



# ST. MARY'S ACADEMY

*Today's Young Woman. Tomorrow's Leader.*

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **VO/SOT AND PACKAGE OPPORTUNITY AT ST. MARY'S ACADEMY TOMORROW AT 1 P.M.**

### **St. Mary's Academy Helping in Lead Cleaning Project in New Orleans** *Only Oregon Collection Site for Fundred Project*

Portland, Ore. – February 11, 2010 – St. Mary's Academy students will donate approximately \$300,000 to a large biodiesel truck toward the efforts to clean lead-contaminated soil in New Orleans tomorrow at 1 p.m. *in theory.*

In actuality, students will contribute drawings of hundred dollar bills known as Fundreds, which are part of a nationwide project called Operation Paydirt that hopes to raise over 3,000,000 Fundreds and deliver them to Congress in exchange for \$300 million in federal funding, the estimated cost needed to make New Orleans' soil lead-safe.

As Oregon's only official Fundred collection center, St. Mary's Academy's Fundred efforts are organized by art teacher, Kathy Mitchell, who encourages all schools, organizations, clubs and individuals to participate and send their bills to the school.

"As a collection site coordinator for the past 3 ½ years, I am committed to the project and its goal to improve living conditions for children in New Orleans," said Mitchell. "When students contribute their artwork by drawing Fundreds, they contribute their talent to a worthy cause. I consider it a case of win-win."

Operation Paydirt was founded by artist Mel Chin and the organization's goal is to rid soil of high lead levels, which may cause learning disabilities and poor education performance in children. Additional information on the Fundred project including a downloadable template, the nationwide pickup schedule and additional lead effects can be found by visiting <http://www.fundred.org/>.

For additional information or questions, please contact Crystal Ghassemi, Director of Marketing and Public Relations, at 503-724-8589 (cell) , 503-721-7715 (direct office) or [crystal.ghassemi@stmaryspdx.org](mailto:crystal.ghassemi@stmaryspdx.org).

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*About St. Mary's Academy*

Founded in 1859 by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, St. Mary's Academy is Oregon's oldest continuously operating secondary school and one of 716 all-female schools in the country. The student body represents a diverse background of young women from over 30 urban, suburban, and rural communities in Oregon and southwest Washington. St. Mary's Academy is distinguished by its development of the whole person, and is the only school in the state to receive three U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon Schools awards. For more information about St. Mary's Academy, please visit: [www.stmaryspdx.org](http://www.stmaryspdx.org).

*About Operation Paydirt*

Operation Paydirt brings together leading environmental scientists, landscape architects, community groups and civic leaders to treat lead pollution in New Orleans and to develop a model to rescue other American post-industrial cities with similar problems. One of the most lead polluted cities in the U.S., New Orleans has an estimated 86,000 properties with dangerously high levels of lead in the soil, placing thousands of children at risk for lead-poisoning. According to the American Society of Pediatrics, "Exposure to lead can cause cognitive damage and behavioral issues. Studies have shown that lead, once it enters a child's body, is stored in the bones for years. Ongoing exposure has been linked to loss of IQ points, higher rates of behavioral and attention problems, and reading disabilities." Operation Paydirt's scientific team has developed a soil remediation method that can make New Orleans lead-safe for children. The cost to treat all the lead-contaminated properties in the city is estimated at \$300 million, based on projections from a pilot project by Dr. Howard Mielke of the Tulane/Xavier Center for Bioenvironmental Research.

The Operation Paydirt and The Fundred Dollar Bill Project is led by internationally recognized artist Mel Chin, who states, "Fundred, as part of Operation Paydirt, demonstrates the participatory power of art as a driving force for public awareness, dialogue, and action. We will reach children, those most affected by unsafe lead, deliver their voices to the U.S. Congress and solve the problem of lead-contaminated soil. Through this process we have the opportunity to profoundly impact the health of society."