

NEWS RELEASE

January 20, 2009

Mariemont City Schools

Mariemont Students' Rain Garden Takes Top Prize in Eco Challenge



A team of ten students at Mariemont High School was one of 16 winning teams nationwide to each win \$10,000 in grants and scholarships in the second annual Lexus Eco Challenge. This national contest encourages middle and high school students to develop and implement environmental programs that positively impact their communities.

The students, with the guidance of biology teacher Mary Halsall, built a demonstration rain garden to be used to explain to the community and students the benefits a rain garden has in helping control runoff water. Mariemont students decided that rain gardens would give community members a beautiful and effective way of doing their part to make sure that water from their gutters and paved areas does not go into the drains, but instead restores the ground water. The students presented a slide show at a reception held in December to thank contributors and introduce the rain garden to the community. Members of the team also shared the slide show with district elementary students to spread the message about rain garden benefits and their construction.

Team member junior Libby Peters was excited about sharing the project with the community. "I thought the project was unique because it was not simply about designing and constructing a rain garden. A major part of the challenge was to share our process with the community in various ways so that our work might inspire others to undertake a similar project. The Eco Challenge really made us realize that we *can* make a difference in the environment on our own, but we can make an even bigger impact if we educate our community."

Teacher Mary Halsall "was impressed with was how enthusiastic the kids were, how many great ideas they had, and how they made time to get the project done. They are all excellent students and very busy with many activities, and yet they thought this was a worthwhile project, and that they wanted to do it themselves."

The material, labor and other support for the project was donated by Marvin's Organic Gardens, Swisher Landscaping, Key Club, Mill Creek Watershed Council, and the Mariemont High School PTO.

Now the Mariemont High School team is invited to participate in the Final Challenge (with the other winning teams from this challenge and two other initial challenges) for a chance to win a grand prize of \$50,000 in grants and scholarships.

Photo: Mariemont High School Rain Gardeners Dillon Wilson, James Sayre, Cole Wilson, Cece Ebelhar, Carolyn Coates, McKenzie Miller, Jillian Kelly, Suzy Evans, Libby Peters and Stuart Simons stand behind their winning Eco Challenge garden.

Betsy Porst, Communications Coordinator
6743 Chestnut St., Cincinnati, Ohio 45227
bporst@mariemontschools.org