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CC helping rebuild city playgrounds

Yanks ace revisits youth for a good cause through Out2Play

By Adam Spunberg / Special to MLB.com

If CC Sabathia had visited the Bronx's P.S. 186 school before its worn-down parking lot was converted into a vibrant playground, he might not have made it out without some kind of injury, which may have broken the hearts of children already devoid of a recess space; instead, he played hopscotch.

"I played on a lot of playgrounds," Sabathia said with a chuckle, "but it's been a long time since I played hopscotch. The last time was when I was 7 years old."



Surely, Out2Play's executive director, Andrea Wenner, and her superstar architect, Daniel Margulies, must have constructed something sensational to inspire that kind of unprecedented participation. Fortunately for the children of New York City, Wenner has been so determined in her task that by the end of the year, more than 100 other schools will be able to boast similar playgrounds of their own.

Out2Play's work has been so exceptional that the organization has received assistance from the Yankees and is currently competing for a \$200,000 grant as part of the Pepsi Refresh Project.

Sabathia recognized the value of Out2Play's efforts immediately.

"For the kids to be able to come out here and run around, I think that's great," Sabathia said. "It definitely makes it worth it to come out here."

To join Sabathia and cast up to 10 daily votes for this worthy cause, [vote here](#).

At P.S. 186, the beneficiaries of Wenner's good deeds are severely disabled students who travel from other areas. They seemed absolutely in love with their new surroundings, swinging bats and jumping around, behaving in ways kids with the proper amenities should. It was a credit to the design plans of Margulies and the remarkable vision of Wenner.

Each site is custom designed, and Margulies makes sure to let the students offer their own advice on how they want their playgrounds to appear.

"I think it's pretty cool that the kids get to have their input," Margulies said after describing how much he enjoys running an architectural class with the students from each of these schools. "We had one site where we mapped out city streets, and Andrea even painted a theater."

Behind all of the decorating is an ingenious business plan, which Wenner perfected while attending Columbia Business School. Despite incredible obstacles, Wenner played the role of fund-raiser, project manager, grant writer and any other necessary occupation to help achieve her dream, which consequently makes life better for thousands of inner-city youth.

Wenner could have been rejoicing in her astounding success, but instead she seemed more focused on tackling the challenges ahead. Even with such humility, it was evident what a savior she has been for so many.

When asked about how it all started, she said, "I played a lot of sports growing up, and when I moved to New York, I saw a school without recess. I worked on it in business school and got a lot of good feedback from professors. We completed one project in 2006, 14 in 2007, 25 in 2008, 40 in 2009 and we will complete another 40 in 2010."

Deciding which schools to reform is no easy task, so much so that Margulies compared the process to "triage," where the most dire situations are given first priority, along with geographic considerations.

Regardless of the semantics, one thing is supremely clear -- the school administrators are thrilled. P.S. 186's assistant principal, Vito Faccilonga, was ecstatic about the development.

"We felt we could use something over a public lot, and if anything the space is used more by the community than the school," Faccilonga said.

Margulies echoed that sentiment, saying, "At first glance, we do it for the kids, but it really ends up being for the community, and they end up with a sense of ownership."