



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Volunteers Improve Bronx Kids' Lives and Futures with Play

Astor Services for Children & Families, Disney and KaBOOM! Celebrate Enriching the Lives of Kids and Families by Building a Healthy, Safe Space to Play in One Day

Bronx, NY – Nearly 70 kids with special needs now have a new opportunity to get the balanced and active play they need to thrive. On October 5, an empty lot at Astor Services for Children & Families' Lawrence F. Hickey Center for Child Development, 4010 Dyre Avenue in the Bronx, NY, was transformed into a kid-designed play space in less than eight hours with the help of more than 200 people from Astor Services for Children & Families (@AstorServices), Disney (@CitizenDisney), area residents and organizers from KaBOOM! (@kaboom).

"A playground offers children many learning opportunities," said Celesta Parisi, M.Ed., Interim Principal at the center, who along with Astor Services for Children & Families' Executive Director/CEO, James McGuirk, Ph.D., believes that play is integral to children's full development. "Play builds mental capacity, enhances socialization skills and contributes to the development of coordination and motor skills. Play is the work of childhood and is the basis of all learning, social and academic," she said.

The design of the playground for children up to 5 years old was based on children's drawings created at a special event in August at Astor's Hickey Center in the Bronx, which were then incorporated into the final playground design.

Since 1996, KaBOOM! has been dedicated to the goal of ensuring that all children get the balanced and active play they need to thrive because #PlayMatters. The new playground is one of many made possible with support from Disney as part of The Walt Disney Company Healthy Living Commitment, a long-standing commitment to create healthier generations by making healthy living fun and simple.

"Our work with KaBOOM! promotes active and healthy lifestyles in the communities we serve," said Kevin Callahan, Vice President of Community and Engagement, Corporate Citizenship at Disney. "Ensuring the happiness of kids is at the heart of what we do, and through our work in more than 75 communities, we are proud to help give kids the childhood they deserve through play."

KaBOOM! works to accelerate efforts that move every child in America to play every day. Together, Disney and KaBOOM! have built more than 75 new play spaces across America giving nearly 100,000 kids access to healthier lifestyles and safe places to play and grow.

About Astor Services for Children & Families

Astor Services for Children & Families, as it has since 1953, promotes the well-being of children, adolescents and their families through a range of programs that prevent and treat emotional problems and facilitate healthy development. Now serving more than 8,000 children and families annually, Astor's current range of services to families in the Mid-Hudson Valley and the Bronx include: Residential Treatment, Therapeutic Foster Family Care, Early Childhood Programs, and Community-Based Behavioral Health and Prevention Services. **Astor is an affiliate of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of NY.** For additional information please visit <http://astorservices.org/> or call (845) 871-1117.

About The Walt Disney Company

The Walt Disney Company, together with its subsidiaries and affiliates, is a leading diversified international entertainment and media enterprise with the following business segments: media networks, parks and resorts, studio entertainment, consumer products and interactive media. Being a good corporate citizen is a time-honored Disney tradition. Through contributions, collaborations with local organizations, in-kind gifts and volunteering, Disney helps to brighten the lives of kids and families in need and strengthen communities around the world. For more information visit, TheWaltDisneyCompany.com/Citizenship or [Twitter.com/CitizenDisney](https://twitter.com/CitizenDisney).

About KaBOOM!

KaBOOM! is the national non-profit dedicated to giving all kids – particularly those growing up in poverty in America – 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 more than 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. To learn why #playmatters and why cities are embracing #playability: visit kaboom.org or join the conversation at twitter.com/kaboom or facebook.com/kaboom.

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Editor's note: Attached please find two photos of the playground build:

Ribbon cutting: *New York City Council member, Andy King, (center, left) and Bronx Borough President, Ruben Diaz, Jr., (center, right) prepare to cut a kid-made ribbon to debut the new playground at Astor Services for Children & Families' early childhood center, the Lawrence F. Hickey Center for Child Development, in the Bronx. More than 200 volunteers with Astor, the Walt Disney Company, KaBOOM!, and residents of the Bronx community participated in the one-day build of the 2,500 square-foot playground, including slides, swings and other equipment, plus therapeutic components for children up to 5 years old with emotional and behavioral issues. Also pictured are Kevin Riley, community relations director for New York Assembly's Speaker of the Assembly, Carl Heastie (second from the right); and New York State Senator Jamaal Bailey (far right). Courtesy photo*

Volunteers with shovels: *Volunteers from Astor Services for Children & Families were hard at work on October 5 during a one-day playground build at Astor's early childhood center, the Lawrence F. Hickey Center for Child Development, in the Bronx. In all, more than 200 volunteers from Astor, the Walt Disney Company, KaBOOM!, and the local community built the 2,500-square-foot playground, for children up to 5 years old with emotional and behavioral issues. Photo: Jehovy Santiago*