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**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

**Roar Media**

**Gillian Durruthy or Jeannie Salameh**

**[gillian@roarmedia.com](mailto:gillian@roarmedia.com) or [jeannie@roarmedia.com](mailto:jeannie@roarmedia.com)**

**(305) 926-2687 or (727) 644-5010**

**MORE THAN 350 LOCAL TEACHERS ATTEND KICK-OFF FOR SOUTH FLORIDA'S  
2009-2010 FAIRCHILD CHALLENGE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**  
***The Fairchild Palms Fundraising Group Presents \$10,000 Check to the Fairchild Challenge***

**CORAL GABLES, FL – Sept. 9, 2009** – Caroline Lewis, director of education who oversees the Fairchild Challenge, the environmental outreach program of South Florida's Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, today announced the Aug. 29 Teachers' Information Luncheon was attended by a record number of 350 Miami-Dade elementary, middle and high school teachers who plan to participate in this year's Fairchild Challenge. The annual luncheon also included a \$10,000 check presentation from the Fairchild Palms young professionals fundraising group.

The Fairchild Challenge's open-ended, environmentally based, interdisciplinary education outreach program is provided at no cost to schools each academic year. Designed by specialists at South Florida's world-renowned Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, the Fairchild Challenge comprises a series of individual projects, contests and performances in which students participate. These Challenge options include: writing opinion and research papers; performing songs and skits; creating school gardens, artwork and newsletters; capturing school energy, water and tree-canopy data; designing solar-powered devices; and planning "green" cuisine menus.

"Teachers are full of praise for the Fairchild Challenge," Lewis said. "They tell us that the program provides opportunities to preserve and enhance Planet Earth on a level that students can relate to and understand. We also hear from our alumni that participating in the Fairchild Challenge made them better earth stewards and drove many to careers in environmental science."

During the kick-off lunch, Fairchild Palms President John C. Malloy III, a Florida attorney, joined other Fairchild Palms members to present a \$10,000 donation to the Fairchild Challenge program. This environmental education program relies on contributions to maintain its inclusive tenet.

During the past school year, 50,000 students from 52 high schools, 64 middle schools, and nine elementary schools (pilot program) were engaged in the Fairchild Challenge in South Florida. This year, these numbers are expected to grow.

**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 this interdisciplinary program. 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 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](http://www.fairchildchallenge.org) or call (305) 667-1651.

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**Editor's notes:**

**Photographs are attached**

**Interviews may be coordinated available upon request**