

Keffer Park kids have 'Wright' stuff

Reading playground takes top prize at design competition

Friday July 25, 2014 12:01 AM

By [Andrew Wagaman](#)

Wright Build Design Competition awards

Grand prize: Keffer Park Art Camp (Reading)

Overall creativity: Pendora Park Playground (Reading)

Overall construction: Jamestown Village Recreation Center (Reading)

Overall thoughtfulness: Community Park Playground (Exeter Township)

Most creative use of materials: Schlegel Park Swim Camp (Reading)

Best use of Lloyd Wright design elements: 11th and Pike Playground (Reading)

Best inclusion of additional design elements: 3rd and Spruce Recreation Center (Reading)

Melanie Fragoso just might be the Frank Lloyd Wright of interior dollhouse design.

The 11-year-old Reading girl can turn just about anything into miniature furniture. She watches MyFroggyStuff, a doll craft YouTube channel, for inspiration.

"But I don't just steal their ideas," she said Thursday at the Reading Public Museum.

"I make them into my own."

In June, Fragoso's Keffer Park playground program leaders announced that they would enter the Reading Recreation Commission's Wright Build Design Competition. The rules: design and build a house that is no bigger than 36 inches by 36 inches, made of 75 percent recycled materials and incorporates at least one signature Wright design element.

After a group trip to the Frank Lloyd Wright exhibition at the museum, "Melanie took the idea and ran with it," said program leader Tyler Seisler, a 20-year-old arts student at Kutztown University.

On Thursday, finished models of the 11 playgrounds that participated were displayed under the museum's outdoor tent. A four-judge panel led by Lee Olsen, of Olsen Design Group Architects, filled out evaluation forms before children, parents and program directors arrived for a reception.

Many pulled their phones out to snap a photo when they saw "The Keffer House," an imitation of the Guggenheim Museum built over an island cliff. The model included an exterior covered with puzzle pieces, vinyl-record flooring and "stained-glass" windows made from soda bottles and cellophane.

Fragoso added her touch to a top-floor movie theater. A close look revealed fabric snacks like popcorn and nachos.

"That was really hard because they're all so tiny," she said.

Noe Herrera, 9, didn't even tell his mom about the project while in progress. But he was nice enough to bring her to the reception.

"This is really, really cool," Lupe Frutos, 27, told him. "I love how you used soda caps for chair seats!"

Keffer Park is one of seven Reading playground programs formed by the recreation commission since 2012. Executive Director Daphne Klahr says Reading once had as many as 28 programs, but when she took over, there were none.

Frutos says she's grateful that Noe could join one.

"As I parent, I love this," she said. "It keeps him off the street."

Keffer Park faced stiff competition from the other playgrounds (six from Reading, three from Exeter Township and one from West Reading).

"What really surprised me with all of them was the level of detail inside," said Olsen, an alumnus of the former E.J. Dives playground program. "The one (11th & Pike Playground) had a bottle of Chianti on a shelf beneath a staircase. They were very thorough."

In the end, Keffer Park won the grand prize - a surprise, all-expenses-paid trip to Fallingwater, the famous Wright house in Mill Run, Fayette County (Western Pennsylvania Conservancy donated the trip). The Reading Public Museum will also display the Keffer House for the next week.

How does Fragoso feel about the trip to Fallingwater?

"Awesome!" she said.

Contact Andrew Wagaman: 610-371-5095 or awagaman@readingeagle.com.

- See more at: <http://readingeagle.com/news/article/kids-in-design-competition-demonstrate-wright-stuff#sthash.0NJe27Lu.dpuf>