

## Youth Venture – New England

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### CT Teens Win \$10,000 for Their Environmentally-based Social Venture

Concord, NH – January 19, 2009 – Newly sworn-in President Barack Obama has promised to make community service a cornerstone of his administration. On the eve of his inauguration he commemorated Martin Luther King, Jr. Day by taking part in a volunteer service project and quoting the great civil rights leader saying, "Everybody can be great because everybody can serve."

Three CT teenagers are being recognized for their inspiring efforts to serve their community. Jessie Mehrhoff, Kelsey Sullivan, and Lindsay Haythorn, members of Green Teens U.S.A., are among the 15 Youth Venture Teams chosen to receive a \$10,000 grant from the Best Buy @15 Challenge with Youth Venture.

Green Teens U.S.A. was launched in March 2007 with the hope of inspiring their Storrs-Mansfield community members to take an active role in helping save the environment. The Team organizes community tree-plantings, compact fluorescent bulb exchanges and also works to educate elementary students about reducing environmental waste.

With their grant, Green Teens U.S.A. will launch their ambitious Compost Caf. Project. The Team will install a large-scale food composter in the cafeteria of Edwin O. Smith High School for fellow students to toss food scraps and biodegradable lunchware. The compost will eventually be turned over to the school agriculture or science department to use. All cafeteria forks, knives and spoons will be replaced with reusable utensils, leaving the cafeteria with close to zero waste.

"The high school cafeteria is a great place to socialize and learn," says Green Teen U.S.A member Jessie Mehrhoff, "and by implementing The Compost Caf. Project into the daily values of the cafeteria, the concept of environmentalism will reach students that it normally would not have reached."

In all, over 70 Teams competed in the Best Buy @ 15 Challenge. "The fifteen winning Teams are excellent examples of Venture Teams who started with a \$1,000 grant and turned it into a long-lasting Venture that has touched the entire community. Their dreams to expand their Ventures are now possible, which will lead to an even larger impact in their community, and all over the world," said Gretchen Zucker, Executive Director of Youth Venture. "We are so proud of what each and every Team has accomplished."

The winners were judged by their project's creativity, community impact, and sustainability. The Venture Teams address a variety of issues ranging from poverty to the environment, arts, children, and disaster relief. To view the results and a complete list of winning Teams, visit [www.genv.net/bestbuy](http://www.genv.net/bestbuy).

#### **About Youth Venture**

Ashoka's Youth Venture® is a global movement of young changemakers. Youth Venture inspires and invests in teams of young people as they start their own sustainable social ventures, connecting them into a powerful global network. Collectively, these young changemakers are redefining the youth years as a time of initiative and positive change. For more information, please visit [www.GenV.net](http://www.GenV.net).

#### **About Ashoka**

Ashoka is the world's largest network of social entrepreneurs—individuals with innovative and practical ideas for addressing social needs. Working with these social entrepreneurs, Ashoka builds communities of innovators who work collectively to transform society and design new ways for the social sector to become more productive, entrepreneurial and globally integrated. For more information, please visit [www.ashoka.org](http://www.ashoka.org).

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