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200 STUDENTS FROM 33 SOUTH FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOLS SHOWCASE ECO-SCIENCE PROJECTS APRIL 18 AT FAIRCHILD TROPICAL BOTANIC GARDEN

Students Engineer Functional Solar-Powered Devices, Design Inner-City Gardens, Create Eco-Friendly Meals, Conduct Research of Plant Species

MIAMI – April 14, 2009 – Caroline Lewis, director of the Fairchild Challenge (FC), the South Florida-based environmental outreach program of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (FTBG), today announced the “Research Projects Showcase,” an eco-science contest for public and private high schools throughout South Florida, will take place from **1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Sat., April 18, at FTBG, located at 10901 Old Cutler Road, Coral Gables, Fla.**

A panel comprised of community leaders and Fairchild staff members will judge 200 students from 33 South Florida schools on their performance in four key research areas. The students began working on these and other Fairchild Challenge projects at the beginning of the school year.

“The students have tremendous fun working on the eco-science research projects and learn valuable lessons about environmental conservation that stay with them for life,” said Lewis, FTBG’s director of education and creator of the Fairchild Challenge, “and the adults in the room are always surprised at how much they learn from the kids.”

During the showcase, students provide two-minute verbal summaries of their projects and answer judges’ questions. They are rated on the quality of their research as well as accuracy, technical ability, creativity, presentation, impact and clarity of explanation. Their schools will be awarded points that count toward their overall rankings in the Fairchild Challenge. Results will be announced at the Awards Ceremony that takes place on Saturday, May 9. Students also have the option of separately entering their projects in the South Florida Regional Science and Engineering Fair.

Students selected from among four project types:

- **Inner-City Sanctuary:** Students design blueprints and 3-D models depicting their vision for small garden spaces in inner cities, through rooftop gardens, green alleys or pocket parks.
- **Green Cuisine:** A two-part assignment asks students to evaluate the ecological impact of their chosen fast-food item, then create their own ecologically-friendly dishes (vegetarian, of course!); provide written descriptions of their green-friendliness along with analysis of their nutritional values; and prepare edible samples for the judges.

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- **Solar Inventions:** Fairchild lends solar panels and electric motors to schools whose students want to try their hand at creating functional, practical sunlight-powered devices that could benefit communities in developing countries. Students describe their gadgets and their usefulness.
- **Field Phenology Study:** Students spend several months observing a single-species example of a plant growing outdoors, conduct research of that species and document its growth. Students are judged on the summary and illustration of their experimental design and findings on stand-alone tri-fold display boards.

Participating schools are: American Senior High School; American Coleman F. Carroll High School; Belen Jesuit Prep School; Booker T. Washington Senior High School; Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart; Christopher Columbus High School; Coral Reef Senior High School; Doctors Charter School; Doral Academy Charter High School; G. Holmes Braddock Senior High School; Gulliver Preparatory School; Hialeah Gardens High School; Hialeah-Miami Lakes Senior High; MAST Academy; Miami Central Senior High School; Miami Country Day School; Miami Edison Senior High School; Miami Jackson Senior High School; Miami Killian Senior High School; Miami Lakes Educational Center; Miami Palmetto Senior High School; Miami Senior High School; Miami Southridge Senior High School; Miami Springs Senior High School; Our Lady of Lourdes Academy; Panzou Project; Pembroke Pines Charter High School; Robert Morgan Educational Center; Ronald Reagan- Doral Senior High School; South Plantation High School; Southwest Miami Senior High School; Westland Hialeah Senior High School; and Young Men's Preparatory Academy.

The Fairchild Challenge, in its seventh year of existence, is quickly growing to become one of the world's most comprehensive and influential youth environmental education programs. The National Forum on Children and Nature (NFCN), a high-profile campaign of the prestigious Conservation Fund, recently recognized it 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 south Florida's youths with nature through an inter-disciplinary 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 competitions in which schools earn points toward prizes awarded at an annual Awards 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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