

Schoolyard science program at Deering Estate hits road



By Sheila Stieglitz

Ford Motor Company is focused on “Driving a Brighter Future in South Florida” and recently announced that it is teaming up with the Deering Estate’s Eco-Brigade to help take the award-winning Eco-Academy on the road.

Beginning in September, the Schoolyard Science Program presented by Ford Motor Company, arrives in schools throughout Miami-Dade and Monroe counties fully equipped with mobile eco-systems, lab equipment, fossils, artifacts and tools, preserved specimens, photographs, lesson plans and experiments to provide hands-on learning in Ecology, Archeology, Geology, Marine Biology and Environmental Science.

The Ford Motor Company Fund continues the important legacy of caring that Henry Ford started 105 years ago, with Operation Goodwill, an innovative initiative designed to increase Ford’s philanthropic and community-related commitment in select cities across America.

Don Conroy, regional manager of Ford Motor Company, said, “Through this program, the Ford Fund is partnering with its dealers in providing financial resources to support a combination of grants, safety and educational programs and volunteer activities that enhance the quality of life in the following cities: Chicago, Detroit, Miami, Nashville, Phoenix, San Antonio and San Diego.”

Recently, at a Go Green, Buy American event at Miami City Hall organized by Miami Commissioner Mark D. Sarnoff, representatives from the Ford Fund announced that the Deering Estate’s Schoolyard Science Program was selected as one of the national Operation Goodwill grant recipients.

“We couldn’t be more excited,” exclaimed Mary Pettit, executive director of the Deering Estate Foundation. “The Estate has served as a ‘living classroom’ serving to enrich the education of thousands of students participating in our award-winning programs through field studies on-site each year.

“With the drastic funding cuts being made to education, both locally and at the state level, it is becoming more and more difficult for educators to bring the students to us. This program has been specifically designed to counteract these changes by mobilizing the curriculum so we can deliver it to them.”

It is understood that early environmental education helps shape children’s values, perspectives, and understanding on how to interact with and respect precious natural resources.

William N. Irvine, director of the Deering Estate at Cutler explained, “Our partnership with Ford Motor Company provides the Estate with the opportunity to outreach to Miami-Dade County Public School students, to learn about the archeological and environmental sciences as they relate to our rich South Florida environment.”

Members from Deering’s Educational and Interpretative staff are working closely with educators in the community developing curriculum that engages children through simple laboratory experiments and field studies that they can apply to real life situations.

“Our ability to mobilize these programs with the help of Ford Motor Company helps answer a growing need for support in our community as we strive to improve student performance on standardized tests such as the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test) in the areas of math, science, reading and writing through ‘real world’ application of lessons taught in the formal classroom,” Pettit said.

For more information on the Living Classroom, Eco-Academy and Schoolyard Science Program, call Yoelly Burgos-Muñoz, 305-235-1668, ext. 222, or send an email to < YBURGOS@miamidade.gov >.

The Deering Estate at Cutler, a Miami-Dade County Park, is located at 16701 SW 72 Ave. For more information on the Deering Estate’s educational and cultural programs visit < www.deeringestate.org >.



Pictured (l-r) are Walter Flores, president Deering Estate Foundation; Mary Pettit, executive director of Deering Estate Foundation; Don Conroy, regional manager Ford Motor Company; Heather Strom, zone manager Ford Motor Company; Dan Yglesias, Deering board member and owner of Palmetto Ford Trucks, and William N. Irvine, director of the Deering Estate at Cutler.

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