

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Appalachian Mountain Club Receives Charles Hayden Foundation Grant to
Expand Youth Opportunities Program in Boston**

Boston, MA – The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) has received a \$150,000 grant from the Charles Hayden Foundation to support its Youth Opportunities Program (YOP), which is dedicated to making the outdoors and the environment accessible and meaningful to youth. This grant builds on the success of the AMC's partnership with the Charles Hayden Foundation last summer and allows the AMC to reach a larger number of urban youth in Boston neighborhoods throughout the year. As part of this initiative, AMC will partner directly with five Boston youth agencies focused on providing at-risk young people from some of Boston's most violent neighborhoods with programs and opportunities that promote their overall development and well-being.

AMC has worked closely with the Charles Hayden Foundation to select the Catholic Charities' St. Peter's Teen Center, Dorchester Youth Collaborative, Inquilinos Boricuas En Acción (IBA), Salvation Army Boston South End Corps Community Center, and the Central Branch YMCA to participate in this program.

AMC has been helping at-risk and urban youth gain leadership skills through hands-on outdoor activities and experiences since the 1960s. To date, AMC's Youth Opportunities Program has reached more than 50,000 young people aged eight through 18 years old and more than 2,500 professional youth workers. The Charles Hayden Foundation grant will allow the program to serve approximately 500 young people from summer 2005 through spring 2006, in addition to 3,500 youth that the program already benefits each year. Through the grant, the program also will train as many as 10 agency staff at the five organizations and provide guidance, support, and mentoring.

“We are proud to collaborate with the Appalachian Mountain Club as it seeks to make its Youth Opportunities Program available to more young people in the City of Boston,” said Ken Merin, President and Chief Executive Officer, Charles Hayden Foundation. “A successful outdoor program often requires more time, money, and support than many youth agencies can independently provide. We are confident that this initiative will have a meaningful impact as participants develop and test their leadership skills in challenging outdoor environments.”

“This new initiative will further the AMC's commitment to urban youth, and we are extremely grateful for Charles Hayden Foundation's generous support of the Youth Opportunities Program,” said AMC Executive Director Andrew Falender. “The outdoor leadership skills learned through the Youth Opportunities Program are life skills with

immeasurable value. They encourage and help shape individual growth and prepare participants to positively influence their communities.”

Through the initiative, AMC will conduct a series of locally-based, day-long outdoor adventures such as hiking, canoeing, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and rock climbing. A set of multi-day expeditions in the White Mountains and an advanced outdoor leadership qualification program also will be available to a select group of youth.

The ultimate goal of these activities is to provide challenging opportunities that help young people hone communication skills, work as a team toward a common goal, take personal responsibility, and make decisions—all core components of leadership.

In addition, training and support for agency staff will prepare youth workers to lead groups in a manner that is safe, organized, and effective. AMC staff will be available to provide trip-planning assistance on a wide range of topics including routes, activities, menus, lodging, and equipment. Youth agencies also will have free access to outdoor equipment through the AMC.

“This is an exciting partnership,” said Emmett Folgert, Director of Dorchester Youth Collaborative. “It gives ‘at risk’ teens from Boston’s most violent ‘hot spots’ a chance to take on unforgettable challenges, like climbing a mountain or living in a deep woods forest. To get a chance to go through these adventures with your best friends, it just doesn’t get better than that. These dramatic narratives change the everyday lives of the kids.”

The Dorchester Youth Collaborative offers counseling, gang prevention, media arts, academic support, and nutrition services to youth that live in the Bowdoin/Geneva/Fields Corner triangle and other areas of Boston that have the highest rates of violent crime.

“After participating in last year’s pilot project, we are confident that YOP will continue to have a positive impact on our local youth taking advantage of the many activities and opportunities available through Catholic Charities’ St. Peter’s Teen Center,” said Celestino Arias, Director of Youth and Family Based Services at Catholic Charities’ St. Peter’s Teen Center. “Programs like this that challenge kids and help build self-esteem make an important, lasting contribution.”

The mission of the Catholic Charities’ St. Peter’s Teen Center is to provide education, enrichment, leadership development, and recreational activities to youths living in the mid-Dorchester corridor. Through the Teen Center, adolescents have work opportunities, access to various support services, as well as a safe place to recreate.

Established in 1968, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA) is a dynamic community building agency dedicated to increasing the social and economic power of individuals and families through education, economic development, and technology and arts programming that builds safe, vibrant, and culturally diverse affordable housing communities.

The Salvation Army Boston South End Corps Community Center is a religious organization ministering to the spiritual and physical needs of all ages in the Greater Boston Area and surrounding communities through a combined ministry of religious, educational, fellowship, and recreational programs. Through its collaboration with AMC, the Salvation Army will provide services to at-risk youth in the South End/Lower Roxbury area of Boston.

The Central Branch YMCA serves youths from Boston's South End, Lower Roxbury, Mission Hill, Fenway, and Back Bay communities. The goal of the expanded Youth Development program is to specifically target youth and teens from the South End and Lower Roxbury communities with a structured set of activities and programs designed to promote their academic, social, and emotional well-being and advancement.

About the Appalachian Mountain Club

Founded in 1876, the Appalachian Mountain Club is the oldest conservation and recreation organization in the United States. With 90,000 members in the Northeast and beyond, the nonprofit AMC promotes the protection, enjoyment, and wise use of the mountains, rivers and trails of the Appalachian region.

About Charles Hayden Foundation

The Charles Hayden Foundation seeks to promote the mental, moral and physical development of children and youth ages three to eighteen in the New York and Boston metropolitan areas. Our focus is on those institutions and programs serving youth most at risk of not reaching their full potential, especially youth in low-income communities.