



ESSEX NATIONAL
HERITAGE AREA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**AMERICA'S BEST IDEA GRANT AWARDED TO SALEM MARITIME
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE AND ESSEX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA**

*\$15,000 Grant to Sponsor Boys & Girls Club of Greater Salem Special Programs for their
Summer Camp.*

May 8, 2009 (Salem, MA) . . . Essex Heritage (The Essex National Heritage Commission), in its tradition of celebrating our region's unique cultural heritage, is pleased to report that the National Park Foundation awarded Salem Maritime National Historic Site and the Essex National Heritage Area one of thirty-five America's Best Idea grants. The focus of these grants, awarded to National Parks throughout the country, is to extend the reach of the important lessons offered in Ken Burns' documentary "The National Parks: America's Best Idea" and to reach traditionally underserved groups and inspire their future stewardship of our National Parks.

The \$15,000 grant awarded to the Salem Maritime National Historic Site and the Essex National Heritage Area will sponsor children from the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Salem to participate in a variety of maritime related activities this summer and to learn about the diverse maritime community of the North Shore. Through these programs the children will discover untold stories related to Salem Maritime National Historic Site, the first national historic site. Salem Maritime National Historic Site was established in 1937, and is one of over 400 National Park Service units.

Twenty 8 to 10 year olds from the Boys & Girls Club will have the opportunity to participate in one of the Schooner Fame's summer camps on July 20-24. Throughout the summer over 250 5 to 14 year olds from the Boys & Girls Club will participate in field trips to Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site and other maritime heritage sites throughout Essex County. All of these programs will be funded by this grant and become part of the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Salem's regular summer camp program.

Through these hands-on educational experiences, the children will discover the impact that African Americans and other ethnic minorities had on American maritime history- especially in 18th and 19th century New England. Through this grant program we hope to find ways to connect with people who have had little or no experience in our national parks, as well as to find ways to deepen existing relationships. Ultimately, the scope of the project includes the development of pilot programs that will strengthen the National Park Service's ability to reach underserved audiences. *This project was made possible in part by a grant from the National Park Foundation through the generous support of the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund and the Popplestone Foundation.*

For additional information, please visit: EssexHeritage.org and www.nps.gov/sama

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About the Essex National Heritage Area and Essex Heritage

Designated by the US Congress in recognition of the important role that this region played in American history and its significant heritage sites still remaining, the Essex National Heritage Area is comprised of the 34 communities of Essex County, MA. Essex Heritage is a non profit agency that manages the Heritage Area, and works in collaboration with the National Park Service to promote public/private partnerships, and develop programs that enhance, preserve and encourage regional awareness of the Area's unique historic, cultural and natural resources. For more information, visit Essex Heritage at www.essexheritage.org or call (978) 740-0444.

About Salem Maritime National Historic Site

Salem Maritime National Historic Site was designated in 1937, the first National Historic Site in the National Park Service system. The nine acre site includes the homes of merchants and mariners, the Salem Custom House in which the famous author Nathaniel Hawthorne worked, and a replica of the three-masted cargo vessel *Friendship*. Today, the rangers and volunteers of Salem Maritime NHS continue to inform and inspire visitors with the maritime history of New England and the United States. For more information, visit us on the web at www.nps.gov/sama or call 978-740-1650.