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## LIVABILITY

# 'Trading Spaces' star to build playgrounds in Louisville area

By [LISA HORNING](#) | July 3, 2018 8:00 am



Carter Oosterhouse plays with kids on a playground in Los Angeles built by his nonprofit, Carter's Kids. | Courtesy

The carpenter and TV personality [Carter Oosterhouse](#) is coming to Louisville July 15-18 to build two playgrounds and possibly more as part of his charity, Carter's Kids.

The two initial playgrounds will be at the [Southwest Family YMCA](#), 2800 Fordhaven Road, and the [Clark County, Ind.](#)

[Family YMCA](#), 4812 Hamburg Pike in Jeffersonville. Though the playgrounds are on YMCA property, they will be open to the public.

Oosterhouse is a carpenter on "[Trading Spaces](#)," the new and old versions. He said he shot one of his first episodes of "Trading Spaces" in Louisville and has been back several times since then.

"I have a little place in my heart for Louisville," he said. "I got to make a bat at the Louisville Slugger Museum, was able to call a horse race, which was really fun, too. I feel like I've always had a sweet spot for Louisville just because I think the town is just so charming and cute, and then, like the outskirts with the bourbon trail and you know the horse farms and everything there just seems to me like a lot of different stuff to do."

Oosterhouse began [Carter's Kids](#) because he wanted a way to help kids fight childhood obesity, which is an issue that he said is close to his heart.

"I was working on TV and having a lot of fun with it, but I felt

A playground built by  
Carter's Kids in Holly,  
Mich. | Courtesy

like there's a little bit more than just working on TV," he said. "And, as a builder, I thought, you know I love work of kids but you don't really see kids building houses."

While playgrounds are costly, they last a long time, he said. And he realized that they could get a playground build pretty quickly, and it would stay around for about 20 years.

"So, to me, that was a huge win-win situation," he said. Playgrounds not only help prevent obesity, but they also help with cognitive development, a bonus they hadn't even thought of at first.

"You know when they're able to accomplish their goals when they're able to get across the monkey bars, and you know they can't do the first time or the fifth time or even the 50th time, but when they do it, it makes a big difference," he said.

Each playground  
built by Carter's

Kids is specific to the area, Oosterhouse said. The organization works with a local team to make it fit into the local culture.



For example, if the playground is near water, they might build it with a ships theme. Or if it's in a rural area, it might have farm animals.

Carter Oosterhouse |  
Courtesy

"It's 100 percent unique to the area," he said.

The team is a tight-knit group, whom Oosterhouse describes as a "well-oiled machine," getting the playground built quickly, with the help of community volunteers.

Having local volunteers helps build community and helps the community take ownership of the project.

"They feel like they helped build it, and they'll help take care of it also. So we really have seen that, as well, which has been really nice," he said.

Oosterhouse has been in the news this year. A former makeup artist accused him of sexual harassment and coercion, which she says eventually led to her hospitalization for depression and the loss of her job.

Oosterhouse has said that the relationship was consensual, [according to People magazine](#). When asked by Insider Louisville about the assertions, he responded, "I've said all I want to say about that." Oosterhouse is married to the actress Amy Smart, who has publicly defended him.

### **Volunteers and donors needed**

The team needs volunteers to help with the build, but it's also soliciting donations to build two more playgrounds in the area.

The initial build was spearheaded by Brook and Pam Smith, Louisville business owners and philanthropists. Brook Smith, founder and CEO of Smith Manus Surety Bonds, is a friend of Oosterhouse and contacted him about possibly building here in Louisville.

Smith made the first contribution, and the YMCA of Greater Louisville secured matching funds and other contributions, which kicked the plan into high gear.

“These playgrounds will help the Y provide safe and healthy spaces for our children to learn foundational skills, develop healthy, trusting relationships and build self-esteem,” said Steve Tarver, president and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Louisville in a news release. “We are fortunate to have great partners like Carter’s Kids and generous donors who understand the impact of youth development in our community.”

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## A playground built by Carter’s Kids in Philadelphia | Courtesy

Local companies donating products or services for the playground builds include AML, Inc., Clark & Riggs, Juli Creations, LLC, Orange Clover, Bubba’s 33, Orange Leaf, Four Seasons Lawn Care, Advance Ready Mix Concrete, Inc., Ernst Concrete and Estes Waste Solutions. Community volunteers from Humana, ARG Financial Group and Mortenson Family Dental will also help with the build.

“Our goal is, you know, we’re building these two playgrounds, and we hope people can come out and join us while we’re building, just to experience it, and it’s always fun,” Oosterhouse said. “Seeing those kids run around the

playground, it's just like we've essentially put in like Disneyland in the community's backyard and it's just amazing. ... And then when the kids get on it, oh! It's fantastic, it's amazing. it's really fun. So I'd encourage people to come out and either help or see it."

There will be a ribbon-cutting at the Clark County Family YMCA at 11 a.m. on Thursday, July 19. Oosterhouse will be speaking along with Brook Smith and a YMCA representative.

If you'd like to make a donation, contact Andy Pierce at 502-587-2106 or [apierce@ymcalouisville.org](mailto:apierce@ymcalouisville.org).

Volunteers are no longer needed.

*UPDATED 12:21 p.m.: This story has been changed to reflect additional company donors and that no more volunteers are needed.*

## **LISA HORNUNG**

Lisa Hornung a native of Louisville and has worked in local media for more than 15 years as a writer and editor. Before that she worked as a writer, editor and photographer for community newspapers in Kansas, Ohio and Kentucky. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Georgia, and after a 20-year career in journalism, she obtained a master's degree in history from Eastern Kentucky University in 2016.



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