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## **Blueprint4SummerSTL Connects All St. Louis Kids to Summer Activities**

*New App Provides Parents with FREE and STRESS-FREE Tool to Plan for Summer*

**ST. LOUIS (Feb. 12, 2015)** – Blueprint4SummerSTL, a new mobile app and website, launched today putting hundreds of summer classes, camps and activity programs at the fingertips of St. Louis-area families. As most parents know, filling a child’s summer months with meaningful experiences can be a frustrating and time-consuming task. By aggregating information about area programs, Blueprint4Summer gives all parents access to summer offerings. The free, easy-to-use tool is accessible via computer or smartphone at <http://blueprint4summer.com>.

“Our hope is that Blueprint4Summer will make the many wonderful programs available in St. Louis accessible to all parents and children regardless of zip code,” said Maxine Clark, who spearheaded and helped fund the project. As the founder of Build-A-Bear Workshop, Clark witnessed the stress and frustration her employees felt as they tried to piece together summer plans for their kids. “While available to all families, Blueprint4Summer fills an important void for under-resourced families, giving them easy-to-access information about what programs are available in their area within their budget,” said Clark.

More than 300,000 children are enrolled in K-12 schools throughout the metro St. Louis area and will be seeking ways to fill their summers. While the end of the school year seems a long way off, planning for summer experiences is critical. Blueprint4Summer helps get the process started early – and their hope is that their extensive marketing outreach will help summer programs reach enrollment goals earlier than ever and plan their summer staffing needs accordingly.

Through the mobile app or website, a parent or guardian can do a search based on any number of preferences such as age, gender, interests, price and zip code. They can also find information about day camps, sleep-away camps and sports camps; art, music and science programs; and academic enrichment

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courses in STEM. Currently there are more than 1,000 summer sessions listed and the database is growing daily as enrollment periods begin and more organizations learn about the Blueprint4Summer mobile app.

The app allows parents to search the offerings, get links to the organizations' websites to learn camp locations via Google maps, how to apply, if they offer before and after care, and if scholarships are available. When creating a free account on Blueprint4Summer, parents can bookmark their favorite programs, save their search results and be kept informed as new programs are added to the database. They can also print a calendar that maps out the summer plans – color-coded for each of their children –and shows if there are overlaps or gaps in the schedules. “The tool truly is a blueprint that parents can use to build an enriching summer for kids and a less stressful planning cycle for themselves,” said Clark.

During the summer months, low-income youth experience a three-month loss in reading performance, and all youth experience roughly two month's worth of losses in math computation. While all children made similar school-year gains in the early grades, summer learning loss may account for 80 percent of the achievement gap between advantaged and economically disadvantaged youth.<sup>1</sup> Blueprint4Summer will be distributed widely in the St. Louis area through schools, community centers, the United Way, churches and youth programs in order to bring information and access to the broadest audience.

“Summer activities are a crucial part of intellectual development that enable children to spend their vacation time constructively, develop their passions and creativity, advance their learning and, of course, have fun,” said Clark.

Blueprint4Summer is not only free and easy for parents to use but it also gives organizations the opportunity to list their offerings for free. Small programs (with less than 10 offerings) can enter their information online at <http://goo.gl/forms/w91OqVkeUR>. Organizations with more extensive offerings should email Programs Manager Allie DeSmet at [allie@blueprint4summer.com](mailto:allie@blueprint4summer.com).

Blueprint4Summer was made possible by the generous support of a wide variety of financial and business partners including the Clark-Fox Foundation, Build-A-Bear Workshop Foundation, Emerson Charitable Trust & Emerson Employee Contributions, Express Scripts, Dr. Jeanne and Rex Sinuefield, Jess Yawitz, John McDonnell, Joyce Wood Charitable Fund, Ron and Pam Rubin, St. Louis Children's Hospital, St. Louis Regional Chamber, The Deaconess Foundation, The Foundation for Barnes-Jewish Hospital, The McDowell Family Foundation, Ward & Carol Klein, William H. Danforth and the William T. Kemper Foundation – Commerce Bank, Trustee.

For more information about Blueprint4Summer, to learn about programs and to connect with other parents online, “like” Blueprint4SummerSTL on Facebook at [www.Facebook.com/Blueprint4SummerSTL](http://www.Facebook.com/Blueprint4SummerSTL) or follow Blueprint4SummerSTL on Twitter at [www.Twitter.com/B4SSTL](http://www.Twitter.com/B4SSTL).

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<sup>1</sup> Forum for Youth Investment