

For Immediate Release:

*Youth Environmental Study Team to Form in the City of Schenectady*

*The Schoharie River Center, its officers and Board of Directors is pleased to announce the expansion of our environmental education and youth development programming into the City of Schenectady. The Environmental Study Team (EST), an award winning Youth Development Program where middle and high school age youth work with ecologists and aquatic biologists to study, monitor and improve the water quality of local streams, rivers and lakes will be opening in the City of Schenectady at the end of September. The Schenectady EST, operated by the Schoharie River Center, Inc. a non-profit organization based in Burtonsville, and Watershed Assessment Associates, LLC. of Schenectady, will be open for business and recruiting interested youth at their open house at 28 Yates Street in Schenectady on Wednesday, September 24, from 3 – 6 pm. Parents are also welcome to attend and participate in the program with their teens.*

*The Schenectady EST program will be based at newly renovated office and laboratory space located at Watershed Assessment Associates, an environmental consulting and education firm providing stream biology and taxonomy services to state and county agencies, environmental organizations, institutions, and private companies since 1998. The Schenectady EST program will be modeled after the Schoharie River Center's highly successful Environmental Study Team, in which over 60 youth from the Duaneburg area (and Montgomery and Schoharie Counties) have been studying, monitoring, and documenting the water quality of the Schoharie Creek and other streams and lakes since 2002. In 2007 the program was awarded a national Environmental Excellence Award from the Conservation Matters program sponsored by Sea World – Busch Gardens –Fuji Films. In addition to the Schenectady EST program, the Schoharie River Center in Burtonsville will continue to be the home for our current and ongoing EST program focusing on the Schoharie Creek and its tributaries. It's also planned that both EST groups will have the opportunity to participate jointly in some of the River Center's ongoing environmental research projects, youth development activities, and cultural programs.*

*"We are very pleased to be able to expand this program into Schenectady, and we look forward to working with many youth and others in the community to raise awareness about the need to monitor and protect our local freshwater streams, lakes and rivers. Often, in urban areas we don't see or think about the presence of streams or the role they play in providing habitat for wildlife, and serving as a source of buffer and recharge for our aquifers and drinking water sources", said John McKeeby, co-developer of the Environmental Study Team Program and the Executive Director of the Schoharie River Center. Through EST, youth participate directly in studying their local environment, conducting real field biology research, side-by-side with professional biologists, and environmental educators. "The EST members learn how to conduct scientifically valid stream biology assessments, utilizing professional equipment and following standard practices and procedures similar to those used by the NYS Department of Conservation and the EPA. The Schenectady youth EST members will document their research findings and their research will be published and presented publically by the team at local community meetings, and at environmental science conferences" stated Kelly Nolan, Chief Aquatic Biologists for Watershed Assessment Associates and co-developer of EST. In addition to stream monitoring, the group plans weekly hiking excursions, raising trout for release, organize canoe trips to study area streams and rivers, learn how to conduct archeological investigations and other activities. The Schoharie River Center's*

*EST Program are funded through grants from the Community Impact program of the United Way of the Greater Capital Region, and the Schenectady County Youth Bureau, and through private and foundation donations. For more information about Environmental Study Team program or for directions to the open house contact John McKeeby at 346-0225, or at 875-6889.*