Latino Environmental Education Network Community Meeting

Background
The Latino Environmental Education Network (LEEN) promotes environmental, community and economic well-being by working to improve environmental education and literacy opportunities available to Latino communities in Southwest Florida. To further our efforts LEEN is holding workshops to identify Latino community leaders as future partners, to determine the educational interests of workshop participants, to connect workshop participants with informational resources, and to improve existing educational outreach strategies.

Community Meetings
LEEN is now in the process of holding a series of four community workshops that include brief presentations about protecting Florida’s habitats and wildlife, conserving water resources and saving water and energy at home. Presentations are followed by smaller group discussions that provide an opportunity for participants to share ideas about expanding environmental outreach and educational opportunities to Hispanic populations. LEEN held the first workshop at Hodges University in Fort Myers, FL on Saturday, January 31st. Thirty eight Hispanic community members were in attendance.

Breakout Session Summary
The following information is the result of input generated at the Ft. Myers LEEN workshop.
Key environmental issues in Southwest Florida for Hispanic citizens include:
- Water pollution
- Garbage (domestic, electronics, oils)
- Ignorance in the use of septic tanks
- CO2 emissions

Perceived barriers preventing Hispanic citizens from attending environmental programming and/or activities include:
- Cultural differences
- Conflicts in schedules (Saturdays are working days)
- Transportation to the place of the events
- Language
- Priorities are in other areas such as economic opportunities

The most effective means/strategies of engaging more Hispanic citizens in environmental programming/activities were identified as:
- Outreach through radio, TV and church.
- Conveying urgency because the topic is important
- Relating environment to the economic situation of the public
- Educating school age youth
- Incorporating business that employs Latinos and where Latinos are in touch
- Explaining more clearly, “what is the benefit for me?”
Community organizations or events to better engage Hispanics in environmental issues include:

- Churches
- Public schools
- Radio, TV, magazines, newspapers
- Stores and supermarkets, public parks
- Promoting more activities in conservation
- Workshops like this one

**Next Steps**

Additional community workshops will be held in Arcadia, Bowling Green and Immokalee, Florida in Spring 2009. LEEN will continue to gather Hispanic citizens' ideas and views about environmental issues and will identify methods to increase involvement of Hispanic citizens in environmental stewardship.

Please join LEEN for a Community Workshop at one of the following locations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Place</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 7</td>
<td>Arcadia</td>
<td>South Florida Community College&lt;br&gt; Arcadia Campus, 2251 NE Turner Ave., Arcadia</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 11</td>
<td>Bowling Green</td>
<td>South Florida Community College&lt;br&gt; B. Green Campus, 2968 US 17 N, Bowling Green</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 9</td>
<td>Immokalee</td>
<td>Career and Service Center&lt;br&gt; 750 South 5th St., Immokalee</td>
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