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**Kidango Receives Major Grants for Newark Children's
Center Outdoor Learning Environment**

*With Obesity on the Rise, Grants Spotlight the Importance of Exercise
and Physical Activity*

Fremont, CA –January 31, 2011—Kidango, a nonprofit child development agency with 41 centers in nine Bay Area cities, has received several grants which will allow its Ruschin Center in Newark to dramatically refurbish its existing outdoor learning and play areas for toddler/infant and preschool children.

Encouraging physical activity and exercise is essential, given the alarming rise in childhood obesity across the country, a condition which the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has likened to an epidemic. Childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years in the United States.

“Physical education is an important component of Kidango’s mission to develop healthy and well-rounded children,” said Kidango Regional Director Kathy Rose. “We are thrilled and grateful for these funds to enhance the Ruschin Center outdoor learning and play area.”

The grants include a \$16,000 contribution from the City of Newark, \$10,000 from the Tri-City fundraising organization Candle Lighters, and \$5,000 from Head Start Body Start (HSBS), a national agency which promotes physical activity and outdoor play.

With its Candlelighter and HSBS grants, Kidango’s Ruschin Center will install several new structures on its outdoor learning and play areas for for the center’s 134 toddler/infant (0-2 years) and preschool (3-5 years) children. The City of Newark funds will enable the center to replace an older concrete portion of the toddler play area with new sod and a trike path.

The outdoor learning and play area is as important as indoor “Interest Areas” for promoting each child’s whole development at Kidango. Kidango believes that all children deserve the opportunity to learn and play outdoors on structures that are age and size appropriate and promote physical, social-emotional and cognitive development. The structures offer opportunities for children to develop gross and fine motor skills through physical activity, as well as develop socially and emotionally through collaborative play with their peers.

“The benefits of daily exercise are both psychological as well as physical, positively impacting self-esteem and self-confidence in children and promoting feelings of wellness,” said Sue Story of Child, Family, and Community Services, on behalf of HSBS. “We are happy to support Kidango’s mission in encouraging physical activity to young children.”

Kidango has provided early care and education services to young children since 1979. Parents rely upon Kidango's quality affordable services so they can go to work or school. The children receive a quality education that enhances their development and prepares them for school and beyond. Currently, 90% of Ruschin Center's enrollees are from low-income families.

"Kidango addresses a great need for child development and early education to low-income and underprivileged young children," said Maria Garnica of Candle Lighters. "The value that this organization contributes to the community is immeasurable and we are delighted to be able to support Kidango's mission."

"The city of Newark always strives to recognize those organizations that provide important social services and Kidango has served the community's children well for over 30 years," said Terrence Grindall, Community Development Director for the City of Newark.

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About Candle Lighters

Candle Lighters is a nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to raising funds for nonprofit groups and community-based projects in the Tri-City Community. (Fremont, Newark & Union City). The organization raises money solely through its annual Ghost House. Open during the last two weeks of October and based in a historical 19th century Carriage House, the Ghost House is wonderful family-oriented event for all ages.

About Head Start Body Start

Head Start/Early Start programs provide early childhood education and other services to low-income children and families through center-based programs and partner agencies such as Kidango. The Head Start Body Start National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play serves to increase physical activity, outdoor play, and healthy eating among Head Start and Early Head Start children and families. A major annual activity of HSBS is to provide grants of up to \$5,000 each to selected local Head Start Centers nationwide to improve their outdoor play spaces.

About the City of Newark

The East Bay city of Newark (population: 42,000+) has evolved over fifty+ years into a very dynamic, diverse, safe, prosperous, self-sufficient, and welcoming community. The City of Newark administration comprises many different departments and divisions in order to meet the demands of the growing city and works in a collaborative effort to ensure that all residents, businesses and visitors' best interests are at the forefront of all its actions and activities.

About Kidango

As a leader in early care and education, Kidango offers a wide variety of programs to meet the diverse needs of children 0-12 years of age and their families. Currently, Kidango operates 41 child development centers and serves more than 2,500 children and families in Alameda and Santa Clara Counties. Please visit the Kidango website at <http://www.kidango.org/>.

For more information on Kidango please contact Marc Baker at 510-897-6913 or at mbaker@kidango.org