



# Magical Bridge Playgrounds, Parks, and Programs



**ALL ABILITIES. ALL AGES. ALL WELCOME.™**









## WHERE EVERYONE PLAYS

More than a playground,  
Magical Bridge brings everyone  
in the community together.

Playgrounds and parks are vital for community connection and healthy outdoor activity at every stage of life, yet most designs overlook the needs of the 42.5 million Americans living with a physical, cognitive, or sensory disability, autism, a medically-fragile condition, or the effects of aging.

Through innovative design and community programs for all ages and abilities, Magical Bridge removes the physical and social barriers of today's typical playgrounds and parks to give everyone a place to play, move, discover, reflect, and connect.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

The critical need for social connection and time spent outside is mounting — and designing playgrounds for *everyone* is the perfect place to start.



The US Surgeon General reports that **84% of Americans do not feel attached to their local community<sup>1</sup>**, fueling an epidemic of loneliness and isolation across all age groups.



According to the CDC, **1 in every 4 adults (and 15% of children) live with a visible or invisible disability<sup>2</sup>** which can include physical, sensory, or cognitive challenges, autism, or the effects of aging.



Extensive scientific findings from a variety of disciplines conclude that **social connection is a significant predictor of longevity and better physical, cognitive, and mental health<sup>3</sup>**.

<sup>1,3</sup> "Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community"

<sup>2</sup> CDC [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth)



# 1 in 4

**ADULTS ARE LIVING WITH A DISABILITY**

**10% OF DISABILITIES LOOK LIKE THIS**



**90% OF DISABILITIES LOOK LIKE THIS**



10% of disabilities are physical or "visible" while 90% are "invisible" including autism, cognitive and developmental issues, sensory challenges and other differences.

## ADA

REQUIRES  
PLAYGROUNDS GIVE ACCESS TO  
PEOPLE USING A WHEELCHAIR.



**MAGICAL BRIDGE PLAYGROUND IS DESIGNED FOR EVERYONE, INCLUDING PEOPLE LIVING WITH:**

- ✓ Autism
- ✓ Visual Challenges
- ✓ Auditory Challenges
- ✓ Sensory Challenges
- ✓ Cognitive Disabilities
- ✓ Physical Disabilities
- ✓ Effects of Aging
- ✓ Medical Conditions
- ✓ Mobility Devices
- ✓ Social Anxiety
- ✓ Typical Abilities





Today's typical playgrounds are not enough.

With sand and loose gravel, raised surfaces and equipment, forced pathways, most playgrounds are unfit, unsafe, and not accessible for at least 25% of our population.

## AT MAGICAL BRIDGE, INCLUSION MEANS EVERYONE

With a unifying message of kindness, Magical Bridge ensures all ages and abilities can benefit from the physical, social, cognitive, and mental health benefits of outdoor play and community connection.



### PHYSICAL BENEFITS

- Increases physical activity and time outside
- Builds flexibility, coordination, and strength
- Improves gross motor skills and body awareness
- Swinging and spinning activates vestibular stimulation critical to balance, equilibrium, and spatial orientation
- Improves cardiovascular health and endurance
- Develops a stronger immune system
- Helps control obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure



### COGNITIVE BENEFITS

- Improves spatial awareness and concentration
- Nurtures self-discipline and problem solving skills
- Increases blood flow to the brain leading to cognitive development
- Boosts self-esteem, confidence and resilience
- Reduces anxiety and improves mood
- Enhances imagination and creativity
- Reduces feelings of isolation and depression
- Increases attention span and ability to focus



### SOCIAL BENEFITS

- Unites diverse people in a kind and friendly environment
- Cultivates a cohesive culture that values kindness, respect, and service — on and off the playground
- Promotes social connection to reduce loneliness
- Ignites multigenerational friendships and connection
- Encourages compassion and acceptance
- Builds and reinforces important social skills such as compromise, cooperation, and leadership





## MAGICAL BRIDGE PLAYGROUND

# Beyond Inclusion, There's Magic.



Award-winning Magical Bridge Playgrounds are internationally recognized for inclusive and innovative features:

### DISTINCT PLAY ZONES™

**Grouped play experiences**, such as swinging and spinning, provide predictable navigation and expectations throughout the playground.

**Ample space** gives visitors wide areas for open play, real decision-making, and transitional space between zones.

**Smooth and seamless soft-fall surfaces** are used throughout — with no tan bark, sand, or loose gravel that may obstruct breathing tubes or impede access for those using wheelchairs or mobility devices.

**Secure, perimeter fencing** increases parents and caregivers peace of mind as their children explore the many play opportunities within the playground.

