

## Young writers to be honored at JOBC awards ceremony

The theme for the 20th annual Junior Orange Bowl Creative Writing Contest is "What It Takes To Be A Great Role Model." This essay contest is open to eighth grade middle-school students in Miami-Dade County. We received 306 submissions from public and private school students in the county.

The Junior Orange Bowl Creative Writing Committee applauds the winners of the 2007-2008 Creative Writing Contest. Laura Pomar from St. Timothy Parish School is our First Place winner. Erica Adams from Epiphany Catholic School won the Second Place prize. Carina Suarez from Epiphany Catholic School won the prize for Third

Place.

The Junior Orange Bowl Creative Writing Contest awards ceremony will be held at the monthly meeting of the South Florida Writers Association on Saturday, Jan. 5 at 10 a.m. This event will be at Borders in Pinecrest, 9205 South Dixie Highway in Miami. The South Florida Writers Association is co-sponsor of this competition and awards event. This event is free and open to the public.

The winning students will read their essays aloud. Awards will be presented to the contest winners and their teachers. The judging panel is comprised of writers, editors, and former classroom teachers.

## MCH doctors treat hospitalized children to holiday magic show

On Dec. 14 two Miami Children's Hospital (MCH) doctors hung up their white physician coats, put away their stethoscopes, and pulled out magic wands and their magical capes. Dr. Andrew S. Labbie, pediatric urologist, and Dr. Gaston de Cardenas, Chief of Otolaryngology, transformed into "The Amazing Andy" and "The Great Gaston." Both magicians performed for the children of MCH at the annual magic show in the hospital main playroom and around the MCH Cancer Center.

The talented duo have been practicing and performing magic professionally for many years. "It's difficult for a child to be hospitalized during the holiday season and I wanted to bring a little magic into their day," said Dr. Labbie.



Dr. Andrew Labbie, Kelly Evangelista age 11, Lloyd Ubri age 14, and Dr. Gaston de Cardenas at last month's magic show at Miami Children's Hospital

## Fairchild awards \$6,100 for school gardens, habitat restoration

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden has announced the recipients of the Fairchild Challenge 2008 school gardening grants totaling \$6,100. Forty schools competing in the annual school gardening and habitat restoration option of the Fairchild Challenge have been awarded up to \$200 each in addition to a *Your Outdoors Tool Kit* designed for young gardeners.

Representing 128 South Florida secondary schools, plus ten elementary schools in a pilot program, more than 45,000 students are projected to be involved this year in Fairchild's multidisciplinary outreach program, the Fairchild Challenge.

"The school gardens reflect the students' immense creativity, diversity, and exuberance" observes David Whitman, who manages the Fairchild Challenge. "They also encourage teamwork, where friendships and mutual respect grow in tandem with the gardens. And many students who struggle in traditional classroom settings often excel in gardening and habitat restoration projects, giving them hope and renewed self-confidence."

Whitman's colleague in the Fairchild Challenge, botanist Theresa Chormanski, agrees.

"School gardens also provide opportunities to learn horticultural skills, observe nature, discover plant lifecycles, and identify where our food comes from. Teachers use gardens for science, language arts, visual arts, social studies, math and many other disciplines. School gardens let students take ownership in their school and responsibility for beautifying their environment." Chormanski teams up with Fairchild's community outreach coordinator Alison Walker to conduct two free, daylong gardening workshops annually for elementary, middle and high school teachers.

Fairchild supports school gardening in other ways, too. Last year, the Challenge offered each participating school a sapling mango or jackfruit tree and books on tropical fruit trees of the world. This year, the program is coordinating volunteers with gardening expertise who want to help schools-in-need with their gardening and habitat restoration projects and is working with nurseries to provide plants.

In April, Fairchild Challenge representatives will visit an estimated 75 schools throughout the region to see, smell, taste and fully experi-

ence the gardens they have created. Then at Fairchild later that month, gardening experts and enthusiasts will evaluate the projects based on reports and photographs submitted by the students. Past school garden themes in the Fairchild Challenge have included vegetable, pond ecosystem, hummingbird, butterfly, native plant courtyard, greenhouse, classroom-extension, edible, Shakespeare, pizza, memorial, tranquility, portable, salsa, and aquatic, among others.

"Children today expect instant results and constant excitement," says Michelle Dreseris of Ruth Owens Krusé Educational Center. "The garden gives them a place of peace, a place to learn patience, a place to work and watch things grow. It is a place where things take time. It is a place to build self-esteem and wisdom."

Results of the school gardening and habitat restoration competition, and all other options of the 2008 Fairchild Challenge, will be announced at awards ceremonies at Fairchild in mid-May. Schools that excel in the program receive the Fairchild Challenge Award, with additional cash prizes, for environmental activities, being awarded to the top-scoring schools.

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