



EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
October 30, 2008 – 10:00 p.m.

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**CELEBRITY CHEF JACQUES PÉPIN, MERCEDE FAMILY SUPPORT
FUNDRAISER TO BENEFIT BOUNDLESS PLAYGROUNDS**

National nonprofit leader dedicated to serving children with disabilities

BLOOMFIELD, CT – The cause of supporting children with disabilities took center stage on Thursday when Boundless Playgrounds, the leading national nonprofit developer of inclusive playgrounds, celebrated Autumn Dreams, an evening of fine food and wine hosted by Frank and Lori Mercede.

Celebrity Chef Jacques Pépin offered his support at Autumn Dreams by preparing a signature appetizer and engaging in a meet and greet with event attendees.

“Playing on a playground, like cooking, is such a simple joy,” said Jacques Pépin, world renowned chef, instructor and author. “If, by supporting causes like Boundless Playgrounds, I can help one child experience that joy, then I’ve made a simple yet profound difference.”

Through their unique designs, Boundless Playgrounds helps communities build playgrounds that allow all children to be in the middle of the fun. Nationally, the organization has completed 142 playgrounds, including four in Fairfield and Westchester Counties.

“At Boundless Playgrounds, we believe inclusive play is an important key to creating a world where children of all abilities are accepted,” said Frederick Leone, Chief Executive Officer of Boundless Playgrounds. “We are honored to be the beneficiary of Autumn Dreams because it enables us to make a difference in the lives of more children across the country.”

The event also served as a platform to honor Stamford community leaders, Frank and Lori Mercede, for their support in advancing the ideals of inclusive play.

In June 1997, the couple gave birth to identical twin daughters, Nicola and Jaclyn. Jaclyn suffered severe birth trauma resulting in quadriplegic cerebral palsy. A typical playground did

not have the unique inclusive features that a Boundless Playground has so that both Jaclyn and Nicola, a typically able child, could play together.

In 2003, the Mercede family spearheaded efforts to build Twin Meadows Boundless Playground at their daughters' elementary school. Twin Meadows has also been the catalyst for the building of three more Boundless Playgrounds in Fairfield County.

“As a parent of a child with a disability, it’s hard to describe the feeling of seeing your children being able to play together at the playground for the first time, “ said Frank Mercede, father, President and CEO of Frank Mercede & Sons. “Autumn Dreams is our way of saying thanks for helping the dream of Twin Meadows become a reality.”

Simple but profound differences in Boundless Playgrounds include: ramps that take children with disabilities up to the highest play deck; accessible pathways and surfacing; swings and bouncers with back support; elevated sand tables and activity panels where everyone can gather; and play structures configured so that all children can play at their highest level of ability and everyone can be in the middle of the fun.

To date, Autumn Dreams sponsors include – **Presenting Sponsors:** Frank Mercede & Sons; Twin Meadows Playground; **Platinum Sponsor:** C.A.W.L. Developments, Inc.; **Gold Sponsors:** Baywater Properties; F.D. Rich Company; Leandro P. Rizzuto, Sr.; and Viking Construction Inc.

Boundless Playgrounds – Based in Bloomfield, Connecticut, Boundless Playgrounds is the leading national nonprofit developer of inclusive playgrounds where children, with and without disabilities, gain the important developmental benefits of unstructured play. There are more than 140 Boundless Playgrounds in 26 states and Canada with dozens more under development. For more information about Boundless Playgrounds, visit www.boundlessplaygrounds.org.

Twin Meadows – The Twin Meadows Boundless Playground located at Stillmeadow Elementary School in Stamford, Connecticut, was built in 2003 through the generous support and leadership of Frank Mercede, President and CEO of Frank Mercede & Sons, Inc., and his wife, Lori. The Mercedes continue to promote the power of inclusive playgrounds and Twin Meadows has been the catalyst for the building of three more Boundless Playgrounds in Fairfield County. For more information, please visit www.twinmeadowsplayground.com.

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