

October 30, 2009

Letter of reference

I am happy to write this letter of recommendation on behalf of the Natural Playgrounds Company. Ron King, Ethan King, and the staff of the Natural Playgrounds Company provided a wonderful design as well as tremendous customer service and support throughout our project.

I first contacted Ron in the fall of 2007, after discovering the Natural Playgrounds website. After having considered traditional playground equipment and finding it unimaginative, unattractive, and expensive, our school was eager to learn more about the concept of a Natural Playground and outdoor classroom. We invited Ron out to Montana to present his ideas and services to our school community. His enthusiasm was contagious, and his astute observations about how kids *really* like to play and learn made perfect sense. Consequently, we soon had funding for our own design.

Ron and his design staff worked with our students, staff, board members, and parents to tailor the design to fit our desires as well as our physical site. At Ron's suggestion, we held a workshop for the students where they designed and built their own miniature playgrounds using natural materials such as sticks, leaves, dirt, rocks, etc. The kids had a blast and many of their ideas were incorporated into our design. They are very proud of having had a part in the design of their new playground.

Due to weather constraints, we hired a local contractor to install our project, but we couldn't have proceeded without Ron and his crew being always available to me and our contractor to answer questions and offer advice. Additionally, Ron offered sage advice on what to look for when interviewing contractors.

We recently had the Grand Opening of our new Natural Playground/Outdoor Classroom, and the comments from kids and adults alike were very rewarding. One little boy said, "this is better than Christmas!" Another little boy was so excited that he ran across the playground, his arms waving with excitement, to say, "the cave is awesome!" The adults were all blown away by the beautiful transformation of our playground and made comments such as: "this is beyond what I imagined" and "can I come to school here?"

The concept of a Natural Playground resonates well with the Montessori philosophy of education, as it encourages children to use their imaginations, explore, discover, and be active in a natural environment. Also, while traditional equipment fades and becomes obsolete, a Natural Playground just keeps getting more beautiful as it matures. It is a living, breathing entity which will add beauty and opportunity to any place that children play and learn.

We are very happy with our new playground and appreciate the knowledge, experience, creativity, and customer service that the Natural Playgrounds Company brought to the project.

I have to admit, now that Ron is no longer on speed dial, I kind of miss talking to him everyday.

Sincerely,

Karyn Spear
Member, Board of Trustees
Chair, Playground Committee
The Learning Circle Montessori Elementary School
Bozeman, Montana