

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, August 18, 2010

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Let's Go Play!: Non-Profit Organization KaBOOM! Names Bel Aire
One of 118 "Playful City USA" Communities
- Communities Across the Country Prioritizing Play Despite Budget Setbacks -

WASHINGTON, D.C. – To ensure children in their communities are active and healthy, 118 cities and towns across the country earned recognition as 2010 Playful City USA communities despite difficult budgetary decisions and Park and Recreation department funding at its lowest levels in decades.

According to a report from the National League of Cities, 7 in 10 city officials are responding to the economic crisis by making personnel cuts, while a pre-summer National Recreation and Parks Association survey found that 55% of its members suffered budget cuts in 2010 and 60% expect more in 2011. These funding cutbacks persist despite findings from a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey that only 20% of homes across the country have parks within a half mile.

Counteracting these issues, First Lady Michelle Obama announced the launch of the Let's Move campaign in 2010, which is geared toward solving the childhood obesity issue within a generation through a variety of ways, including unstructured play.

This massive undertaking coincides with objectives of Playful City USA – a national recognition program honoring cities and towns determined to prioritize play and ensure that children are healthy by providing the time and space for play. KaBOOM!, a national non-profit dedicated to saving play, recognized 118 cities across the country as Playful City USA communities, including Bel Aire.

Hailing from 36 states and ranging in size from San Francisco and Atlanta, to Ottawa, Kan. and Shirley, Mass., these Playful City USA communities are making a commitment to play and physical activity by developing unique local action plans to increase the quantity and quality of play in their community. In doing so, some of the most innovative ideas and cost-effective programs are being developed in Playful City USA communities – proving that parks and play are more important than ever.

In the fourth year of the annual program, 33 of 118 Playful City USA communities were repeat honorees from 2009, 30 were honored for the third consecutive year and 19 communities received Playful City USA status for the fourth straight year.

Florida paced the country with 19 Playful City USA communities followed by Arizona and California with 10 communities each. For the third consecutive year, Florida led the nation with the most Playful City USA communities with California and Arizona sharing second place for the second straight year. Arizona led the country in 2007 and was third in 2008.

Each of the 2010 Playful City USA communities demonstrated creative commitments to the cause of play. Playful City USA celebrates and highlights these unique initiatives developed by communities across the

country. A primary goal of Playful City USA is to encourage cities and towns to share creative ideas, concepts and programs in an effort to increase play opportunities for children. City initiatives include:

- Casa Grande (Ariz.) – offers Positive Lunch Activities for Youth (P.L.A.Y.) program benefiting 6th-8th grade students who no longer have access to play equipment.
- Dothan (Ala.) – uses a “community build” process for all playground construction, which builds community cohesion and spirit, but also saves 20-25% on overall cost.
- Indianapolis – launched “Get Fit Indy” challenge this summer designed to encourage children to be active for 60 minutes per day, while eating nutritiously.
- Orlando – increased quantity of playspaces by developing joint-use agreements with the local school district to open school recreation facilities to the public during non-school hours.
- Takoma Park (Md.) – created Traveling Playgroups to meet and provide residents with recreational information at different facilities throughout the city, while collecting citizen feedback on improvement needs

KaBOOM! also selected Bel Aire for its outstanding dedication to play. A notable aspect of its commitment to children – a Play Advocacy Initiative is being created in Bel Aire to increase the awareness of the importance of play and will include Public Service Announcements, flyers and website content.

KaBOOM! makes children happier and healthier by inspiring communities to build great places to play in conjunction with its vision of a great place to play within walking distance of every child. Playful City USA communities create best practices, like the ones above, to reach a similar goal. They serve as role models for other communities and prove that enhancing children’s well-being by increasing the opportunity for play is an attainable goal for every community.

“An extreme misconception exists in our country that play among children is a luxury when, in fact, it’s an absolute necessity,” said Darell Hammond, KaBOOM! CEO and Co-founder. “For decades, this notion dominated our actions and we continue to see the damaging results: a monumental lack of playspaces for children and sky-rocketing childhood obesity rates. Bel Aire refused to adhere to the status quo and realized all children deserve a municipal commitment to the cause of play. These 118 Playful City USA communities serve as beacons for the rest of our nation that an investment in children is an investment in our future.”

For more information on the KaBOOM! Playful City USA program, including applications for 2011, visit www.kaboom.org/playfulcityusa.

