



For Immediate Release

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ECHO'S OPEN DOOR SUCCESSES AND ECHO EARTH WEEKS ANNOUNCED

Support of Community, Government, and Private Sector Partnerships Are Key

(BURLINGTON, VT) Senator Patrick Leahy, Robert W. Varney of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Heather Paquette of Hannaford Supermarkets, along with ECHO Board members Mary Abele and Tom Little, today announced the successes of ECHO's Open Door access programs. Speakers also addressed the critical importance of the project's partnerships with government entities, like the EPA, and the private sector, such as Hannaford Supermarkets, in tandem with community support. In addition, ECHO made a community appeal to raise \$165,000 for ECHO's Open Door in 2006, from individual contributions. Lastly, the events and activities encompassing ECHO Earth Weeks — a two-week celebration of Earth Day in April — were officially announced.

In 2005, ECHO's Open Door raised \$362,077. Individual contributions and private foundations were \$108,752; funding through an EPA Lake Champlain grant was \$200,000; and Hannaford Supermarkets three-year, annual commitment is \$53,325.

Senator Leahy stated, "ECHO's Open Door has been a tremendous success in breaking down financial, cultural and geographic barriers to community members who want to learn more about the Lake Champlain Basin. The new contribution from EPA will help the next generation to renew our commitment to take good care of the Lake and its Basin."

Robert W. Varney, regional administrator of EPA's New England office said, "EPA is proud to continue our support of the good work by ECHO at the Leahy Center for Lake Champlain. This facility is an exciting resource for people living in the Champlain Valley to learn about their beautiful Lake and surrounding environment."

Mary Abele, Chair of the ECHO Board: "On behalf of the ECHO Board of Directors, volunteers and staff, I would like to express my gratitude to all of the individual donors and ECHO Annual Pass Holder's for their support of ECHO's Open Door. We are also deeply grateful for the contributions of Senator Leahy, EPA New England and Hannaford Supermarkets."

Heather Paquette, Hannaford Supermarkets District Manager stated, "Hannaford Supermarkets is proud to support the ECHO Basin Backyard Explorers program and student fair, to help 'open the door' to ECHO visits by thousands of elementary and middle school students from the Lake Champlain Basin. Hannaford is also delighted to be the event sponsor of ECHO Earth Weeks, and in particular, its new ECHO Earth Weeks Art Contest; designed to impress upon students the importance of safeguarding our environment in order to maintain a healthy food chain for all of us."

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ECHO Earth Weeks, a two week celebration of Earth Day in the Champlain Basin, is April 17-30. Beyond the Hannaford ECHO Backyard Basin Explorer student fair (April 17-20), the event features the following activities:

- ECHO Earth Weeks Art Contest, sponsored by Hannaford Supermarkets, with the 2006 theme of a "Healthy Food Chain." Vermont and upstate New York K-12 students are encouraged to enter their art — to be displayed during ECHO Earth Weeks MudFest (April 22-30) — which will be panel-judged and eligible for prizes. The Grand Prize Artist will win an iPod nano, among other prizes, and their classroom will receive an Apple iBook laptop computer. Artists from three grade levels will also win prizes. For details go to echovermont.org. The event's media sponsors are the Burlington Free Press, WPTZ/NewsChannel 5, and WDEV, and its prize sponsor is Small Dog Electronics.
- ECHO Earth Weeks MudFest, is April 22-30. Mud-themed activities, games and daily "Muddy Music" performances by regional artists featuring Patti Casey; Pete Sutherland; Sandra Wright; Jon Gailmor; Sheefra; Mountain Girl Band featuring Tammy Fletcher, Dakota Foley & Jim Pitman; PossumHaw; Colin McCaffrey; and Lewis Franco. The event will also feature eco-exhibitors and Voices for the Lake stewardship workshops for families.

STATUS OF ECHO'S OPEN DOOR PROGRAMS (November 2005 to March 2006)

- Annual Pass Matching Gift: 1,270 free Annual Passes were given to low-income neighbors for every Annual Pass purchased or renewed Nov. 21, 2005! through December 31, 2005.
- ECHO After School: Registered 165 low-income 4-12 year olds to participate in ECHO Encounters; games, crafts, science experiments, and ECHO Treks.
- Hannaford ECHO Backyard Basin Explorer (EBBE): ECHO registered nearly 2,000 students. The 2005/06 EBBE program offers free ECHO Classes, and a free visit during ECHO Earth Weeks student fair to present student environmental projects and presentations.
- The Library ECHO Pass — which library patrons borrow like a book to redeem for two dollar admission — has been distributed to over 365 Basin libraries.
- MOBIUS Mentoring, Inc. Free admission to 300 children who participate in the MOBIUS Mentoring Movement, when accompanied by their mentor at the standard admission.
- Social Service Agency Vouchers. Distributed 1,210 Annual Passes and 3,697 two-dollar admission vouchers through regional social service agency partners to youth, senior citizens, people with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged families.
- Teacher and Teacher Ambassador Programs: Free daily admission to Vermont and New York educators. 78 teachers who serve as Teacher Ambassadors — the liaison between ECHO and their school — received a free Family Annual Pass, with benefits of three free guests, and free admission to over 280 science museums.
- Vermont and New York Resident Discount: Social service agencies distributed 3,697 two-dollar admission vouchers.

ECHO at the Leahy Center for Lake Champlain is Vermont's Lake Aquarium and Science Center, on the beautiful Burlington Waterfront. ECHO features 60 species of live fish, amphibians, invertebrates, and reptiles, with more than 100 hands-on experiences, and hosts major traveling exhibits several times a year. The 2.2 acre site also highlights the Lake Champlain Navy Memorial. For more information on ECHO, visit our website at www.echovermont.org, call Toll-Free 1-877-ECHOFUN, or write to ECHO, One College Street, Burlington, VT 05401.

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