

## *Tulsa's solution to soil displacement leads to new designs for having fun*

BY KYLE ARNOLD - Tulsa World Oklahoman  
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TULSA — As a college student, Brandon Riggs tackled a common problem with playgrounds and came up with a simple solution — heavy rubber pads underneath the equipment to prevent soil displacement.

“While everyone else was writing thesis papers about cotton candy shops, I wanted to do something real-world, something that applied to the business I knew,” said the University of Tulsa graduate whose father, Mike, had run a playground equipment company for a decade.



*Mike Riggs, left, and Brandon Riggs show the Kid Zone playground at ONEOK Field in Tulsa from a different angle.*

In 2002, Brandon Riggs formed his own company, Terra Pad Inc., as a subsidiary of his father's firm, Playscape Designs Inc.

But the pads were just the beginning. Now Riggs has stepped out of his father's shadow and is president of a business that is expecting more than \$2 million in sales this year.

Terra Pad, whose 15 employees include 10 in Tulsa, designs playgrounds and recreation areas across the Midwest, using popular design trends such as composite shading systems, water features and foam rubber flooring.

Riggs' company helped install the playground and shade systems at ONEOK Field and a park at 41st Street and Riverside Drive, and has done work on the elephant demonstration yard at the Tulsa Zoo.

The company also has been involved in dozens of projects across the country.

But before Riggs and his crew were accepting out-of-state jobs, he was trying to solve the playground-industry problem of holes underneath playground equipment such as slides and swings.

“People have put rubber mats underneath swings and slides for years, but they always anchored them down with steel or rope belts,” said Mike Riggs, who helps run his son’s company.

Eventually those belts become exposed and can pose a hazard.

So Brandon Riggs designed his own rubber composite mats, but his unique solution was simply size.

“The Terra Pads are 95 pounds, 135 pounds or 200 pounds,” he said. “You don’t have to anchor them because they are too heavy to move or steal. It’s not very much fun for thieves and vandals to carry around a 200-pound rubber pad.”

During its first year in business, Terra Pad simply designed and sold the pads, which are manufactured in Austin, Texas.

But Riggs saw that competitors were copying his idea and knew his product could only carry the company so far. Over time Terra Pad started selling playground systems, then shade and water products. The rubber mats are still the only product produced by the company.

Riggs said much of Terra Pad’s recent growth has come from shade systems.

“Cities are moving away from pools and into parks with water and shade,” he said. “It’s a lot cheaper than pools, and you don’t need any employees to supervise.”