

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**Greenway Challenge Gives \$1,000 to Youth Leadership Academy**

SUTTON – Citing its goal to promote the vitality of the Blackstone Valley Region, organizers of the Blackstone River Valley Greenway Challenge presented a check for \$1,000 to the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation on Tuesday, January 10, to support its Blackstone Valley Youth Leadership Academy. The check was presented in front of approximately 80 Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce members attending an economic outlook breakfast held at Pleasant Valley Country Club in Sutton.

The Blackstone Valley Youth Leadership Academy develops leadership skills of 25 ninth- and 10<sup>th</sup>-grade students from the Massachusetts and Rhode Island Blackstone Valley communities and strengthens their connection to the Valley through community service.

The Greenway Challenge is an annual event in which participants bike, paddle and run over a course designed to encourage teamwork and sportsmanship, and to raise awareness of the Blackstone River Valley.

After graduating from last year's inaugural Youth Leadership Academy class, Burrillville (R.I.) High School student Samantha Pellerin served as co-captain for the Blackstone Gorge transition site of the Greenway Challenge in September 2005. Pellerin was on hand for the check presentation at Pleasant Valley.

"We are encouraged that these students are taking their community service interests to another level to enrich their lives and their communities," said Mary Lou Anderson, Blackstone Valley Youth Leadership Academy Coordinator. "We are grateful for the Greenway Challenge's support."

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About the Greenway Challenge:

The Greenway Challenge is a multi-sport, adventure race held every year in the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor that links Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Participants run, cycle, and paddle through one of New England's most beautiful outdoor recreation areas.

While the emphasis is on fun, teams participate in a number of divisions competing for prizes and recognition. There is also a "tri-athlete" category.

Approximately 600 participants competed in 2005 with thousands of spectators lining the course to cheer them on.