

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Kansas Corps Pilot Project makes Melvern trails a reality

Melvorn, KS - On April 19, 2008, over 50 students and sponsors from 6 colleges and universities across the state gathered to create a hiking and biking trail in the community of Melvern, Kansas. Working with the local "Friends of the Trail" committee and their partners, Westar Electric's Green Team, the Kansas Trails Council and the PRIDE organization, these students were able to help a small community convert what was once a landfill into a health and fitness trail that will stimulate their local economy. In addition to promoting fitness, the trails are being utilized as "outdoor" classrooms for the community and school districts in the surrounding area.

Kansas Corps purpose is to unite student volunteers from Kansas' colleges and universities to serve the public service needs of the state of Kansas; *Kansas Corps* is higher education serving the public good. With a single phone call, this group of college student volunteers could be mobilized to provide disaster recovery, social services and/or community development assistance to any region of the state.

This pilot project tested the concept of *Kansas Corps*. "When college students come together we can do big things," said Natasha Blackmore, a freshman from Allen County Community College. *Kansas Corps* college student volunteers from KU, K-State, Fort Hays State, Allen County Community College, and Pratt Community College cleared and raked trails, trimmed trees, cut and removed rock, built picnic tables and benches, and assisted in the bridge building that took place over the creek that runs through the trails. In addition, student volunteers from the Hospitality/Culinary Arts program at Flint Hills Technical College prepared the meal that fed the approximately 100 volunteers for the day. Together with members of the community and others approximately two miles of trails were completed.

"For those of us who build trails as a hobby we know that the progress made today is tremendous," said Tim Gogolski with the Kansas Trails Council. "We want all of you to know that the amount of work today is great," he continued as students prepared to leave for the day.

"The *Kansas Corps* group was great to work with," said Joyce Lacey, "Friends of the Trails" co-chair in Melvern, "The community appreciates the hard work. It would have taken us a long time to get this much done."

Resources from the Kansas Volunteer Commission, Huck Boyd Institute for Rural Development, Insurance Planning Center, Inc. of Emporia, and Price Choppers/Country Mart of Emporia made the meal possible. Other contributors to the day's event were Linweld, Inc of Hays who provided gloves for volunteers, American Red Cross of Ellis County and K-State Volunteer

Center who provided bottled water, the City of Melvern who provided snacks and equipment, the Kansas Trails Council who provided crew leaders and equipment, and Westar Electric's Green Team who provided protective eye wear, staff, and supplies to assist in the trail building. Those responsible for the organization of the event were members of the Center for Civic Leadership, Kansas Campus Compact, PRIDE Organization, the Kansas Board of Regents Student's Advisory Committee and many others.

"The response to the *Kansas Corps* initiative has been positively overwhelming," said Chantelle Arnold, pilot project coordinator. "Schools, state agencies, private corporations and non-profit agencies alike have all been great to work with. They see the tremendous value that college student volunteers can provide to the state of Kansas."

"Overall the pilot project was a remarkable success," Arnold continued. "We learned a great deal about what it will take to make the *Kansas Corps* a reality."

The Students' Advisory Committee along with members of the *Kansas Corps* planning committee will present the full proposal to the Kansas Board of Regents at their May meeting. The proposal seeks an endorsement from the Kansas Board of Regents for the *Kansas Corps* initiative and asks that participation of all higher education institutions be promoted. Additionally, a request for permanent funding beginning in FY 2010 from the Kansas Board of Regents and the state legislature is sought.

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