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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Houston Parks and Recreation Department Awarded Youth Wellness Grant to Create Youth Ambassador Program** *Youth Ambassadors Will Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity as Part of the National Recreation and Park Association's Commit to Health Program*

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.) has received \$50,000 in grant funding to implement a Youth Ambassador program and collaborate on the Play Everywhere Tour as part of their pledge to Commit to Health through the National Recreation and Park Association (N.R.P.A.). H.P.A.R.D. is one of four agencies that will be engaging youth as leaders for health and wellness among their peers and throughout their community. Findings from these programs will help to gather best practices that can be replicated across a national network of park and recreation agencies, providing youth with new leadership skills, confidence, and healthy living knowledge.

Nationwide, parks and recreation play a key role in helping youth make healthy decisions not only by providing healthy and nutritious foods and opportunities for physical activity, but also by teaching youth how to make healthy decisions. The Youth Ambassador program will allow youth to learn from their peers and support the next generation of health and wellness leaders.

The grant results from a partnership between N.R.P.A. and the Target Corporation to inspire local park and recreation agencies to engage young people as community health and wellness leaders and to collaborate with partners to inspire families to engage in play and healthy living activities through a large-scale community health and wellness event.

"We are profoundly grateful for this grant funding," said Steve Wright, Director, Houston Parks and Recreation Department. "The members of our team are dedicated to promoting a healthy lifestyle, and the Youth Ambassadors program is a great way to do that!"

In Houston, the grant funding will go to expansion of H.P.A.R.D.'s Commit to Health: Youth Ambassadors program, which focuses on youth as community health and wellness leaders, and the Community Play Day, a partnership between N.R.P.A., Target Corporation, KaBOOM! and Playworks to hold a large-scale community health and wellness event. In addition, H.P.A.R.D. will receive \$17,500 in Target gift cards to be distributed through these two programs.

There is an active Youth Ambassadors program based at Furr High School. Participants take part in fitness and nutrition education and promote healthy lifestyles with their families and peers. The Community Play Day was originally scheduled for October 14, 2017, at Moody Park, but has been postponed until Spring 2018 due to the effects of Hurricane Harvey.

The funding for this grant comes through the Target Corporation (NYSE: TGT) as part of Target's ongoing youth wellness efforts and is part of Target's ongoing efforts to help make wellness more affordable, accessible and inspirational for its team members, guests and communities.

N.R.P.A.'s Commit to Health campaign, aimed at park and recreation agencies, supports the implementation and evaluation of Healthy Eating and Physical Activity standards nationwide. As a result of the ongoing campaign, approximately 280,000 children now have improved access to healthy foods and increased opportunities for physical activity. That number is expected to rise as more park and recreation agencies take the Commit to Health pledge.

To learn more about Commit to Health, visit [www.nrpa.org/committohealth](http://www.nrpa.org/committohealth).

**Houston Parks and Recreation Department** (*H.P.A.R.D.*) stewards and manages over 37,851 acres of parkland and greenspace for the City of Houston and develops and implements recreational programming for citizens of all abilities. For more information on the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (832) 395-7022 or visit [www.houstonparks.org](http://www.houstonparks.org).

**The National Recreation and Park Association** (*N.R.P.A.*) is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing park, recreation and conservation efforts that enhance quality of life for all people. Through its network of more than 47,000 recreation and park professionals and citizens, N.R.P.A. encourages the promotion of healthy lifestyles, conservation initiatives and equitable access to parks and public space. For more information, visit [www.NRPA.org](http://www.NRPA.org). For digital access to N.R.P.A.'s flagship publication, *Parks & Recreation*, visit [www.parksandrecreation.org](http://www.parksandrecreation.org).