500 Festival Named Project Play Champion by Aspen Institute

Indiana nonprofit recognized for its work related to youth fitness in Indiana

INDIANAPOLIS (December 4, 2018) – The 500 Festival, a nonprofit organization providing life-enriching events and programs that celebrate the spirit and legacy of the Indianapolis 500®, has been recognized by the Aspen Institute for the organization’s work as a champion of youth health and fitness. The 500 Festival was one of 21 organizations recognized and was the only Indiana organization and the only running/walking initiative recognized for its efforts. The 500 Festival’s Mini-Moves Program received the Project Play Champion award during the Aspen Institute Project Play Summit in Washington, DC.

The Aspen Institute gathers diverse, non-partisan thought-leaders, creatives, scholars and members of the public to address some of the world’s most complex problems. One key initiative is Project Play, a multi-year effort to build healthy communities and children by growing sport participation rates among youth and make sports accessible to all kids. Project Play Champions are organizations recognized for their work to introduce new youth programs, initiatives and specific actions to reimagine community sports.

The 500 Festival was recognized for its newly launched Mini-Moves Program, a partnership with INSHAPE (Indiana Society for Health and Physical Educators). Mini-Moves is a free program for Indiana teachers at any grade level, designed to inspire physical movement and instill lifelong healthy habits in Hoosier youth. Mini-Moves is the first program of its kind for Indiana, meaning that the program has been created by Hoosier educators. In addition, it will enable physical education programs to fundraise and know that 100% of all funds raised will stay right here in Indiana. This is an opportunity for Hoosiers to invest in our youth and future, making the state healthy and happy.

“The 500 Festival is proud to take action and lead the way in building healthier Indiana communities and Hoosier kids are at the core of this movement. In partnership with INSHAPE, we committed to leveraging the value of Indiana being the home of the Indy 500 and the OneAmerica 500 Festival Mini-Marathon to further a culture of movement, running and walking for K-12 students throughout Indiana,” said Bob Bryant, president and CEO of the 500 Festival. “We are incredibly proud to be recognized by the Aspen Institute as a Project Play Champion. This accolade will amplify our efforts to increase physical activity and improve the physical, mental, and social health of Indiana youth.”

Bryant received the award on behalf of the organization at the Aspen Institute Project Play Summit in Washington, DC. Bryant also shared best practices of 500 Festival youth health and fitness programming which includes the 500 Festival KidsFit Program, 500 Festival mini-mini, Salesforce & JPMorgan Chase 500 Festival Kids’ Day and Rookie Run and the newly launched 500 Festival Mini-Moves Program.

The Project Play Summit is the nation’s premier gathering of leaders at the intersection of youth, sport and health. Where game-changers from the eight sectors that touch the lives of children take next steps in building healthy communities through sports. This year’s theme, “Think Global, Play Local,” challenged attendees to make a difference within their local communities. Speakers included NBA legend Kobe Bryant, skateboarding legend Tony Hawk, Olympic track and field champion Jackie Joyner-Kersee, NBC Sports broadcaster Mary Carillo, and other domestic as well as international trailblazers who can help U.S. leaders identify opportunities for innovation.

“We can’t say it enough - when kids get time for health and physical education, they do better physically, mentally and emotionally. We are proud to partner with the 500 Festival to offer Mini-Moves to Indiana’s
teachers, the people who are on the front lines, helping our youth create a love of movement for a lifetime of healthful living,” said Gary Lemke, executive director, INSHAPE. “We are delighted that Mini-Moves has been recognized by the Aspen Institute as a Project Play Champion. We believe the Mini-Moves Program will advance physical activity among Hoosier kids and we are delighted that the Aspen Institute feels the same.”

Mini-Moves is a free, year-round program to inspire physical activity among Indiana’s youth, instilling lifelong healthy habits. Mini-Moves is available to all Indiana educators from Kindergarten through high school. Created by Indiana teachers, for Indiana teachers, Mini-Moves offers Hoosier educators with a full menu of opportunities that can be implemented in order to inspire physical activity, including:

- **Customizable Resources:** Flexible health and fitness resources that teachers can customize for students of any age - from elementary to high school.
- **Turbocharged Experiences:** Bring the excitement of the month of May to your school! In-school activities and events that can extend to additional participation opportunities for your class to be part of 500 Festival events.
- **Fundraising:** In-school activities provide the opportunity for schools to raise funds specifically to advance health and physical education. All funds raised will stay in Indiana to support the advancement of health and well-being among all Indiana students. The fundraising option will be launched in Fall 2019.

To learn more about Mini-Moves, please visit IndyMini.com/MiniMoves or search #minimovesIN on social media.

The 20 organizations that have been named Project Play Champions are: The 500 Festival, Algonquin Sports for Kids, Appleton (Wisc.) Parks & Recreation Youth Sports, Association of Chief Executives for Sport, Banner Neighborhoods Community Corporation, Detroit PAL, DREAM, Fred Wells Tennis and Education Center, i9 Sports, Lindy Infante Foundation, MVP360 Leadership Development Programs Inc., National Council of Youth Sports, Racquet Up Detroit, Saturday Night Lights, Seneca Babcock Community Association, Susan Crown Exchange, U.S. Soccer Federation, U.S. Youth Soccer, Up2Us Sports, and Victory Sports Global Outreach Inc. To read about the new commitments these organizations made to become a Project Play Champion, [CLICK HERE](#).

**About the 500 Festival**

Founded in 1957, the 500 Festival is a not-for-profit organization that produces life-enriching events and programs that celebrate the spirit and legacy of the Indianapolis 500® and foster positive impact on the city of Indianapolis and state of Indiana. One of the largest festivals in the nation, each year more than half a million people attend an event or program produced by the 500 Festival. Since its founding, the 500 Festival has contributed more than $400 million in economic value to Indianapolis. To learn more about the 500 Festival, please visit [www.500festival.com](http://www.500festival.com) or follow us on [Facebook](https), [Twitter](https), and [Instagram](https).

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