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## VIPs from Around the Country Join Forces to Help America's Kids

### *Three New Influential Members Join National Children's Charity*

**BETHLEHEM, PENN., Feb. 8, 2007** – America's children face many dangers and challenges growing up today. Fortunately, dozens of the best and brightest professionals and philanthropists from the adult world are coming together from all over the country to provide millions of kids facing crises with hope, help and healing.

Dr. Ira Blake of Kutztown University, noted engineer Emil Herkert of New Jersey, and educator, philanthropist, and former United States Olympic Committee State Chair Mary Jane Willis of Delaware are the newest caring luminaries to join a group of 27 distinguished VIPs from 10 U.S. states serving on the board of directors for the national children's charity KidsPeace. The 125-year-old organization, which helps children overcome traumas and the crises of growing up, was founded in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and now has 65 centers nationwide. Through direct care and global prevention efforts, KidsPeace reaches millions of kids and families each year with life-saving tools and services to cope with such problems as abuse, neglect, depression, autism, and the modern pressures of life.

Dr. Ira. K. Blake is Assistant to the President for Public Engagement at Kutztown University. She has an extensive educational background in psychology and educational psychology and her research on the role of culture and language in children's learning and development has been published in several scholarly journals and texts. Dr. Blake is active in many charities and projects: She is a member of the Advisory Committee for Right From the Start, an early parenting program of the United Way of Berks County; a trustee of The Swain School in Allentown, Penn., a member of the Hawk Mountain Executive Council of the Boy Scouts of America; a member of the Allentown School District's Diversity Committee; and a member of The Sisterhood of Reading. Dr. Blake is on leave from Kutztown University for 2006-07. She is currently working for the Chancellor's Office of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

“The KidsPeace family -- children, staff, trustees -- epitomizes our best humanity through gifts of care and support,” says Dr. Blake. “As a new trustee, I am humbled by their commitment, inspired by their vision, and honored to become family.”

Emil C. Herkert is a noted civil and environmental engineer. With more than 40 years of top-level experience in the field, Mr. Herkert is the retired Chairman and CEO of Hatch Mott MacDonald Infrastructure and Environment Inc. (formerly Killam Associates Inc.), one of the largest environmental

engineering firms headquartered in New Jersey. Herkert has authored many technical papers and chaired several technical committees for the American Society of Civil Engineers. Mr. Herkert has been involved in numerous philanthropic activities. He has served as Chairman of the Board of Overseers for the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Vice President of the Board of Trustees for New Jersey Opera Theatre, a member of the Advisory Committee of M-1, an alternative energy company, a judge for the McClosky Business Plan Competition of the Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame, has been a member and president of the Parish Council for Our Lady of Mercy RC Church, and is active in Engineers without Borders-USA, including establishing a student chapter at NJIT. He and his wife Ann have six children and four grandchildren.

“I joined KidsPeace because I felt that my background could be of assistance to their efforts,” says Mr. Herkert. “I have had a first-hand view of what these programs can do and I felt that they should receive some outside support. For these reasons I joined the board of directors.”

Educator, philanthropist and former U.S. Olympic Committee Delaware State Chair Mary Jane Willis has lived a life of creating opportunities for others. Ms. Willis worked in public education for fifteen years as a guidance counselor, a diversified cooperative training coordinator, and a teacher of gifted and talented students. Her public service and philanthropic activities are legion. In addition to her work with KidsPeace (this election marks her second term in a dozen years) she is a trustee on the boards of literally dozens of charities and worthy causes, including the University of Delaware, BayHealth Medical Center, and Children's Beach House. She and her husband, Bill, have four grown children who have gone on to successful careers in the professions as well as the family businesses, Willis GM Automall, Willis Ford, and Middletown Chevrolet of Delaware.

“There are many good causes in the world,” says Ms. Willis. “However, I felt compelled to return to KidsPeace because of the children I met there. Their stories and their triumphs rang in my heart and made me realize that no matter what else we may do in this life it is in the fate of the children that all hope lies.”

In addition to the 27 members of the board, KidsPeace is supported by its national spokesperson Leeza Gibbons, television personality and Executive Director of the Leeza Gibbons Memory Foundation, which she created to help Alzheimer's victims and their families. Other well-known supporters who serve as Honorary Directors include Frances Hesselbein, Chairman of the Leader to Leader Institute and former CEO of Girl Scouts of the USA, and philanthropists Mrs. Inez Donley and Ann Ardoline of Bethlehem, and Mr. Douglas Patt of Allentown.

“I cannot begin to express the importance of having this level of support for our children and how thankful we are for it,” says C.T. O'Donnell II, president and CEO of KidsPeace. “The world can be a tough place for youngsters today, but friends like these will help give our kids peace.”

*KidsPeace is a 125-year-old national children's crisis charity dedicated to giving hope, help, and healing to children facing crisis. Founded in Bethlehem, PA with 65 centers nationwide, KidsPeace directly helps thousands of children a day to overcome the crises of growing up and millions more each year through prevention and awareness programs. KidsPeace was named “The Outstanding Organization” of its kind in the country by the American Association of Psychiatric Services for Children and was called “a prototype of what we need for all children everywhere” by the late, nationally renowned child and family expert, Dr. Lee Salk. For more information, go to [www.kidspeace.org](http://www.kidspeace.org).*