

Pekin Park will get \$67,000 makeover

Written by George Browning

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Pekin Park is the hub of all the activities for the oldest continuous Independence Day Celebration in America.

The park is soon to get an upgrade of more than \$60,000 worth of playground equipment. The addition of the new equipment will not only draw residents to the park year-round, but will also provide children with more things to play with during the annual Fourth of July celebration.

"It's going to be so awesome," said Pekin Clerk-Treasurer Sherry Clem. "The town likes for people to take care of their stuff and this shows them that the town is taking care of their stuff. It's going to be great."

Clem has applied for a couple of grants to help with the funding of the project.

She was approved for a \$5,000 grant from the Washington County Community Foundation and is awaiting word on whether or not the town will receive a grant from Home Depot.

She also plans to apply for a

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grant from Lowes.

"Every penny will help," she said. "Even if they are small grants they can help to pay for mulch and things like that."

With or without the grants, the project will move forward.

Clem has ordered the equipment and said it will be installed the week after this year's Fourth of July celebration.

A picture of the equipment can be found on the town's Web site at www.townofnewpekin.com. Follow the park project link.

Clem said the park is such an under-used commodity and she thinks the new playground equipment will help draw more people.

"It has always been a vision to have the park, it's beautiful over there, but the playground has never been where I thought it should be," she said. "I want a place to where people can get in the car and take their kids. Right now, if you are looking for a park, you drive to Borden or to Salem, that's not keeping your people in town.

"I think it will keep our kids active and really give the community something to be proud of. They see the town taking pride in this, I think it will give the residents pride."

Clem already has a number of volunteers to help with the installation of the equipment, but said she could always use a few more.

Anyone wishing to donate their time and services should call the town hall at 967-3777.