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Miami Launches Public-Private Environmental Education Partnership *Jose de Diego Middle School Kicks Off 'Be Water Wise Miami' Campaign*

MIAMI, Fla.—Students at Jose de Diego Middle School, flanked by Miami Mayor Manny Diaz and Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho, launched an in-school water measurement exercise to commemorate National Environmental Education Week as part of a one-of-a-kind partnership between the City, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, businesses, nonprofit and government organizations.

"Be Water Wise Miami," a project of the National Environmental Education Foundation, includes math, science and language activities focused on water conservation at school and at home, building awareness of this precious resource. Jose de Diego Middle School students led Mayor Diaz, Superintendent Carvalho and others through part of a water measurement exercise in which they examined water use in classrooms, restrooms, kitchens and outdoors.

The school is one of 14 in Miami taking part in Be Water Wise Miami. Partnering organizations include the City of Miami, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden, HydroPoint Data Systems, Inc., Johnson Controls, Inc., South Florida Water Management District, Miami-Dade County Water and Sewer Department and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"It is very powerful for young students to see their studies and experiences taken seriously by adults, especially adults in decision making positions working together in the public and private sectors," Wood said. "It is our hope that Jose de Diego Middle school students, along with 13 other Miami schools will set the standard for future public-private environmental education projects in other cities around the country facing water conservation challenges."

Mayor Diaz, who accompanied the students at the start of the water measurement exercise, said the "Be Water Wise Miami" program helps advance the goals of the Mayor's Sustainable Initiatives office and the City of Miami Green Commission.

"Water is one of our most valuable resources, especially in South Florida, where we have experienced drought conditions for much of the last several years," Diaz said. "It is important that we educate our children in conserving this precious resource, and teach them to appreciate our planet and our environment."

Mayor Diaz also presented a proclamation to the National Environmental Education Foundation to commemorate Environmental Education Week, April 12-18.

Superintendent Carvalho said the project was a perfect fit for Miami's teachers and students as the district has been working to increase environmental and sustainability practices at school.

"I am very excited about The National Environmental Education Foundation's decision to launch National Environmental Education Week in Miami-Dade County Public Schools," Carvalho said. "Our school district has been working in partnership with the City of Miami to strengthen green practices in our schools and in our community. This unique partnership reinforces our efforts and underscores the importance of environmental issues. The 'Be Water Wise' program highlights the responsible use of water in our schools and at home and makes us all aware of the important role we play in water conservation."

"Be Water Wise Miami" is a special event taking place as part of National Environmental Education Week. EE Week, however, is national in scope with activities planned across the country. More than 2,200 schools and partner organizations and over 4.5 million students will participate in a full week of environmentally themed lessons and activities in K-12 classrooms, nature centers, parks, zoos, museums and aquariums. The Wal-Mart Foundation is the national sponsor of EE Week.

"Wal-Mart is proud to be the national sponsor of Environmental Education Week," said Duane Noveh, Miami-area market manager for Wal-Mart. "The *Be Water Wise* program here in Miami is a great opportunity for students to learn the importance of conservation and environmental responsibility—practices that Wal-Mart is also dedicated to implementing throughout our network of stores."

This year's "Be Water Wise" focus includes lesson plans, quizzes, water-themed nature journaling blogs, "ask-an-expert" opportunities with water professionals and water-quality testing plans for students. For more information about EE Week and Be Water Wise, visit <http://www.eeweek.org>.

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