LANDCARE AUSTRALIA

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MEDIA RELEASE

More than 200,000 bags collected during the Coles Plastic Bag Challenge

November 2009

Australians have taken steps to help the environment by collecting more than 200,000 bags in support of the Coles Plastic Bag Challenge.

Schools, businesses and individuals were urged to collect their unwanted plastic bags in October and place them inside new recycling bins in Coles stores nationwide, with all proceeds from the challenge donated to Junior Landcare and the Coles School Gardens Grants Program.

In total, 229,712 bags were collected by more than 300 participants during the four week challenge, with the majority of bags being collected by 185 primary and secondary schools across Australia.

The winners of the 2009 Coles Plastic Bag Challenge are:

***School* category –** St Paul Apostle North Primary School (Victoria) with 9,778 bags
***Business* category** – Serpentine Jarrahdale Shire (Western Australia) with 2,469 bags
***Individual* category** – Tyler Richardson (Tasmania) with 1,455 bags

Principal of St Paul Apostle North Primary School, Christine White, said the Coles Plastic Bag Challenge was an opportunity to educate children about the importance of recycling and caring for the environment.

"The Coles Landcare Plastic Bag challenge has been an excellent springboard for students' environmental investigations into important issues such as food packaging and recycling. It has helped students realise that individual action does make a difference."

President of Serpentine Jarrahdale Shire, Sheila Twine, said the positive response to the challenge also showed that more families were taking responsibility for recycling in their local community.

"We are extremely proud of our win. It is yet another example of the way our small community continues to lead in environmental initiatives."

Coles General Manager for Customer Service, Sioned Rees-Thomas, congratulated each of the winners and everybody who contributed to achieving this impressive result.

"On behalf of all of us at Coles, I would like to congratulate our customers across Australia for their commitment to collect and recycle so many plastic bags. Initiatives like this help to ensure that we all take small steps to save the planet, one bag at a time," Ms Rees-Thomas said.

Junior Landcare spokesperson, Sheena Martin, congratulated all challenge participants for ensuring that we have saved 200,000 plastic bags from having an impact on our fragile environment.

"Over the course of only a few short weeks we have managed to recycle over 200,000 plastic bags. Imagine the difference we could make every day if everyone switched to using reusable bags all year round."

Coles has funded the Coles School Garden Grants Program in partnership with Junior Landcare since 2008, and has supported more than 450 schools around Australia to establish native, waterwise and vegetable gardens as part of their environmental studies. For more information about the Coles School Garden Grants Program, visit www.juniorlandcare.com/coles.

Winners of this year's Coles Plastic Bag Challenge have won a range of fantastic prizes including a compost bin and Sony projector (St Paul Apostle North Primary School); a Bokashi waste bucket and subscription to G magazine (Serpentine Jarrahdale Shire), and a Nintendo Wii and Yates 'Have a Grow' pack (Tyler Richardson).

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