The Urban Ecology Institute, Inc.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Fall River Field Studies Underway in 2010 with Help from Dominion Foundation

Fall River, Massachusetts – September 30, 2009 – The Urban Ecology Institute's partnership with the Matthew J. Kuss Middle School in Fall River is thriving, after receiving a Dominion Foundation Educational Partnership Grant in September 2009 to support field studies, experimental education, and provide scientific equipment in Fall River. The Urban Ecology Institute is now developing field studies curriculum modules and supporting lessons for the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade classes at Kuss Middle School. The units provide students with an opportunity to engage in scientific inquiry and research using their new schoolyard as a field site to connect science to the real world in a local context.

To supplement the curriculum development, the Urban Ecology Institute is also providing professional development in field studies training for educators at the Kuss, resulting in improved teacher application of scientific concepts to real world local scenarios. Teachers have developed skills in lending inquiry-based activities on local ecological research and environmental issues in Fall River. This new knowledge and set of skills has translated into many benefits to their students thus far and will increase as the implementation plan for grades 6 and 7 progress.

This project was developed as a means of offering professional development and field studies curriculum and materials for the middle school teachers at the Kuss Middle School. The true outcome of this project emerges as an increased environmental stewardship ethic and scientific self-efficacy of middle school students in Fall River. Experiential education and inquiry based scientific research have successfully engaged students in hands-on science activities, where they are able to prove themselves as leaders and explorers outside of a traditional classroom setting.

As students become more connected to their "schoolyard field site" they are also noticing environmental issues around them. The next step will be to work with teachers to develop service learning opportunities for the students to become actively engaged in the improvement of the environment and community, ideally resulting in long term changes in behavior.

To learn more about the organization and its offerings, please visit www.urbaneco.org.

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