

Race track stakes \$40G for playground

By DAVE WEDGE

Big-hearted Suffolk Downs owners are ponying up big dough to help rebuild an East Boston school playground torched by heartless firebugs last month, the Herald has learned.

The Eastie racetrack and the Fields Family Foundation, the charity founded by track owner Richard Fields, are chipping in \$40,000 to help fix the Bradley School playground, which was set ablaze Sept. 24.

The playground, which just opened two years ago at the 300-student school, has been closed since the fire. The racetrack's pledge to help out came a day after the Herald reported on the damage.

"Suffolk Downs has a 76-year legacy as a good neighbor in the local community, and when we saw the story in Sunday's Herald about the Bradley School we wanted to make sure, we did something to help," track spokesman Chip Tuttle said.

Longtime Suffolk Downs superintendent Steve Pini and the track's maintenance crew visited the school yesterday to assess the damage and develop a repair plan. The school is in Orient Heights in Eastie and overlooks the Suffolk Downs property. Suffolk Downs officials are working with the Boston School Department on the repair project.

"This is wonderful news for our students and the school community," Brad-

ley principal Anne Kelly said. "So much work went into designing and building our play areas and in obtaining the grant funding for them. We're very grateful that Richard Fields and our neighbors from Suffolk Downs have made this commitment."

The playground, which includes climbing bars, a slide and an outdoor classroom, was funded through a \$419,000 grant from the Boston Schoolyard Initiative. The blaze is under investigation by Boston fire and police investigators.

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PATRICK WHITTEMORE

VICIOUS: Principal Anne Kelly surveys the damage caused by arsonists to the Bradley School playground in East Boston.

