

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Appalachian Mountain Club Receives REI Grant  
to Support Youth Opportunities Program**

The Appalachian Mountain Club has received a \$65,000 grant from Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI) to support the club's Youth Opportunities Program (YOP), an initiative that helps engage young people in outdoor recreation and adventure.

REI, a leading retailer of outdoor gear and apparel, announced the grant with the awarding of a \$35,000 check to the AMC to help fund their ongoing core programming needs, as well as an additional contribution of \$30,000 in new hiking and camping gear.

The financial portion of the grant will support the AMC's outdoor leadership trainings and their "Kids in Huts Initiative," which subsidizes the cost for youth to spend the night in a variety of AMC backcountry lodging facilities. The equipment portion of the grant, which includes backpacks, sleeping bags, and boots, will be used to outfit youngsters participating in hiking and camping trips with the AMC's Youth Opportunities Program.

"We are extremely grateful for REI's generous support of the Youth Opportunities Program," said AMC Executive Director Andrew J. Falender. "This significant grant will help the AMC train youth group leaders and provide more memorable outdoor experiences than ever for urban youth throughout the region."

"REI has a special commitment to promote stewardship of the outdoors. One way we do this is by supporting groups which introduce the outdoors to young people who may not otherwise have the opportunity, in hopes of creating the next generation of stewards, to care for the great places we all enjoy," said Dennis Madsen, president and CEO of REI. "We're impressed by the AMC's innovative work in providing skills training for youth group leaders and meaningful outdoor experiences for young people, and are pleased to provide our support."

YOP helps at-risk, urban youth to balance life in an urban environment by connecting them with their natural world through hands-on experiences in backcountry environments.

A key component of YOP is the training of youth group leaders in outdoor leadership skills, which prepares youth workers to lead groups on safe, outdoor experiences in a manner that is organized, effective, and challenging. Once youth group leaders have completed AMC's Outdoor Leadership Training, they can use AMC's hiking and camping equipment to outfit their youth groups, free of charge. The program also provides trip-planning assistance and discounted lodging at its lodges and backcountry huts for YOP groups.

"The AMC is committed to making the outdoors accessible to youth who would not ordinarily have these opportunities or feel comfortable in the backcountry without the support of YOP and YOP-trained leaders," said Falender.

Since 1968, YOP has reached more than 42,000 youth. The REI grant will help YOP serve 3300 young people and 200 youth agencies throughout the Northeast this year, including more than 100 agencies in the greater Boston area.

Founded in 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club is the oldest conservation and recreation organization in the United States. With a membership approaching 100,000, the nonprofit AMC promotes the protection, enjoyment, and wise use of the mountains, rivers and trails of the Appalachian region. More information on the AMC and YOP are available on the Web at <http://www.outdoors.org>.

REI, which last week was named for the sixth consecutive year as one of *Fortune* magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For," was founded in 1938 as a consumer cooperative by a group of Pacific Northwest mountaineers seeking quality climbing equipment. While anyone may shop at REI, members pay a one-time \$15 fee and receive a share in the company's profits through an annual patronage refund based on their purchases. A portion of REI's profit is set aside each year for support of conservation, outdoor recreation and environmental stewardship causes, with more than \$1 million awarded last year, and more than \$9 million since 1976 to such efforts around the country.

REI currently operates stores in Reading and Framingham, with two additional area stores set to open this year in Hingham and Boston's Landmark Center, in the Fenway neighborhood. In total, REI operates 63 retail stores in 24 states; two online stores, REI.com and REI-OUTLET.com; and an adventure travel company, REI Adventures.

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