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**Fit Kids Playground Receives *We Can!*® Assistance Award
to Help Children in Tampa, FL
Maintain a Healthy Weight**

Tampa, FL (January 25, 2012)—To help address the growing epidemic of childhood obesity, Fit Kids Playground has received an assistance award from the ***We Can!* (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition)®** childhood obesity prevention program. Developed by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), ***We Can!*** supports local efforts to help children and families maintain an active lifestyle and a healthy weight.

Childhood obesity is a public health crisis in the United States. In the past ten years, the prevalence of obesity in the state of FL has increased from 18.6 percent to 25.9 percent of the population. Also, in the past year, the percentage of children in poverty increased from 18.3 percent to 21.0 percent of people under age 18. These statistics show that more than ever, the children in the Tampa Bay area need our help. Families are in desperate need of information on how to develop healthy habits for their children. Educating the community about resources within the community that can help families live healthier lives will only help the children break the cycle of obesity. (Source: AmericasHealthRatings.org)

Fit Kids Playground has been teaching parents and caregivers how to get the entire family to eat right, move more and spend less time in front of the screen since they joined the ***We Can!*** movement in 2009.

“We are excited to be able to make a difference,” said Marisa Langford, Founder of Fit Kids Playground. “This grant will allow us to implement simple curriculum and classes for both children and parents, that will teach them simple ways to live healthier.”

Fit Kids Playground also received a 2011 ***We Can!*** Assistance Award and used the funds to launch “Playin’ In The Park”, a free community event held every first Tuesday of the month in Tampa’s downtown Curtis Hixon Park. The mission of these community events is to create awareness about healthy habits for children and parents and increase physical activity through free play in city parks. These events were co-produced with the Downtown Tampa Partnership.

Fit Kids Playground is one of 18 registered ***We Can!*** community sites across the country to receive community assistance support of up to \$10,000 to implement programs that:

The overall objectives of this assistance program are to help ***We Can!*** community sites:

- Implement ***We Can!***'s parent and/or youth curricula
- Build organizational and/or community capacity to implement ***We Can!*** curricula;
- Expand existing community health efforts, programs, events, or activities to include ***We Can!*** messages and materials; and



- Are sustainable after the funding period ends.

Fit Kids Playground aims to create an educational campaign to be executed in Tampa, Florida entitled “**Real Kids. Real Change. Really Simple.**” The mission of all the programs and the curricula implemented within the campaign is to reach REAL kids and help them to CHANGE through SIMPLE lessons. Ultimately, we want to inspire them to become more invested in their own health. By implementing the **We Can!** curricula in a variety of locations and partnering with creative educational outlets throughout the Tampa Bay community, Fit Kids Playground will reach a very diverse audiences that would be considered high-risk for childhood obesity. Prevention is the key and education will lead us down the path to successfully changing the behaviors among parents and children.

Currently, partners that will be assisting Fit Kids Playground implement the “Real Kids. Real Change. Really Simple.” campaign are The Downtown Tampa Partnership, Amore To Go, Hillsborough County Library System, Metropolitan Ministries, Tampa Bay Markets, TUFF (Tampa Urban Food Forum) and Truck Farm Tampa. Without the support of these organizations and businesses, this grant would not be made possible.

Launched in 2005 by NIH, the **We Can!** program provides science-based strategies and resources for parents, caregivers and communities to help youth ages 8–13 stay at a healthy weight by improving nutrition, increasing physical activity and reducing screen time.

The 18 sites that received funding under the 2012 **We Can!** Assistance Program include:

- Alice Hyde Medical Center, NY
- Annette Island Service Unit, AK
- Cobb & Douglas Public Health, GA
- Colorado Black Health Collaborative, CO
- ENEMY Swim Day School, SD
- Feeding South Florida, FL
- Fit Kids Playground, FL
- Gary Comer College Prep, IN
- Healthy Heart Community Prevention Project, LA
- Indian River County Health Department, FL
- Inlet View Elementary School, AK
- Knoxville Area Coalition on Childhood Obesity, TN
- Mercy Medical Center, IA
- Neighborhood HealthSource, MN
- St. James-Santee Family Health Center, Inc., SC
- United Health Services, NY
- Westside Health Authority, IL
- 6KidsNFit, FL

For more information about **We Can!**: <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov>.

For more information about Fit Kids Playground: FitKidsPlayground.com

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Fit Kids Playground, Real Kids. Real Change. **Really Simple.**

We Can!® is a science-based national education program developed by NIH—a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—to help children ages 8–13 stay at a healthy weight through improving food choices, increasing physical activity, and reducing screen time. The program offers flexible, easy-to-implement resources complete with partnership ideas and outreach opportunities to unite community organizations. Four of the National Institutes of Health have combined their unique resources and activities to create **We Can!**: the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; and the National Cancer Institute. For more information, visit <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call toll-free 866-35-WE CAN (866-359-3226).