

Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Highlights Budget Funding for Toms River Field of Dreams

07/30/2021

*Fully-Accessible Community Complex Will Be the Only Recreational Facility in New Jersey Developed Specifically to Include Individuals with Disabilities*

**TOMS RIVER** – Governor Murphy, the Kane family, and a bipartisan group of local leaders today visited and toured the future site of the “Toms River Field of Dreams”, a soon-to-be state-of-the-art, fully-accessible, three-acre outdoor complex designed specifically to include individuals with disabilities. The complex is supported with \$400,000 in funding proposed by the Governor and included in the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget. The Governor was joined on his tour by Toms River High School North teacher Christian Kane, whose ten-year-old son Gavin sustained severe brain trauma from a car accident in 2012 and who has advocated for the completion of the complex for many years.

“It is an honor to stand here today with Christian, Mayor Hill, and Councilman Turnbach to celebrate the Toms River Field of Dreams,” **said Governor Murphy**. “A short time from now, this complex will be open to serve individuals of all ages and abilities, especially disabled folks with limited access to spaces like this. I am proud that we could be a part of making this dream a reality for Gavin and so many other individuals who are deserving of a fully accessible recreational space.”

“Mary and I are extremely thankful for Governor Murphy’s willingness to assist our project with \$400,000,” **said Christian Kane, Founder of the Toms River Field of Dreams Complex**. “After the pandemic our foundation lost significant pledged donations for the construction phase of the project. This allocation allowed us to hire new companies to ensure our dream of building a fully inclusive complex for those of any age and ability in Monmouth, Ocean, and Burlington counties.”

“The RWJ Barnabas Health Field of Dreams will provide unique recreational opportunities for our special needs children,” **said Toms River Mayor Mo Hill**. “In the summer of 2017 Christian and Mary Kane started this as vision for their son, Gavin who was seriously injured in a automobile accident. Toms River donated 3.4 acres of land in the Bey Lea Park for the Field of Dreams. This project has had overwhelming support from the community including local major league baseball star Todd Fraizer who contributed \$50,000. In addition Lowe’s has selected Field of Dreams as one of the 100 projects nation-wide they are supporting this year. Many of our local contractors have donated their time and materials in constructing this park. With the State’s grant of \$400,000 the RWJ Barnabas Health Field of Dreams will be completed this fall.”

“The beauty of the Field of Dreams is that it allows all children to play, to feel a part of something, to feel included as opposed to excluded,” **said Toms River Councilman Terrence Turnbach**. “On behalf of the residents of Toms River, I would like to thank Governor Murphy and our State Legislature for their generous assistance in seeing this project to fruition.”

“I am proud to see this incredible new facility aimed at giving special needs people a chance to play ball,” **said Congressman Andy Kim**. “I want to thank the Governor for his efforts to help get this project across the finish line. Everyone should have a chance to enjoy America’s pastime, and I am excited to see the Toms River Field of Dreams become a reality.”

"This is such an important and exciting moment for everyone in the Toms River community, regardless of disability status, because the Field of Dreams is all about accessibility, opportunity, inclusion and fun," **said Paul Aronsohn, Ombudsman for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and Their Families.** "Like so much of the recent progress made for people with disabilities, this is the result of a true partnership – one inspired and made possible by families like the Kanes, and one supported by public officials at the state and local levels. As for me, I'm looking forward to watching Gavin's first baseball game. Maybe he'll ask the Governor to throw out the first pitch!"

"Christian Kane has worked tirelessly to bring this amazing project to life," **said Senator James Holzapfel, Assemblyman John Catalano, and Assemblyman Gregory McGuckin in a joint statement.** "This endeavor could not have been possible without the volunteers and the Toms River community members who reached into their pockets to donate to this noble cause. We are glad to have been able to help Christian and his amazing cause since day one."

The \$400,000 in funding in this year's State budget proved critical to the expected completion of the project later this year. The complex will include a Little League field, playground, designated quiet spaces, paved walking and rolling path with rehabilitation stations, pavilion, snack shack, and courts for basketball, bocce, and shuffleboard. The Field of Dreams project is expected to cost \$2.5 million in total and is scheduled to open in October 2021.

## Governor Phil Murphy

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