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NEWS/FEATURE RELEASE

**Opportunity Farm Opens First Home for At-Risk Girls and Receives \$325,000 Challenge Grant from The Kresge Foundation.**

(New Gloucester, Maine) – At the end of December, Opportunity Farm opened its first home for at-risk girls, and received a \$325,000 Challenge Grant from the Kresge Foundation. “We’re thrilled that these events happened simultaneously – and with the help of dedicated volunteers, we are ready to raise the additional funds needed to meet the Kresge Challenge”, says Ron Scott, President of the Farm.

Opportunity Farm is residential group-home campus in New Gloucester, Maine that provides safe, supportive, family-style homes for at-risk boys. Since its founding nearly a century ago, Opportunity Farm has successfully served countless numbers of boys who had nowhere else to turn—and offered them safe, nurturing homes and a path to stable, productive lives. It is the *only* institution in Maine that **intervenes early**—well before troubled youths reach the point of crisis that leads to state custody or incarceration—and **makes a long-term commitment** to their personal development, **regardless of financial need.**

From its founding in 1910, Opportunity Farm has been open to children of all backgrounds—regardless of a family’s race, religion, or financial status. No youth is turned away from Opportunity Farm because of family finances. And everyone who comes to the Farm can count on the same thing: **caring and careful adult supervision, a well-structured daily routine** that includes a good mix of chores and fun, physical activity and rest, **professional tutoring and regular studying;** and **individual counseling** to help him/her confront the emotional challenges he/she faces.

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Several recent studies confirm an alarming trend - more and more girls, both across the nation *and* right here in Maine, are arrested every year, and girls are acting out in increasingly disturbing ways. While Maine's lawmakers and social service experts are working hard to find alternative programs for the growing number of female juvenile offenders, there are no early intervention and long-term preventative options, with full financial assistance, for girls who are at-risk of traveling this path.

It was only logical to the Trustees that Opportunity Farm expand its mission to meet the needs of at-risk girls in Maine. Early last year, the Board approved a \$3.6 million long-term capital plan to build and endow a campus for girls to be located on a separate property, already owned by the Farm, on Bennett Road in New Gloucester.

Opportunity Farm's program for girls incorporates the same family-teaching model used for the boys and **early intervention and a long-term commitment, regardless of financial need** will be the hallmarks of the girls' initiative. At the same time, the new campus and program for girls will recognize and respect the inherent differences between boys and girls—and address the gender-specific challenges and needs of girls.

Funding for the program has come from the generosity of foundations, individuals, trustees, corporations, staff and friends of the Farm. In December 2002, the Kresge Foundation had awarded 158 grants in 2002 for a total of \$109,251,000. John E. Marshall, III, President and CEO of The Kresge Foundation indicated "In this cycle of grantmaking our Trustees were pleased to support a range of organizations, including Opportunity Farm for Boys & Girls. This organization is responding to the new challenges presented by their community."

With help from honorary campaign co-chairs, Senator Olympia Snowe, Former Governor John McKernan, Olympic Skier Julie Parisien and former trustee, John Staples along with a dedicated group of trustees and volunteers - Opportunity Farm has raised \$2.6m of the \$3.6 goal. Before The Kresge Foundation awards a challenge grant to organizations they must have raised a certain percentage of their goal....the grants are made on a challenge basis, requiring the raising of the remaining funds, prior to receiving any funds from Kresge. This process assures the completion of projects. The Kresge

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Foundation is an independent, private foundation created by the personal gifts of Sebastian S. Kresge. It is not affiliated with any corporation or organization.

For More Information about Opportunity Farm for Boys and Girls, please call 926-4532 or go to our website at [www.opportunityfarm.org](http://www.opportunityfarm.org)

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