

**MARIEMONT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TAKE POSITIVE ACTION  
TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT**

Effort Provides Chance to Win Part of \$1 Million in Grants and Scholarships



(Cincinnati, Ohio 11/3/08) – A team of 10 students at Mariemont High School have entered the second annual Lexus Eco Challenge, a national contest that encourages middle and high school students to develop and implement environmental programs that positively impact their communities.

The Lexus Eco Challenge, created by Lexus, the luxury automaker, and Scholastic, the global children's publishing, education and media company, was designed to educate young people about the environment and to inspire them to create a better world. The students at Mariemont High School have accepted the challenge by taking a stand and proving that a small group can bring about big changes. After carefully studying the local environment, the students have developed an Action Plan they feel will benefit their local community.

The students will build a demonstration rain garden to be used to explain to the community and community school students the use and benefits a rain garden has in helping control runoff water. The students are addressing the problem of runoff that occurs when an area is developed and paving and rooftops prevent rain water from percolating into the soil. This reduced absorption area reduces restoration of the water table while washing lawn chemicals, oil, heavy metals, pet sewage, salts and other pollutants directly into the drains to overload the sewage system and compromise our water environments and the balance of organisms that live in them. Mariemont students decided that rains garden 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. Working with the Mill Creek Watershed Council of Communities and Marvin's Organic Gardens, students have designed a demonstration rain garden that will retain runoff from an area at the high

school and allow it to percolate into the soil. The water will be purified naturally through filtration and bacterial action, and replenish the ground water instead of contributing pollutant, heavy metals, fertilizer and lawn chemicals to water that goes into drains and ends up in our rivers and streams. A rain garden mimics natural conditions and can trap, retain and break down 99% of common pollutants from urban storm water runoff according the American Chemical Society journal, *Environmental Science and Technology*.

Our students plan to make a slide show and videos that they will use to educate students and community groups about rain garden benefits and their construction. They are also planning to host a reception in early December to thank contributors and introduce the rain garden to the community.

To date, material and labor support for the project has been donated by Marvin's Organic Gardens, Swisher Landscaping, Key Club, and Mill Creek Watershed Council. We are inviting community members and concerned groups to join us to make this a successful and useful project for the whole community.

We will submit our completed project in early December, and Lexus and Scholastic will choose 16 winning teams nationwide. Each team will receive a total of \$10,000 in grants and scholarships. All winning teams from this challenge and two other initial challenges will be invited to participate in the Final Challenge for a chance to win a grand prize of \$50,000 in grants and scholarships.

For more information about this local environmental movement or to volunteer, contact:

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