



2022



**Annual Report**

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The past few years have been tough for our kids. Rates of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and suicide amongst youth have skyrocketed, the historic shutdown of school systems widened pre-existing disparities in education, especially among Black and Brown students, and communities continue to experience collective traumas linked to racial unrest and violence targeting our youth.

As President Biden formally brings the three-year COVID-19 national emergency to a close, we recognize that the effects of pandemic-related disruptions are complex and will have a long-lasting strain on our kids as they begin to shape their own views of the world.

## **Simply put: our children are in crisis and cannot wait.**

The importance of healthy development in early childhood cannot be overstated, as the well-being of children is inextricably linked to our own future. We know that play is essential for kids' mental health. It helps them build relationships and community, manage stress, and cope with difficult emotions.



## A LETTER FROM KABOOM! CEO AND BOARD CHAIR

Although every kid instinctively knows how to play, not all kids have access to safe and inviting places to play. Fostering connection and togetherness is crucial to strengthening the mental health of kids, and increased access to playgrounds not only supports this, but also provides joyful spaces to gather where kids feel they are valued and belong. Access to the benefits that safe playspaces bring to kids and communities is an equity issue, with a significant gap in access to playspaces for kids of color.

In 2022, KABOOM! made significant advancements in our work to end playspace inequity. Since the introduction of our 25 in 5 Initiative to End Playspace Inequity, we've deepened our commitment to innovative problem solving, partnering with youth and community leaders to design and build places for kids to thrive. In Baltimore, we worked with the Mayor, Schools, and Parks Department to build new playgrounds through a \$5 Million investment allocated through the City's American Rescue Plan Act funding. It's work that the Surgeon General and Second Gentleman recognized in their initiative to positively impact youth mental health. And in Uvalde, Texas, we worked closely with kids and community members to contribute to their healing process, thanks to support from The Archewell Foundation, laying the groundwork for a broader partnership that elevates community healing even further by aiming to eliminate playspace inequity throughout Uvalde. Now more than ever we are grateful for our wonderful local and national partners who make this work possible.

We have so much more to do. And we are committed to doing our part through diverse, creative partnerships, collective action through public policy, and using data-informed decision-making to address playspace inequities at scale. In these ways we will accelerate our efforts to enable better futures for a generation of kids who have faced far too much adversity in their young lives to be healthy and well.

We can't do this work alone. We thank each of you who have supported us, and we invite those who are ready to be a part of our mission to come join us.

Together, we can create a world with happy, healthy kids and thriving communities.



**Lysa Ratliff**

CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lysa".



**Lynn M. Ross**

Board Chair  
Founder and Principal  
Spirit for Change Consulting

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynn".



# 2022 Playing by the Numbers



**74**

playspaces created or transformed



**100K+**

kids with access to new playspaces



**7.5K+**

community members engaged





# KABOOM! 25in5

## end playspace inequity

In January of 2022, on the heels of a \$14 million gift from MacKenzie Scott, we announced the 25 in 5 Initiative to End Playspace Inequity. Through the 25 in 5 Initiative, we are challenging 25 partners to work with us over the next 5 years to accelerate our mission to end playspace inequity across the county.

We are building a coalition of Playce Partners – school districts, parks and recreation departments, housing systems, etc. and other nonprofits and organizations – to unite with us to end playspace inequity at the scale it exists in specific locations. Our Playce Partners value public spaces designed with kids in mind, have a commitment to addressing racial equity, and work alongside KABOOM! and communities to ensure that places to play are built where the need is greatest. Visit [kaboom.org/25-in-5](https://kaboom.org/25-in-5) to learn more about 25 in 5 and how to join our cause.





KABOOM! 25 IN 5

# KABOOM! Announces Baltimore as Inaugural Partner in 25 in 5 Initiative to End Playspace Inequity

As the first official partner of the 25 in 5 Initiative to End Playspace Inequity, Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools), Baltimore City Recreation and Parks (BCRP), and KABOOM!, with the support of the Office of Mayor, Brandon M. Scott, embarked on the urgent work ahead to ensure every child in Baltimore has access to places to play where they live and learn. Playgrounds in parks and schools are vital gathering spaces for Baltimore kids that support academic success and community unity, and can help strengthen the physical, social, and emotional health of children. While KABOOM! has a long history of working alongside partners and communities across Baltimore, addressing the needs of kids and creating safe and high-quality spaces for them to just be kids continues to be a top priority.



