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U.S. Forest Service and the Ad Council Launch a National Sweepstakes to Encourage Children to Re-Connect with Nature

Photo Sweepstakes to Encourage Tweens to Find Their "Other You"

In an effort to encourage tweens (ages 8-12) to spend more time in nature, the U.S. Forest Service is joining the Ad Council today to launch an interactive photo/art sweepstakes that will engage families in experiencing nature first hand. As an extension of their "Re-Connecting Kids with Nature" public service advertising (PSA) campaign, which first launched in June, the photo sweepstakes encourages tweens to head into the forest, explore and find their "other you." The sweepstakes is kicking off today and will continue through December 7, 2009.

"This photo sweepstakes is a wonderful way to extend the reach of our campaign with the Forest Service and engage children and their families in developing a love for nature," said Peggy Conlon, CEO and President of The Ad Council. "We are excited to see the submissions when they come in and are grateful to The North Face for generously donating the prizes."

Sweepstakes participants will provide a photo or an original piece of artwork that represents their journey in nature. By visiting sweeps.discovertheforest.com, parents can submit their children's picture or drawing depicting what they have discovered or experienced in nature. Each image will be reviewed by a third party vendor who will then post all approved entries to the public gallery. The North Face, the world's premier supplier of authentic, innovative and technically advanced outdoor apparel, equipment and footwear, has donated the prizes, which feature gift cards to its store.

"Connecting kids with nature is the key to creating the stewards of tomorrow," said USDA Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. "This sweepstakes builds on our 'Re-connecting Children with Nature' campaign and is a fun and creative way to encourage families to spend time together in the forest."

The sweepstakes winners will be chosen at random on a weekly basis from the pool of validated entries. Two winners will be selected on the Friday of each week during the sweepstakes period. The grand prize and ten (10) first prize winners will be drawn a week prior to the conclusion of the sweepstakes. The prizes will total \$3,000, with the ten (10) first prizes being \$100 gift cards, followed by 20 weekly prizes of \$50 gift cards, and a grand prize of \$1,000. Each winner will be notified individually. Visitors to the contest site can also view the public gallery to vote. Voters will only be allowed to give the picture a “thumbs up” and are encouraged to vote by being offered an additional chance to win a weekly prize.

“The North Face is committed to outdoor participation and education,” said Aaron Carpenter, The North Face Vice President, Marketing. “US Forest Service and Ad Council’s ‘Re-Connecting Kids with Nature’ campaign is a fun, authentic way to encourage tweens to embrace nature and the outdoors.”

First launched on National Get Outdoors day (June 13, 2009), the goal of the Re-Connecting Kids with Nature PSA campaign is to encourage children to get outside and experience nature first-hand, instilling a life-long love for nature by fostering a connection with urban and national forests. The campaign’s PSAs show the freeing aspects a nature experience can provide by depicting the various qualities -- the curious you, the creative you, the adventurous you -- that tweens can discover about themselves in nature. The TV spots depict children engaging with nature in various ways and encourage audiences to discover the forest, “where the other you lives.”

The campaign directs children to visit www.DiscoverTheForest.org, which features a zip code search of forests and parks, powered by Nature Find™ and Google Maps, as well as downloadable activities to take with them.

U.S. Forest Service

The U.S. Forest Service (www.fs.fed.us) manages 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands for the American Public. Its mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The U.S. Forest Service is the agency responsible for overseeing the use of Smokey Bear in cooperation with the National Association of State Foresters and The Advertising Council.

The Advertising Council

The Ad Council (www.adcouncil.org) is a private, non-profit organization that marshals talent from the advertising and communications industries, the facilities of the media, and the resources of the business and non-profit communities to produce, distribute and promote public service campaigns on behalf of non-profit organizations and government agencies in issue areas such as improving the quality of life for children, preventive health, education, community well-being, environmental preservation and strengthening families.