



NEWS

For Immediate Release

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Come Out and Play Bismarck Named One of 93 “Playful City USA” Communities

Bismarck, North Dakota – In a time when 82 percent of parents believe children don’t spend enough time playing outside, 93 communities across the nation have taken innovative approaches to make play a priority for the health and well-being of their kids. Communities large and small, urban and rural, have created initiatives designed to increase the quantity and quality of play and playgrounds, while improving access to existing play opportunities.

To honor communities making this commitment to play, KaBOOM!, a national non-profit dedicated to bringing play back into children’s lives, named them Playful City USA communities. In the third year of this annual program, 93 communities created and implemented programs to positively impact childhood wellness, public safety and the quality of life.

Bismarck is one of those communities and has been designated a “Playful City USA.”

“This is a designation that once again sets us apart in providing play opportunities for all kids in Bismarck,” said Paul Quist, President of the Board of Park Commissioners.

Steve Neu, Director, Bismarck Parks and Recreation District (BPRD) said, “Not only are there diverse recreational programs for kids throughout the park district, but access to parks, trails and playgrounds for free and unstructured play is a standard we’ve set, and now, have been honored for it. “

The application for “Playful City USA” also had the support of the City of Bismarck. “We’ve always known Bismarck as a great place to live, work and play. This designation puts the stamp of approval on *play*, said Mayor John Warford.

Other “Playful City USA” communities across the country include Phoenix, AZ, Niagara Falls, NY and Missoula, MT. Bismarck was the only city in North Dakota to receive the honor.

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In celebration of being a “Playful City USA,” the City of Bismarck and Bismarck Parks and Recreation District is designating **Wednesday, July 29th** as an annual **Play Day in Bismarck**.

Two special events and a kick-off to a program have been scheduled for Play Day.

1. All BPRD Activity Centers, which is a daytime recreational program held at elementary schools, will participate in a Play-Off. The over 600 participants at the 14 Activity Center sites will be encouraged to wear red that day, and to all go outside and play on the playground from 10-11 am. In addition to Activity Center participants, all Bismarck kids throughout the city of Bismarck are invited to wear red and go outside and play in your yard, in your neighborhood or nearest park or playground from 10-11 am. We will have hundreds of Bismarck kids just, simply playing!

2. On the evening of July 29th, the entire community is invited to the Bismarck Community Bowl from 4-8 pm for a complete Play-For-All. Families can walk (or skip?) around the track, play catch in the football field, draw a picture, kick a ball into a soccer goal or just enjoy unstructured play with the variety of toys and games that will be provided at no charge. It's an evening to simply, *play*. Families can bring a snack or picnic supper to enjoy at the Community Bowl during the Play-For-All, but please, leave pets at home.

3. Play Day will also kick-off a Playground Passport program. There are many new playgrounds throughout the community's park system, and the Playground Passport allows families to explore the playgrounds on their own time, at their own pace, and asks questions about each playground. Answers are then recorded in each individual passport. The passports are then brought to the BPRD office by August 26 to be checked, and participants will receive a passport prize and a t-shirt.

Play Day events are part of BPRD's annual July Celebration, noting that July is National Parks and Recreation month.

KaBOOM! selected Bismarck as a “Playful City USA” for its dedication to play. Twice a year, BPRD partners with local public and private schools, service groups, individuals and businesses to create new or improved playspaces through a Matching Grant program for public recreation projects. This program began in 1986 to encourage partnerships that would improve recreation facilities throughout Bismarck. Since 1986, more than 350 projects have been completed with total project costs of \$2.8 million.

The KaBOOM! vision is 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.

“Our country is facing two monumental deficits: a lack of unstructured play among children and a lack of resources to address this very issue,” said Darell Hammond, KaBOOM! CEO and Co-founder. “Bismarck took a stand and determined that the future of their community—their children—deserve a commitment to the cause of play. This is an investment in the future, not an expenditure and cities and towns across the country can replicate initiatives from these Playful City USA communities so that they too can bring play back into the lives of their children.”

For more information on Play Day or other July Celebration events, please go to www.bisparks.org, or call 222-6455.

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