Q. Why do the children of Sderot need our help?

A. Over the past few years, the Israeli communities on the border with Gaza, such as Sderot, have endured continual Kassam rocket attacks. In the last two years the number of rockets has increased greatly, to almost a daily event. Some of these rockets have hit homes and schools, killing 11 people and injuring hundreds more.

Q. Why is this happening?

A. The aim of the terrorists in Gaza is to force Sderot’s citizens to abandon their land.

Q. How far from Gaza is Sderot?

A. Sderot is on the border with Gaza, only about 1 kilometer (.62 miles) away.

Q. How many people live in Sderot?

A. Currently, Sderot has approximately 20,000 residents. 3,000 of who are school-age children.

Q. Why aren’t they moving away?

A. To date, about 3,000 people have left, but most regard Sderot as their home and either view leaving as a sign of giving in to terror, or they simply have no where to go.

Q. How has this affected the lives of Sderot’s children?

A. Studies have shown that at least 75 percent of children ages 4-18 in Sderot suffer from post-traumatic stress, including sleep disorders and severe anxiety. They suffer nightmares, loss of appetite and problems in school. Some 120 children are currently undergoing long-term mental health therapy. This is not surprising, say experts, given that the rocket fire is often timed for the early morning when children head to school.

Q. What happens when a rocket is launched?

A. Every time rockets are launched a warning siren is triggered. The town-wide alert, known as “Tseva Adom” or “Code Red,” is produced when an incoming rocket is detected. The system is only partially effective. It gives people up to 15 seconds to find cover before the rocket hits. Given such little warning, kindergartners are kept inside all day, and children cannot play with their friends outside of school, rather than risk the chance that they won’t be able to move to safety quickly enough.

Q. What is this Let Us Play! program all about?

A. JNF’s Let Us Play! is looking to bring together children from across the country at the same time to achieve a simple goal: help the children of Sderot by giving a gift that will have a major impact on their lives. JNF is embarking on the creation of the largest indoor playground in Israel.

Q. Tell me more about JNF’s Sderot Indoor Playground.

A. This all-inclusive Indoor Recreational Center will provide Sderot’s youth with a place to have fun, connect with friends, enjoy stimulating classes, and be children. It is a place to feel strong and free, away from their daily worries about rockets. Parents will have the peace of mind knowing that their children are playing and learning in an environment that is safe and secure.

Q. What will the playground feature?

A. The playground will be approximately 20,000 square feet and feature state-of-the-art indoor play park equipment with extensive padding and no sharp edges, interactive skill games, seating to accommodate parents, an indoor soccer field, basketball and volleyball courts, a rock climbing wall and media center, including a movie room and video games. There will also be three therapy rooms to help children suffering from trauma. The building is in a secure location and being built to meet all IDF security regulations for safety.

Q. This is how YOU can help:

A. Participate in the JNF Let Us Play! event at your school playground! During the week of the 15th of Cheshvan, (Thursday, November 13), play games, sports, and do other activities on your school playground and ask your family and friends to sponsor your participation. All of the proceeds you raise will help the children of Sderot by giving them an opportunity to play on their own playground – in safety. This day was chosen as the national Let Us Play! Day as a symbol of the 15 seconds a child in Sderot has to get to safety during a rocket attack. Every student that participates will receive special recognition.