



RALPH C. WILSON, JR.
FOUNDATION

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation Launches *Built to Play* Initiative to Provide More Opportunities for Kid-Driven Free Play Across Western New York and Southeast Michigan
Creation of new, innovative play spaces and skateparks will be made possible through \$10 million Foundation commitment and collaborations with Tony Hawk Foundation and KaBOOM!

Buffalo, NY/Detroit, MI (March 1, 2018) – The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation (RCWJRF) today announced *Built to Play*, an initiative designed to give children and youth across Western New York and Southeast Michigan more opportunities for free play through the creation of new, interactive public play spaces. To fund and operate the initiative, the Foundation will invest up to \$5 million in each region (for a maximum of \$10 million) over the next several years, to provide grassroots groups and nonprofits with support to create and maintain these play spaces within their neighborhoods.

The Foundation has partnered with the **Tony Hawk Foundation (THF)**, an organization focused on promoting high-quality, public skateparks in low-income areas throughout the U.S., and **KaBOOM!**, a national nonprofit dedicated to giving all kids great, safe places to play, to work with communities across its two regions of focus on the development of various uniquely designed spaces. Tony Hawk Foundation has helped build more than 500 skateparks across all 50 states, while KaBOOM! has built more than 3,000 playgrounds throughout the country.

The need for more safe, outdoor play options for youth in both rural and low-income neighborhoods throughout Western New York and Southeast Michigan was a key finding in the *State of Play* reports released in June 2017 by the Aspen Institute's Sports & Society Program, in partnership with the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. The *Built to Play* initiative was developed as a response by the Foundation to help answer that need by providing more access to free play through the development of innovative play spaces and skateparks.

“Our vision with *Built to Play* is to create more opportunities and places of recreation that are owned and embraced by the kids and families they serve,” said Jim Boyle, Vice President of Programs & Communications, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. “The Tony Hawk Foundation and KaBOOM! are experts in their respective fields and will do a wonderful job leading these collaborative efforts in our regions. We look forward to the day that more children within these communities can make active play a part of their daily life through these play spaces and skateparks.”

Over the next several months, KaBOOM! and Tony Hawk Foundation will begin to immerse themselves in both regions to engage potential applicants to help guide them through the process and steps to create these spaces. The three funding opportunities within *Built to Play* are:

- **KaBOOM! Play Everywhere Challenge** (*Up to 20 winners total*) – Design competition which encourages installations constructed to integrate play into everyday life and unexpected places (such as on sidewalks, in vacant lots, at bus stops, in open streets and beyond). More details on the application process will be announced in early March. Through RCWJRF funding, KaBOOM! will award grants to the challenge winners in August.
- **KaBOOM! Unique Playground Builds** (*Two in each region*) – Hands-on design and build day events for kids, parents, and community members to give ideas and input for their dream playground. A team of world-class designers will turn the community's dreams into reality with custom playground designs. The design phase will take place between May – August 2018 and the community-builds will take place from July – October 2018.
- **Tony Hawk Foundation Skateparks** (*Up to five in first phase, up to 20 total*) – Through RCWJRF funding, THF will offer matching/challenge grants to assist in the construction of public, non-profit skateparks, giving youth the opportunity to be active whether they're riding on skateboards, BMX bikes, scooters or rollerblades. THF will begin outreach and announce the opening of applications later this Spring for the first phase.

“We know that play is essential for the well-being of kids and our communities,” said Roxane Rucker, Vice President, Community Impact at KaBOOM!. “That’s why we are thrilled to be working with the Ralph C. Wilson,

Jr. Foundation as part of the *Built to Play* initiative to help create play spaces in Southeast Michigan and Western New York. Through our work together, we are helping kids get the playful childhood experiences they deserve and need to grow up healthy, resilient and ready for life.”

“The *Built to Play* Skatepark Program will support communities with both expertise and an unprecedented matching grant opportunity,” said Miki Vuckovich, Executive Director, Tony Hawk Foundation. “Our goal is to bring the many benefits of skateparks and the active lifestyle they encourage to communities throughout both regions so kids can thrive. And this program is designed to do just that.”

The Tony Hawk Foundation’s dedicated project manager for the *Built to Play* initiative will work across both regions to help applicants navigate the public process of building a skatepark. KaBOOM! staff will play a similar role, leading the community engagement and offering technical assistance to help grantees complete design, installation and promotion of their projects.

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation’s grantmaking in Youth Sports and Recreation is largely based on its Project Play initiative driven by the Aspen Institute’s “Eight Plays” to get and keep kids active, which were analyzed within the *State of Play* reports. Three key “plays,” which the *Built to Play* initiative supports, include “ask kids what they want,” “reintroduce free play,” and “think small.” The reports also identified the need to create safe options for youth to stay active who don’t take part in organized sports. Built to Play will help fill that void.

To learn more about *Built to Play* and the application process and eligibility for each opportunity, visit RWBuiltToPlay.org.

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About the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation:

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation is a grantmaking organization dedicated primarily to sustained investment in the quality of life of the people of Southeast Michigan and Western New York. The two areas reflect Ralph C. Wilson, Jr.’s devotion to his hometown of Detroit and greater Buffalo, home of his Buffalo Bills franchise. Prior to his passing in 2014, Mr. Wilson requested that a significant share of his estate be used to continue a life-long generosity of spirit by funding the Foundation that bears his name. The Foundation has a grantmaking capacity of \$1.2 billion over a 20-year period, which expires January 8, 2035. This structure is consistent with Mr. Wilson’s desire for the Foundation’s impact to be immediate, substantial, measurable and overseen by those who knew him best. For more information visit www.rcwjrf.org.

About KaBOOM!

KaBOOM! is the national non-profit dedicated to giving all kids – especially those living in poverty – the childhood they deserve through great, safe places to play. KaBOOM! inspires communities to make play the easy choice and works to drive the national discussion about the importance of PLAYces. KaBOOM! has collaborated with partners to build or restore more than 17,000 playspaces, engaged more than 1.5 million volunteers and served over 9 million kids. To learn why play matters for all kids, visit kaboom.org and join the conversation at twitter.com/kaboom, facebook.com/kaboom and instagram.com/kaboom. #playmatters #PLAYceforKids

About the Tony Hawk Foundation

A charitable, non-profit organization, the Tony Hawk Foundation was established in 2002 by its namesake, professional skateboarder Tony Hawk. THF promotes and provides technical assistance and funds for high-quality public skateparks in low-income areas throughout the United States that promote healthy, active lifestyles, and to International programs that enrich the lives of youth through skateboarding.

Domestically, the Foundation’s Skatepark Grant program has awarded over \$5.7-million to 588 communities in all 50 states. The Foundation focuses on working with local officials and grassroots, community-based organizations that plan to hire designers and contractors with strong experience designing and building skateparks.

The Foundation’s International Program has provided technical support and awarded \$100,000 to assist youth through the Skateistan educational programs in Afghanistan, Cambodia, and South Africa (www.skateistan.org).

The Tony Hawk Foundation was established by a gift from Tony Hawk. Its directors raise additional funds through events, industry donations, and continuing contributions from Tony and other entities. For more information, visit the Foundation’s Web site at www.tonyhawkfoundation.org. You can also visit THF on [facebook](https://facebook.com/tonyhawkfoundation) and [Instagram @tonyhawkfoundation](https://instagram.com/tonyhawkfoundation), and on [Twitter @THF](https://twitter.com/THF).

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