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KABOOM! and Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation Announce 19 Winners of Play Everywhere Design Challenge

Community groups awarded \$1 million total across Western New York and Southeast Michigan for public installations that inspire play in everyday spaces

WASHINGTON D.C. (February 9, 2021) — Today, KABOOM!, the national non-profit working to end playspace inequity for good, and the *Built to Play* Initiative, supported by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, announced the winners of the Play Everywhere Design Challenge. These winning teams will create public installations to infuse play into everyday locations like bus stops and laundromats, giving kids across Western New York and Southeast Michigan more opportunities to get the physical activity they need to thrive.

The Play Everywhere Design Challenge, now in its third iteration, invites communities to submit creative ideas that help make play more accessible to families—particularly those living in neighborhoods that have experienced significant disinvestment. The Challenge awards a total of \$1 million for projects across Western New York and Southeast Michigan. All projects are slated for installation by January 2022. A gallery with all winning projects is available at KABOOM.org/grants/play-everywhere-design-challenge. Examples of playful projects coming to these areas include:

- An interactive **Mammoth Natural Play** (Randolph, NY) site where kids can explore the area's natural history by pretending to be archaeologists discovering mammoth fossils.
- A wheelchair accessible, wooden **ROCKET to Imagination** (Rochester, NY) structure with a mini-library, space for free play and a colorful maze winding around the site.
- The **REST.PLAY.RIDE.** (Detroit, MI) oasis, which will transform a bus stop into a vibrant green space where kids can interact with playful structures while waiting for the bus.
- **Harmony Place** (Port Huron, MI), a public performance space with a stage and collection of jumbo-sized musical instruments will invite kids and families to engage with the arts.

The need for flexible play options is more apparent now than ever before, as communities that have been hardest hit by the pandemic have also been overlooked when it comes to investment in critical infrastructure like places to play. Play Everywhere Design Challenge Winners will be

uniquely positioned to respond to shifting local needs and public health realities. Communities can customize the design of their project to ensure they meet local safety guidelines, from location and materials to how kids interact with each installation. Activities like site activation events, installation procedures, and community engagement protocols are also highly adaptable.

The *Built to Play* Initiative answers a need identified through the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation's work with the Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program on each region's, "State of Play" assessment, and through research conducted by KABOOM!, which shows that while play is an essential factor in childhood development, there are far too many kids who lack opportunities for great, safe spaces to play – especially in rural neighborhoods and those experiencing disinvestment.

“Play Everywhere projects are all about meeting kids and families where they are by infusing play into every corner of the community,” said Lysa Ratliff, CEO of KABOOM!. “Spaces where kids can run, jump, interact and explore are essential for kids’ health and wellbeing, particularly in neighborhoods that otherwise lack safe spaces for recreation and play. We’re excited by the grassroots creativity and enthusiasm that these projects reflect, and look forward to seeing their positive impact on the lives of children across Western New York and Southeast Michigan”

“We are continuously inspired by the level of creativity that Play Everywhere projects display, especially during these unprecedented times,” said Jim Boyle, Vice President of Programs & Communications, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. “Now more than ever, it’s important that kids have safe spaces to play in their communities and we’re proud to be a partner in this work.”

[Learn more about the Play Everywhere Design Challenge and view a gallery of winners from across Western New York and Southeast Michigan.](#)

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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.](http://www.rcwjrf.org)

About KABOOM!

KABOOM! is the national non-profit that works to achieve playspace equity. Kids who don’t have access to play miss out on childhood and are denied critical opportunities to build physical, social and emotional health. And all too often, it more deeply affects communities of color. So we amplify the power of communities to build inspiring playspaces that spark unlimited opportunities for every kid, everywhere. KABOOM! has teamed up with partners to build or improve 17,000+ playspaces, engage more than 1.5 million community members and bring joy to more than 11 million kids. To learn about our goal to end playspace inequity for good, visit

kaboom.org and join the conversation at twitter.com/kaboom, facebook.com/kaboom, and instagram.com/kaboom.