

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BENNETT'S VILLAGE TO SHARE PLANS FOR ACCESSIBLE TREEHOUSE

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – July 30, 2021 – Bennett's Village, a local non-profit dedicated to building a place where all can play, is delighted to announce plans to build an accessible treehouse at Pen Park. Concept designs will debut at Stonefield at their July 30th Music on the Lawn event benefiting Bennett's Village.

Bennett's Village is named after Bennett McClurken-Gibney. A boy who loved to play and happened to use a wheelchair to get around. Nearby playgrounds are not designed for *all people*—like those in wheelchairs or those with sensory disabilities. If Bennett's family wanted him to have the freedom to play, they had to drive all the way to Richmond, home of Park365, the nearest accessible playground.

Bennett's sudden passing in February of 2018, at just five years old, left an immeasurable sense of loss in the lives of all who loved him. Inspired by his wish to have a birthday party at the Park365, they wanted to create a place here in our community where day-to-day real-world barriers could be forgotten and where ALL children and adults could enjoy the magic of connecting with the world and each other. So they partnered with the award-winning Baltimore-based landscape architecture firm Mahan Rykiel Associates (MRA) to create a place that will serve the needs of all, including people with mobility limitations, sensory processing disorders, and developmental delays. Bennett's Village will announce phase one of their designs on July 30th, 2021.

What began as a dream for one child has grown into a project that will meet a significant and growing need for people across the age spectrum and throughout our community. Census data in our region shows that we have more than 9,000 people under the age of 65 who have a disability. That number jumps to 1 in 3 when you look at those over 65. And these statistics do not even include those with temporary injuries or the many families who travel here for health care/treatment.

We invite you to join us at Stonefield's July 30th Music on the Lawn event, where we will share our next steps to make Bennett's dream come true and how you can help play a part, while enjoying great music, food, and fun from 5-7 p.m.

For more information on how you can help Bennett's Village make Charlottesville a place where all can play, visit us online at www.bennettsvillage.org.

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