## KABOOM! On PBS NewsHour

KABOOM! CEO Lysa Ratliff was featured alongside Mayor Brandon M. Scott and leaders from BCRP and Baltimore City Schools to highlight the hope for brighter futures for kids in Baltimore through the 25 in 5 Initiative to End Playspace Inequity. [WATCH HERE](#)



Achieving playspace equity across Baltimore will send the message that we believe in our youth and know they're capable of the brightest possible future.

**- BRANDON M. SCOTT**  
*BALTIMORE MAYOR*



KABOOM! 25 IN 5

## A Moment of Gratitude for MacKenzie Scott

MacKenzie Scott is transforming the philanthropic space, one gift at a time, contributing to a shift in culture that trusts organizations to use funding to maximize community change. KABOOM! was inspired to match the boldness and scope of her unprecedented moves by making some of our own – launching our 25 in 5 Initiative to End Playspace Inequity – but more importantly, her generosity has revealed how many nonprofits struggle against an often-inequitable funding landscape that hinders rather than catalyzes our progress. In FY2021, 41% of white-led nonprofits received 50% or more of their funds as unrestricted grants, compared to just 26% of organizations led by people of color. The reality is: investing in nonprofits led by people of color, women, and people who have lived the experiences of the problems they work to solve is critical to fixing the problem.





# Empowering Kids & Communities for Lasting Impact

We know that playgrounds are critical public spaces with the power to spark joy and a sense of belonging for kids and also support progress toward addressing community-defined needs. We believe in empowering the voices of young people by involving them in our process of building playspaces in communities, seeking their input as the experts they are in the actual design of the playspace. Engaging kids and the community ensure we create playspaces that truly meet their needs and reflect their perspectives. This year, we partnered with bold and diverse organizations who not only share our commitment to racial equity, but work alongside us to ensure that youth and community voices are at the forefront of our work.



EMPOWERING KIDS & COMMUNITIES FOR LASTING IMPACT

# Supporting Community Healing in Uvalde

In October, the City of Uvalde, Texas opened its arms to KABOOM! and The Archewell Foundation to help unite the community in a positive way after the unthinkable tragedy at Robb Elementary School on May 24, 2022. The community members, including some of those most deeply impacted by the tragedy, wanted an opportunity to come together and heal through the creation of a vibrant space that honors the many lives lost. For KABOOM!, our goal was to provide a place to play while kids and their families look for ways to begin healing through a sense of normalcy and moments of joy. The DeLeon Park project is just the beginning of a deep-rooted commitment to the Uvalde community, and after considerable work with City and community leaders who shared a desire to do even more for kids across Uvalde, KABOOM! identified the need for several additional new playspaces to be built in the future.







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We tried to think of a thousand ways to make the kids feel better, but I never thought a playground would be the answer. A big part of the community being able to move forward included KABOOM!.

**- LAURA GARZA**

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZER  
AND AUNT OF AMERIE JO, 10**

Photo credit: La Vida es Bella Photography



EMPOWERING KIDS & COMMUNITIES FOR LASTING IMPACT

## Working with DigDeep to Meet the Critical Needs of Kids

In Cochran, a small rural community in El Paso County, Texas, lack of access to what many would consider basic necessities – like electricity and running water – has threatened the community’s ability to grow and thrive. Residents often had to travel miles to purchase or haul water for drinking, cooking, and bathing, taking valuable hours away from work, school, and play. Our partners at DigDeep and A.Y.U.D.A. are working to help provide the community with water and essential health services, and also recognized the critical need for kids to have a place to play. By working with the community to understand their needs, we created a playground for kids to enjoy and experience the essential benefits of play.

Photo credit: DigDeep



EMPOWERING KIDS & COMMUNITIES FOR LASTING IMPACT

# Creating Inclusive Playspaces for Children with Disabilities

Alongside our partners at Landscape Structures, KABOOM! helped create an inclusive playground design for ACCEL, a nonprofit organization providing educational, behavioral, therapeutic, and vocational programs to children and adults who have developmental disabilities in Phoenix, Arizona. With support from The CarMax Foundation, we worked with kids, leading the way as the designers of the playspace, families, teachers, therapists, and WNBA star, Diana Taurasi, to create a ramped, accessible playground that supports this community's larger efforts to ensure students with severe disabilities gain the necessary skills to live successfully with dignity and independence.







