



Tatum's Garden

Making Play Accessible for Every Child

Accessible to Every Child

- Typically developing children
- Children with neurological disabilities such as autism
- Children who have intellectual disabilities
- Children who require wheelchairs or other medical equipment
- Children with physical disabilities
- Children with social and emotional disabilities
- Family, siblings, grand-parents, etc.
- The community: friends, caregivers, teachers, etc.

Disabled Population

- The US Census reports 12% of the population has a severe disability
- If you include people who are involved with this group of people; parents, siblings, grandparents and friends – 36% or 1 in 3 people are touched by severe disability
- Disability challenges how affected individuals and their families can spend a day at the park

What is an Inclusive Playground?

- An inclusive playground addresses the needs of all people including those who have autism, intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments, visual impairments, cerebral palsy, physical disabilities and other impairments.
- It also addresses the needs of typical children.
- It accommodates everyone and challenges them at their own developmental level.

The mission

Childhood is an important time for opportunities to interact socially and strengthen the imagination.

The mission of an inclusive playground is to provide inclusive play areas for all children, regardless of their ability.

Unfortunately, special needs children are often excluded from activities when facilities are not capable of accommodating children with disabilities.

An inclusive playground has play features for fully abled as well as disabled kids, so that both can play together.

Background Information

Tatum's Garden was the brainchild of Shawn and Amanda Bakker, whose youngest daughter, Tatum, was born with Spina Bifida in 2010. Tatum uses a wheelchair, and her parents struggled to find playgrounds where Tatum could enjoy playing alongside her older siblings. Then, on a vacation in Idaho, the Bakker family stumbled upon a fully-inclusive playground; for the first time, they watched kids of all abilities play together on play structures, side by side. They were so inspired by this experience that they decided to do whatever it took to have something similar back home in Salinas. With Tatum's Garden, the Bakkers' mission was to provide their daughter and other area children who use wheelchairs an awesome place to play.

The Bakkers secured the land for Tatum's Garden by winning approval from the Salinas City Council to build on a four-acre abandoned parking lot adjacent to Sherwood Park.

Once they had the location set, the steering committee visited local elementary schools to brainstorm ideas for the playground's design and theme. The next step was raising money, and they were wildly successful. The Bakkers raised \$1 million to build the playground. That money came from large corporate sponsorships and lots of smaller, community-based fundraising efforts.

Amanda Bakker stated, "One of the biggest obstacles for us was keeping up with the fast pace which the support we received demanded. When we set out, we thought maybe it might take a few years to raise the \$1 million we were shooting for...but no, our community raised it in seven short months!"

The playground itself was built during an all-out community volunteer effort over ten days in September 2013. Over 3,000 people showed up to pitch in and help construct the play structures, paint murals, move gravel, and create a grassy park area around the playground with benches and restrooms. Amanda says, "We were amazed to have volunteers showing up from every single zip code in Monterey County, from all socioeconomic backgrounds, and from all ages.

Tatum's Garden was built by Leathers and Associates. They have designed and built over 3,000 playgrounds in the last 40+ years in the US and 7 other countries. They specialize in inclusive and accessible playgrounds.

The project was financially sponsored by [Salinas Circle for Children](#), a 501c3 nonprofit organization that advocates for special needs children. As a result, donations to help with the construction of Tatum's Garden were tax deductible. Contributors sponsored pavers or pickets as well as making monetary donations to the Tatum's Garden Fund Drive. The estimated budget for this incredible playground is \$750,000.

Local artists donated their time and talent to making Tatum's Garden a uniquely decorated place, and it is fun to walk around and spot all the different artistic flourishes adorning the park.









