

# Kaboom! Playful City USA 2011 Playful City Award



## Starkville, Mississippi

### Play Task Force

Matthew Rye & Heather Carson

Starkville Parks & Recreation

405 Lynn Lane

Starkville, MS 39759

Phone: 662.324.2294

Fax: 662.324.4028

[www.starkvilleparks.com](http://www.starkvilleparks.com) | [www.goplaykids.org](http://www.goplaykids.org)

## Executive Summary

Healthy communities offer safe and equitable playspaces for all residents. The Kaboom! Playful City USA program provided the needed spark to encourage Starkville residents to reach out and work together to make play a priority. Leaders representing the city of Starkville, Parks Commission, Starkville School District, civic organizations, and local businesses have joined efforts and set tangible goals to invest in play.

### Why Starkville, Mississippi?

Located in Northeast Mississippi, Starkville's permanent residents of 23,686 share parks and playspaces with the 17,824 students attending Mississippi State University during the school year. Recognizing that a diverse population has unique challenges and needs our city organized a Play Task Force that not only focuses on the objectives required for the Kaboom! Playful City USA application but also addresses specific short and long term play solutions for all ages.

The city of [Starkville](#) has a rich history of community involvement and civic engagement. The Kaboom! Playful City USA process allowed residents to celebrate our accomplishments and tackle play deficits. Recruiting leaders to serve on the Play Task Force was not difficult and presentations to the [Starkville Parks Commission](#) and Starkville Board of Alderman were met with support and encouragement. ***The Kaboom! online resources and Playful City USA guidelines have been invaluable tools that inspired our team to think beyond adding one or two playgrounds and instead strive to redefine what it means to be an active resident in a thriving community that values play.***



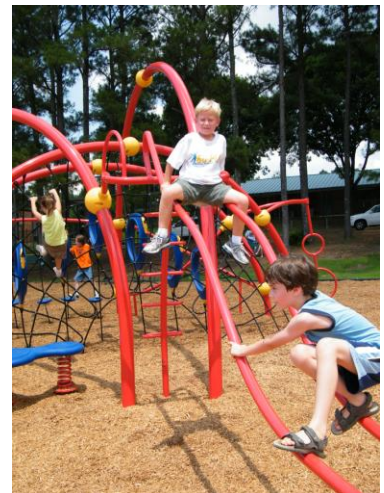
### Community Support

The city of Starkville is committed to becoming a healthier community. In 2004, local leaders formed the nonprofit [Starkville In Motion](#). This organization's efforts include sidewalk expansion and bike routes throughout the city linking university, businesses, schools, and parks. The [GoPlay Initiative](#) started in 2009 as a grassroots effort to help the Starkville School District build a new playground and encourage learning beyond the classroom. In the same year, city leaders organized the [Healthy Starkville Committee](#) (HSC) which promotes improving the health and well-being of local citizens. HSC is developing an iPhone application for Starkville residents that will include mapping of Parks and Recreation facilities as well as updates on current

programs and events that include play.

### Community Resources

The city of Starkville is committed to expanding public and private partnerships to decrease costs and increase the quality, quantity, and access to plays. Continuing a history of successful collaboration, the [Starkville School District](#) and Starkville Parks Commission have committed to pursuing shared use agreements in 2011. In addition, the city will be working with [Mississippi State University](#) to consider shared maintenance of nature and bike trails on campus that would be open to the public. With the support of the [Greater Starkville Development Partnership](#) innovative pilot projects such as the "Good Neighbor" program will offer recognition to churches and living complexes willing to set public use hours for privately owned playgrounds. Finally, in the year ahead a new Splash Pad will be designed based on community feedback and will become the model for future playspace planning.







### Community Action

The city of Starkville is committed to improving existing structures and building additional playspaces. In 2010 alone, community minded organizations invested over \$30,000 specifically for play. [Henderson Ward Stewart Elementary PTA](#) raised and donated \$20,000 to the Starkville School District in order to complete an all-weather pavilion in the center of their newly built GoPlay playground. The Starkville Chapter of the [Junior Auxiliary](#) donated over \$10,000 and volunteered over 65 hours of their time to playground builds for the Parks Commission. While play facilities are essential, local organizations have also developed programs that encourage nontraditional play. For the 2011 summer season, nonprofit organization, [Gaining Ground SIM](#) is hosting a “Last Child In The Woods” program for families interested in exploring the great outdoors. By establishing a city-wide Play Task Force, local groups are no longer working in isolation but instead are sharing ideas and best practices in order to benefit all citizens.

### Ready to Play

The city of Starkville has established a solid foundation for fostering a culture of play. Being recognized as a Kaboom! Playful City presents the opportunity to accelerate our plans allowing Starkville to redefine what it means to be a thriving community. The Starkville Parks Commission continues to provide quality facilities and innovative programs, receiving Mississippi Recreation and Park Association awards in 2009 for its Silly Sports Program and Facility of the year in 2010 (appendix A). By becoming a Playful City, Starkville has the potential to reach more supporters and inspire additional collaborations needed to achieve our goals.

The Kaboom! Playful City USA application process challenged our Task Force to consider the diverse needs and remarkable potential for the future of play in our town. We have accepted the challenge and intend to continue our efforts to provide all Starkville residents safe, enjoyable, and inspiring opportunities for play.

