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“Service-Learning” activities make learning relevant

(Oct. 24, 2007 – Lake Worth, FL) Students at Palm Beach Community College have been busy this semester personally saving the environment, with 140 students completing over 450 hours of community service. They’ve removed trash and exotic plants from coastal areas, nature centers and nature preserves, replaced them with native plants and trimmed vegetation to provide sunny places for gopher tortoises.

Professor Pamela Pannozzo’s biology and environmental conservation students have been experiencing what educators call “service-learning”: tying community service back to the objectives of the course with reflection techniques. These hands-on activities and their accompanying analysis “reinvigorate teaching and help students feel part of their community,” said Heidi Ladika-Cipolla, PBCC’s service-learning coordinator.

“People do amazing things,” Ladika-Cipolla said, “and service-learning can make learning more meaningful.”

Community colleges across the nation are embracing service-learning as one more teaching tool that enhances learning. PBCC’s nursing and dental programs have incorporated service-learning in their curricula for many years. Professor Pannozzo has coordinated her habitat restoration activities with the county’s Environmental Resources Management and Parks and Recreation departments to restore some of the county’s more than 30,000 acres of environmentally sensitive lands (scrub, wetlands, cypress swamps, etc.). Her students will complete the semester’s service-learning on:

- Oct. 26 from 9 a.m. to noon at Snook Islands Natural Area in the Lake Worth Lagoon along the Lake Worth golf course and Bryant Park. Students will remove exotic plants and trash.
- Nov. 16 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Folke Peterson Wildlife Center, 10948 Acme Road, Wellington. Students will feed the animals and clean their cages plus work on creating wildlife habitat.

- Nov. 30 from 9 a.m. to noon at the High Ridge Scrub Natural Area in Boynton Beach on High Ridge Road off Hypoluxo Rd. Students will plant native vegetation and remove exotic plants.

About Palm Beach Community College: Serving more than 46,000 students annually, Palm Beach Community College is the largest institution of higher education in Palm Beach County, providing associate degrees, professional certificates, career and customized training and lifelong learning. Florida's first public community college, PBCC offers more than 100 programs of study at locations in Lake Worth, Boca Raton, Palm Beach Gardens and Belle Glade.

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