EMPOWERING KIDS & COMMUNITIES FOR LASTING IMPACT

## Kellogg's™ Minecraft Build for Better Contest

As KABOOM! looks to amplify the voices and perspectives of youth as future leaders and playspace equity champions, we partnered with Kellogg's™ to bring the virtual world of Minecraft into reality at the James T. Anderson Boys & Girls Club in Marietta, Georgia. In November, over 200 kids and teens received a high-quality, safe place to play, with the winning design from Kellogg's™ Minecraft Build for Better Contest as the blueprint. Avid Minecraft player, 21-year-old Morgan Sloan's mushroom-inspired design won the contest which challenged players to design the playground of their dreams in the virtual world. [READ MORE](#)



# Fostering Innovation Through Dynamic Partnerships

To end playspace inequity, we must take an innovative approach to playspace design, driven by the social, economic, and environmental needs of each community and the impact that each playspace has on the residents. By collaborating with organizations, community leaders, and other experts in play, we can harness the collective wisdom and resources needed to create inclusive and transformative playspaces.





FOSTERING INNOVATION THROUGH DYNAMIC PARTNERSHIPS

# KABOOM! and Partners Launch Green Playground Initiative in Walker County, Texas

In March, KABOOM! joined the Boys & Girls Club of Walker County, Powell Foundation, City of Huntsville, and Huntsville Independent School District to support child health and environmental resilience through a series of green playground projects. The initiative, made possible through a \$1.5 million grant from Powell Foundation, engages local community members to conduct in-depth surveys and focus groups over two years to generate environmentally and culturally appropriate designs for each playspace. Uniquely, the effort will incorporate sustainable design elements like spaces for environmental education, the planting of sustainable, native plants, and features to improve stormwater management on site.



## FOSTERING INNOVATION THROUGH DYNAMIC PARTNERSHIPS

# Touring our Playful Learning City with Chelsea Clinton

Over the past few years, Philadelphia has become a national leader in creating playful learning opportunities for children and families, transforming everyday spaces around us — such as laundromats, grocery stores, libraries, and bus stops — to help children develop skills that will enable them to be successful in school and in life. In October, CEO Lysa Ratliff and Jen DeMelo, Vice President, Organizational Innovation & Strategic Partnerships, joined the William Penn Foundation, Too Small to Fail (TSTF), an initiative of the Clinton Foundation, and its Vice Chair, Chelsea Clinton on a bus tour to highlight the power of creating literacy-rich environments for children to spark playful learning opportunities in communities across the city and discuss the process and the science behind creating innovative, playful learning spaces for kids ages 0-8.





## FOSTERING INNOVATION THROUGH DYNAMIC PARTNERSHIPS

# Stephen & Ayesha Curry Bring Play to Fruitvale

Through the Eat. Learn. Play. Foundation, Stephen and Ayesha Curry have committed to meeting three important needs that can ensure a healthy childhood: nutritious food, a quality education, and active play. KABOOM!, Eat. Learn. Play. Foundation, and Oakland Unified School District, with support from Workday and Ripple, worked together to transform kids' play opportunities at Global Family Elementary with a new custom playground, multi-sport court, and outdoor teaching gardens. The health and well-being of our kids are deeply connected to the places where they live, learn, and play, and it's clear that achieving playspace equity is possible when diverse partners come together to address the needs of kids.

Photo credit: Desmond Gribben (@dcphotosf) for Eat. Learn. Play.





# Driving Change: Public Policy & Advocacy in Action

In 2022, KABOOM! increased the reach of its policy work to advance system changes that support equitable access to playspaces for children. We expanded our advocacy efforts to promote policies that foster physical activity and prioritize the creation and improvement of playspaces in communities disproportionately affected by decades of systemic barriers, especially in communities of color. We worked closely with policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels to position playspaces as a critical part of public infrastructure that supports the fundamental aspect of mental and physical health and well-being in communities.

Because of these efforts, KABOOM! has emerged as a policy thought leader, sought after by both federal and state elected officials to lend insights and support their work. From giving quotes in support of legislation sponsored by Senators Padilla (D-CA) and Heinrich (D-NM) for their press releases to working with President Biden on a major national initiative, KABOOM! has strengthened its influence in the national policy landscape.





DRIVING CHANGE: PUBLIC POLICY & ADVOCACY IN ACTION

## White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health

Panel Conversation with Lysa Ratliff, Catherine Grano, School Nurse, Middletown Township Public Schools (NJ), Jermaine Harris, Community Policing Sergeant, Chicago Police Department and Co-Founder, Chicago Westside Sports, and Ann Marie Krautheim, CEO, GENYOUth

In July, KABOOM! submitted formal comments on the Administration's draft national strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. Those comments — and further discussions KABOOM! had with the Domestic Policy Council — led to CEO Lysa Ratliff's invitation by the White House to moderate a panel discussion during the unveiling of the five-pillar National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. She shared the connection between nutrition, our work to end playspace inequity, and kids' long-term health. [WATCH HERE](#)



## DRIVING CHANGE: PUBLIC POLICY & ADVOCACY IN ACTION

# Baltimore Listening Session

Panel Conversation with Lysa Ratliff, U.S. Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy, Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott, Baltimore City Schools CEO Dr. Sonja Santelises, and Park Heights Academy Principal Monica McClain.

