



# A PLACE FOR EVERYONE TO PLAY

photos by Glenn Riegel

**T**ake a creative vision, an empty lot next to a church, abundant community participation, many corporate and private donations, and countless volunteer hours, and what comes out? For one Pennsylvania congregation, the result was the Tree House of Lititz, a one-acre playground “where anything is possible for every child of every ability.”

Eric Landram, pastor of Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, says the project “has been a lot of amazing pieces coming together.”

Three years of brainstorming, fundraising, and planning came to fruition this past fall, when the fully accessible playground opened following a two-week blitz build by a host of volunteers. It includes features like a boat with a moving platform to simulate sailing, an Australian-built “liberty swing” that accommodates wheelchairs, ziplines with a bucket seat for transport, a ground-level merry-go-round, a unique climbing wall, four towers representing the seasons—and, of course, a tree house.

The church and community partners worked with design firm Play by Design to create their dream, and many of the ideas came from the kids who would use it. They asked dozens of elementary-age students in the local school district what they would like to see in the playground, and those concepts shaped the final result.

“They all feel like they own a little piece of it,” Landram says. “It’s great to see so much community involvement and commitment.”

A pavilion, kitchenette, and accessible restrooms add possibilities for birthday parties and other events, making it a “destination spot” in the town. A safe, poured-rubber surface undergirds it all.

The Church of the Brethren’s proposed compelling vision statement calls congregations to share Jesus Christ “through relationship-based neighborhood engagement,” and for Lititz, “This is how we’re doing it,” Landram says.

Learn more at [treehouseoflititz.com](http://treehouseoflititz.com) or visit the Tree House of Lititz Facebook page.—Walt Wiltschek





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