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Photos Available Upon Request

**MIDDLE SCHOOL SERVICES COMMUNITY—LEARNS ABOUT
CONSERVATION**

Daly City, CA, March 21, 2008 – Students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades at The Hilldale School are clearing away invasive plant species on a patch of San Bruno Mountain next to the school. As part of their Contemporary Issues and Social Action class, students decided to attack a small portion of the problem which is threatening to cause the extinction of butterflies indigenous to San Bruno Mountain, most notably the Mission Blue Butterfly.

In October, students were visited by Doug Allshouse, representative of *Friends of San Bruno Mountain*. He has been working with the group since 1996 to keep the mountain free from development. In 1973 the Endangered Species act was written by Congress, and in 1976 the Mission Blue Butterfly was added to the list. That same year the San Bruno Elfin Butterfly was listed, and in 1997 the Callippe Silverspot joined the list of endangered insects which call San Bruno Mountain home. During Mr. Allshouse's presentation, students learned about the geology and history of the invasive species—how plants such as the Blue Gum Eucalyptus tree, English Ivy, and Cape Ivy were brought over by explorers and settlers. These plants thrived here, taking over the native plants that butterflies need in order to survive. These endangered butterflies are host specific, so they can only eat the single plants, endemic to San Bruno Mountain, which are being choked out by the invasive species. In fact, San Bruno Mountain is one of 18 hot spots in the world where a large number of rare species are being encroached upon by urbanization.

Every Friday, students at Hilldale School get out their shovels, wheelbarrows, gloves, and hoes, and continue the arduous task of clearing away the ubiquitous, invasive vines and plants. Students are joined by their teacher and a parent. The students have secured funds from their Student Council to purchase native plants and flowers and plan to begin the planting portion of the project in the next couple of weeks.

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“I believe that what we are doing is quite exemplary, as we are helping the community, and our actions may inspire others to do the same. In the end, we are not doing this for ourselves; we are doing this for the planet” says eighth-grader, Oliver Knitter. Students have expressed enjoyment in the project, in part because it’s a break from the regular academic day. Sixth-grader Aditi Sheth explains, “I think that the San Bruno Mountain is a huge part of our community, and [this is] a project that not only benefits our community, but our school as well. It is a great thing to be a part of. Plus, it’s a lot of fun!” Eighth-grader Max Koval adds, “I feel that I have done something important to help the school by pulling out weeds, and I am also having fun while doing it.” Another eighth-grade student, Dima Aryeh, inserts, “Ripping things out of the ground is fun, especially when it helps the environment!”

Hilldale is a co-educational, academically accelerated pre-Kindergarten through 8th grade private school nestled against the San Bruno Mountain in Daly City. At Hilldale School we are...“Rising to the Challenge.” For more information about programs and enrollment, please visit **hilldaleschool.org**.

The Hilldale School

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