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Release jointly prepared by Green Team student Bryan Munoz.

Groundwork Elizabeth Green Team Entertains Pre-School

Elizabeth, N.J., April 8, 2008--On Tuesday, April 8th, the Groundwork Elizabeth Green Team presented a skit about nature in Elizabeth to more than one hundred pre-school students and their instructors at Elizabeth High School's Upper Academy.

The intention of the Green Team Program was to both educate and instill an enduring sense of appreciation of nature and the environment to young minds in the City of Elizabeth, N.J. The skit featured individual and group performances from the dozen Green Team students as they acted out: how a tree grows, the fragile existence of a butterfly, and the general ecological balance of all animals and growing things.

The play was accompanied by live music performed by two Green Team students, and the audience was invited to sing and dance with the performers. Wide-eyed and enthusiastic, when not singing or dancing, the youngsters sat transfixed during the performance.

Elizabeth Mayor Christian Bollwage attended the event and addressed the gathering. Speaking directly to the students, he impressed upon the preschoolers the civic responsibility of keeping Elizabeth clean. The Mayor inquired; "Who likes candy?" He then followed by asking who didn't throw their candy wrappers in the trash. A few admitted that they discarded them on the street. The Mayor laughingly responded, "Well, now you know better!"

The Green Team Program was developed in partnership with the City of Elizabeth, the Community Development Block Grant Program, the National Park Service, Elizabeth High School, the Elizabeth Development Company, Groundwork Elizabeth, the Skills USA Program, and other private sector community members. Mrs. Lilia Chaika and Dave Wiener lead the Green Team during the school year on weekends. Last year the team constructed a "Nature Guide to Elizabeth", and this year they are working to get the message about nature and the environment out to the community at large.

Speaking on behalf of her fellow Green Team actors, Julianne Pelaez stated, "Today's events were a life altering experience for the participants and the audience as well. We were unsure about the children's reception of the play, but it was imperative to a holistic education."

The youngsters' enthusiasm and willingness to learn about their environment was evident by the smiles on their faces, and many asked when the Super Green Team members would come back. Mr. Richard Esperon, Director of the Upper Academy was greatly pleased by the play, the Upper Academy students, and their effect on the young audience.

Before the performance concluded, team members directed the children in reciting the “LOVE OF NATURE PLEDGE”. Like the members of the Green Team, the youngsters are now committed to act in unison and are attuned to their surroundings. As Bryan Munoz, another Green Team performer said, “Hopefully, as a result of today’s play, these young saplings will grow into mighty oaks.”

For more information on the Green Team, a chance to view the Nature Guide online, or to learn more about the Groundwork Elizabeth program in the City of Elizabeth, please log onto www.groundworkelizabeth.com., or contact Executive Director Jonathan Phillips at 908-289-0262.