



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**April 25, 2022**

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## **Ijams Nature Center Opens New Nature Playscape at Grayson Subaru Preserve May 9**

Ijams Nature Center will open the new Ijams Nature Playscape at Grayson Subaru Preserve at a public ribbon cutting May 9 at 10 a.m.

The Ijams Nature Playscape is specifically designed for young children to play in a creek, climb hills, dig, build, crawl and engage with nature in an organic, unstructured way. The new space features a large nest, tunnels, log steps and different “rooms” to play in.

Parking for the ribbon cutting will be at the Ijams Mead’s Quarry parking lot. The ceremony will begin at the Adventure Camp area at the far end of the parking lot. Attendees are encouraged to wear outdoor shoes and bring their children or grandchildren to try out the new free-play area.

“For generations, many of us had the opportunity to roam and play in the woods, empty lots and fields that surrounded our homes and neighborhoods,” Ijams Executive Director Amber Parker said. “We remember the freedom we had to use our imagination, test ourselves and become a part of the natural landscape, at least until we were called home for dinner.

“Today’s children don’t get the chance to play like this for a variety of reasons, so Ijams created a place to give children, parents and caregivers a safe place where that connection to nature can happen,” she said. “It’s a place where there is a whole lot of ‘yes’ and not a lot of ‘no.’”

Parker said research conducted over the past two decades shows how an early childhood connection to nature through unstructured play helps develop critical cognitive, social and physical skills. However, the lack of natural areas near homes, barriers preventing access to open spaces and safety concerns may prevent these experiences.

“Ijams Nature Center’s mission is to be an educational resource for everyone and eliminate barriers whenever possible,” Parker said. “But Ijams cannot do that alone. This amazing space for children in our community would not have been possible without significant support from Grayson Subaru and Subaru of America.”

“When Ijams presented Grayson Subaru with the idea of creating a place where kids can play in nature, where they can use their imaginations and develop a love of the

outdoors, we knew it was something we wanted to support,” Grayson Subaru Sales Manager Randy Carter said. “Subaru of America and Grayson Subaru are committed to helping people find outdoor adventures. Providing our youngest children with this opportunity is the perfect fit for Subaru, and we are honored to be a part of this project.”

Ijams also received support from The Aslan Foundation and Tennessee Department of Agriculture Forestry Division to fund initial invasive plant removal on the 13.46-acre property.

“Partnerships are critical to everything Ijams does,” Parker said. “Volunteers gave and are continuing to give thousands of hours of their time to remove invasive plants from the space, as well as helping with building projects. The Ijams Natural Resource Management team has spent several years coordinating these efforts and has logged countless hours preparing this space. It truly takes a team to build a dream.”

Grayson Auto Group, a leading car dealer and family-owned business in Knoxville, has been serving drivers in East Tennessee and beyond for more than 40 years. Grayson proudly stocks vehicles from BMW, Genesis, Hyundai, MINI and Subaru. Grayson provides some of the safest vehicles on the planet, mostly with IIHS Top Safety ratings, and many with partial zero or zero emissions ratings.

Ijams Nature Center is a nonprofit, 318-acre educational nature center for all ages, abilities and walks of life. Ijams’ mission is to encourage stewardship of the natural world by providing an urban greenspace for people to learn about and enjoy the outdoors through engaging experiences. Located just three miles from downtown Knoxville, Ijams features 12+ miles of hiking and mixed-use trails, a public access river dock, swimming, boating, biking and more. The center offers hundreds of educational programs annually for all ages. The Ijams grounds and trails are open every day from 8 a.m. until dusk. The Visitor Center is open daily from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. For more information, visit [ijams.org](http://ijams.org).

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