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INDEPENDENCE N.H.P. & GIRL SCOUTS OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA COMPETE IN NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION 2011 'FIRST BLOOM' YOUTH GARDEN DESIGN CONTEST

Visit www.first-bloom.org to View Garden Design and Vote

Philadelphia (April 21, 2011) – Independence National Historical Park has teamed up with Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania to compete in the [National Park Foundation](http://www.nationalparkfoundation.org)'s 2011 "[First Bloom](http://www.first-bloom.org)" Youth Garden Design Contest, which challenges First Bloom youth groups around the country to create the best garden design. The National Park Foundation (NPF), the official charity of America's national parks, designed the First Bloom program to give 4th- 6th grade youth firsthand experience in national parks, and teach important conservation lessons including the difference between native and invasive plant species.

From April 15-May 16, 2011, Independence NHP's garden design can be viewed and voted on at www.nps.gov/inde/forkids or www.first-bloom.org. The First Bloom group with the most votes will win a free trip to a national park. NPF is also awarding at random three NPF prize packages to voters who participate. People are allowed to cast their vote once daily, with each vote increasing the chances of winning.

"Independence National Historical Park is excited to compete in the First Bloom Garden Design Contest. We're putting the knowledge and skills learned in the program to a practical and beneficial use in the park," said Park Superintendent Cynthia MacLeod. "This experience has also helped our kids grow their love for the outdoors, building on and benefitting from First Lady Michelle Obama's 'Let's Move' program to strengthen Americans' bond with the outdoors."

The Garden Design Contest is the culmination of a year of project work in which Girl Scouts from West Philadelphia have partnered with Independence NHP to learn important lessons about stewardship and conservation. The Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania are currently one of 24 youth groups participating in the program in 24 national parks throughout the country.

"Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania is proud of its three-year partnership with Independence National Historical Park on the First Bloom program, and thrilled to participate in this contest. Girls from across our council in urban, suburban, and rural areas enjoy learning about how our choices effect the environment, and our National Park treasures," said Natalye Paquin, CEO of the Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania.

To view a gallery of the First Bloom garden designs, cast a vote for your favorite design and learn more about the First Bloom program, please visit www.first-bloom.org.

Vote for Independence, just like the founding fathers did in 1776!

ABOUT THE NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION

You are the owner of 84 million acres of the world's most treasured landscapes, ecosystems, and historic sites -- all protected in America's nearly 400 national parks. Chartered by Congress, the [National Park Foundation](http://www.nationalparkfoundation.org) is the official charity of America's national parks. We work hand in hand with the National Park Service to connect you and all Americans to the parks, and to make sure that they are preserved for the generations who will follow. Join us in supporting your national parks -- this is your land. www.nationalparks.org.

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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 6th 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, www.nps.gov/inde, Facebook page, www.facebook.com/IndependenceNHP, or follow us at twitter.com/independencenhp.

ABOUT GIRL SCOUTS OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

With the mission of building girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place, Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania (GSEP) delivers programs for girls ages 5-18 to promote their healthy development and build their skills and interests in leadership, science, technology, math, the environment and outdoor experiences. GSEP is the largest girl-serving organization in Pennsylvania, with more than 41,000 girl and 14,000 adult volunteer members throughout Berks, Bucks, Carbon, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, and Philadelphia Counties. For more information about GSEP visit www.gsep.org.