

# Freedom Trails Initiative Wins Honor Award

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman presented an Honor Award in 2001 on behalf of the work done on National Forests in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. The project was one of 15 selected from nationwide nominations. The team of Mary McCorvie, Marlene Rivero, and Elizabeth Fuller, Shawnee National Forest; Angie Krieger and Sarah Arthur, Hoosier National Forest; and Ann Cramer, Wayne National Forest was recognized “for innovative methods in creating employment opportunities for minority students to research the African American heritage of the national forests and the Underground Railroad.”



The purpose of this project was to provide employment opportunities to minority students to research the African American heritage of southern Ohio and the Underground Railroad. Little is known of the African Americans who settled in the southern reaches of the three states in the early years of the 19th century. The three forest’s work at the Lick Creek, Miller Grove, and Poke Patch Settlements have uncovered some of the past of these courageous settlers. A second benefit of the project is that “There are currently only about 20 African American archaeologists,” Cramer said. “We saw this research as an opportunity to get college students excited about their heritage and perhaps interested in a career in archaeology.” In the three state area several African American students researched the settlements and their role in the Underground Railroad last year which helped increase knowledge about local African American history.



*Picture of the award the group received.*

*Ann Veneman, center, awards archaeologists from the Hoosier, Shawnee and Wayne (Ann Cramer - far right) for their work on the Underground Railroad project.*

