

Latham Lawyers and Staff Build Playground for Houston School

By Brooks Igo
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May 16, 2014 – Latham & Watkins Houston managing partner Michael Dillard and his wife rode 60 miles in last month’s BP MS 150 charity ride. Then, they rushed in their car to drive the same distance to join at least 50 lawyers and staff to build a playground for a school for 1st through 3rd graders.

The build was the final day of a special *pro bono* project the firm was working on with Kaboom!, a national non-profit whose mission is to create playspaces for America’s children. The beneficiary of this project was A.B. Anderson Academy, a school in Aldine Independent School District.

Dillard said the firm, which opened its Houston office in 2010, was looking for opportunities to give back to the community that has been so welcoming and receptive to them. A staff member suggested Kaboom! at one of the firm’s weekly meetings.

“We thought it was a fun project that could also be a team building project for our people,” Dillard said. “Plus, who can’t get excited about doing something for kids?”

“It was a natural fit.”

The Latham team was part of more than 200 volunteers from the community that worked together on April 5 to build the playground,

which required moving 42,120 square feet of safety surfacing by hand. One of the unique aspects of the project was the playground’s design was inspired by drawings made in January by the students of what they wanted the playground to look like.



Michael Dillard

At the office’s weekly breakfast meeting following the build day, the firm showed a video (well worth a watch if you have three minutes to spare) with highlights from the project, from the design day in January to the build day in April, on the conference room’s large flat screen television. People were glowing, Dillard says.

Latham detailed the project and included a link to the video in a firmwide internal email, which Dillard says inspired a great deal of positive feedback.

“We were getting lots of internal emails from partners we don’t deal with every day and senior management saying it is the coolest thing,” he said.

The playground will serve more than 800 kids from Aldine ISD.

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