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Non-profit will build 26 new school playgrounds this year

Thousands of Brooklyn public school children will be surprised this September as they return to schools with renovated yards. Out2Play, a non-profit group with a mission of building playgrounds at economically disadvantaged NYC public schools will build 26 new playgrounds before the end of 2008 across the five boroughs, 5 of which are located in Brooklyn.

Funded with both public and private money, Out2Play's playground renovations transform schools' asphalt lots into safe, stimulating and engaging play spaces.

Founded in 2005, Out2Play has already successfully completed 15 playgrounds around the City. Raising funds from philanthropic donations, corporate sponsorships and government, Out2Play is now implementing a city-wide program to restore the school system's playgrounds.

The following Brooklyn schools will receive new playgrounds: P.S. 19, P.S. 65, P.S. 145, P.S. 146, and P.S. 191. Funding for these projects include support from Brooklyn Borough President, Marty Markowitz, and City Council Member Diana Reyna.

"Our schools must be more than just chalkboards, computers and classrooms—they should be an oasis for children so they can become both physically and mentally strong. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of Out2Play and Andrea Wenner, more Brooklyn kids than ever before are playing games,

exercising and experiencing the great outdoors in our well-equipped school playgrounds. No one had to educate me about the importance of supporting Out2Play," said Brooklyn Borough President, Marty Markowitz.

"The future of this city lies in the hands of today's youth and nurturing their health and development should be a top priority," said Andrea Wenner, founder and Executive Director. "With approximately 43% of New York City schoolchildren overweight, this is not just about entertaining kids at recess, it's about their health."

Students will have an opportunity to utilize the new play spaces during programmed recess time, during Physical Education classes when appropriate, and during other times when teachers take classes outdoors as part of academic studies. Students and local residents may also benefit in situations in which schools elect to keep their playgrounds open to the public during non-school hours. A list of the targeted schools is attached.

One of the group's major private funders is the Audrey & Martin Gruss Foundation, which donated \$500,000 to co-sponsor 24 of the 26 play spaces being built around the City. Renovated playgrounds include play structures with slides and monkey bars, basketball courts, kickball diamonds, soccer and football fields, tracks, blacktop games, chess tables, trees, benches and more.