



myriad botanical
GARDENS

30
YEARS
1988-2018

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Myriad Gardens to Unveil of New Assessable Playground Equipment Monday, April 30, 11 a.m.

Thanks to \$75,000 donation from Thunderbird Telecom Pioneers

Oklahoma City, OK – The Myriad Botanical Gardens will unveil new playground equipment designed for children with special needs on Monday, April 30 at 11 a.m. in the Children’s Garden. After the invitation only reveal, the park will re-open to the public. The equipment installation is made possible thanks do a \$75,000 donation from the Thunderbird Telecom Pioneers, a nonprofit charitable organization that was organized in 1978 as the Oklahoma City Telephone Pioneer Council. Members and their families will be in attendance as well as children from the Children’s Center Rehabilitation Hospital and Special Care. Officiating the “big reveal” will be Maureen Heffernan, executive director of Myriad Gardens.

“We are thrilled by this opportunity for children of all abilities to know the joy of play and of being outside to experience the Gardens,” Heffernan said. “The Thunderbird Telecom Pioneers have been wonderful community partners and we are honored that they chose the Gardens for such a meaningful legacy gift.”

The Myriad Gardens underwent an extension renovation as a part of Project180 and Devon Energy. Included in that renovation was a designated play area for children that balances active play with natural learning. Our Children’s Garden has received more than a million visits since and is much loved by families of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and across the country.

About the new playground equipment

[The AbilityWhirl](#) has changed public open spaces by making merry-go-rounds accessible to children of all abilities, and this equipment is now used in hundreds of play areas, schools, hospices and hospitals. The manufacturer GL Jones is located in the United Kingdom. There are currently more than a dozen in the United States with the AbilityWhirl. The Myriad Gardens is the only one in Oklahoma.

[The We-saw™](#) is a new take on the traditional seesaw. Its unique design and gentle rocking motion invites kids and families of all ages and abilities to participate in the fun.

[The Arch Swing](#), pictured above, is a fun and accessible way to add swinging motion to your playground. The wide seating area accommodates up to five children and is constructed of durable steel with a soft rubber bumper. Children with Sensory Processing Disorder, or similar sensory issues, can lay across the center section and enjoy the calming to-and-fro motion. Children can also sit around the perimeter of the seat and enjoy swinging together.

About the Thunderbird Telecom Pioneers

The [Thunderbird Telecom Pioneers](#) have a long history of community service. Originally organized in 1911 with Alexander Graham Bell as its first member, the Pioneers are a national organization of volunteers who have donated their time, energy and talents to create and provide services, facilities, and innovative contributions for special needs of their respective communities. With the motto, "United we serve," the Pioneers remain the world's largest single industry volunteer organization.

The Thunderbird Pioneers is a nonprofit charitable organization that was organized in 1978 as the Oklahoma City Telephone Pioneer Council. The name Thunderbird was adopted in 1995 when AT&T split up the Bell System, separating telephone companies from the manufacturing and supply side of the telephone business. During the 43 years of manufacturing in Oklahoma City, more than 25,000 people were employed and eligible to become Pioneers.

They have used their time and resources for a broad range of projects from renovating apartments for homeless families, building handicap access ramps at residences, to sending packages to servicemen in the Middle East, producing hug-a-bears to sooth child victims of earthquakes in California, planting trees in parks and in areas devastated by tornadoes, and upgrading and donating computers to schools.

On December 7, 2017, Pioneers presented Myriad Gardens Foundation with a check for \$75,000 to purchase and install the playground equipment. The Foundation coordinated the installation and operation of this new feature for the Children's Garden.

"When telephone equipment manufacturing ceased at Oklahoma City in 2003, the Thunderbird Pioneers lost their source of new membership," said Lonnie Austin, president of the Oklahoma City group. "So, the Pioneers began to search for ways to phase out operations and leave behind some legacy projects. We are happy to provide this first-of-its kind play equipment for children in Oklahoma City."

The Myriad Botanical Gardens is one of Oklahoma City's most beloved public spaces, offering its visitors a 15 acre natural escape in the very heart of downtown. A half-acre children's garden, an off-leash dog park, restaurant space, splash fountains, and paths for walking and jogging provide guests young and old with a place to seek solitude with nature, or seek community and the company of others. Additionally, the Myriad Gardens offers a variety of horticultural education programs for adults and children.

The Crystal Bridge Tropical Conservatory's unique design has earned attention and praise in the architectural community. It is 224 feet long, 70 feet in diameter, and is covered by 3,028 sections of translucent, double-layered acrylic panels. The Conservatory includes 13,000 square feet of plant display area in two distinct climates: the Tropical Wet Zone, which is at the south end and is watered daily; and

the Tropical Dry Zone at the north end which receives water from April through September, followed by drought from November through March. Some 2,000 varieties of plants and a 35-foot waterfall round out the spectacular features of the Conservatory.