

Reported by Ken Slack
May 22, 2007

NBC 29

Most children do not want their feet on the ground. It is natural for them to want to climb to see things with a bird's eye view. That is now possible for all children thanks to Virginia's first handicapped accessible tree house.



On paper it is about 1,000 square feet of tree house and decking tucked against a sloping hillside. But thanks to the vision of a few volunteers and the hard work of many more, Camp Still Meadows in Rockingham County offers the exhilaration of tree climbing to children of all abilities.

The tree house is built onto five massive oaks on a steep hillside. That allows the ramps to be level while sweeping kids 14 feet into the air.

Jane Smith of Camp Still Meadows stated, "These five oak trees and the access to parking for the handicapped and that type of thing just made it perfect. And then all of these dogwoods and all of these redbuds that are all right here naturally all the rocks I mean this site was meant to be."

The research, fund raising and construction took two years and \$125,000. What the community gets in return is an experience that used to be out of reach for children with physical or mental handicaps.

One teacher, Jennifer Williams, stated, "I think it's important that they get to experience what all other kids get to experience that they are part of what every other kid could get to see, touch and feel. I think they enjoy doing what their regular Ed peers will be able to do."

Camp Still Meadows says the future of that unique tree house could include parties and special events for kids. They have even started looking into the possibility of zip lines specially built so any kid can get that soaring feeling of flight.