



OPERATION
Green Team
Keeping Huntsville Beautiful

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Operation Green Team Chosen to Participate in Keep America Beautiful's 2011 "City Partner Immersion Program"

Program Will Support Vacant Land Stabilization Initiatives in Huntsville

Huntsville, AL --- Operation Green Team was one of three Keep America Beautiful (KAB) affiliates selected to participate in the 2011 KAB/PHS City Partners Immersion Program under the guidance of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS). Keep America affiliates in Phoenix Arizona and Akron Ohio are the two other affiliates accepted for the program.

In the last 10 years, PHS, through its Community LandCare program, has reclaimed and maintained 11,000 vacant lots within Philadelphia, or 9 million square feet of vacant property. By building partnerships with city agencies, local community groups and concerned citizens PHS has built a model program for vacant land management.

"Operation Green Team is appreciative of this opportunity for us to gain valuable insight from a successful program," Joy McKee, Operation Green Team's director stated. "We will be working with our Planning Department as well as local organizations like the North Alabama Food Policy Council to see if we can extend our partnerships utilizing vacant lots."

The KAB/PHS City Partner Immersion Program, in its second year, provides the financing for KAB affiliates to participate in an intensive two-day seminar in Philadelphia to learn first-hand from PHS and its partners about the successes it has had in developing the LandCare program. All 2011 participants will be asked to serve as mentors for other KAB affiliates interested in creating vacant lot management programs.

"Large cities and small towns across the country are having to confront the ever-growing problems of vacant land and abandoned properties. Vacant lots, however, can represent an opportunity, not simply a burden. Carefully constructed and managed plans of lot reclamation and stabilization can turn a neighborhood and a community around," said Matthew McKenna, president and CEO of Keep America Beautiful. "We're pleased that PHS is sharing the successes realized through Philadelphia's vacant land management program and sharing them with our affiliate communities."

"Several decades of experience in the field of vacant land stabilization have led to a very effective model here in Philadelphia," said PHS President Drew Becher. "PHS looks forward to sharing the lessons we've learned and the transformations that have taken shape in our neighborhoods, including community gardens, pocket parks, and attractive, marketable real estate."

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