**Press Release**

For Immediate Release

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**City of Houston Public Works and Keep Houston Beautiful**

**Beautify Acres Home area with Adopt-A-Ditch Project**

**Article by: Alvin Wright**

The City of Houston partnered with Keep Houston Beautiful in an Adopt-A-Ditch project in the Acres Home area held on Saturday, April 10, 2010 at 8 am in a drainage esplanade at Ferguson Way and Depriest. The goal of the effort was to raise the quality of life by transforming the adopted areas into a cleaner, more environmentally pleasant place.

The overall scope of this award winning and nationally acclaimed project was to keep the ditch free of litter and debris while improving the quality of the storm water and drawing added attention to stopping illegal dumping in the area.

Administered by Keep Houston Beautiful and the City of Houston’s Department of Public Works and Engineering Right-of-Way and Fleet Maintenance Division, this effort landscaped a 359’ linear ditch. Hundreds of community volunteers such as the Acres Homes Super Neighborhood, Progressive Missionary Baptist Church members and Teach for America teacher volunteers planted hundreds of trees, shrubs and native plants which are used to filter the storm water. The teacher volunteers took this valuable learning experience back to the classroom as apart of a new environmental educational curriculum focused on water quality.

Professional landscape architect Keiji Asakura, of Asakura Robison Company LLC, who volunteered his time, was on hand to provide direction and guidance to ensure the program’s success. Drought tolerant plants native to Texas temperatures were used, reducing the need for frequent watering.

The plan was to construct a walking trail around the ditch comprised of material recycled from a coal plant that is inexpensive, maintenance-free and safe for the environment. The mulch that was used to create an environmentally friendly appearance for this project was comprised of recycled brush and trees that were collected by the City of Houston and processed by Living Earth Technology Houston Mulch™. Financial underwriters for the Adopt-A-Ditch program and Keep Houston Beautiful Day included UPS Foundation, Republic Services, Marathon Oil Corporation, HEB and AbitibiBowater. In-kind contributors included: Living Earth Technology; Home Depot for trees; and Coca-Cola Enterprises, Inc. for water.

Adopt-A-Ditch is an expansion of the successful Adopt-A-Block program that is a partnership between the City of Houston, Keep Houston Beautiful, local merchants, volunteers, and residents. The goal of the effort is to raise the quality of life by transforming the adopted areas into cleaner, more environmentally pleasant places to live and work.

Derrick Neal, Adopt-A-Ditch Coordinator for the Department of Public Works Right of Way and Fleet Maintenance, said the ultimate goal is to improve storm water quality in our service region which flows to Galveston Bay. “To this end, we want to use our Adoption efforts as an integration mechanism within our ongoing educational curriculum development activities within the HISD school system in partnership with Keep Houston Beautiful,” Derrick commented.

Robin Blut, Executive Director, Keep Houston Beautiful, believes this effort makes a difference in the quality of life in the community. “This effort shows what a dramatic improvement the landscaping adds to the ditch environment. Volunteer participation and government partnership are the hallmark of the Adopt-A-Ditch program,” Blut said.





