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**“River of Words” Finds New Home
at Beacon Institute, Clarkson University**

Environmental Education Program Expands Offerings to New Area Schools

The Hudson Highlands Land Trust (HHLT) and Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries, Clarkson University (BIRE) today announced a new initiative to transfer and expand the Hudson Highlands River of Words (ROW) environmental education program. Given its extensive academic and public education programming, BIRE will conduct the program as of July 1. HHLT will continue to support ROW as a sponsor and to provide guidance as founding partner.

Michelle Smith, HHLT’s Executive Director, said, “We are thrilled to celebrate the 10th anniversary of ROW by engaging our partnership with BIRE to expand its reach to neighboring cities. Beacon Institute’s location, networks with area school districts and commitment to environmental education make it the perfect new home for ROW to thrive and expand its impact.”

Asher Pacht, BIRE’s Director of Environmental Programs, said, “We are honored HHLT is entrusting the future of ROW to Beacon Institute, Clarkson University. I am excited to continue ROW’s impact while making its transformative educational experiences available to deserving students in all our partner school districts and beyond.”

Since 2008, ROW has fostered future environmental stewards by conducting nearly 700 hands-on, nature-based workshops for approximately 16,500 students in Hudson Valley public schools. Under this new leadership, the program will make its workshops available to new districts like Beacon and Newburgh during the 2018-2019 school year, while continuing to deliver the same high-quality program in existing schools.

Irene O’Garden, award-winning poet and ROW educator, said, “We have to keep the sparkle in our kids if we want to keep the sparkle in our river. This dynamic new partnership will benefit more students than ever. I’d say we’re tickled pink, but we’re really tickled green!”

Elise LaRocco, ROW Program Coordinator, said, “The value of ROW is that, in this technology-obsessed society, we take students outside on school grounds to expose them to nature while teaching them hands-on environmental science, art and writing workshops,” said. “It is exciting that we can expand to new schools. We are fortunate to bring along our entire terrific staff to our new home at BIRE, which will be such a wonderful academic resource for us.”

Maureen Esty, River of Words Coordinator at the Center for Environmental Literacy at Saint Mary's College of California, said, "As coordinator for the international ROW program, I am excited that HHLT has developed a flourishing regional ROW program in the Hudson Valley over the last 10 years since its founding. It is a shining example to all future regional ROW programs across the country, and I am delighted this program will continue to expand and inspire the next generation of watershed caretakers under the capable care of the Beacon Institute, Clarkson University."

Dr. Anthony Collins, Clarkson University President, said, "Clarkson University is proud to provide educational growth experiences in and out of the classroom that enliven minds, broaden horizons, and facilitate dialogue. The River of Words environmental education program will flourish at Clarkson University's Beacon Institute."

Today, Beacon Institute launched a new River Of Words web site and virtual gallery at www.bire.org/row. The website features student art and poetry, photos and videos from ROW workshops, and more information about the program.

ABOUT RIVER OF WORDS

The River of Words (ROW) program incorporates nature exploration and arts, focused on the Hudson River watershed, into traditional education. ROW educators conduct outdoor workshops, tying nature-inspired programming to the New York State Learning Standards and Core Curriculum, and train teachers to use nature as a learning laboratory.

The Hudson Highlands program is based on the international River of Words program, co-founded by former US Poet Laureate Robert Hass, and affiliated with the Library of Congress Center for the Book. The regional version of ROW is currently offered to public schools in Cornwall, Garrison, Haldane, Highland Falls/Fort Montgomery and Putnam Valley districts, with plans to expand in the 2018-2019 school year.

For more information and to register for workshops, visit www.bire.org/row or contact Elise LaRocco at laroccoelise@gmail.com.

ABOUT HHLT

The Hudson Highlands Land Trust is a community-based, accredited, non-profit conservation organization with a mission to protect and preserve the natural resources, rural character and scenic beauty of the Hudson Highlands. www.hhlt.org

ABOUT BIRE

Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries, Clarkson University is a nonprofit organization using science and technology to understand and protect rivers, estuaries and other natural resources. The Institute sponsors an array of educational programs from K-12 to the graduate level with a focus on environmental sustainability. www.bire.org

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