Building innovative playgrounds and more inclusive communities

all abilities. all ages. all welcome.
Our story starts with a mom, two daughters, and a playground.

It was only after the birth of her second daughter that Olenka discovered how isolating a playground could be.

A place which brought joy and community connections with her older daughter had become a dreaded outing when she realized there were no parks designed for families like her own. A family, who had two children with very different needs.

Determined to create the kind of outdoor space space that both her daughters — disabled and non-disabled — would love, she mobilized a team of volunteers to create such a place. While she found many playgrounds designed for the disabled populations, none brought visitors of every age and ability group together in the welcoming way she envisioned.

For seven years, Olenka and her team continued to dream, research and raise the funds necessary to create a new kind of playground in Palo Alto, California, called Magical Bridge.

The playground opened to great enthusiasm, and today, Kindness Ambassadors roam the park and welcome over 25,000 visitors monthly who come to experience a sense of belonging and fun.

With longtime friend and team member Jill Asher, Olenka created Magical Bridge Foundation as a non-profit organization in 2016. Since then, the success of the playground has inspired an awareness that today’s parks leave far too many behind. In response, Santa Clara County allocated $20 million of funds to create more playgrounds. New school play solutions are underway as well.

The foundation is beginning to extend its reach beyond the Bay Area and continues to bring the joy of play, kindness and new friendships to as many families as possible.

Our dream is that we no longer have to use the words, “inclusive” or “accessible” when building something as vital as a playground.

– Olenka Villarreal, Founder, Magical Bridge Foundation

25%

1 in every 4 Americans live with a visible or invisible disability which can include physical, cognitive, auditory, or visual impairments. Playgrounds are vital places for community connection, yet most playgrounds do not meet the needs of everyone.

With an underlying message of kindness, Magical Bridge Playground removes the physical and social barriers of today’s typical playgrounds and gives everyone a place to play together.

Today’s typical playgrounds are not enough.

ADA requires playgrounds to provide limited access, however, Magical Bridge is driven to change or improve all components from the ground up — including safety, accessibility, equipment, surfacing, and layout design — for the best possible gathering and play experience for everyone.
Beyond inclusion, there’s magic.

Distinct play zones, labeled above in circles, provide playground users with predictable navigation and play for an enhanced experience. With smooth, seamless ground surfaces, the playground offers ample space for open play and easy transition between play zones.

Variable challenge levels in each zone help playground visitors build skills and confidence. Our carefully selected equipment is accessible for all — including elevated areas such as the two-story, artist-designed Playhouse and Stage, slide mound, carousel, and sway boat.

The Kindness Corner is a place for reflection and thoughtful conversations. The inscribed wall offers messaging that promotes acceptance, good will, and friendship. The Kindness Corner is a perfect place for a “Buddy Bench” which encourages new connections.

Hidesaway Huts are placed throughout the playground for those, such as students with autism, who need a retreat from play or a safe place to observe the action. Our Hidesaway Huts are custom designed in natural, stained wood to match the Playhouse and add a special, unexpected design element to the playground.

Slides with Dignity Landings™ (patented by Magical Bridge® and distributed exclusively by Playworld®) provide a transitional place to sit at the end of a slide for those needing extra time while waiting for a mobility device or assistance from a friend.

Secure, perimeter fencing offers parents and caregivers peace of mind as their children explore the many play opportunities at Magical Bridge. The playground, designed for all ages including our seniors, offers adult fitness equipment and tables for group gatherings, games, and celebrations.
PLAY ZONES
Carefully identified play zones are the foundation of Magical Bridge Playground. With ample space and endless opportunities to play, each zone offers multiple challenge levels and unique benefits for all ages and abilities. Best of all, the spaces and equipment are mindfully designed to provide maximum accessibility so everyone can play.

- Community Playhouse and Stage
- Swing and Sway Zone
- Spin Zone
- Slide Mound
- Tot Zone
- Kindness Corner
- Meditative and Wellness Garden
- Interactive Art Pieces
- Hideaway Huts
- Buddy Benches

We design and build outdoor spaces to ensure people with and without disabilities thrive in their communities.

Innovative Design
Partnering with thought-leaders, academics, landscape architects, and playground users, we create a welcoming space for all. Building on a decade of research and development, our universal design meets the unique needs of everyone, including those often forgotten.

The foundation regularly receives inquiries from around the world. Our playgrounds and innovations have been featured at:

- World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland
- Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum in NYC
- PBS News Hour

Community Engagement
We engage with city officials, foundations, businesses, and the community at large to ensure Magical Bridge Playgrounds are fully funded and well supported. Every donation is meaningful, appreciated, and acknowledged.

Each donation over $300 will receive a tile in the playground of your choice. We are currently fundraising for these Bay Area playgrounds:

- Morgan Hill, CA
- Mountain View, CA
- Santa Clara, CA
- Sunnyvale, CA

Fundraising Expertise
Partnering with thought-leaders, academics, landscape architects, and playground users, we create a welcoming space for all. Building on a decade of research and development, our universal design meets the unique needs of everyone, including those often forgotten.

What a beautiful, magical place! The fact that it is so inclusive and accessible without looking like a special-needs facility shows the thought, expertise, consideration, and love that went into it.

– Grandfather (Oakland, CA)
Creating more inclusive communities

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS
Empowering students with social-emotional skills while advancing academic growth.

Our playgrounds serve as a living laboratory to learn how empathy, design, engineering, and leadership skills all come together to strengthen our communities. We regularly host classes, tours, and workshops for groups of all ages to give hands-on opportunities to learn.

We offer a companion educational and enrichment curriculum for K-12 to strengthen social-emotional skills while enhancing academic and life skills. Teachers and youth development professionals appreciate having projects that teach kindness, empathy, and compassion while aligning with a variety of core math, science and literacy skills.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS
Actively seeking partnerships to help bring Magical Bridge Playgrounds to more communities.

With the help of city officials, we work with businesses and local organizations to leave a lasting legacy in their community. We support fundraising events through our social channels and rally our engaged and enthusiastic supporters to get involved and learn more about each playground project.

Through donor naming opportunities in our playgrounds, businesses become important community partners in our efforts to build Magical Bridge Playgrounds for everyone around the world.

KINDNESS AMBASSADORS
Offering a leadership program for students to lead, engage, and grow in a meaningful way.

Our volunteer Kindness Ambassador Program encourages students of all ages to give back to their community in an active and personal way.

Through hands-on activities on and off the playground, Kindness Ambassadors work with children and adults of all abilities and disabilities to make Magical Bridge welcoming and fun for all. Ambassadors take the lead on special events, programming, activities, photography, video production, social media, research, and more. It’s a rewarding experience and a meaningful way to engage with the community.