

THE CALL

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Vice-President Gore Campaigns At Park On City's East Side

By Ché Parker

Vice President Al Gore made two stops on his campaign trail in Kansas City Saturday, April 29, to discuss issues he plans to focus on in this year's presidential election.

The Vice President's visit was the first time that a presidential candidate had visited Kansas City's east side since Hubert Humphrey greeted voters at Central high school in the fall of 1968.

Gore, the democratic presidential nominee, was greeted by well-wishers and city officials immediately upon his arrival in Kansas City, about 1:30 p.m. on Saturday.

Third district-at-large City Councilman Troy Nash spoke with Gore about the Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community (EZ/EC) Initiative.

The initiative, which was established to create job and business opportunities in economically distressed areas in inner cities, was designed to provide job training, childcare and transportation.

Nash called upon Gore to provide additional funding for the third district.

"It's programs like these that help us leverage city, state, and private
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dollars that are vital to rebuilding our community," Nash said.

Gore stated that funding for impoverished communities was an important issue nationwide, and that he plans to address it as part of his political platform.

At his initial stop at Montgall Park, located at 22nd and Chestnut, Gore was given an opportunity to display his handy-man prowess.

The Washington Wheatley Neighborhood Association, along with community leaders and activists, sponsored restoration of Montgall Park in which Gore took a knee in the grass and turned a few bolts.

"We need someone to test it," Gore said of the slide he helped attach to new, safer playground equipment.

Members of the Kansas City, Mo., Police department and officials from the city's Parks and Recreation department were also at the park to lend a hand in erecting colorful slides, benches, and ladders.

The event, which lasted from 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., was an effort to

help provide a safe place for young people in the neighborhood to play and grow.

This is the first of a number of public/private efforts to address the need for injury prevention by replacing unsafe equipment with more appropriate and inviting places for children to play.

"This is like celebrating the birth of a child. This neighborhood is being reborn. When children feel safe, the community is back to life," Gore said.

When the construction is complete, the playground will be grounded in a poured rubber surface, the safest material available.

Other features designed to enhance safety that will be added at a future date include enhanced lighting, speed bumps, and signs indicating children are at play.

"We need to make our entire nation a safe zone. We need more positive activities for young people," Gore stated.

E. Lenita Johnson, manager of the Center for Childhood Safety at Children's Mercy hospital, spoke about

the need for safe environments for children to play.

"It will take us as a group and a community to make this a safe place for our children," Ms. Johnson stated.

Ms. Johnson expressed the need for playground ground equipment renovation efforts at parks throughout the Kansas City urban core.

"The renovation was extremely important. The community's residents are excited about it. It was very important to them," Ms. Johnson said.

Over 125 volunteers came to Montgall Park to offer their talents and support.

The newly refurbished park will be officially dedicated on Saturday, May 6, at 9:30 a.m.

Gore's second stop on the city's east side took place at Crispus Attucks elementary school, located at 2400 Prospect ave.

There, he held a town hall meeting where he discussed crime prevention, prescription drug costs, and the condition of the nation's public schools.



COUNCILMAN GREETS VICE PRESIDENT . . . City Councilman Troy Nash, left, was on hand to greet Vice President Al Gore as he arrived in Kansas City on Saturday afternoon, April 29. Gore, the Democratic presidential candidate, made campaign appearances at Montgall Park and the Attucks school. — White House photo