

## *We choose Albany public schools because ...*

### **Play time at Delaware, Pine Hills**

Pine Hills Elementary School and Delaware Community School both welcomed new playgrounds this fall thanks to the hard work of school and community volunteers and the support of a variety of organizations and individuals.

“I think that people are having lots of fun and they are enjoying it,” Delaware Community School fourth-grader Nigora Aripova said on a recent fun-filled morning before school.



*Students at Delaware Community School enjoy their new playground before school in September.*

Delaware Community School opened in January 2007 with a large play area that quickly deteriorated under students' feet. Despite efforts to regrow grass, the area consisted mostly of dirt and rocks by the time the 2007-08 school year began.

That limited the play area's use until the district and school decided in the late fall of 2007 to close the play area completely to avoid further deterioration while a new plan was developed.

Thanks to the support of the district and a \$10,000 grant from Wal-Mart, the school was able to install a multi-use play area that includes a blacktop area, 9,000 feet of new sod and a separate playground.

“I like the big slide,” Nigora said.

“And the rock climbing wall!” said fourth-grader Denise Lopez.

“And the monkey bars!” fourth-grader Edith Gonzalez chimed in, adding that the playground makes coming to school more fun.

At Pine Hills Elementary, the school celebrated the grand opening of its playground with a community event Oct. 4. The school also had been without a playground since it opened in January 2007.

The Pine Hills Elementary School Playground Committee – made up of parents, teachers, administrators and support staff – worked tirelessly to make the new playground a reality. Students provided ideas about equipment and design for the new playground, and

also helped with fund-raising efforts in addition to support from the district, private donors and grants.

Members of the school community gathered Aug. 23 to set up the new apparatus in time for the start of the new school year.

The Pine Hills Elementary community began planning and fundraising for the new playground long before the former School 16 building and playground came down.

In the spring of 2003, students held a penny drive that raised \$1,800, matched by Charter One Bank (now Citizens Bank) to spruce up the former playground and provide a foundation for their playground fund. That fund was boosted by sales of bricks from the former School 16 building, including pre-sales at the farewell event “A New Era Begins” in June 2005.



***The new Pine Hills Elementary playground was a community effort that came to fruition at the start of the 2008-09 school year.***

Over the last few years, the school has continued to raise funds through a combination of PTA efforts and community support, including the very successful “Pine for a Book” sale held last spring by the Pine Hills Neighborhood Association and Pine Hills Retired Ladies at St. Andrews Episcopal Church.

The Pine Hills playground committee began designing the playground right after the school moved into the new building in January 2007 and worked tirelessly from then on to make the new playground a reality.