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For Immediate Release
Contact: Jeff Clarke

Foundation awards \$8.3 million for Anchorage parks

Anchorage - Today the Rasmuson Foundation announced \$8.3 million in awards to benefit the Anchorage parks and recreation system. Chairman Ed Rasmuson noted that "the Foundation has always been a strong supporter of community recreation and the important, positive opportunities parks, trails and recreational programming provide to all citizens, particularly our youth. With the emergence of the Anchorage Park Foundation, strong commitment by the Municipality, and, most importantly, the recent passage of the first parks bond in 5 years, we believe our expanded support of the park system to be a great community investment."

Specifically, the \$8.3 million over five years will support the following projects:

- \$6 million to rebuild current area-wide soccer fields which, because they are in a state of disrepair, are unsafe. The award will also support new championship facilities. The \$6 million will be equally distributed across neighborhood, competition and championship facilities as defined by the Anchorage Soccer Task Force with the support of the Parks & Recreation Department;
- \$900,000 to continue the successful ["Clean and Green" campaign](#) which, over 3 years, will revitalize 120 Anchorage parks. The Foundation's first \$400,000 award to the campaign in 2004 was matched by over 30,000 hours of volunteer labor and over \$800,000 of bond monies designated for capital improvements;
- \$900,000 to continue the successful ["Challenge Grant" program](#) which, in 2006, awarded 26 grants to individuals, groups and neighborhoods for grassroots projects designed to reconnect citizens with their parks. The Foundation's first \$410,000 award in 2005 to start the program was matched with over \$800,000 of cash, in-kind donations, and volunteer labor. The Municipality provided substantial technical assistance to the projects;
- \$250,000 to support the new [Youth Employment in Parks](#) program which, in its inaugural year, provides positive and valuable employment and leadership experience to the 20 area youths employed in Anchorage parks. These new awards monies are designed to help grow the program next year and beyond;
- \$250,000 in challenge monies to assist the [Anchorage Park Foundation](#) in building its donor base to continue its work as a community advocate for the important role that Anchorage's parks, trails and recreational programming play in strengthening the community and its quality of life.

Diane Kaplan, Foundation President said, "Over the past three years, we've worked with the Anchorage Park Foundation, the Municipality and many others to begin the process of rebuilding pride of ownership in our park system. All \$8.3 million of our support is structured in the form of "challenges", which, if met, will result in \$26.5 million of new support both to "take care of what we have" and to create new opportunities."

Addressing the major investment in area-wide soccer, Kaplan noted, "Over 14,000 area youth play soccer at some level. That's huge. When the Soccer Task Force issued its findings earlier this year, we saw an opportunity to partner with the soccer community and the Municipality to significantly improve both the safety and quality of the experience for those 14,000 area youth and their families. At the same time, we believe that everyone in Anchorage will see benefit from the collective set of projects supported by this initiative."

All award monies will be granted directly to the Anchorage Park Foundation. "It is important to recognize

two other key partners who, along with the Rasmuson Foundation, were the original "venture capitalists" nurturing the Anchorage Park Foundation," said Kaplan. "Through its support, the Municipality of Anchorage has shown an innovative spirit by thinking outside of the box to create widespread community good. [The Alaska Community Foundation](#), itself in a growth mode, provides a valuable set of services, allowing the Park Foundation to concentrate on what it does best: advocating for a healthy parks and healthy people. It's a great partnership that is helping to build community support and giving for parks."

About the Rasmuson Foundation

The Rasmuson Foundation was created in May 1955 by Jenny Rasmuson to honor her late husband "E.A." Rasmuson. The Foundation is a catalyst to promote a better life for all Alaskans.

About the [Anchorage Park Foundation](#)

The Anchorage Park Foundation, founded in 2004, strives to build Healthy Parks - Healthy People by mobilizing public support and financial resources for Anchorage parks, trails, and recreation opportunities.

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