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**"A World-Class Commitment to First Class Citizenship for All"\***

**American Express Donates \$Half-Million to the International Civil Rights Center & Museum**

**GREENSBORO, N.C., Sept. 9, 2003** –American Express today announced it would donate \$ one-half million to the development of the International Civil Rights Center & Museum in Greensboro, N.C., lending its world-class name, leadership, values and resources as well as funding to this worthwhile cause.

The \$ half-million commitment will be used for the design, development and installation of exhibits to serve the Museum's mission to preserve and commemorate the courage of four North Carolina A & T University students who desegregated the Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C., on February 1, 1960, creating the first student-orchestrated, nationally publicized "sit-in," a pivotal tool in the struggle for civil rights in the United States. Historians believe this single action precipitated a series of events that established a new platform for social change and the use of non-violent protest to combat institutionalized oppression. The Museum is scheduled to open on February 1, 2005.

The contribution to the Museum is the largest American Express Philanthropic Foundation Grant awarded in the state of North Carolina, the single largest contribution made on behalf of any service center in the American Express Network and the largest corporate donation to date for the Museum. The contribution will be made in four payments based on the progress of the project, beginning with the first \$200,000 payment later in September.

Announcement of the contribution will launch a local American Express initiative, themed 'A World Class Commitment to First Class Citizenship for All,' that will link employee education and volunteerism efforts to support the development of the Museum. Michelle Gethers-Clark, senior vice president and newly appointed centerhead at the American Express Service Center in Greensboro, was named to the board of Sit-In Movement, Inc., the Museum's board of directors.

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"We are proud of our world-wide customer base, our diverse employee population and our brand values that promote understanding and acceptance of everyone as part of our corporate culture. As leaders in this area, American Express recognizes the need for the Museum and its mission to tell the story of the civil rights struggle nationally and its effects internationally," said Gethers-Clark. "Committing our resources, as well as our philanthropic dollars will allow American Express to lend value through leadership and expertise as well as funding. This also provides employees of the company the opportunity to become true corporate partners in this internationally significant endeavor."

"This \$500,000 commitment is more than a donation," said David Hoard, CEO, Sit-In Movement, Inc. "While it helps the Museum move forward financially, the commitment from American Express elevates our mission to national, if not international levels, and provides new opportunities to challenge other companies to get involved."

"The development of the Museum is a key component to stimulating interest in Greensboro. Its value, culturally as well as educationally, will enhance our overall quality of life and lead to the generation of more and better paying jobs," said Susan Schwartz, Action Greensboro executive director. "We appreciate American Express' commitment to the economic vitality of our community. We know that, once opened, the Museum will become a catalyst for tourism, generating interest from visitors around the world and contributing greatly to the revitalization of Greensboro's downtown."

"American Express is pleased to support the efforts of Action Greensboro as it brings renewed energy, strategic focus and new investment to the community at this critical time. We challenge other corporate citizens to meet or exceed our financial commitment to make this historic treasure into a world-class teaching and tourism reality," said Gethers-Clark.

The grant meets the American Express Philanthropic Foundation's guidelines for cultural heritage – supporting the careful planning and execution of preservation efforts and providing for the careful management of major tourism sites.

At the heart of the American Express Philanthropic Program are the company's "Blue Box Values." These values are: Customer Commitment; Quality; Respect for People; Integrity; Personal Accountability; Teamwork; Good Citizenship; and A Will to Win. "As the foundation for our business, our Blue Box values help us understand our role as a company and provide clear direction for decision-making at every level – including philanthropy," says Gethers-Clark. "Our commitment to being good citizens in the community has helped us to be recognized as a top place to work."

American Express is a good corporate citizen. In 2002, AESC-G employees donated more than 5,500 hours of service to more than 50 center-sponsored activities. In addition, American Express supports 9 employee diversity networks to increase cultural understanding and acceptance, and the company contributes generously to the local community for program sponsorships, grants and other efforts that help citizens and causes throughout the Triad.

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\*'First Class Citizenship for All' is a slogan featured in an archival photo of a banner used by protesters during the 1960's struggle for Civil Rights. The photograph is currently used in the virtual tour of the International Civil Rights Center & Museum, and is available on CD-Rom. The Museum is scheduled to open February 1, 2005 in Greensboro, N.C.