

Volunteers help rebuild playground for formerly homeless children

By **Yvonne Wenger, The Baltimore Sun**

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A team of 90 volunteers painted and cleaned the playground at the Pratt House this week to prepare the site for an overhaul next month.

College students, part of Students Today Leaders Forever, joined Volunteers of America Chesapeake to enhance the playground at the 35-unit apartment complex for formerly homeless families with two or more children. The recreational area will be rebuilt in April with new equipment for the children, who helped design their dream playground.

The students from Minnesota and North Dakota are taking part in the Pay it Forward Tour, which offers an alternative spring break trip.

"The Pay it Forward Tours are a way for students across the country to make meaningful impacts on the lives of others," said Ellie Thorstad, manager of college programming for Students Today Leaders Forever. "You meet new friends and make lifetime connections while improving our nation."

The playground at the Pratt House, a former West Baltimore school gymnasium, has been closed for more than two years because of safety concerns. The renovations are funded by grants and donations.

For more information, visit voachesapeake.org/prattplayground.

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