Students, parents, and faculty gathered at Park Heights Academy in Baltimore to share the value of playspaces and recreation in their lives and how critical they are for mental health. The listening session was part of our 25 in 5 Initiative work in Baltimore, where we are working with Baltimore Recreation and Parks Department and Baltimore City Public Schools, with support from the Office of Mayor Brandon M. Scott, to ensure every child has a place to play where they live and learn across the city. [WATCH HERE](#)





“

Play is as essential for mental health as it is for the physical health of our kids, especially in the last couple of years, which have been really stressful for our kids and their parents. We've got to do everything we can to reinvest in the mental health of our children and one of those steps is making play part of our kids' day.

**- DR. VIVEK MURTHY**  
**U.S. SURGEON GENERAL**



DRIVING CHANGE: PUBLIC POLICY & ADVOCACY IN ACTION

## Governor Wes Moore's Transition Team

In December, CEO Lysa Ratliff was asked by Governor-Elect Moore's Transition Team to participate on its Education Committee. Lysa provided input on a variety of issues related to play and academic performance. She also submitted a policy proposal calling for the creation of a mandatory recess in the State of Maryland, launching a national campaign by KABOOM! to focus on this issue in other states in 2023.





# Mapping Playspace Inequity

Our data-informed approach allows us to understand where and why playspace inequity exists nationally, as well at state, county, city, and neighborhood levels. KABOOM! uses mapping and GIS tools in combination with data such as income, race and ethnicity, and proximity to public transportation, to identify and map areas experiencing playspace inequity. We then leverage the data and maps to develop targeted interventions and policies that can help us better address playspace inequities at scale. Building playspaces is important and necessary work, but how we leverage data is a critical step in ensuring that we're building playspaces where the need is the greatest.





## MAPPING PLAYSPACE INEQUITY

# Playspace Inequity Prioritization Index (PIPI)

In October, we developed the Playspace Inequity Prioritization Index (PIPI) which combines data from 21 different indicators to create a single score to estimate playspace equity for all 86,000+ census tracts in the United States. This allows us to identify and map the areas that we think have the highest estimated need for playspaces to direct our work in communities accordingly, and allows for cross-community and cross-state comparisons.

## MAPPING PLAYSPACE INEQUITY

# Emphasizing Playspace Utilization

In December, we tested some new methods to measure how frequently the playspaces we build are used by kids in communities. Our largest test focused on the use of QR codes on permanent playground signs which are designed to get residents to provide feedback on how many children are using the playspace and to share if there are any quality concerns with playground equipment. Our goal is to learn from these tests to create methods to track long-term use of our playspaces for the majority of new builds in 2023 and beyond.

Photo credit: MSE Foundation







# KABOOM! Culture

Our staff at KABOOM! are the heart of our organization, and as change agents, they are driving us forward by working with partners and communities in bold and innovative ways every day to end playspace inequity. We are guided by our core values that govern our decision-making and approach to our work – **partnership, humility, equity, play, and, accountability**. As we physically moved to a new office space, we leaned into this new beginning as a way to refocus our commitment to our mission and how we are structured as an organization to ensure we foster a culture of collaboration, learning, and growth as we accelerate progress towards our goals.

## KABOOM! CULTURE

# Stay Classy, KABOOM!

The Classy Awards have been bringing together social sector leaders and influencers since 2009 to recognize the achievements of thousands of nonprofits across the globe. In April, KABOOM! was selected from a pool of 1,700 nonprofits as a winner of the 2022 Classy Award in Social Innovation for our Play Everywhere program. By activating play in unexpected, everyday spaces, we hope to inspire kids to play every day and to incorporate it into their normal routines.







## KABOOM! CULTURE

# Moving Playgrounds

In August, we moved to a new office space in Bethesda, Maryland, representing a significant step forward in our organization's journey. The new office serves as a symbol of growth, progress, and renewed dedication to our mission to end play-space inequity. With this fresh environment, we aim to create an inspiring workplace that will support stronger engagement, collaboration, and innovation, empowering our staff to continue making a positive and lasting impact on the communities we work alongside.

## KABOOM! CULTURE

# Boomers in Action

We wrapped up an amazing year by joining City Interests Development Partners in NE, Washington, DC as they built a new playground and adventure course for the Parkside community. Staff volunteers rolled their sleeves up to actively engage in KABOOM!'s mission and showed their commitment to the cause by building components, mixing concrete, and moving mulch to bring the playspace to life!