2010 Playful City USA Communities

Albany, Ga.
Albemarle, N.C.
^Allentown, Pa.
*Ankeny, Iowa
^Annapolis, Md.
#Arlington, Texas
*Atlanta, Ga.
^Auburn, Wash.
^Baldwin Park, Calif.
Bel Aire, Kan.
Bethlehem, Pa.
^Bismarck, N.D.
#Bloomington, Ind.
#Brentwood, Calif.
^Casa Grande, Ariz.

#Cerritos, Calif.
*Chandler, Ariz.
Chevy Chase, Md.
College Park, Ga.
^Columbia, Ill.
^Columbus, Ohio
^Commerce City, Colo.
#Coolidge, Ariz.
^Coral Gables, Fla.
*Creedmoor, N.C.
#Danville, Va.
Davenport, Iowa
Derby, Kan.
#DeRidder, La.
Doral, Fla.
*Dothan, Ala.
^Durham, N.C.
East Point, Ga.
#Encinitas, Calif.
^Eules, Texas
^Evans, Colo.
^Fishers, Ind.
Fort Wayne, Ind.
Fountain Hills, Az.
Franklin, Ind.
*Gilbert, Ariz.
#Grand Prairie, Texas
#Green River, Wyo.
*Greenbelt, Md.
^Greensboro, N.C.
^Greenville, N.C.
^Hamilton, N.J.
#Henderson, Nevada
#Hernando, Miss.
^Hilo, Hawaii
Horn Lake, Miss.
^Indianapolis, Ind.
Juneau, Alaska
Kenmore, Wash.
*Kenner, La.
*Kerman, Calif.
^Killeen, Texas
#La Mesa, Calif.
*Lake Worth, Fla.
Lakewood, Calif.
^Laramie, Wyo.
^Las Cruces, N.M.
#Lauderdale Lakes, Fla.
Lauderhill, Fla.
^Laurel, Md.
*Longview, Wash.
#Mercer Island, Wash.
^Mesa, Ariz.
Miami Gardens, Fla.
^Miami Lakes, Fla.
^Missoula, Mont.

Mount Juliet, Tenn.
#Murray, Ky.
#Nampa, Idaho
^New Port Richey, Fla.
*New Roads, La.
#New York City, N.Y.
Newport, R.I.
^Niagara Falls, N.Y.
*Norfolk, Va.
North Port, Fla.
#Northglenn, Colo.
Oak Park Heights, Minn.
Oldsmar, Fla.
#Orlando, Fla.
Ottawa, Kan.
#Palm Bay, Fla.
Palmetto Bay, Fla.
#Parkland, Fla.
*Phoenix, Ariz.
Redwood City, Calif.
Richmond Hill, Ga.
#Riverside, Calif.
Rock Hill, S.C.
Rowlett, Texas
#Safety Harbor, Fla.
^Saint Paul, Minn.
#St. Petersburg, Fla.
^San Antonio, Texas
*San Francisco, Calif.
^Sanford, N.C.
Savannah, Ga.
Scranton, Pa.
*Shirley, Mass.
*Spartanburg, S.C.
#Springdale, Ark.
Sunrise, Fla.
^Takoma Park, Md.
Tamarac, Fla.
^Tempe, Ariz.
^Thornton, Colo.
*Tucson, Ariz.
Tupelo, Miss.
#West Palm Beach, Fla.
^Wichita, Kan.
#York, Pa.
#Yorkville, Ill.
*Yuma, Ariz.

* Four-time honoree
Three-time honoree
^ Two-time honoree

2010 Playful City USA Communities by State:

19: Florida
10: Arizona, California
6: Georgia, North Carolina, Texas

5: Indiana, Maryland

4: Colorado, Kansas, Pennsylvania, Washington

3: Louisiana, Mississippi

2: Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, New York, South Carolina, Virginia, Wyoming

1: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee

About KaBOOM!

Headquartered in Washington, D.C., KaBOOM! is a national non-profit organization dedicated to saving play. Through community building, the organization is focused on giving every child in America a great place to play within walking distance. Since 1996, KaBOOM! has used its innovative community-build model to bring together business and community interests to construct more than 1,800 new playgrounds, skate parks, sports fields and ice rinks across North America. KaBOOM! also offers a variety of resources, including an online community, free online trainings, grants, publications and the KaBOOM! National Campaign for Play, which includes Playful City USA and Playmakers – a national network of individual advocates for play. KaBOOM! also has offices in Chicago and San Mateo, Calif. For more information, visit www.kaboom.org.