

# Press Release



## Coastal Roots

For Immediate Release – December 21, 2009

Belle Chasse Middle School students recently traveled to Woodland Plantation in West Pointe a la Hache to participate in a coastal restoration planting with the LSU Coastal Roots Program.

“We would like for our students to become more involved in their own community and to become more environmentally responsible,” said Belle Chasse Middle School teacher Natalie Lartigue. “We are empowering our students by giving them tangible proof that everyone can make a difference.”



**Dr. Pam Blanchard of the LSU College of Education talks to Belle Chasse Middle School students while BCMS Teacher Gina Egan plants Cypress tree at Woodland**

Having grown southern bald cypress trees in their school’s can yard under the guidance of LSU College of Education faculty, the students will transplant the seedlings to the new site to provide food and habitat for the site’s animals, as well as to provide a way to stabilize the soil there. Plants grown by the students in their school-based nurseries are chosen by the restoration site manager based on particular location’s needs.

The LSU Coastal Roots program provides an active learning situation in which students can explore strategies for sustaining coastal ecosystems and develop an attitude of stewardship toward natural resources. The program does this by conducting an on-going school-based nursery program growing native plants and involving students in a hands-on habitat restoration planting. In addition, the program provides teachers and students with information on issues such as ecological stewardship, wetlands functions and values, wetland loss, habitat restoration and conservation, and basic geoscience and horticultural skills.

“Students participating in the LSU Coastal Roots program are learning to be stewards of our natural resources,” said Pam Blanchard, director of the program and LSU College of Education assistant professor. “This means both educating ourselves about critical issues so we

can make good decisions for our families and taking action to nurture the environment that nurtures us.”

Plaquemines Parish President Billy Nungesser praised all those involved in the project. “Educating our children on the importance of giving back to the community, and at the same time restoring our lost habitat is critical to this area,” stated President Nungesser. P.J. Hahn, Director of Coastal Zone management stated that the parish is working with LSU Coastal Roots Program to create Plaquemines Parish as a planting zone for all future school plantings.

The LSU Coastal Roots program is an initiative of the LSU College of Education Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice. The program now includes approximately 40 schools in 18 parishes throughout southern Louisiana. Since the plantings began in 2001, 3,600 students have transplanted more than 29,000 school-grown restoration plants on 90 restoration trips across south Louisiana.

“The Coastal Roots program is a great example of our commitment to innovative, research-based outreach programs that make a difference in the lives of kids while helping all Louisiana residents,” said Jayne Fleener, Dean of the College of Education. “We are proud to provide students the opportunities to become stewards of the ecological future of Louisiana and to provide teachers with the opportunities to enrich their science lessons with hands-on, real-life activities.”

For more information on the Coastal Roots program or any plantings, contact Blanchard at 337-739-8506.



PHOTO (left to right) Dr. Pam Blanchard, LSU College of Education, Foster Creppel, and Gina Egan, Belle Chasse Middle School teacher.