# Partners

## LEADERSHIP

The CarMax Foundation  
Challenge of Tarrant County  
The Colorado Health Foundation  
The Powell Foundation  
Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation  
Vanguard Strong Start for Kids  
William Penn Foundation

## SIGNATURE

Discover Financial Services  
Eat. Learn. Play. Foundation  
General Motors (GM)  
Morgan Stanley Foundation  
UnitedHealthcare Services, Inc.

## PARTNER IN PLAY

AbbVie Foundation  
Anaheim Ducks  
Anonymous  
Bank of America  
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina  
Boss  
Build-A-Bear  
CityInterests Development Partners  
City of Akron, OH  
City of Anaheim, CA Community Services  
DIGDEEP  
Fairytale Brownies, Inc.  
Fiesta Events, Inc.

Fort Worth Independent School District  
Hancock Whitney  
Jermani Grant's Hour Generation  
Kaiser Permanente  
Kellogg Company  
Keurig Dr Pepper  
King & Spalding LLC  
Knight Foundation  
Landscape Structures  
LA Sprout Fund  
Markelle Fultz's Faithful 2 the Grind LLC  
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
Mead Family Foundation

MercyHealth System  
Monumental Sports & Entertainment Foundation  
Nashville Predators Foundation  
PECO Energy Company  
Pennsylvania Municipal League  
Popsicle  
Public Service Enterprise Group  
Pure Storage, Inc.  
Related Affordable Foundation  
Sierra /TJX Compaies, Inc  
The Archewell Foundation  
The Smile Generation  
Welly  
Zoom

# Our Board of Directors



**Michael Araten**

President and CEO  
Sterling Drive Ventures



**Tiffany Manuel, PhD**

President and CEO  
TheCaseMade



**Eric Rothman**

Board Treasurer  
President  
HR&A Advisors



**Gregory Johnson**

Managing Director, U.S.  
Equity and Economic  
Opportunity Initiative  
The Rockefeller Foundation



**Natalie Vega O'Neil**

President and CEO  
Junior Achievement of  
Washington



**Jewel James Simmons**

Head of State and Local  
Government Affairs  
JPMorgan & Chase Co.



**Vincent J. Lumia**

Managing Director and  
Head of Field Management  
Morgan Stanley



**Lysa Ratliff**

CEO  
KABOOM!  
Ex-Office Member



**Eric Wayne**

Board Secretary  
Senior Vice President, CFO  
Consumer Reports



**Ladan Manteghi**

Vice Board Chair  
Senior Advisor, Business  
for Impact Initiative  
Georgetown University



**Lynn M. Ross**

Board Chair  
Founder and Principal  
Spirit for Change Consulting



# Senior Team



**Lysa Ratliff**  
Chief Executive Officer



**James Siegel**  
Senior Fellow



**Carlyne Cardichon**  
Vice President  
Finance & Operations



**Ronda Jackson**  
Vice President  
Policy, Advocacy, & Impact



**Danielle Turnage**  
Vice President  
Program Operations



**Joy Hathaway**  
Vice President  
Regional Programs



**Gerry Megas**  
Chief Financial Officer



**Carey Palmquist**  
Chief Program Officer



**Kathryn Lusk**  
Vice President  
Regional Programs



**Tamara Grider Harris**  
Vice President  
Marketing &  
Communications



**Jen DeMelo**  
Vice President  
Organizational Innovation  
& Strategic Partnerships

# Financials

## REVENUES

Contracted Program Services	\$7,689,784
Contributions & Grants	\$6,087,900
In-Kind Contributions	\$150,156
Other Revenue	\$360
<b>Total Revenues</b> . . . . .	<b>\$13,928,200</b>

## EXPENSES

Programs	\$14,492,075
<i>Direct Impact</i>	\$12,548,258
<i>Thought Leadership</i>	\$1,943,817
Development	\$1,891,565
Management and General	\$1,100,478
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$17,484,118</b>

Change in Net Assets from Operations*	(\$3,555,918)
Investment Income/(Loss), net	(\$3,189,434)
<b>Change in Net Assets</b> . . . . .	<b>(\$6,745,352)</b>

Net Assets at 2021 Start	\$29,271,973
<b>Net Assets at 2021 End</b> . . . . .	<b>\$22,526,621</b>

View our full Consolidated Financial Statement.

[CLICK HERE](#)

\*Investment approved by Board to scale capacity, funded by prior year \$14 million donation.





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@kaboom    