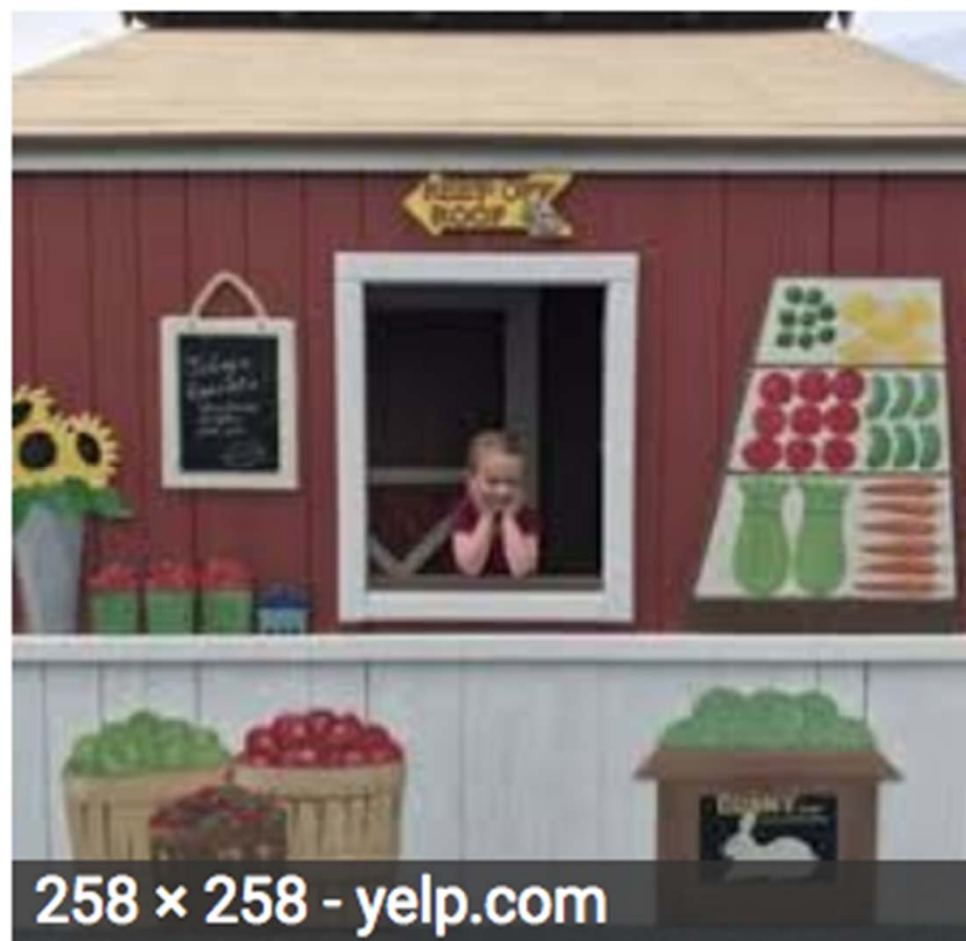






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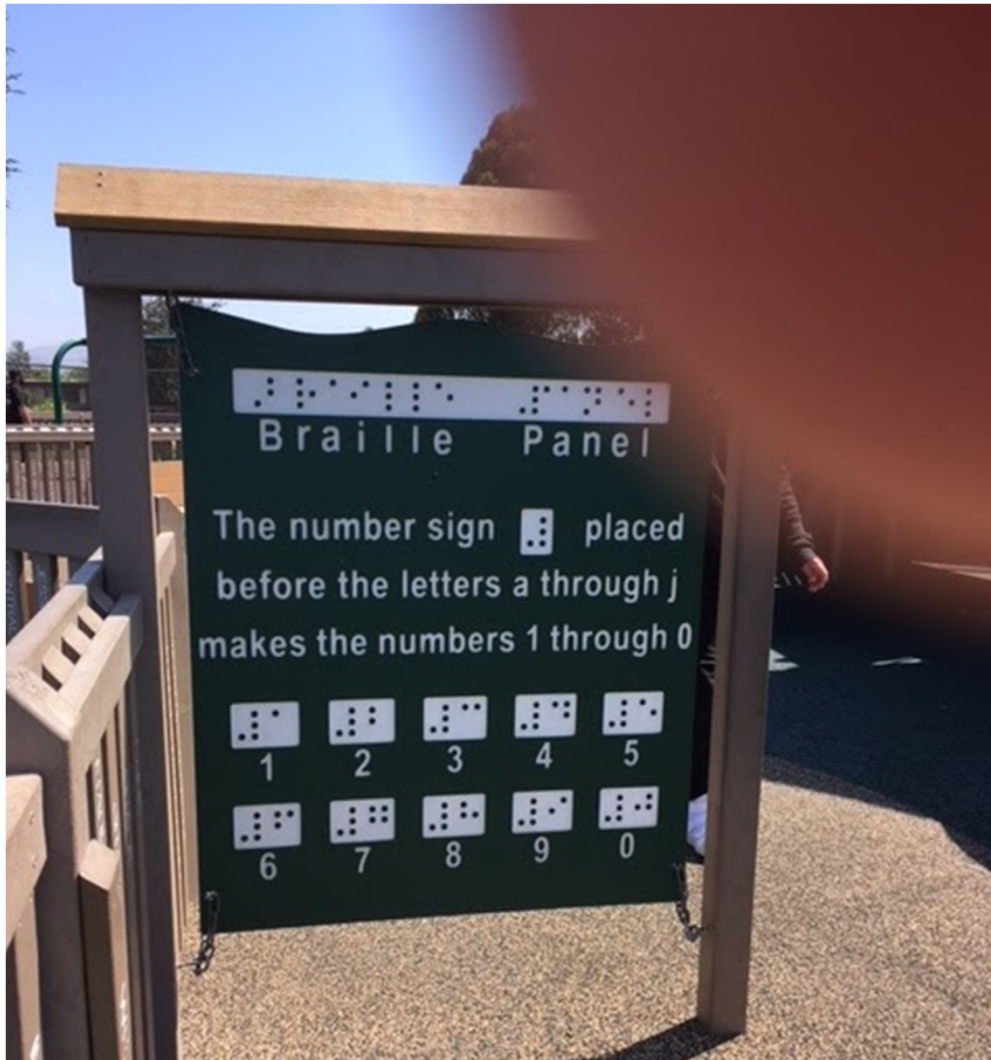




