

Cleveland Metroparks Receives PNC Grant To Bring Environmental Education Program “On Wheels” To Underserved Preschoolers

- Grant of more than \$195,000 announced as part of local PNC Grow Up Great initiative to improve school readiness in Cleveland region -

CLEVELAND, Feb. 9, 2011 – The [PNC Foundation](#) today announced a grant to [Cleveland Metroparks](#) to establish Eco Explorers powered by PNC Grow Up Great, a new program designed to help enhance environmental education for Cleveland preschoolers. The program will feature a mobile education vehicle, the "Eco Explorer," that will visit underserved classrooms to promote an understanding of nature and science. The grant of more than \$195,000 from the PNC Foundation, which receives its principal funding from The PNC Financial Services Group, also will create programs to teach lessons in sustainability at special events in Cuyahoga County.

Approximately 19,000 students, ages 3 to 6, in early education programs operated by Greater Cleveland Head Start and the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) will be served by the Eco Explorers powered by [PNC Grow Up Great](#) program over the course of the year. The 24-foot-long Eco Explorer mobile education vehicle is equipped with a computer-powered 50-inch touch LCD monitor and materials for environmental and science activities.

The vehicle will provide customized educational programming and hands-on activities, led by Cleveland Metroparks naturalists, which focus on environmental-based lessons that promote school readiness in nature and science, creative arts, fine and gross motor skills, problem solving, listening and speaking. Activities also cultivate awareness of sustainability through activities that encourage recycling, water and energy conservation, and crafts that support wildlife.

"The Eco Explorers powered by PNC Grow Up Great program will help inspire curiosity and a greater appreciation for nature and science for Cleveland-area children," said PNC Regional President for Northern Ohio Paul Clark, speaking on behalf of the PNC Foundation. "The environmental stewardship lessons they learn today have the potential to influence healthier and stronger communities of tomorrow."

The announcement is part of the PNC Foundation's signature philanthropic initiative, Grow Up Great, a 10-year, \$100 million bilingual effort to improve early childhood education. The PNC Foundation already has provided more than \$2.5 million in grants to Cleveland area organizations to establish new programs in school readiness for underserved preschool children.

"As the area leader in outdoor education, Cleveland Metroparks believes in the importance of conserving our natural resources and providing our children with the right tools and programming to develop a healthy appreciation for the environment," said Brian Zimmerman, executive director of Cleveland Metroparks. "This funding will enable us to bring nature and science to preschoolers across Greater Cleveland via the new mobile Eco Explorer vehicle."

In addition to the program grants, PNC will donate 6,000 of the newly released Happy, Healthy, Ready for School – Math Is Everywhere activity kits, one for each student within Cleveland Metropolitan School District and Cuyahoga County Head Start centers. The kits were created by Sesame Workshop, the nonprofit educational organization behind Sesame Street TM, as part of a continuing partnership with PNC. The math activity kits are available for free at all PNC Bank branches, [pncgrowupgreat.com](#) and [sesamestreet.org/math](#). Additionally, the Math Is Everywhere video is available, at no charge, on Amazon.com VOD and on iTunes (iTunes.com).

Cleveland Metroparks is the area's leader in outdoor education making nearly 440,000 contacts annually with families, students, and visitors both outdoors and in the classroom. <http://www.clemetparks.com/>

The PNC Foundation, which receives its principal funding from The PNC Financial Services Group (NYSE: PNC), actively supports organizations that provide services for the benefit of communities in which it has a significant presence. The foundation focuses its philanthropic mission on early childhood education and community and economic development, which includes the arts and culture. Through its signature cause, Grow Up Great, PNC has created a 10-year, \$100 million initiative to enhance early childhood education and school readiness.

CONTACTS:**PNC**

Kelly Wagner Amen

(216) 222-9514

(216) 536-8507 (cell)

kelly.wagneramen@pnc.com

Cleveland Metroparks

Jane Christyson

(216) 635-3229

(216) 780-9592 (cell)

mjc@clevelandmetroparks.com

<https://pnc.mediaroom.com/index.php?s=3473&item=74405>