

FCS SPOTLIGHT

Northeast Region

by Jocinda Jackson



During a HYPE Meeting in 2020, the East Carroll Parish HYPE Coalition chose Kendall's Park as the location to make park improvements. The youth stated that they enjoyed gathering at the park but there is nothing there that currently encourages them to get out and play. The park is connected to two public schools in the area that the majority of the children in the East Carroll Parish community attend. Kendall Thompson was identified as the Police Jury representative for the district and agreed that he'd be willing to work with the youth to help with any planning or events that may need to be developed for the park. From this, the youth coalition began meeting on a monthly basis to develop a plan to help push the project forward.

In 2021, the Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) produced Complete Streets Recommendations for not only the area surrounding Kendall's Park, but the entire parish. For East Carroll Parish, those improvements included the addition of crosswalks to Gould St., traffic calming suggestions and more. The plans were shared with the adult coalition as well as the Police Jury President and more plans were able to be developed from the recommendations, such as a crosswalk demonstration and community input day at the park.

In October 2021, the youth hosted a community-wide pop park event/demonstration day at Kendall's Park. The HYPE Coalition partnered with the East Carroll Parish Adult Coalition, CPEX (Centers for Planning Excellence), The East Carroll Parish School Board, The East Carroll Parish Sheriff's Dept., 4-H & other community leaders to collect data from the community (all ages). The East Carroll Parish Sheriff's Department provided security during the formation of the crosswalk demo by rerouting traffic and also assisted with tent-set ups for the actual demonstration day. CPEX hosted a playground demonstration activity along with a dot-survey to receive feedback about the park. The HYPE Coalition also hosted a crosswalk demonstration leading to Kendall's Park (painted by the youth coalition) and a playstreets activity for the youth to give them a feel of what a day of play would feel like at the park. Over 200 children were able to come out and play.

The crosswalk activity was utilized to help assist teachers transporting kids across the road from the school to the park. The youth stated that the crosswalk made them feel safer and helped calm traffic in the area.

After the HYPE Coalition collected the necessary data to develop the park plan, the coalition began meeting with a playground development team from LSU (MaryBeth Lima & students) to develop a park plan that would be suitable for everyone in the community. The HYPE Coalition was instructed to develop a park plan that would include all of the desired playground equipment while also taking consideration of the police jury's plans for the park. The HYPE Coalition was able to successfully develop the park plan and gather estimates from the playground development team at LSU and through state-owned recommended playground sites. The plan was reviewed, feedback was shared, and final edits were made.

The group will soon be breaking ground on major improvements including installing new playground equipment using funding from the CDC's High Obesity Program (HOP) and a Well Connected Communities grant. The grant was awarded to East Carroll HYPE and 4-H through the National 4-H Council and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

