

ALBUQUERQUE SELECTED AS PRIORITY CITY BY U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR TO CONNECT YOUTH TO THE GREAT OUTDOORS

ALBUQUERQUE, NM. – As part of the Interior Department’s leadership of First Lady Michelle Obama’s [Let’s Move! Outside initiative](#) to engage the next generation of outdoor stewards and inspire millions of young adults to play, learn, serve and work in the great outdoors, Mayor Berry joined Janice Schneider, Assistant Secretary of Land Minerals Management and Cezanne Fritz, President & CEO of the YMCA of Central New Mexico today to announce that Albuquerque has been selected as one of the first 50 cities to participate in the nationwide movement.

The initiative, funded through a \$5 million national commitment by the American Express Foundation, will provide two years of funding for the YMCA of Central New Mexico to create a community coordinator position in Albuquerque to help coordinate efforts, facilitate collaboration, grow resources, and increase participation in outdoor programs on all public lands – from local parks to federal lands and waters. The funding will also support efforts to engage young adults and veterans to serve on the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps and engage new volunteers during next year’s National Park Service centennial

“Children across our nation are increasingly disconnected from nature, yet playing outside and learning about the natural world is fun, healthy and builds confidence in kids. Engaging volunteers of all ages in caring for parks and public lands in Albuquerque not only leverages public resources, it builds pride and a connection to these special places that stays with people forever,” said Schneider. “Albuquerque is blessed with parks and national public lands close by, and a strong network of public and nonprofit leaders committed to getting kids outdoors, active and connected to nature. Through this new partnership, with the financial support of American Express and community connections of the YMCA, we are nurturing a movement to foster the next generation of leaders and outdoor stewards while helping people connect to the public lands in their community – particularly in urban areas like Albuquerque.”

Creating employment opportunities for young people is a component of the initiative being led by the Department of the Interior. Today Schneider announced grants totaling \$171,000 to organizations throughout New Mexico. Examples of work being done include engaging a Native American crew in vegetation monitoring and habitat restoration in the Navajo-Gallup Water Supply Project and employing 8 youth through the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps to work on trails in the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument.

“Albuquerque is home to a growing network of parks, trails, and open spaces. We must do everything we can to prepare our young people to become the future stewards of our city,” said Mayor Richard J. Berry. “I want to thank The U.S. Department of the Interior for selecting our city. Through this partnership, we will promote the rediscovery of our natural ecosystems and pass along values of teamwork, local pride, and social responsibility to the next generation.”

"Many people in our urban neighborhoods don't always have the chance to experience all that our public lands in and around the city have to offer," said Fritz. "This initiative will help us bring together leaders in conservation, education, recreation and service to provide opportunities to deepen connections to these natural and historic sites, develop important skills, and engage in activities where they can give back and strengthen our community."

"Community service and historic preservation have a long heritage at American Express," said Timothy J. McClimon, president of the American Express Foundation. "Since our founding more than 160 years ago, American Express has seen how America's parks and public lands contribute to our sense of national and local identity, and we are proud to lead an effort to mobilize a new generation of volunteers to protect, conserve and revitalize America's public lands and treasured national parks."

The Department of the Interior is leading First Lady Michelle Obama's ["Let's Move! Outside"](#) initiative getting millions of young people to play, learn, serve and work in America's great outdoors. This past March, [Secretary Jewell announced this partnership with the American Express Foundation](#) and [kicked-off the first cities across the country to be a part of this movement](#). Albuquerque joins 26 cities that will be announced in 2015. The remaining cities will be identified in 2016. For more information about the initiative, visit: <http://www.doi.gov/youth>.

This work is part an overall strategy by the Obama Administration to connect young people to the outdoors. Other efforts include the President's recently announced ["Every Kid in A Park"](#) initiative to provide all fourth grade students and their families with free admission to national parks and other public lands and waters for a full year, and the National Park Service's ["Find Your Park"](#) campaign in preparation for next year's centennial of the National Park System.

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