

**NEWS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Media Contact:**

**Jennifer Bell**  
585.287.5555  
jennifer@philipsongroup.com

## **SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP ALIVE AND WELL IN ROCHESTER**

*- Greentopia Festival Co-Founders Receive the Center for Environmental Information  
Elizabeth Thorndike Environmental Leadership Award of the Year -*

**Rochester, NY (October 28, 2011)** – The 38th Annual Community Salute to the Environment, hosted by the Center for Environmental Information, was held this week at the RIT Inn & Conference Center. This year Michael Philipson and Lewis Stess, co-founders of Friends of the GardenAerial, were awarded the Elizabeth Thorndike Environmental Leadership Award in recognition for their efforts in organizing, producing and executing the first annual Greentopia Festival. This award is given to organizations or individuals who have shown exceptional leadership through out the community in promoting positive environmental change.

For more than 18 months, Philipson and Stess had worked diligently, along with forty-one community volunteers who represented all walks of the green movement, on Rochester's first sustainable festival. The event that started out as nothing more than an idea on paper developed into a full two-day festival complete with over 140 vendors, music, speakers, culinary and film series, and an alternative energy vehicle show.

"It was truly an honor," says Lewis Stess, "to be recognized for our efforts on this first year event. We believe that the huge success of the first year evidenced by over 18,000 attendees who came to the event, speaks to the our community's desire for such a festival and the growing concern for our environment and healthier living alternatives."

The festival was a fundraiser for a larger vision, the GardenAerial project. Friends of the GardenAerial is a 501(c)3 non-profit grassroots organization advocating for the conversion of pre-existing structures and trails along the Genesee Gorge at High Falls into a multi-use, extraordinary public green space; the creation of a unique elevated park to be used in perpetuity by residents of and visitors to the City of Rochester.

### **About Greentopia:**

*Greentopia is a free two-day "World's Fair" of inspiration through art, music, organic and locally grown food and beverages, ideas and activism. Throughout the festival visitors will be able to hear visionary speakers and meet well-known authors. Through how-to workshops and cutting-edge films, visitors will learn about big green ideas and how to apply them creatively in everyday life. There will be special family activities, community recycled art installations, mouthwatering organic and local food and beverages, and all kinds of live music. Businesses and organizations will showcase products and programs that help restore the planet, promote green living – even save consumers some money.*

### **About GardenAerial:**

*The project proposes transforming the Ponte de Rennes bridge into a stunning "bridge of flowers," and extending an existing trail and building a new bridge across the High Falls. This unparalleled ¾-mile-long public park, floating high above the Genesee Gorge will combine beauty, sustainability and walk-ability, creating an unforgettable experience for local residents and visitors to the Rochester area.*

###

