

My name is Ali Karpenko. I am a twelve year old girl from Grand Forks, North Dakota. I am nominating my hometown of Grand Forks, to win a wonderful Boundless Playground for all the kids who really deserve it. I was born with Spina Bifida. I am very blessed as I have a very mild case of it. Many of the problems I face are hidden to most, as I am very physically able. Although, I am not writing this letter for me, I am writing it for all the kids like me who have a disability; but aren't as lucky as I am.

In our city there aren't very many activities available to kids in wheelchairs or kids that have walkers. I would really like to have a Boundless Playground where kids like me can have fun, socialize, and feel like they belong. I know for me, when I was younger I didn't like to do some of the activities at the playground like all the other kids. I was afraid I would injure my back even more if I did those activities. I have friends who have Spina Bifida who are in a wheelchair and it is very hard for them to participate in several outdoor activities.

Through my life experience, I have met several kids in my community that are faced with the day-to-day challenges of having a disability. I know not only to the kids, but to the parents it would be a great tribute, and it would also really let them know they are cared about. Also, in 1997 our community was devastated by the wake and aftermath of the flood we suffered. It was so wonderful how everyone joined together to rebuild our city. If we ever have a Boundless Playground here in Grand Forks, I would like to have one that any kid can enjoy; disabled or not. I think every kid should be able to have fun, and feel like they belong. It would be so nice to have a place where kids with disabilities could have so much fun, the burden of being disabled would be lifted from their minds. Also, several kids in our community are disabled and have siblings who aren't, and also kids who have a sibling that is disabled. I believe they all should have a place they can play together, bond, and meet new friends from several walks of life.

I have the great support of several groups of people in my community. Those people include: my family and friends, The United Way of Grand Forks, The RICC ( The Regional Interagency Coordinating Committee), The Grand Forks Park District, Northeast Regional Kids, and several wonderful people at The Developmental Disabilities Division of Northeast Human Service Center.

The Grand Forks Park District has approved a lot for the boundless playground. They would love to add it to Sertoma Park. The park is 22 acres, or 958,319.9999052776 square feet. The Grand Forks Park District owns the lot, and they give 100% approval to put a Boundless Playground there. The Park District has also agreed to keeping up the maintenance of the playground. The lot currently has a small playground, eating area, bike path, parking lot, and walkway located on it. The lot is not on a flood plain. Also, located on the edge of the park is the coulee. There are also several beautifully shaded areas around the park.

I hope you choose our city because we have so many people who really deserve a Boundless Playground to have fun, play, and meet new people. Every child, no matter what lifestyle; should have a place to just go out and play. So, when you're making your decision; please consider the wonderful community of Grand Forks, North Dakota.