

# Playground upgrades at Dr. George Johnson Middle School



***Celebrating the re-opening of the playground were, left to right, Evergreen board chair Ruth Ann Furgala, PAC member Nancy Johnson, ribbon cutter Corbin Symynyshen, the school mascot and principal Jim Gibbs.***

## ***By Roger Newman***

Principal Jim Gibbs has noticed a difference in student attitude since a major redevelopment of the playground at Gimli's George Johnson Middle School. Gibbs says he and his staff have to settle fewer conflicts between students now that all the playground equipment is either new or renovated and enhanced. "Today we see our students busy, active and socializing in a positive way," Gibbs said Monday afternoon at the playground's official re-opening. "They are interacting instead of acting up."

Gibbs was speaking outdoors to students and dignitaries about a project that has been needed for almost a decade and in full swing for the past five years. Spearheaded by George Johnson's Parent Advisory Council (PAC), outdated and potentially unsafe equipment has been replaced by everything from new climbing structures and two tire swing sets to a tether ball unit and an improved soccer field. Recognized at the re-opening were the organizations and people who raised the \$60,000 spent so far on the playground upgrade. First and foremost were PAC chair Elly Acton and about half-a-dozen of her members who held pizza and hot dog days, bingos and craft fairs. Their hard work was augmented by grants from the Manitoba Government Community Places Program, Manitoba Lotteries, the Evergreen School Division, the Westshore Foundation and the Gimli Kinsmen Club. Present to see the results of their largesse were Connie Magnusson-Schimnowski and Tristin Tergesen of the Westshore Foundation plus Evergreen School Division chair

Ruth Ann Furgala, assistant superintendent Roza Gray and trustees Robert Arnason and Gladys Kohler. Cutting the ribbon was grade fiver Corbin Symynyshen while remarks were made by students Jayda Campbell and Brooke Peterson. Nancy Johnson, of the PAC, said the playground redevelopment project is part-way through the second of three phases. "We could use some help," added colleague Korrie Kowalski who would like to see more parents join the PAC. Gibbs told the students they could go back to the school and entertain the dignitaries during refreshments after the ceremony. "That's your job," one grade fiver shouted back.