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DSS Dedicates New Playground at Office

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By Kirsten Ballard

Staff Writer

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"Families will begin the healing process right here," says Moore County Department of Social Services (DSS) Director John Benton.

"Here" is the new playground at the DSS office, where a small crowd gathered Thursday morning for the unveiling and rededication of the Babs Coleman Memorial Playground.

A child psychologist, Barbra "Babs" Coleman was always interested in helping children. In 2005, she received her certifications by the Guardian ad Litem (GAL) to help with the social services system. In 2006, Coleman established the Moore County Friends of the GAL. She served on the board to improve the foster care system in Moore County.

Her son, Scott Coleman, addressed the audience. "My mother would be so happy and proud," Coleman said.

A year ago, Friends of GAL reached out to DSS and asked how it could assist the program. Benton forwarded a video of the rickety old wooden swing set.

The play area was originally created for more private, supervised visits. However, after much weathering, the wooden structures were removed for safety reasons, and there was nothing to engage

the children outside. This new playground, with two slides and multiple climbing structures, will be a favorite among the children.

Friend of GAL board member Steve Leggett reminded the audience that without volunteers, none of this would be possible.

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"We always need more volunteers because ultimately it is all about helping the children," said Leggett. Through generous donations and hard work, the playground is now complete with a new pin oak for shade and safer, shredded-tire ground covering. "Babs Coleman Memorial Playground," reads the dedication plaque, with Coleman's quote, "With a guardian, a child is never alone."

"Today we are here to recognize and remember Mrs. Coleman," said Benton. "She had a commitment to helping children we should all emulate."

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