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## NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION'S "FIRST BLOOM" PROGRAM PLANTS ROOTS IN INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

### Innovative Conservation Program Teaches Urban Youth About and Restoring Native Habitats

PHILADELPHIA (April 28, 2010) – Area youth from Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania will be planting a garden of native plant species in Independence National Historical Park on Saturday, May 22 as part of the [National Park Foundation's](#) First Bloom program. [First Bloom](#) gives students firsthand experience in national parks, and teaches them about native and invasive plant species.

The Girl Scouts will have their work cut out for them this spring. The group will replant two beds next to Dock Creek Bridge, in the eastern part of Independence NHP. Historic Dock Creek once flowed through Philadelphia, connecting the growing city to the ports of the Delaware River. While the creek was filled in almost 200 years ago to fight contamination, it still flows underground and a channel has been carved out in the park's landscape to represent where it once stood. The Girl Scouts will plant native trees, shrubs and perennials to transform the beds into a First Bloom garden that will attract birds, bees, butterflies and other insects.

"The Girl Scouts I have been working with for First Bloom at our park this year have learned and grown tremendously," said Park Guide Holly Johnson. "Our park has really valued their enthusiasm and their hard work and they have had fun learning about native plants and species, as well as a little bit about our nation's history."

"One of the most important things anyone can do for the environment is to connect young people to parks," said Neil Mulholland, president and CEO of the National Park Foundation. "Kids, who are forging connections with the national parks today, are likely to have lasting relationships with the parks and the outdoors for their whole lives."

This year, for the first time, First Bloom participants will be competing in a national program called the "Native Gardens Contest." Each First Bloom youth will design his or her own garden and submit it to a website where the public will be able to vote for a favorite. The contestant with the most votes will receive a trip to a national park for his/her First Bloom Youth Group. To view the contest, and vote for a garden, visit the Native Garden Contest at <http://firstbloom.nationalparks.org/41gardenGallery.php>

First Bloom connects kids between 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades to nature and national parks. The nationwide program is currently taking place in 26 national parks in partnership with 31 youth groups across the country. First Bloom kids meet with park rangers monthly over one program year, approximately September 2009 to June 2010. They engage in outdoor, hands-on activities and learn to love the outdoors and their national parks. Toward the end of the program, youth involved plant a native landscape at a national park. That landscape is a lasting connection for those youth, a transferable

experience, and a feature that all future visitors to the park will enjoy. To learn more about the First Bloom program, visit [www.first-bloom.org](http://www.first-bloom.org).

First Bloom programs around the nation were generously supported by the UPS Foundation, ARAMARK Parks and Recreation, and gifts from private donors and foundations.

### **About Independence National Historical Park**

A unit of the National Park Service, Independence National Historical Park was created by an Act of Congress on June 28, 1948. Accredited by the American Association of Museums, Independence NHP covers almost 54 acres in Philadelphia's Old City, and includes Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell, Congress Hall, Franklin Court, and other historic buildings associated with the founding of the United States. The park is open from 9:00 am daily with the exception of Christmas day. A visit to Independence National Historical Park should start at the Independence Visitor Center, located at 6<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets. Here, visitors can pick up a park brochure, park map, and the free, timed tickets required for Independence Hall. For more information visit the park's website, <http://www.nps.gov/inde> or follow us at [twitter.com/independencenhp](https://twitter.com/independencenhp).

### **ABOUT THE NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION**

You are the part-owner of 84 million acres of the world's most treasured landscapes, ecosystems, and historical sites -- all protected in America's nearly 400 national parks. Chartered by Congress, the [National Park Foundation](http://www.nationalparks.org) is the official charity of America's national parks. We work hand in hand with the National Park Service to help connect you and all Americans to the parks, and to make sure that they are preserved for the generations who will follow. Join us – *This is Your Land*. [www.nationalparks.org](http://www.nationalparks.org). FACEBOOK <http://www.facebook.com/nationalpark>. TWITTER <http://twitter.com/goparks>