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**HUNDREDS OF SOUTH FLORIDA STUDENTS AND DOZENS OF SCIENTISTS
TEAM UP MARCH 31 TO FIND WAYS TO SAVE THE PLANET**

Fairchild Challenge's Environmental Immersion Day Covers 27 South Florida Environmental Sites

CORAL GABLES, FL – March 30, 2009 – Caroline Lewis, director of the Fairchild Challenge, the environmental outreach program of South Florida's Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (FTBG), today announced an Environmental Immersion Day (EID) event that will bring together almost 300 students and dozens of scientists at 27 real field research settings throughout South Florida to find ways to save the planet. The event, considered one of FTBG's prime annual events, takes place from **8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Tues., March 31.**

The students from 31 public and private high schools will join environmentalists, biologists, botanists and other researchers at a broad array of nature centers, labs, parks, botanical gardens and marine science centers. In addition to watching the pros at work, the students will participate, taking water samples, preparing microscope slides, studying coral reef growth and collecting specimens. Details about activities and participating schools are provided below.

"This is a perfect opportunity for our youngsters to see real scientists and naturalists in action, appreciating how this type of work and creative thinking are critical for the preservation of our environment," said Lewis. "As a result of this experience, many teenagers will likely explore careers in environmental science. This is our hope."

Venues for the EID include John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park on Key Largo; the Marjorie Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center in Key Biscayne's Crandon Park; A.D. Barnes Park in Miami; the Redlands' Fruit and Spice Park; and Virginia Key facilities such as the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science and the Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory, operated by the Federal government. A complete list is provided in the attached addendum.

Participants were selected based on application forms and letters of interest submitted. Participating schools are awarded points for participation that will count toward the school's final ranking in the overall Fairchild Challenge results and help increase their chance of winning awards during the ceremony on Sat. May 9.

The Fairchild Challenge offers a series of competitive individual projects and contests in which schools may earn points toward the Fairchild Challenge award and other prizes at the annual ceremony in May. Currently in its seventh year of existence, it is quickly growing to become one

of the world's most comprehensive and influential youth environmental education programs.

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The National Forum on Children and Nature, (NFCN), a high-profile campaign of the prestigious Conservation Fund, recently recognized the Fairchild Challenge as a worldwide model for connecting youths with the environment in new and creative ways.

About the Fairchild Challenge

The Fairchild Challenge, established in 2002 by South Florida's 70-year-old Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, seeks to reconnect America's youths with nature through an interdisciplinary program available free to middle and high schools. Designed to integrate with state curriculum standards, the Fairchild Challenge offers a series of individual projects and contests in which schools may earn points toward prizes awarded at an annual ceremony each May. Staff members at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, one of the world's premier conservation and education-oriented gardens, also train educators from public gardens, museums, zoos and other organizations to establish Fairchild Challenge programs throughout the U.S. and beyond. To learn more, visit www.fairchildchallenge.org or call 305-667-1651.

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**Editor's Notes: Interviews and photographs are available upon request
The EID program will yield superb photo opportunities, and interviews
may be arranged with students and scientists**

2009 Fairchild Challenge Environmental Immersion Day:

Participating Venues and Schools

Venues (27)

A.D. Barnes Park, Westchester
 Biscayne Bay Aquatic Preserve, Pelican Harbor Marina, 79th Street Causeway
 Castellow Hammock Preserve & Nature Center, West Kendall
 Deering Estate at Cutler, Palmetto Bay
 Everglades National Park, Homestead
 Everglades Outpost, Homestead
 The Fruit & Spice Park, Redland
 Greynolds Park, North Miami
 Historic Virginia Key Beach Park Trust, Virginia Key
 John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, Key Largo
 The Kampong/National Tropical Botanical Garden, Coconut Grove
 Kids Ecology Corps, Fort Lauderdale
 Marjorie Stoneman Douglas Biscayne Nature Center, Virginia Key
 Miami Dade College Kendall Campus, Kendall
 Miami Dade College North Campus, Miami
 Monkey Jungle's Dumond Conservatory, Homestead
 Montgomery Botanical Center, Coral Gables
 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Field Lab, Virginia Key
 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory, Virginia Key
 National Park Service Office, Palmetto Bay and Black Point Marina, Cutler Bay
 Officer Snook Water Pollution Program, Coral Gables
 Oleta River State Park, North Miami
 South Florida Water Management District Service Center, Miami
 Shake A Leg Miami, Coconut Grove
 Tropical Audubon Society, Sunset
 University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, Virginia Key

Subtropical Horticulture and Research Station, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Coral Gables

Schools (31)

American Senior High
Archbishop Coleman F. Carroll High School
Barbara Goleman Senior High
Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart
Christopher Columbus High School
Conservatory Preparatory Senior High
Coral Gables Senior High
Coral Reef Senior High
Design and Architecture Senior High
Doctor's Charter School of Miami Shores
G. Holmes Braddock Senior High
Gulliver Preparatory School
Hialeah-Miami Lakes Senior High
MAST Academy
Mater Academy Charter High School
Miami Senior High
Miami Central Senior High
Miami Edison Senior High
Miami Jackson Senior High
Miami Killian Senior High
Miami Palmetto Senior High
Miami Southridge Senior High
North Miami Senior High
Our Lady of Lourdes Academy
Pembroke Pines Charter High School
Ronald W. Reagan/Doral Senior High
Ruth Owens Kruse Educational Center
Somerset Academy Charter High School
South Plantation High School
Westland Hialeah Senior High School
Young Men's Preparatory Academy