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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hamilton Community Foundation Announces New Environmental Grants

HAMILTON – Hamilton Community Foundation has announced grants totalling \$80,000 to four local environmental organizations, supporting the sector’s important work in creating a sustainable Hamilton community.

The four organizations to receive \$20,000 each are Green Venture, Environment Hamilton, Hamilton Naturalists Club and Bay Area Restoration Council. The grants are being made from the Foundation’s Protecting our Environment Together (POET) program which focuses on helping Hamiltonians to adopt behaviours and choices that improve the environment and protect human health.

“Recognition is rapidly growing of the importance of the environmental sector not only to a healthy community but also to an economically prosperous city,” says Sheree Meredith, HCF’s Vice-President of Philanthropic Services. “For instance, environmental technologies and green jobs are an important component of Hamilton’s new economic development strategy. Investing in these key organizations results in environmental, economic and social benefits for Hamilton.

Green Venture is an example of the economic spinoff from Hamilton Community Foundation’s investment. The local non-profit is committed to helping Hamiltonians live more sustainably at home and at work. Part of the HCF grant will support training staff to conduct energy audits in new areas that will expand the organization’s existing fee-for-service energy audit work.

“Well-trained staff will be key for us to be able to take advantage of opportunities from the province’s new Green Energy Act,” says Green Venture’s executive director Pete Wobschall, “These include the proposed green audits for homeowners and other similar initiatives that are likely to emerge.”

Among the projects that Environment Hamilton’s grant will expand is its Fruit Tree project which helps address basic needs for low-income citizens. Volunteers pick fruit that would otherwise go to waste, from trees in local backyards. The harvested fruit goes to local food banks and social service providers, providing fresh produce to families who would not otherwise be able to afford it.

“We are thrilled to be receiving this support from the Hamilton Community Foundation,” says Lynda Lukasik, Environment Hamilton’s executive director. “This couldn’t be a more critical time to be providing fresh, healthy local fruit to area food banks. The grant will also be hugely beneficial to us in supporting staff development and promoting public awareness about the environment.”

Hamilton Naturalists’ Club’s grant will expand its Land Trust Program which works with landowners to protect and enhance natural areas. Bay Area Restoration Council’s funding will include resources to engage more people in its adopt-a-creek and marsh planting programs.

In addition to these grants, Hamilton Community Foundation is hosting a series of workshops throughout the year for the four organizations. These sessions will focus on common issues faced by the organizations, such as volunteer management, financial and strategic planning.

Launched in 2004, HCF's Protecting Our Environment Together supports the work of neighbourhood and citizen groups, schools, youth and non-governmental organizations serving Hamilton and focuses on air and water quality, waste reduction and management, reducing energy consumption and protecting natural areas. Originally a three-year program, it was extended based on its track record of creating a greener Hamilton.

Under the "POET" program, some \$287,000 has been granted since 2004. POET also has a youth component which annually awards grants to Hamilton's secondary schools. Last year, 26 high schools carried out environmental projects with support from POET youth grants.

Hamilton Community Foundation was founded in 1954 to help donors give back to their community in ways that mean most to them. Since its founding, HCF has made grants to our community totalling more than \$51 million to organizations across sectors: health, social services, arts, environment, education and recreation. Its mission is *to strengthen Hamilton's quality of life as an inclusive and sustainable community by acting as a catalyst and by connecting people, ideas and resources through community philanthropy.*

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