### UNIQUE PLAY EXPERIENCES

**Quality equipment**, carefully selected for maximum accessibility and play value, includes elevated slide and climb zone, ground-level carousel, adult-sized swings, and ramp-accessible sway boat.

**Variable challenge levels** engage all ages and abilities and help build skills and confidence.

**Magical Bridge-patented Slide and Sit Landings™** provide an extended bench area at the end of a slide for those needing extra time to wait for a mobility device or assistance from a friend.

**Hideaway Huts™** with tactile sensory walls give visitors, such as people with autism, a quiet retreat from play a safe place to observe the action.

### COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

**Gathering places** with ample shade and comfort ignites multi-generational connections with space for games, celebrations, and performances.

**The Kindness Corner™** with messaging that promotes acceptance, good will, and friendship encourages reflection and thoughtful conversations.

**Fitness equipment** for all ages keeps everyone active and healthy.

**Programming** provides fun and educational activities, events, and performances for all ages.

**Kindness Ambassador™** volunteers promote kind behavior on and off the playground.



## PLAY ZONES™

Carefully identified and customizable Play Zones™ are the foundation of Magical Bridge Playgrounds. Each zone offers a variety of play equipment, multiple challenge levels, and unique benefits for all ages and abilities. Best of all, the spaces and equipment are intentionally designed to provide maximum accessibility so everyone can play together.



**Playhouse and Stage** Custom original by Barbara Butler Artist-Builder



**Slide Mound**



**Swing and Sway Zone**



**Spin Zone**



**Tot Zone**



**Kindness Corner**



**Music Innovation Zone**



# It starts with a playground.

Whether its finally having a place where everyone can play together or the many programs and activities hosted at the playground, Magical Bridge changes the way communities think about kindness and inclusion.

## KINDNESS IS MAGICAL™

The Magical Bridge play experience is undeniably fun and unique, but there's something intangibly special about visiting a Magical Bridge Playground. The very act of gathering in an intentionally inclusive, accessible, and kind space brings out the best in a community — and those values transcend into every aspect of life.

As the hallmark of Magical Bridge community engagement efforts, the Kindness Ambassador™ program enlists local volunteers to promote an active, playful, and kind culture — on and off the playground.

Ready with a friendly hello, a push on a swing, or an invitation to create a colorful craft, Kindness Ambassadors™ are a welcoming presence on the playground. These local teens, adults, and senior volunteers host events, activities, and friendly open play for all ages and abilities. Becoming a Kindness Ambassador is a great opportunity for teens to find purpose in community involvement and for seniors to get outside and socialize with people of all ages.

## ON THE PLAYGROUND

Magical Bridge community programs ensure the playground is active all year long. Activities and events, hosted by Kindness Ambassadors, City organizations, and community groups, include:

- Live music on the playstage including a Summer Concert Series
- Entertainment featuring local artists, magicians, and jugglers
- Storytime and sing-a-longs for all ages
- Hands-on STEM activities
- Arts and crafts
- Senior movement classes
- "Send Kindness" postcard activities
- Resource exhibitions, such as Canine Companions™
- Fundraising events for local charities and organizations
- School field trips for playtime and educational tours







## OFF THE PLAYGROUND

Magical Bridge Foundation partners with local organizations to host complementary programs and events that welcome all ages and abilities (sometimes for the first time). With Kindness Ambassadors on-hand as well as other helpful resources and accommodations, programs include:

- Sensory-friendly musical theater and Nutcracker ballet performances
- Stanford University innovation workshops on universal design
- Tennis and movement classes
- Activity tables at city-sponsored events, parades, fairs, and more
- School presentations to educate students about inclusion
- Conferences and speaking engagements focused on inclusive design



### PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG ADULTS

What happens when a young person with disabilities ages out of school day programs?

Exploring this question, Magical Bridge proudly co-sponsored a pilot day program for five young adults in Palo Alto, CA. Each participant was joined with a one-to-one caregiver, and much like a summer camp, explored the Bay Area, including visits to the zoo, restaurants, cooking class, musical performances, bowling, and a local farm to pet the animals.





## WHAT'S NEXT?

# Working with Magical Bridge

Magical Bridge Foundation is dedicated to designing and building the world's most innovative playgrounds that inspire more inclusive communities.

Every Magical Bridge project is an open collaboration between city and/or organization stakeholders, community members, local organizations, and the Magical Bridge team. Projects begin with public input meetings and follow with incremental concept presentations and marketing support, vendor and equipment selection, construction planning meetings, press and social media support, and a grand opening celebration. Once the playground is open to the public, Magical Bridge brings the playground to life through active community engagement featuring events and activities hosted by a robust Kindness Ambassador™ volunteer program. This tiered and collaborative design approach ensures everyone has a voice and everyone is welcome.

