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**Hitchcock Center Announces its first Leadership Training Camp with Peter Lamdin, retired 23-year Amherst School teacher and one of the Center's first Counselors in the 1970's**

Amherst, MA – The Hitchcock Center for the Environment is pleased to announce its first ever Leadership Training Camp for youth ages 11- 16, from June 30 – July 3 in Amherst. Young aspiring leaders will gain strong mentoring and leadership skills such as assessing group dynamics, managing behavior, and facilitating activities for younger campers.

Hitchcock's new Youth Leadership Training Camp was the idea of Education Director Colleen Kelley with focused curriculum and activity-planning direction from Peter Lamdin, recently retired, 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher for 23 years at Fort River School in Amherst. Peter returns to the Hitchcock Center where he was one of its first counselors in the 1970's.

Participants will engage in group challenges, a guided field trip, learning opportunities to increase knowledge of the environment, discussions and reflections. This direct empowerment and training provides for future job opportunities as junior counselors at the Hitchcock Center and other programs in the future. Participants achievements will be recognized in a short ceremony on the final day of camp.

Students will develop environmentally themed learning games, prepare their own activities for younger campers and engage the younger children in a cross camp facilitated learning experience. Joining Peter Lamdin is returning camp counselor Courtney Dyson whose background includes a strong foundation in biological research, conservation and wildlife management.

On the development of the program, Camp Director Katie Koerten said, "We saw a need for engaging older children in our camp programs and offering the opportunity in leadership training was the clear choice. The camp was among our first to fill in the spring and we anticipate offering it in future years due to high demand. This is our pilot week and we couldn't be more excited!"

The Hitchcock Center will also be partnering with Kroka Expeditions, of Marlow, NH, engaging camp participants in a group rock climbing challenge during one of their camp days.

### **About the Hitchcock Center for the Environment**

The Hitchcock Center for the Environment is an independent nonprofit environmental learning center serving the communities of Western Massachusetts. Founded in 1962, The Hitchcock Center for the Environment's mission is to foster a greater awareness and understanding of our environment and to develop environmentally literate citizens.

Founded by Ethel Dubois (1906-1987), a former guidance counselor who was deeply inspired by the works of Rachel Carson, the Hitchcock Center was initially known as the Long Plain Nature Center and located on a farm in Leverett. In those early days, the organization provided summer camp and nature programs for low income children living primarily in Holyoke and Springfield through the support and work of a dedicated group of volunteers. Dubois' simple goal was to provide these children with opportunities otherwise not available to them: to experience the natural world and to develop a sense of wonder about it.

Over the years, the Center changed its name and began offering more programs and services, including new science and nature programs for schools and communities throughout Hampshire, Hampden and Franklin Counties. It moved to its current location at the Larch Hill Conservation Area in 1976, with the generous support of the Town of Amherst.

Today, the Center remains true to its core mission to foster a greater awareness and understanding of our environment and to develop environmentally literate citizens. The Hitchcock Center for the Environment now serves nearly 6,500 children, youth, and adults each year, employs a growing staff of highly skilled environmental educators, and has a service region that encompasses all of western Massachusetts. Since 2000 alone, the Hitchcock Center's programs have more than doubled. Space limitations are hampering the organization's ability to meet rising requests for programs, field trips, and classes. The challenge of growth transpired into a unique opportunity for the Center to once again search for a new home and in the process, translate its core values into a built environment.

For more information on Hitchcock Center Programs and Projects please visit:  
[www.hitchcockcenter.org](http://www.hitchcockcenter.org).