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NEWS RELEASE

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Colorful Playground Just a Hop, Skip and a Jump Away

Mecklenburg County awarded grant to update outdoor spaces and increase healthy activity

Charlotte, N.C. – Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department recently received a donation to transform a public area into an imaginative space for families to play and be active outdoors. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) and the North Carolina Recreation and Park Association (NCRPA) are supporting healthier communities by installing PlayPrints across the state.

PlayPrints are ground markings, or colorful shapes and games that are painted on existing pavement. The bright colors and interactive designs are meant to encourage visitors to take part in more physical activity. Community agencies across North Carolina were invited to apply.

“Receiving a PlayPrints donation at Arbor Glen Outreach Center is a helpful step as we continue to grow healthy and active opportunities in our community”, said Heidi Kitterman, Recreation Manager for Community and Recreation Center Services. “Park visitors will have new creative ways to engage with our public space and have fun participating in physical activity outdoors.”

Arbor Glen Outreach Center offers a great variety of amenities, both inside and outside, for the surrounding community. Outdoor amenities include multiple outdoor courts, a playground, a picnic shelter, baseball/softball field, and connection to the Irwin Creek Greenway. Arbor Glen Outreach Center has over 40,000 visitors each year not counting the countless citizens that utilize the Greenway every day. Adding PlayPrints will offer another wonderful feature for visitors of all ages to use in a variety of physical activities.

“We want to promote healthy habits at an early age and make it fun for North Carolinians to get outside and get active with their families,” said Kathy Higgins, vice president of corporate affairs at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina. “PlayPrints are a simple way to take existing outdoor spaces in our communities and transform them into a center for healthy activity and imaginative play.”

Over the next two years, PlayPrints will be popping up at open play spaces as part of BCBSNC's Get Outside North Carolina! (GO NC!) program. Go NC! builds healthy and active lifestyles through the advancement of greenway systems, increased access to public bicycles and the overall promotion of outdoor physical activity.

"Providing fun and creative avenues to engage our communities by adding PlayPrints to our parks and greenways is an exciting way to encourage citizens of all ages to have a little fun while increasing physical activity," said Michelle Wells, executive director at NCRPA.

For a complete list of PlayPrints recipients and to follow progress as PlayPrints are installed throughout the state visit www.NCRPA.net/PlayPrints or follow @NCRPA @BCBSNC or #PlayPrints on Twitter and Facebook.

About Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation:

The Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department is home to 210 parks and facilities located on more than 18,000 acres of parkland throughout Mecklenburg County. The department is also responsible for 18 recreation centers, 7 public golf facilities, 3 indoor pools, 2 outdoor pools, 3 nature centers, a public campground and disc golf courses. In Mecklenburg County you'll always have somewhere fun and exciting to go! For outdoor enthusiasts there are 33 miles of developed greenways and 147 miles of undeveloped greenways. Mecklenburg Park and Recreation is responsible for 21 nature preserves. For more information about the department and what it has to offer visit us at www.parkandrec.com

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina:

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina improves the health and well-being of our customers and communities by providing innovative health care products, services and information to more than 3.91 million members, including approximately 1 million served on behalf of other Blue Plans. Since 1933, we have worked to make North Carolina a better place to live through our support of community organizations, programs and events that promote good health. We have been recognized as one of the World's Most Ethical Companies by Ethisphere Institute every year since 2012. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. Visit BCBSNC online at bcbsnc.com. All other marks are the property of their respective owners.

About the North Carolina Recreation & Park Association:

Founded in 1944, the North Carolina Recreation & Park Association (NCRPA) is the premier nonprofit education and advocacy organization, dedicated to the advancement of the park, recreation and leisure professionals in our state. NCRPA empowers park and recreation professionals and citizen board members through educational opportunities that enhance their ability to change lives and impact communities on a daily basis for the citizens of North Carolina. For an overview of the programs and services offered by the organization, visit www.ncrpa.net .

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