



## Program promotes teens to think green

**Caleb Warnock - DAILY HERALD | Posted: Friday, January 30, 2009 11:00 pm**

To launch a revolution of environmental consciousness in Utah Valley, Thanksgiving Point is turning to teens, asking them to design environmentally friendly fashion, food, public service announcements, debates, poems, songs, dances and even solar-powered gadgets.

The new competition, free to students and teachers, is called the Fairchild Challenge at Thanksgiving Point.

"There is not a whole lot out there for high school students to make them aware of the environment they live in," said Whitney Lindseth of Thanksgiving Point. "Our mission is hands-on discovery, that is the short of it. We like to do things that are education based and people can get in and get their hands dirty and learn, and that is what this program is all about."

There is no cost to participate.

"It is designed to help them; we are not trying to get anything out of anybody or sell anything," Lindseth said, noting the program is so new that many schools and teachers don't know about it yet.

"I thought it would be a great opportunity for my students, particularly my honors senior English class," said Rachael Woolbright, a teacher at Rockwell Charter High School in Eagle Mountain, whose class made a public service announcement video on smog to enter in one of the Fairchild Challenge competitions at Thanksgiving Point. "It seemed like something real world they could get involved in and get outside the classroom a little bit, and express themselves. They could get someone's opinion besides my own."

Her students wrote, performed and edited their service announcement by themselves, she said.

"They took a typical teen approach and showed how people are much more attractive who are friendly to the environment, as opposed to polluting the environment," she said with a laugh.

The Fairchild Challenge takes its name and inspiration from a program started in 2002 at the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Coral Gables, Fla. Today more than 40,000 students in the Miami region alone participate, and educators from across the nation and many foreign countries travel to Florida to be trained in the program, as did Lindseth and several other Thanksgiving Point employees.

"The goal is basically to get kids actively engaged in their community, to have meaningful experiences with their environment, to care about the environment, to be involved with the environment," said Netiva Koltz of the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, interviewed by phone in Florida. "It encourages students to appreciate the beauty and value of nature, develop critical thinking skills, understand the need for biodiversity and conservation, tap community resources, become actively engaged as citizens, and recognize that individuals do make a difference."

Utah Valley students can participate in eight different competitions ranging from debate and performance to green cuisine and designing clothes from environmentally friendly materials. It's not too late for schools to get involved with Thanksgiving Point's program, said Lindseth. Schools earn points when their students compete, and the three top schools will earn money toward environmental discovery programs.

In some instances, Thanksgiving Point has provided schools with solar panels, for example, to help students and teachers with the materials needed to enter the competitions. Schools and teachers are encouraged to submit the maximum number of entries possible, and to compete in as many categories as possible. Many of the competitions have entry deadlines in late February, with awards and performances in March.

For more information on the Fairchild Challenge at Thanksgiving Point, call 768-4991, e-mail [challenge@thanksgivingpoint.com](mailto:challenge@thanksgivingpoint.com) or visit [thanksgivingpoint.com/challenge](http://thanksgivingpoint.com/challenge).