

The Plimmer Family Partners with Meridian Parks and Recreation to Make a Child's Final Wish Come True

Evangeline Brighten Plimmer, or "Eva" as she liked to be called, was a lively 11-year old girl who resided in Meridian with her parents and brothers and sister. She loved sports and being outdoors. In the spring of 2024, she was diagnosed with an inoperable brain stem tumor which was deemed terminal. She died in January 2025, but not without leaving a lasting legacy for the Meridian community.



Growing up, Eva's favorite television program was *American Ninja Warrior*. On this program, men and women from all walks of life and from every corner of the country come together to pursue their common dream of completing one of the world's most difficult obstacle courses. Each possessing an inspiring story and a memorable personality, these athletes regularly push through seemingly impossible tests of strength and endurance. Though only a few actually ever successfully finish the course, the challengers stop at nothing as they take on a growing number of competitors and an ever-changing set of obstacles.

Among Eva's final wishes was to have a ninja-style challenge course built locally to be enjoyed by people of all ages, but especially by children. She explained: "It really spreads the message that you can overcome obstacles. I want it to become something that kids will find joy in and find that they believe in themselves and that will let them know they can emotionally and physically overcome every obstacle."

While exploring potential locations for a local challenge course, the Plimmer family approached the Meridian Parks and Recreation Department. It was determined that an ideal space could be made available in Meridian's Discovery Park in its active recreation area, just north of its large playground.

The Plimmer family, who had formed a non-profit called Brighten Day Park, Inc. and already begun fundraising for a challenge course, was encouraged to continue raising as much money from the community as they could for the project with the understanding that the City of Meridian would contribute the remaining amount needed to bring the total to the \$350,000 needed. Through raffles, online auction items, lemonade stands, and other community contributions, the family raised \$185,000 and received a \$20,000 grant from Blue Cross of Idaho, and the Meridian City Council approved a \$145,000 budget amendment to help the project cross the finish line.

Working collaboratively, Meridian's park planning team met regularly with Eva and her parents to capture and fine-tune Eva's vision for the challenge course. There were other details to be handled, too... building permits, liability insurance coverage for the construction workers, etc.

Once the challenge course structures were ordered and had arrived, several construction crews recruited by the Plimmer family and the Meridian Parks and Recreation Department provided in-kind or reduced-fee labor to prepare the substrate, lay concrete, and assemble the various elements. These included Shamrock Construction, Extreme Concrete, DeBelloy Construction and Sonntag



NOTE: *Discovery Park, where Eva's Dream Ninja Course is located, is in south Meridian off Lake Hazel Road between Eagle Road and Locust Grove Road.*

The challenge course is free and open to the public every day from dawn until dusk.

Other park amenities include a BMX bike track, a pump track, skate park, ball fields, playground, 40-yard run, splash pad, community garden, picnic shelter, sand and water play area, and public art.

On May 8, 2025, a large grand opening celebration marked the opening of Eva's Dream Ninja Course. More than 300 people gathered to honor Eva's legacy and to try out the new challenge course. Among the special guests was Meridian Mayor Robert Simison and Eva's favorite American Ninja Warrior champion, Daniel Gil, who she'd met before her passing. Attendees enjoyed timed ninja course runs with expert coaches, food trucks, face painting, tattoos, bracelet making, and a photo booth.

Although Eva did not live long enough to see her project come to fruition, her big vision —to create a space where kids could discover their inner strength, build resilience, and learn to face challenges with courage — is now a reality.



Thanks to the partnership between Meridian Parks and Recreation and the Plimmer family's non-profit organization, what began as the dream of one courageous and creative girl is now a real place where kids can climb, race, and grow stronger in every way.