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Grant Will Help Involve Youth in Reforestation Project at Seward Park

The Seward Park Environmental & Audubon Center has been selected as a recipient of a *TogetherGreen* national innovation grant for a new program aimed at reaching out to an array of new audiences in the Seattle area. This program will focus on finding and cultivating audiences not traditionally drawn to conservation activities because, organizers say, they may not always see the linkage to their lives and values.

A \$58,888 one-year grant will allow the Seward Park Audubon Center to involve community members in conservation education and field activities, including restoring different habitat areas in the park.

Seward Park has one of the only remaining stands of old growth forest in the city of Seattle. Its ecosystem also supports several habitats, including 2½ miles of freshwater shoreline, coniferous forest, an oak savannah supporting endangered white oaks, and geologic outcroppings of the Seattle earthquake fault zone.

Outreach efforts will be aimed at urban youth and adults that draw from the ethnically diverse population surrounding Seward Park. These include Latinos, Asians, Pacific Islanders, African-Americans, and African immigrant populations.

Given the diverse community surrounding Seward Park, new and exciting outreach programs will happen in places such as tattoo parlors, nail salons, coffee shops, and places of religious worship. Institutions that deal with confined audiences, such as nursing homes, minimum security prisons, and halfway houses will also be targets for outreach on family visiting days. Other unique and innovative methods of attracting new audiences and connecting urban communities with conservation activities will be explored. These will include a variety of arts activities such as a modern dance performance about rainforests, slam poetry contests with environmental themes, and nature rap.

“Like most urbanized areas, Seward Park is impacted by the loss of vegetation due to direct human contact, a high concentration of invasive species, and a culture that values manicured spaces over natural states. We need lots of volunteers to help with a major reforestation project already underway,” said Gail Gatton, Center Director. “The new outreach opportunities provided by this grant will help us educate and recruit previously untapped volunteers to remove invasive species and re-plant the area with native species that can provide a better habitat for native birds and other wildlife.”

“We hope this grant will help build a stewardship ethic in the surrounding community and beyond that will ensure the long-term sustainability of this remarkable asset,” added Jillian Weed, plant ecologist with the Seattle Parks Department in charge of the reforestation effort at Seward Park.

The Seward Park Environmental & Audubon Center grant is part of the first \$1.4 million awarded by the *TogetherGreen* initiative, a national Audubon project with funding from Toyota. Grantees were selected from scores of applicants across America. Funds were awarded to Audubon organizations that demonstrated exceptional innovation in working with other groups on projects that will produce tangible benefits for environmental quality.

“This outreach effort is a wonderful opportunity for creating a new generation of environmentally aware people in Seattle and restoring important wildlife habitat as well. We’re happy to be able to provide help to make it happen,” said *TogetherGreen* Project Manager Judy Braus.

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TogetherGreen will invest in both promising environmental projects and outstanding leaders that can shape a brighter tomorrow. Along with Innovation Grants to be awarded each year, *TogetherGreen* funds and promotes conservation leadership training and volunteer programs designed to equip and engage diverse groups and individuals to take action today to shape a healthier tomorrow. Information on other grantees, along with opportunities to get involved in conservation efforts, showcase successful initiatives, and honor those who are making a difference, can be found at 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.

About Toyota

Toyota (NYSE: TM) established operations in the United States in 1957 and currently operates 10 manufacturing plants, with another under construction in Mississippi. 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. Through its corporate initiatives, manufacturing operations and philanthropy, Toyota supports numerous organizations across the country, focusing on education, the environment and safety. In 2007, Toyota contributed more than \$56 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>.