



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact

Cindy Hassil, Development Director
865-577-4717, ext. 1006 / chassil@ijams.org

**Grayson Subaru Presents \$39,000 Check to Ijams Nature Center
for 16th Subaru Share the Love® Event**

Funding will expand Ijams Nature Playscape and Mead's Quarry Swim Area

(KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE, 4/24/2024) – Grayson Subaru today presented a check for \$39,000 to Ijams Nature Center to expand the popular Ijams Nature Playscape at Grayson Subaru Preserve and the Mead's Quarry Lake swim area.

The local retailer chose the nonprofit nature center as its hometown charity for Subaru of America, Inc.'s 2023 Subaru Share the Love® Event. From Nov. 15, 2023, to Jan. 2, 2024, Subaru and its retailers donated a minimum of \$300 for every new Subaru vehicle purchased or leased at more than 628 of its retailers nationwide to several national charities and a hometown charity chosen by each retailer.

"Subaru of America and Grayson Subaru are committed to the communities we serve," Subaru Sales Manager JC Marquardt said. "We do that by showing support in ways that make a meaningful difference, and we're incredibly grateful to our customers, who share our values and are committed to doing the same. This is a proud day for all of us."

Ijams President and CEO Amber Parker echoed his comments.

"It's amazing how many people care about this nonprofit nature center," she said. "It's an honor to be part of something so special, and we appreciate our friends at Subaru and everyone who designated these funds to help Ijams improve areas where people of all ages can learn and play."

Work has already begun on Phase 2 of the Ijams Nature Playscape.

"Thus far, Ijams staff have scouted the new trail and, with the help of 115 trained volunteers, removed invasive species from about one acre of the new section," Parker said. "This is the most time-consuming part of the process, because there is a more diverse mix of invasive and native species, and removal has to be done by hand."

"It took three years to prepare the first five acres in Phase 1, and it was a combination of mechanical and manual removal techniques," she added.

In addition to preparing the upper section of the 13.46-acre property, Ijams is planning a new feature to Phase 1 of the playscape after conducting a survey of the people who were using it.

"We learned that people wanted a way to cross through the mushier spots of the floodplain in an area we call the 'Soggy Bottom Room,' so we're creating a narrow path of wood over utility poles to make a bog walkway," she said. "We recently salvaged a large palette that was mired

in the mud along the Tennessee River and will use that reclaimed wood in the project. There are perks to having an Ijams River Captain keeping our waterways clear!”

Parker said improvements to the Mead’s Quarry swim area will start at a later date.

The overwhelming majority of donations (more than 75%) of the 2023 Subaru Share the Love event went to local charitable organizations, which received more than \$24 million of the \$31.6 million raised.

Grayson Subaru is part of Grayson Automotive, which offers the Subaru, Hyundai, BMW, Genesis, and Mini brands. Grayson Automotive is celebrating its 45th anniversary of serving customers in the Knoxville, Maryville, and Sevierville area.

Subaru of America, Inc. is an indirect wholly owned subsidiary of Subaru Corporation of Japan. Headquartered at a zero-landfill office in Camden, N.J., the company markets and distributes Subaru vehicles, parts, and accessories through a network of more than 630 retailers across the United States. All Subaru products are manufactured in zero-landfill plants.

Ijams Nature Center is a 318-acre nonprofit educational center in the heart of Knoxville and serves visitors of all ages, stages, and abilities. Its mission is to encourage stewardship of the natural world by providing an urban greenspace for people to learn about and enjoy the outdoors through engaging experiences. Ijams features 14 miles of hiking and mixed-use trails, a public access river dock, swimming, boating, biking, and so much more. Hundreds of world-class educational programs and events are coordinated and offered annually. Ijams’ grounds and trails are open every day from 8:00 AM until dusk. For more information, visit Ijams.org or call 865-577-4717.

###



PHOTO OUTLINE: Grayson Subaru presented a check for \$39,000 from Subaru of America’s 2023 Subaru Share the Love Event to Ijams Nature Center on April 24. Funds will be used to expand the popular Ijams Nature Playscape at Grayson Subaru Preserve and the Mead’s Quarry Lake swim area. Subaru Sales Manager JC Marquardt (center) presented the check to Ijams staff members, from left, Jerry Weaver, Hailey Manus, Jennie McGuigan, Amber Parker, Sarah Brobst, Melanie Thomas, Gianni Tesfaye, Joseph Bailey, Knox County Parks and Recreation Director and Ijams Board Member Joseph Mack, and Ben Nanny.