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CONTACT: Rachel Ezekiel- Fishbein
215-635-1045

**MELROSE PARK CHILDREN'S GARDEN AND LOCAL LANDSCAPE
DESIGNER WIN
"EXCELLENCE IN LANDSCAPE DESIGN" AWARD**

Children's Mitzvah Garden was Created to Teach Jewish Preschoolers the Mitzvot (commandments) of Caring for the Earth & Tzedakah (giving charitably)

Wyncote, PA – (February 9, 2005) – An act of *tzedakah* by a local landscape designer triggered a summer of learning about *tzedakah* by area preschoolers ... and ultimately won the landscape design firm a prestigious award from its peers. On Tuesday, February 8th, Baker Creative of Wyncote was awarded honorable mention in the theme garden category at the Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association's (PLNA) *2005 Awards for Excellence in Landscape Design* Ceremony. The award was given for the Children's Mitzvah Garden which Baker Creative designed and installed at the Mary Bert Gutman Early Learning Center in Melrose Park.

Brad Baker, president of Baker Creative, volunteered to create the 30'x20' garden after helping clear the heavily overgrown land during a Congregational Mitzvah Day event. Working with the school's director, Helen Victor Turk, Baker planned a garden which the children could help plant and maintain, and from which they could pick vegetables for their families' tables and flowers to sell to raise money for charity. The goal was to provide an ongoing, hands-on lesson about the mitzvot of *caring for the earth* and *tzedakah*.

Planning a garden for small children brought its own challenges. "The goal in creating this children's garden," says Baker, "is to make it a completely safe and kid-friendly outdoor classroom."

Confronted by a lack of access to water (the closest water source was too far for the children to transport), Baker invented a system for maintaining the garden that the children could manage independently and would keep mess to a minimum. Baker ran lengths of eight inch PVC piping through the garden and along its edges. Its curved, plastic surface was splinter-free with no sharp corners. Its height was perfect for seating

for the children. The piping provided a reservoir for water from a distant hose and maintained the water at a safe and comfortable temperature for the children. Baker set up bilge pumps (the type used on boats) for the children to use to pump out the water. The pump holes were closed with secure stoppers when not in use to preserve cleanliness of the water (and the children).

Throughout the summer, the garden offered colorful flowers for Friday night dinner tables and a harvest of bell peppers, bush beans, cherry and beef tomatoes, cucumbers and herbs. Each Friday, the children sold the bouquets of cosmos, marigolds, sunflowers, zinnias and snap dragons to their parents to raise money to combat hunger.

According to Victor-Turk, the garden – its planting, its maintenance and reaping its reward -- was the most exciting event of the summer for the children. As for Baker Creative, the firm was pleasantly surprised that their act of charity reaped a professional reward. Says vice-president Dina Wolfman Baker, “We were so pleased to be recognized for our innovative approach to children’s gardening. Awards are usually given for beauty, thus we are inspired to be recognized for a project which is more functional and educational in nature.”

Each year, PLNA recognizes its member firms for quality design, installation, and maintenance projects -- both residential and commercial. In 2004, Baker Creative received two PLNA Awards for Excellence in Landscape Design.

Baker Creative offers professional landscape design, installation and pruning. The trademark of Baker Creative is unique, functional design with respect for the land’s natural beauty. Bradley Baker is a graduate of the prestigious College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University, and a Pennsylvania Certified Horticulturist.

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