about \$65,000 of the \$113,000 renovation cost, with the city contributing about \$13,000. The WJCS will bring toddlers and pre-schoolers in its nearby day care center to Clemens Park on weekdays.

"We could not find a place in Yonkers that had an acceptable play space," said Amy Kohn, the WJCS's associate executive director.

WJCS provides counselling, job readiness training and parenting support, among other services, to low-income individuals in its offices at 489 and 503 South Broad

way

Sian Fletchman brought her 20-month-old son Zion to the new Clemens Park and said that she would return.

"It's beautiful," said Fletchman, a Van Cortlandt Park Avenue resident whose son attends the WJCS's Family Center day care service. "I'll probably come back because now I know where it is."

Murray Gunner, executive director of the Jewish Council of Yonkers, said his organization helped raise \$35,000 for the park. Gunner said the project helped fulfill the organization's constitutional mandate.

"One of our constitutional provisions is strengthening the city of Yonkers," Gunner explained. "When we improve a park for kids, we believe we are strengthening the city."