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**PARKSCAN RECOGNIZED FOR EXCELLENCE IN GETTING
KIDS ACTIVE AND PLAYFUL**

National Non-Profit KaBOOM! Compiles List of the Nation's Top Programs

KaBOOM!, the national non-profit bringing play back into the lives of children, recently released its ***Play Matters*** report, highlighting 12 local initiatives that have increased the *quantity* of available play spaces, improved the *quality* of kids' playtime, and increased children's safe access to playgrounds. The report is part of KaBOOM!'s Playful City USA campaign, which seeks to honor communities across the country who have made a commitment to improving the lives of their children through play. The San Francisco Neighborhood Parks Council's ParkScan program was included in ***Play Matters*** as an example of great ways communities can help support healthy children's play.

To involve citizens in reporting park maintenance issues, the Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) developed ParkScan, a website to document, report, and track park maintenance issues in San Francisco. ParkScan data collection heightened public interest in improving the safety of San Francisco's playgrounds. Playgrounds with repeated or unresolved maintenance or quality issues receive a failing grade on NPC's annual Playground Report Card. Of the 26 playgrounds receiving a failing grade on the 2008 Playground Report Card, seven have been upgraded to a passing grade and 15 are on track to receive a C or better, either through capital development or a focused effort on playground repair. To help improve all the city's playgrounds, the Neighborhood Parks Council has supported over 100 "friends of" community groups that have conducted work days to clean up and repair their neighborhood playgrounds. For these efforts, San Francisco has also been recognized as a ***Playful City USA*** community for the past three years.

"There is a shared responsibility between the City of San Francisco and park users to make sure that parks and playgrounds stay fun, safe, and clean. ParkScan enables both to be actively involved," stated Meredith Thomas, NPC Executive Director.

By spotlighting the great work of the Neighborhood Parks Council's ParkScan program, and other selected programs, KaBOOM! hopes to show other communities different playful ways they can address their growing childhood health and educational issues.

Why the focus on play? A recent Institutes of Medicine report on ways to cut childhood obesity rates recommends that communities should “*build and maintain parks and playgrounds that are safe and attractive for playing, and in close proximity to residential areas*” in order to increase children’s activity levels. The IOM went on to single out some of the best practices highlighted in the ***Play Matters*** report by encouraging cities to “*collaborate with school districts and other organizations to establish joint use of facilities agreements allowing playing fields, playgrounds, and recreation centers to be used by community residents when schools are closed; if necessary, adopt regulatory and legislative policies to address liability issues that might block implementation.*”

Childhood obesity rates have nearly tripled since 1980, from 6.5% to 16.3%; more than 30% of U.S. children and youth are obese or at risk of becoming obese.ⁱ Approximately 175,000 individuals under the age of 20 have type 2 diabetes, and two million young people between the ages of 12 and 19 have pre-diabetes. Many government, scientific, and public health agencies recommend that school-age children and adolescents participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day.ⁱⁱ Two-thirds of our children fall far short of meeting this standard.

Other initiatives honored include:

Ankeny, Iowa: Parks and Recreation Department – After failing to pass a bond measure to build a sports complex, the Parks and Recreation Department engaged citizens in the planning process, and they responded in record numbers, which gave the Parks and Recreation Department the political capital develop even more places to play.

Baltimore, Maryland: Playworks -- Playworks sends coaches into low-income schools to facilitate play during recess and the rest of the school day. As a result of the program, schools are reporting improved classroom behavior.

Boston, Massachusetts: Boston Schoolyard Initiative -- With the leadership of Mayor Tom Menino, the Boston Schoolyard Initiative has transformed the outdoor physical space of more than 70 Boston schoolyards into colorful and engaging outdoor classrooms and places to play.

Boulder, Colorado: The Freiker Program -- Freiker (short for “frequent biker”) uses incentives and technology to increase the number of children regularly bicycling and walking to school. A solar-powered Freikomometer counts bike trips, which earn kids points to get prizes and recognition.

Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Switch Program -- Switch What You Do, View, and Chew aims to increase children’s physical activity (“Switch What You Do”), decrease their screen time (“Switch What You View”), and increase their fruit and vegetable consumption (“Switch What You Chew”).

Denver, Colorado: Learning Landscapes -- Learning Landscapes is a public-private partnership that designs and builds comprehensive outdoor play spaces at schools across Denver. In addition to engaging the community in the design-and-build process through joint-use agreements, these play spaces were opened up to the community after school hours.

Greenbelt, Maryland – In order to keep local Home Owner Associations from removing playgrounds in an effort to avoid maintenance fees, the City of Greenbelt formed public-private partnerships with them and took over a percentage of the upkeep costs. In return, the Home Owner Associations open their play spaces up to all citizens of Greenbelt.

New York City – Over the last few years, grassroots advocacy groups and community members have caused an increase in applications for block parties and high profile street closures. In urban areas, street closures are a cost-effective way to provide children with access to safe, open areas for play.

Seattle, Washington -- The High Point Housing Project provides a model of a mixed-income and intergenerational planned community that was designed with a focus on healthy living. By engaging residents and collaborating agencies, the authority created a community oriented to walking and full of safe accessible play areas.

St. Petersburg, Florida -- St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Baker developed the Play'n' Close to Home initiative to create a playground within a half mile of every child in the city. Through joint-use agreements with the school district and community organizations, the city has significantly improved opportunities for play.

Tucson, Arizona -- A joint-use agreement between the city and its largest school district meant that the city paid for the playground's safety upgrades and upkeep and the schools open their playgrounds and athletic fields to the public.

ⁱ "F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies are Failing in America," Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

ⁱⁱ *Building "Generation Play."*