



PRESS RELEASE

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TOWN OF ASHLAND HONORED AS 2017 PLAYFUL CITY USA COMMUNITY

Joins eight neighboring localities to become the first playful region

Richmond, VA – Today, the Town of Ashland was honored with a 2017 Playful City USA designation today by KaBOOM!, a national non-profit organization dedicated to bringing balanced and active play into the daily lives of all kids. The Playful City USA program, which honors cities and towns across the country for putting the needs of families first so kids can learn, grow, and develop important life skills.

The 2017 Playful City USA recognition includes 258 communities across the country that are transforming ordinary places into playful spaces and using play as a solution to the challenges facing their residents. Nationwide, these communities feature more than 14,000 safe and engaging playspaces that serve more than 4 million kids. The Town of Ashland was designated along with the City of Richmond and the Counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Powhatan. With each of the region's nine localities recognized individually, the Richmond region became the first playful region in the nation.

The benefits for being designated as a Playful City USA include national recognition and increased competitive advantage in competitions for grants and other funding opportunities; access to KaBOOM!'s playability engagement series, webinars, newsletters, and policy tools; and two highway road signs to showcase the recognition to residents and visitors.

The collaborative effort to apply for the program was led by Capital Region Collaborative (CRC) and Sports Backers as part of the effort to increase active living habits by transforming ordinary places into playful spaces. Last year, the partners worked with the City of Richmond to receive a 2016 designation as a Playful City USA.

"After seeing the benefits from the city's designation last year, it was clear we needed to spread the effort to include the entire region," said Ashley Hall, Manager of the Capital Region Collaborative. "We're proud of the regional commitment to playability, a subject that connects across our region's eight priority areas – from education and quality place, to the James River and healthy community."

Active RVA's Director, Jeff McIntyre added, "This is far more than entertainment and leisure. Active play is crucial to the well-being of kids, families, and their communities. In a playable environment, children's creative adventures on the playground create a foundation for classroom learning. For adults and families, play creates connections, expands social networks, and helps to build stronger and safer neighborhoods. It shows our commitment to providing all members of the community with enhanced opportunities to be more active."

As cities are becoming hotbeds for innovation, communities across the country are creating inventive ways to

attract and retain residents. Playful City USA honorees are taking bold action to ensure kids have great places to play with the goal of making play the easy choice for all kids, no matter where they live. In addition to the playground down the street, Playful City USA communities are turning grocery stores, vacant lots, crosswalks, and sidewalks into opportunities for play.

“We are thrilled to recognize the Town of Ashland for putting kids first,” said KaBOOM! CEO James Siegal. “The well-being of our communities starts with the well-being of our kids, and play is critical for them to thrive. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that all kids get the childhood they deserve filled with play.”

To see the full list of Playful City USA communities and to learn more about making play the easy choice for kids, visit www.playfulcityusa.org. You can also take part in the conversation with leaders across the country using #PLAYceforkids on Twitter and Facebook.

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The Town of Ashland seeks to be an attractive community for people of diverse backgrounds to live, work, shop, and play, with play being an important factor in the health and happiness of Ashland’s residents.

***KaBOOM!** is a national non-profit dedicated to bringing balanced and active play into the daily lives of all kids, particularly those growing up in poverty in America. KaBOOM! strives to ensure all kids get the childhood they deserve filled with balanced and active play, so they can thrive. Since 1996, KaBOOM! has collaborated with partners to build, open or improve 16,700 playgrounds, engaged more than one million volunteers, and served 8.5 million kids. KaBOOM! creates great places to play, inspires communities to promote and support play and works to drive the national discussion about the importance of play in fostering healthy and productive lives.*

*The **Capital Region Collaborative** engages government, business, and community stakeholders in a process of identifying, prioritizing, and implementing actions that will enhance the quality of life in the greater Richmond Region, which includes the Town of Ashland, the City of Richmond, and the Counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Powhatan.*

*The Active RVA program of **Sports Backers** works with partners to make active living a regional priority and improve residents’ quality of life through active living. For over twenty years, Sports Backers has encouraged active lifestyles through events and training teams involving hundreds of thousands of participants.*