Internationally recognized, Magical Bridge has received dozens of awards for design and community impact, and has been featured for its innovation and inclusive playground design by:



"We dream that one day soon we will no longer need to specify 'inclusive' or 'accessible' when creating something as vital as a playground."

— Olenka Villarreal, CEO and Founder, Magical Bridge Foundation

## INNOVATING FOR INCLUSION

# Be a part of the future of play.

Drawing from over a decade of research and development, Magical Bridge continues to push the boundaries of playground design utilizing a mix of technology, ingenuity, artistry and imagination. Here are just some of the magical touches found at Magical Bridge Playgrounds, with more exciting features to come!



**ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL** Ramps and bridges ensure visitors using wheelchairs or other mobility devices can reach all areas of the playground, including the the slide mound and the second story of the playhouse.



**SLIDE AND SIT LANDINGS™** The Magical Bridge-patented bench extensions at the bottom of the slides give those needing extra time a safe space to wait for their mobility device or help from a friend.



# Magical Bridge Projects

Magical Bridge designs and builds play spaces of all sizes and for a variety of enriching experiences:

## Public Playgrounds

### Specialty Playgrounds

- Schools
- Museums
- Zoos
- Hospitals
- Churches and Clubs

### Parks

- Recreational Parks
- Commercial Parks
- Residential Parks

### PlayPlazas™

- City Plazas
- Residential Plazas
- Business Plazas

## EXPERIENCE THE MAGIC

Visit the Magical Bridge Playgrounds currently open to the public, including the first licensed and the first international Magical Bridge Playground located in Hamilton, New Zealand.



Mitchell Park, Palo Alto, CA



Fair Oaks Park, Sunnyvale, CA



Red Morton, Redwood City, CA



Community Park, Morgan Hill, CA



Hamilton, New Zealand



CuriOdyssey, San Mateo, CA



El Carmelo School, Palo Alto, CA



Addison School, Palo Alto, CA

### COMING SOON:

Central Park, Santa Clara, CA  
Rengstorff Park, Mtn View, CA  
CCRMS PlayPark, East Palo Alto  
Hillside Park, Daly City, CA  
Foothill College, Los Altos Hills  
Singapore National Museum  
Maryland Zoo, and more



**LASER HARP** Created by artist Jen Lewin, the 24-string harp creates a symphony of sounds as visitors move through the invisible laser beams. The tones stimulate brain activity while facilitating non-verbal communication.



**HIDEAWAY HUTS™** Placed throughout the playground, these custom designed domes with tactile interior walls offer visitors, especially those with autism, a quiet and soothing place to retreat and observe the action.



**THE MAGIC MAP™** The tactile and interactive bronze area map lets visitors explore with their hands, eyes, and ears. Powered by digital vision and auditory technology, a stylus responds with descriptions of the active area.



## THE STORY OF MAGICAL BRIDGE

Magical Bridge began with a mom, two daughters, and the need for a playground.

It was only after the birth of her second daughter, Ava, that Magical Bridge founder Olenka Villarreal discovered how isolating a playground could be. A place that brought joy and community connections with her older daughter, Emma, had become a dreaded outing when she realized there were no parks designed for families like her own — a family with two children with very different needs.

**2008** Determined to create the kind of outdoor space that both her disabled and non-disabled daughters (and all their friends) would love, Olenka mobilized a team of volunteers — including community leaders, landscape architects, therapists, developers, artists, and families living with disabilities — to create such a place, where visitors of every age and ability could play together.

**2015** After seven years of design research, advocacy effort, and fundraising, Magical Bridge Playground in Palo Alto, California opened to the public. Once discovered, people from around the world began reaching out for help in bringing this new kind of playground to their communities.

**2016** With generous support from the Enlight Foundation and Steckler Family Fund, Magical Bridge Foundation was launched as a non-profit organization with a mission to develop more playgrounds, parks, and programs designed for all ages and all abilities.

**TODAY** With six award-winning custom playgrounds now open to the public, and many more in development around the world, Magical Bridge continues the passion of bringing the joy of play, kindness, and social connection to communities everywhere.



## READY TO BRING MAGIC TO YOUR COMMUNITY?

Magical Bridge Foundation would love to hear from you. Please contact Olenka Villarreal at [olenka@magicalbridge.org](mailto:olenka@magicalbridge.org) or (650) 538-2850.



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