

Youth Venture – New England

The Concord Center, 10 Ferry Street, Suite 320, Concord, NH 03301
Phone: (866) 923-9863 Fax: (603) 410-6675 Web: www.GenV.net

Media Contact: Jessica O'Neal – Program Associate: Media & Marketing
Email: joneal@youthventure.org, Phone: 866-923-9863, ext. 3



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Merrimack Teens Win \$10,000 for a Service Project that Precedes President Obama's Call to Action

CONCORD, NH – January 21, 2009 – In his inaugural speech, President Barack Obama stated, “to the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow; to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds.”

Four Merrimack High School students who already have put that pledge into action are being recognized for their efforts to provide clean drinking water to families in poor nations. Jane Starke, Melia Robinson, Noelle Joubert and Julie Phelps are members of the United Way-Youth Venture Team called Pure Water Vending. The Team is one of 15 Youth Venture Teams chosen to receive a \$10,000 grant from the Best Buy @15 Challenge with Youth Venture to support and expand their community-benefiting projects.

Pure Water Vending launched their Venture in February 2008 as a result of the United Way of Greater Nashua - Youth Venture partnership. The friends wanted to do something to help after learning that globally 6,000 children die everyday from drinking contaminated water. The Team raised \$4,000 to purchase a vending machine to sell bottled water at a local community center. The profits are donated to Pure Water for the World, a nonprofit organization that installs sand filtration systems in remote villages in third world countries.



Mobilizing the Caring Power of Young People



“These young people are raising awareness in their community about a serious issue and are taking positive action. We commend them for their leadership.” said Lucille Jordan, president of Nashua Community College and chairperson of United Way of Greater Nashua's Youth Venture Committee.

With their grant, Pure Water Vending plans to spread their idea across the country. They will locate 4- 5 other youth interested in duplicating their Venture and offer them \$2,000 to get started, along with support. “It's a great project to replicate in other sites, because it's easy for teens to manage, and is something that children can easily relate to – buying clean drinking water from us so children in other countries can have clean water, too,” said Lead Venturer Starke.

Over 70 Venture Teams competed in the nationwide Best Buy @15 Challenge. “The 15 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.

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.

About United Way of Greater Nashua

United Way of Greater Nashua seeks to improve people's lives by creating lasting changes in conditions that affect the 11 communities in its service area. United Way collaborates with local businesses, government, nonprofits, faith-based groups, and individuals to define and address the most pressing problems. At the same time, United Way continues its tradition of helping area residents meet basic health and human service needs by supporting innovative programs that have positive, measurable outcomes. For more information, visit www.unitedwaynashua.org.

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