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For Immediate Release

Subject: Conestee Foundation Announces Environmental Education Project

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The Conestee Foundation is pleased to announce a new environmental education initiative at Lake Conestee Nature Park (LCNP).

This initiative embraces the well-established value of getting children and families outdoors. The benefits of outdoor activity and exercise, experiential learning in a natural environment, and escape from indoor distractions that contribute to sedentary and unhealthy lifestyles have been recognized by health professionals and educators alike. In his book, *“Last Child in the Woods,”* Richard Louv underscored the growing problem of “nature deficit disorder”. This profound work recognized that children who get outdoors have fewer school absences, higher performance on standardized testing, and are less likely to suffer from attention deficit, depression, behavior problems, or obesity.

The objective of this project is to utilize the resources of Lake Conestee Nature Park to address this set of societal challenges, while delivering quality of life benefits to children and families. This project will provide an innovative environmental education experience that: 1) gets students outdoors in the natural environment of LCNP; 2) provides lessons on environmental science principles centered around the ecosystems, physical setting, and history of the park; and 3) utilizes the internet to deliver the related educational content.

The project plans call for establishing 25 learning stations along the trails in the park, each with unique signage and information on a core instructional concept. Examples of learning stations may include lessons on water quality in urban streams, wetland ecology, the fate of sediment and water quality contaminants in the Reedy River watershed, and the importance of different ecosystems for wildlife. While students, young and old alike, are learning from this circuit of learning stations, they will enjoy the subtle benefits of outdoor exercise, fresh air, and the stimulative effect of the outdoors on their curiosity and observational skills.

The program will target a broad spectrum of audiences, including families, but will focus on the unique educational needs of high school and middle school students. The project will utilize a variety of technologies for delivering educational content. Students, for example, may be able to download audio, graphic, or text content from the internet to a cell phone, smart phone, MP3 player, or portable computer for use in the field, or for study before, during, or after a field trip to visit the learning stations. The educational content developed for this program will be accessible to individual students, classes, or other groups via the internet.

The educational content of the program will be designed to support and complement specific school curriculum standards in the area of science education. The Conestee Foundation will work closely with professional educators and technology consultants to implement this project.

This exciting education project has been funded by Michelin, 3M, and the Jolley Foundation. The project will be executed over the next year and will be fully deployed by fall 2011.

Lake Conestee Nature Park (LCNP) is a wildlife sanctuary and nature park encompassing 400 acres of ecologically diverse site conditions supporting a remarkable variety of wildlife. This rich diversity includes extensive wetlands, riparian forests along four miles of the Reedy River, as well as upland hardwoods, meadows, and successional habitats.

Lake Conestee Nature Park is owned by the Conestee Foundation, a private non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. The mission of the Conestee Foundation is to conserve its Lake Conestee properties as a nature park and wildlife sanctuary for public recreation and environmental education. The Conestee Foundation depends upon grants and charitable donations and it welcomes tax-deductible contributions. The park also enjoys significant support from the Greenville County Recreation District.

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Note: Background information on Lake Conestee Nature Park is available at <http://conesteeperk.com>.