

EXPLAINING UNVEILING CHIHULY THROUGH DISCOVERY

by April Dominguez



DISCOVERY VOLUNTEER, SIMA SIEGEL TEACHES STUDENTS FROM ST. THOMAS EPISCOPAL ABOUT LIGHT DIFFRACTION AT THE COLOR OF LIGHT CART.

“Wallas Wallas! Hershey Kisses! That one looks like a little rose that’s not blooming yet!” exclaimed the elementary students from St. Thomas Episcopal School.

From December 2005 to May 2006, 4,500 students in grades K-12 participated in the Discovery program at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. Activities correlated to the organic, undulating shapes and inspiration of the Dale Chihuly exhibition.

Twenty-four Fairchild volunteers guided participants through a colorful palette of activities. Students learned the mechanics of making glass, recycling and other unusual topics, such as navigation and the qualities of sunlight. Some highlights included participants holding actual Chihuly glass and examining glass-making tools on loan from the hotshop at the University of Miami.



DISCOVERY VOLUNTEER LOUISE BENNETT TEACHES GIRL SCOUT TROOP BLANK ABOUT GLASS AND CHIHULY AT THE MAKING AND REMAKING OF GLASS CART.

“They liked holding the glass from the exhibition, because it looked so fragile. They realized the weight of it. It changed their perspective,” said literature teacher from Cushman School, Jessica Buck.

According to glass artist and art specialist Jane Lambert from University School at Nova Southeastern University, “It was impressive how well the glass station tied into my art curriculum. It is difficult to teach a lesson on 3-D sculpture, especially made out of a material students do not really understand. The glass Discovery station helped me explain to my students how glass is made outside a factory, what the tools of the glass craftsmen are and the way light and glass work artistically together.”

The bright blue, green and orange *Nijjima Floats* created the backdrop for the Color of Light station. At this activity, students diffracted sunlight with solar glasses to examine the spectrum of colors and wavelengths. Guides also taught the characteristics of sunlight, focusing on the electromagnetic spectrum, solar energy and solar electricity.

“The students really liked the scientific aspect and wearing the glasses. It was very informative. I was impressed by it,” said art teacher Nadine Schoenfeld from North Twin Lakes Elementary School.

In addition to uncovering the properties of glass and sunlight, students manipulated compasses and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) while searching for plants in the Palmetum.

“For one thing, I think that the GPS station is great. They loved it!” said Buck. “They were so engaged in finding the glass and working in groups. GPS is a really cool thing.”

The Chihuly at Fairchild exhibition served as the catalyst for Discovery and piloted a successful program scheduled to continue throughout the 2006-2007 school year. Activities will include independent art, light and navigation activities. 