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MEDIA CONTACT:

For questions or excerpt and interview requests, please contact:

Jennifer Campaniolo

617-424-0030 ext 232

jcampaniolo@shambhala.com

www.shambhala.com

“Research has long proven the benefit of outdoor play, yet many continue to replace “green time with screen time.” There have been several excellent activity guides this year (e.g., Jennifer Ward's *Let's Go Outside*) and this joins the ranks. **Enthusiastically recommended.**”—*Library Journal*, **Starred Review**

Featured in *USA Today's* “Green House”

Trading Screen Time for Green Time Author encourages families to set aside one “green hour” a day

February 8, 2010—Remember when you were a kid and playing outside was a daily adventure that only ended when your mom called you in for supper? You didn't have to be told to “go play outside”—you just did it. For kids today, it's a vastly different picture. Children are more apt to be staring at a computer screen than looking up at cloud formations; they're more likely to be listening to their MP3 player than noticing the sounds of crickets and cicadas. University of Maryland researchers have found that outdoor and nature-based activities now comprise less than one-half hour, per week, of a child's time. And this nature deficit is leading to high rates of childhood obesity, attention deficit and media addiction.

An extension of the green values and practices of the National Wildlife Federation, ***The Green Hour: A Daily Dose of Nature for Happier, Healthier, Smarter Kids*** (Trumpeter-March 16, 2010) by Todd Christopher is both a field guide for outdoor family activities and an energetic appeal for greater green knowledge. Based on the idea that every child needs an hour each day in which she can interact with her natural surroundings, Christopher's book supports a new generation of children and their parents who are more deeply appreciative and aware of their natural surroundings.

Mindful of the fact that guidance and safety are necessary to any constructive and fun family activity, ***The Green Hour*** provides clear directions for various outdoor

activities parents can plan for their kids. From finding the North Star from your backyard to livening up your family's weekly Sunday nature walk, Christopher's ideas are accessible and easy, feasible for the busiest of families and the parents with few outdoor experiences.

Brimming with enthusiasm about his own backyard adventures with his children, Christopher shares tips with families about how to reclaim free time, from determining how much media use is enough to making outdoor time a part of the family routine. Aware that children might complain about being torn away from their video games for even an hour, he also offers advice on gently unplugging your family from the myriad electronic devices available to us everyday.

Ultimately, ***The Green Hour*** is filled with hope and good will, rooted in the belief that the smallest changes we make in our everyday family lives can yield the greatest improvements.

Todd Christopher is a writer, educator, and producer who celebrates wonder wherever he finds it. He was the creator of the National Wildlife Federation's Green Hour website and served as director of online media for its award-winning publications, including *Ranger Rick*, *Your Big Backyard*, and *Wild Animal Baby*. He resides with his family near Washington, D.C., where they make a green hour part of their daily routine. You can find more of his writing on kids and nature at www.toddchristopher.com

The Green Hour: A Daily Dose of Nature for Happier, Healthier, Smarter Kids

By Todd Christopher

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