



**PRESS RELEASE**  
October 31, 2007

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### **Groundbreaking ceremony to mark start of parent-initiated Outdoor Classroom**

BALTIMORE—Parents at The Mount Washington School have taken their public school improvements into their own hands. On **Friday, November 2 at 3:30 p.m.**, parents and school and city officials will mark the official start of construction on a \$250,000 outdoor classroom with a groundbreaking ceremony.

City councilpersons Rikki Spector and Mary Pat Clark, whose grandchildren attend the elementary school in northwest Baltimore, will speak. Parents and children will also be present, along with community leaders like Mac Nachlas, the president of the Mount Washington Improvement Association.

“We are thrilled to get this project started,” said Becky Redett, Mount Washington School parent and the head of the parent group that is coordinating the project. “The community has supported the outdoor classroom from the start, and we’re eager to show them that it’s time to break ground.”

In only 18 months, Mt. Washington residents and others have donated more than \$165,000 towards a \$250,000 goal. Last spring, students joined in the effort with a highly successful penny drive, which netted more than \$2,600. The parent-run committee has secured donations from local grantors, including Baltimore Community Foundation, the John J. Leidy Foundation, the Macht Philanthropic Trust, the Neighborhood Design Center, the city’s Office of Neighborhoods, the Lockhart Vaughan Foundation, and the Alex Brown Charitable Foundation.

Baltimore-based Mahan Rykiel Associates designed the newly renovated space. It will include an amphitheatre built into the side of the hill, a labyrinth which will serve as a stage, a gigantic climbing structure, newly-paved areas for kickball and other games, a water fountain and a large archway at the entrance, embellished with mosaics and metal artwork. The area will be landscaped with shade trees and surrounded by a new fence.

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“The Mount Washington School enjoys great support from its parents and surrounding community,” said school principal, Tom Shepley. “But this project goes beyond bake sales, auctions and school fairs. These parents have worked tirelessly to make this dream a reality, and I’m so excited to see the bulldozers get to work!”

This groundbreaking marks the beginning of the first phase of construction. By spring, the site—which is ready for a much-needed makeover—should feature a new fence, water fountain and the stone amphitheatre. The landscaping will also be prepared for spring and fall planting. A schematic of the project is attached.

Parents who are directly involved in this project include: Becky Redett, Rebecca Saybolt Bainum, Ann Shafer, Laura Laing, and Monika Springer-Schnell. Additional information about the project can be found by clicking on the Outdoor Classroom logo at [www.mtwashingtonelementary.com](http://www.mtwashingtonelementary.com).



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### AT A GLANCE

**WHAT:** Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Mount Washington School's Outdoor Classroom

**WHO:** The public school's parents, students, faculty and city officials, including councilpersons Mary Pat Clark and Rikki Spector.

**WHEN:** Friday, November 2, 2007 at 3:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** The Mount Washington School, old playground, 1801 Sulgrave Avenue

**MORE:** This groundbreaking kicks off phase one of a \$250,000 outdoor classroom project, headed by school parents and financially supported by the community. More than \$165,000 has already been raised to repave the asphalt kickball area, build an amphitheatre and labyrinth, install a water fountain and replace the dilapidated fence and uninspired landscaping. Expect a big crowd, large construction equipment and opportunities to interview parents, students, teachers and school officials.