



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2011**

CONTACT:

Sue Heinz, Shirley Playboard Chair. 978-425-9447, skheinz@msn.com

Alexandra Katich, Ketchum on behalf of Dr Pepper Snapple Group, 646-935-4375, alexandra.katich@ketchum.com

Mike Vietti, KaBOOM!, 785-320-2137, mvietti@kaboom.org

**SHIRLEY AWARDED \$20,000 LET'S PLAY GRANT
AFTER BEING NAMED A PLAYFUL CITY USA COMMUNITY**

SHIRLEY, MA – Dr Pepper Snapple Group and national non-profit KaBOOM! announced on September 19 that Shirley has been awarded a \$20,000 “Let’s Play Playground Construction” grant for a new playground at Lura A. White (LAW) Elementary School.

Shirley received the grant because it was selected as a 2011 Playful City USA community by KaBOOM! on September 6, and will use the grant to build a new playground with community involvement.

“As the chief administrative officer of the town, I see this project as the classic win-win situation for all parties, and it represents another example in town of the type of cooperation and coordination that is necessary to help move the town forward,” said Shirley CAO David Berry.

“I commend all of the players in this project for their support and efforts to get Shirley’s kids outside and in motion!”

Shirley is the only town in MA to have been selected as a Playful City 2011, and one of only 20 Playful City USA communities out of the 151 that earned Playful City 2011 status nationwide to receive a Let’s Play grant.

The Snapple/KaBOOM! grants are part of the first Let’s Play initiative introduced in November 2010—a \$15 million, three-year commitment from Dr Pepper Snapple Group to KaBOOM!, the national non-profit saving play by ensuring there is a great place to play within walking distance of every child.

Together through Let's Play, Dr Pepper Snapple Group and KaBOOM! will build or fix up 2,000 playgrounds by the end of 2013, benefiting an estimated five million children across North America.

Playful City USA is a national program advocating for local policies that increase play opportunities for children. KaBOOM! created Playful City USA in 2007 to help local governments address the Play Deficit by ensuring their children have the time and space they need to play.

According to Shirley Playboard Chair Sue Heinz, the playboard now has the necessary funds and cooperation from various area businesses and individuals to build a safe, appropriate playground for Shirley's 400-plus elementary school students. The current playground has not had a substantial update in decades and is difficult to maintain, she said.

Childscapes owner Bill Eckhardt has been selected as the primary supervisor for the project, and others have signed on to be responsible for the various aspects of demolition, subsurfacing, and the October 22 and 23 community build.

Shirley Youth Baseball and Softball (SYBS), which has been occupying a large area within the school playground with its batting cages for the past several years, is now moving them to an area closer to the ball field. In exchange, the school has agreed to give up part of its current playground space for a new dugout.

The former batting cage area will be dug up and surfaced by Powell Stone & Gravel, which is donating the subsurfacing labor and materials. Mitrano Removal Service has agreed to help with disposal, and SYBS has already removed their old fencing and agreed to erect their new fence with the help of Builtwell Fence Company.

The Playboard and SYBS, with the help of many volunteers, are already in the process of removing fencing, poles, and tar; cutting down the fence poles between the playground and the road; and, removing the old playground equipment, most of which will be preserved and relocated within the newly resurfaced playground. The renovation also will include new climbing, swinging, and sliding structures.

"This modern, safer playground will help children to better develop both physically and socially, give them a sense of pride, and stand as a symbol of what can be accomplished when people work together toward a common goal," said LAW Principal Patricia Fitzgerald. "The students and parents are really excited about it."

Now that LAW is part of the newly formed Ayer Shirley Regional School District, a merger that officially took place on July 1, there is a plan for the elementary school to move to the current middle school building (in Shirley) once the Ayer Shirley Middle and High School building is renovated.

"In three to five years, when the elementary school is moved to the current middle school building, the playground will remain on site and continue to be used by the community," Fitzgerald said.

Heinz added that the Shirley Playboard, a small non-profit organization that serves under the umbrella of the Shirley Charitable Foundation, would not exist were it not for the tools provided by KaBOOM! to help it succeed. Those tools include guidelines for play space surveys and fundraising, opportunities for grants, and online training.

Volunteers wishing to help with the LAW Community Playground build can visit the Friends of the Shirley Playboard Facebook page or call the school at 978-425-2630 x 1100 for more information. Due to the recent merger of the Ayer and Shirley school districts, the school's phone number will change to 978-772-8600 some time during the week of October 12.

#