



Play Mart's History - Beach Family Biography

Armed with a Garden Club grant and with the help of the community kids, Dennis Beach built his first play ground in 1968 from treated railroad ties, ropes, tires, and chains, while still a senior at Rutgers.

After moving to the Appalachian region of the US in rural SE Kentucky, Dennis received a request from a local PTA group to build a playground for a local elementary school. This launched the entire family into a career of designing; installing and servicing playgrounds across the state.

In the early years, the equipment was built in the large family built "barn" behind the large family built home. The oldest son would help his dad install from as early as four years old. Rebecca would home school the five young children in the morning and while the girls practiced violin in the background, she turned "sales woman" and made sales calls to principals, superintendents and park directors.

When CPSC issued its Handbook for Public Playground Safety in 1981, the whole industry made radical changes. As the playground industry changed its focus to safety, so did Play Mart. In order to compete with national playground manufacturers, Dennis obtained his Certified Public Safety Inspector certification, and then went to work to bring the designs and specifications up to the national playground standards according to ADA law and ASTM, and CPSC guidelines.

Dennis' foresight told him that wood was becoming a problematic material for several reasons. One, the liability issue concerning the natural tendency of wood to splinter, crack and decompose was a serious one. Parents did not want their little kids ripping their clothes or injuring themselves on wooden equipment that needs constant maintenance to keep it safe. Metal, also seemed to Dennis to have too many problems as well: rusting, thermally unstable, and its rigidity not being kid-friendly. Having always been environmentally conscious from Dennis's years of laying out trails in the Rocky Mountain State Parks for Colorado Game Fish and Parks, and Rebecca's time with the state in Environmental Resources had given them both an appreciation for the fragile nature of the environment.

Combining their concern for environmental issues and their knowledge of consumers' desire to make environmentally sound consumer choices, Dennis began research for a recycled structural product (plastic lumber). Play Mart purchased plastic structural material from five different manufacturers, finally settling on one that satisfied their quality requirements in 1999. As Play Mart grew, suppliers could not meet their growing demands for recycled plastic lumber. So in 2006 Dennis, Rebecca and the Board of Directors voted to purchase a \$250,000 extruder to manufacture Recycled Structural Plastic™ (RSP) in-house. Quality-control of the product, the ability to recycle nearly all manufacturing waste, as well as control over production schedules made the extruder highly cost-effective even in the first year of use.

Play Mart continues to refine in-house processes to reduce waste, recycle materials internally, purchase regionally-collected recycled raw materials, as well as educate employees and customers about recycling and reducing environmental impact personally.

The Beach family Play Mart Board of Directors believe that playground manufacturers should strive to supply the consumer with products that have social and environmental integrity being both child-friendly and safe, but also environmentally friendly and safe for the world in which we all live. Towards that end, Play Mart continues on a journey of research, change and discovery.