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Trail helps children learn

BY LARRY GIERER

The playground was built with children ages 2-5 in mind. A new addition now makes it a place for adults to well. The United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley along with Aflac and the Columbus Consolidated Govern opened a Born Learning Trail at Shirley Winston Park on Steam Mill Road.

The playground that already existed is surrounded by a sidewalk. Now, there are signs placed along the wa includes a learning activity that can be done right at the spot by the child and parent.

For example, at one sign, the letters A, B and C have been painted on the sidewalk. The sign instructs the point to a letter and have the child say the sound the letter makes and then think of words that begin with e

At another location, different shapes have been painted on the sidewalk. Parent and child are instructed to how the shapes are different and to think of objects that have the different shapes.

United Way research has found many parents undervalue their role in preparing young children for school ; many aren't sure how to help their children. The trail is designed to help adults interact with children to boo and literacy development. The web site bornlearning.org offers many tips for parents of young children.

"The Born Learning Trail promotes fun and games — important components of early childhood learning," s Way President Scott Ferguson. "Research tells us children are literally 'born learning.' That means five yea education take place before they enter kindergarten. We know that what happens in a child's early years tr difference for success in life and for school readiness. Kids who are ready for school are more likely to do v graduate. We want to help parents, grandparents and caregivers use everyday outings — including trips to Winston Park — to support that learning."

Columbus Mayor Jim Wetherington was on hand for a Wednesday ribbon cutting where he was assisted by children from Little Blessings Nurturing Center. He said the trail was important for getting children ready for noted that it was another fine example in Columbus of public and private partnership.

"This is what Columbus is all about," Wetherington said, pointing to projects such as this as one reason a r publication named the city as the fourth best place in the country to raise a family.

Sharon Douglas, an Aflac vice-president, said, "By incorporating the spirit of learning as a life-long passion excited to help make a difference in the lives of children right here in the valley."

Ferguson said he hoped this would be the first of several Born Learning Trails. "This was a good place to t said, "because of the way the park was already set up."

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