



Media Contact:

Jennifer Fitzgerald, 972.896.1455

[jfitzgerald@realschoolgardens.org](mailto:jfitzgerald@realschoolgardens.org)

## CHILDREN “DIG-IN” AT SCHOOL TO CREATE NEW LEARNING GARDEN

### *Chesapeake Energy joins REAL School Gardens in support of Sallye Moore Elementary*

GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas – [March 3, 2010] – REAL School Gardens, a Fort Worth-based organization that brings gardens to underserved elementary schools in North Texas, is extending its reach through generous support from Chesapeake Energy. Sallye Moore Elementary in Grand Prairie will be the first school to benefit from Chesapeake-sponsored vegetable and perennial beds installed as part of its school’s outdoor classroom on Thursday, March 4, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Hands and shovels will be busy as new flower beds will be prepared, seeds sowed and plants installed with care by children, parents, teachers, and community volunteers from Chesapeake Energy and the City of Grand Prairie.

“Chesapeake is pleased to provide the foundation that will allow elementary school children a chance to learn outside of a traditional classroom,” said Leah King, Senior Director of Public Affairs for Chesapeake. “Nature provides an enormous opportunity in which to learn about a variety of subjects, and we know that these children and their parents will be inspired for a lifetime because of this garden.”

Chesapeake provided funds to underwrite a vegetable and perennial garden, and the donation will supply building materials to construct flower beds, including the soil, fertilizer and plants to create a place for both nature and children to congregate. Sallye Moore Elementary’s REAL School Garden will also include features such as a soil and gravel bed for studying erosion, a pond for water experiments, boulders for seating and geology and compost bins.

“I am excited about the opportunities this garden will provide our teachers and students,” said Angela Lesley, Principal of Sallye Moore Elementary. “This garden will provide an incredible environment in which to learn about ecosystems, life cycles and animal adaptations. Whether studying math, science, or English, all students will enjoy the benefits of our new outdoor learning classroom.”

On installation day, the REAL School Gardens team will ensure each student has the opportunity to participate in creating “their” new space. Classes will rotate through the garden throughout the day, and will participate in the construction and planting of the overall project. Students will transport soil, mulch and plants using simple machines – also known as garden tools – to create the special place where learning is both fun and educational.

“School gardens provide a real world context for students to study plant structures, life cycles of butterflies and insects and much more. They also provide parents and community volunteers new opportunities to get involved in our schools,” said Scott Feille, Regional Program Director for REAL School Gardens. “We depend on

the generosity of our community partners who help us bring the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills subject matter to life for children throughout North Texas.”

Currently, REAL School Gardens supports more than 66 schools in North Texas by ensuring that more than 40,000 children and 2,300 teachers have access to nature through school gardens. Currently, school districts benefitting from the program include Grand Prairie, Arlington, Fort Worth, Birdville and Dallas.

The organization and its partners support schools to create the outdoor classroom and to build community around the school garden. This support includes professional development for teachers, as well as guidance about subject matter content, maintenance, sustainability and use.

### **About REAL School Gardens**

REAL School Gardens cultivates relationships with elementary school communities to create learning gardens that raise hope, spark imaginations and connect children to nature. In addition to garden installations, REAL School Gardens provides year-round support for the gardens, professional development opportunities for educators and community-wide networking events. Currently, REAL School Gardens works with 66 elementary schools in five urban school districts, ensuring that more than 40,000 children and more than 2,300 educators have daily access to nature through school gardens in North Texas. With plans to reach more students and school communities across the country, the organization is itself growing. For more information, visit [www.realschoolgardens.org](http://www.realschoolgardens.org).

###