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Two Conservation Projects in Maryland Receive *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grants Funding

Nearly \$40,000 from Nationwide Audubon/Toyota Conservation Initiative Boosts Environmental Opportunities for Maryland Teens

New York, NY, December 2, 2010 –Two Audubon groups—and three partner organizations—are the recipients of national Innovation Grants that will provide kids with opportunities to get outside, learn, and improve their health. One of the projects will work with doctors in the Baltimore Medical System to “prescribe” time in nature for kids suffering from obesity, diabetes, asthma, and behavior problems like AD/HD.

TogetherGreen Innovation Grants, provided through an alliance between National Audubon Society and Toyota, provide seed money for projects that use innovative approaches and technologies to engage new and diverse audiences in conservation action. Innovation Grants enable awardees and their partner organizations to inspire, equip, and engage people to tackle environmental problems and improve the health of their communities.

“The conservation solutions pioneered by *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grant winners are inspiring models of both ingenuity and conservation commitment,” said Audubon President David Yarnold. “Each project represents an investment in our shared environment and future – and an opportunity for many of our nation’s most creative and dedicated individuals and communities to transform their dreams into effective conservation action. As our alliance with Toyota shows, when organizations work together, they can magnify conservation results.”

The two *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grants projects in Maryland are:

- “Rx for Nature” (Baltimore). An \$18,000 Innovation Grant will enable the [Patterson Park Audubon Center](#) and the [Baltimore Medical System](#) to work together to offer “nature prescriptions” as a means to improve children’s health, have fun, and improve the environmental quality of the Baltimore Harbor and Chesapeake Bay watersheds. The Center’s elementary and high school partners, the [National Environmental Education Foundation](#), physicians, school nurses, and other health care professionals will receive training on the health benefits of outdoor nature programming. Patterson Park Audubon Center will learn ways in which they can make their programs more physically beneficial to youth attending them; ultimately they intend to help develop 26 specialized programs that include significant physical activity while educating children about the benefits of improved water quality and healthy wildlife habitats. Programs will include hands-on

stewardship activities that allow them to play an active role in improving water quality and wildlife habitat in the Chesapeake Bay watershed —just what the doctor ordered.

- “GreenKids: Creating Maryland Green Schools” (Chevy Chase). With a \$20,628 Innovation Grant, the [Audubon Naturalist Society of the Central Atlantic States](#) will partner with [Montgomery County Public Schools](#) to expand its GreenKids program to reach more students. In participating GreenKids schools, each class will receive lessons on energy conservation, recycling, and watershed conservation as well as take part in schoolyard nature investigations. In addition, each school will receive a grant of \$500 to construct a piece of green infrastructure on their grounds (such as a nature trail or schoolyard garden). This year, with *TogetherGreen* support, Montgomery County streams will become learning laboratories where students can act as both scientists and conservationists in learning how to test water quality and monitor stream health. At the end of the year, participating GreenKids schools will be eligible to apply for Maryland Green School certification. By working in close partnership with schools, GreenKids gives students a voice in environmental stewardship, connects them to nature, and uses the outdoors as a living classroom where they can explore and learn lessons that stay with them into the future.

“This funding will allow Audubon’s Baltimore environmental education programs to be offered to a new group of local youth who need more time outside, where they can have fun in Patterson Park, and realize the health benefits of being active and out in nature and fresh air,” said Jacqui Bonomo, vice president and executive director of Audubon Maryland/DC .

The nearly \$40,000 in Maryland Innovation Grants are part of almost \$1.1 million awarded by the *TogetherGreen* initiative this year. Now in its third cycle, the *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grants program has awarded more than \$3.5 million to over 130 environmental projects nationwide. Forty three awardees in 27 states will receive grants ranging from \$5,000 - \$66,100. Funds are awarded to partnerships between Audubon groups (local Chapters or programs of Audubon’s large national network) and organizations in their communities—with more than 125 partner organizations involved in Innovation Grant projects in the coming year. Most of the projects involve audiences previously underserved or not engaged in environmental action, from urban youth to ranchers.

In addition to financial support, Innovation Grantees receive opportunities for professional development, including a multi-day workshop held at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife’s National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, and web-based training throughout the year. They also receive communications support, which leads to more public recognition at the local, state, and national level, and they are networked with other grantees to share best practices and learn from others.

For complete details about the 2010 *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grants projects, please visit: www.togethergreen.org/grants.

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About *TogetherGreen*

Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in 2008 to fund innovative conservation projects, support conservation leadership, and offer volunteer opportunities that significantly benefit the environment and reach new audiences. To date, *TogetherGreen* has supported 130 Innovation Grants projects, 120 Conservation Fellows, and over 750 Volunteer Days events nationwide. For more information, visit www.togethergreen.org.

About Audubon

Now in its second century, Audubon connects people with birds, nature and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, scientific, education, and advocacy programs engages millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world. Visit Audubon online at www.audubon.org.

About Toyota

Toyota (NYSE: TM) established operations in the United States in 1957 and currently operates 10 manufacturing plants, including one under construction. Toyota directly employs nearly 30,000 in the U.S. and its investment here is currently valued at more than \$18 billion, including sales and manufacturing operations, research and development, financial services and design.

Toyota is committed to being a good corporate citizen in the communities where it does business and believes in supporting programs with long-term sustainable results. Toyota supports numerous organizations across the country, focusing on education, the environment and safety. Since 1991, Toyota has contributed more than \$500 million to philanthropic programs in the U.S.

For more information on Toyota's commitment to improving communities nationwide, visit <http://www.toyota.com/community>.