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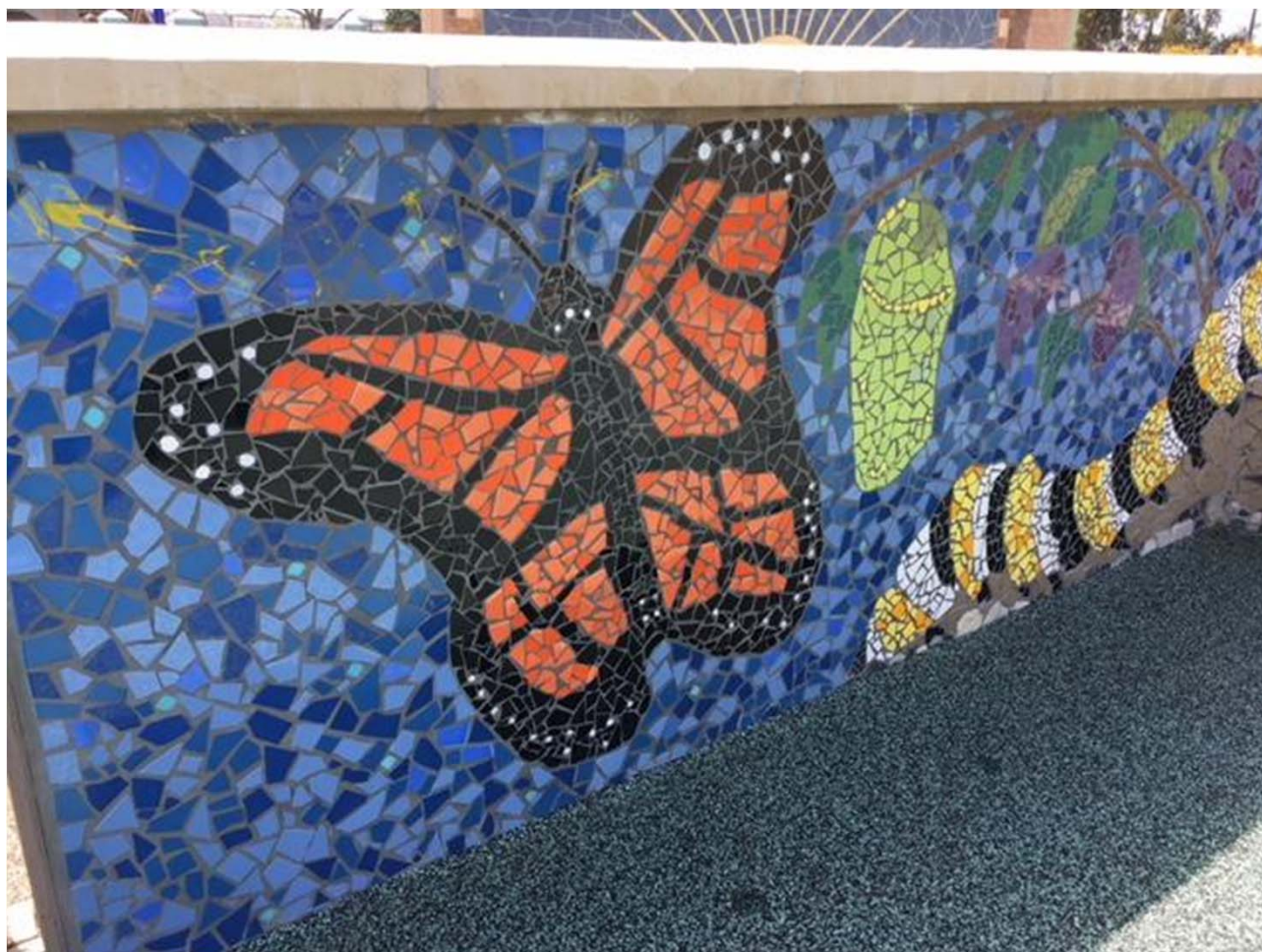
















720 x 450 - smartcitieslibrary.com



600 × 600 - foursquare.com

Community Ownership

Five years after Tatum's Garden was built, it is thriving, and it is still supported by the community. Every month, there a Community Cleanup day, where 25-50 volunteers show up to sanitize benches and picnic tables, pull weeds, pick up litter, and wipe down the play structures. Amanda says, "It amazes us how much the community has taken ownership of this place, and I attribute it to the fact that they helped fund and then literally build it, so they continue to care for it."

Valuing People with Disabilities

At Tatum's Garden children with disabilities can play with their classmates in ways they struggle to at school. Tatum was only two years old when Tatum's Garden was built, so she doesn't remember a world without it. The Bakkers hope that she grows up knowing that her community values her and all kids with special needs.

In fact, they value her and other people with disabilities so much that they came together in an unprecedented way to create this sanctuary of inclusion.

A Worthy Goal

Tatum's Garden in Salinas is a community-based effort to build an inclusive playground that is accessible to all children.

This kind of play, for all kids, is a worthy goal to work toward.

