

Contact: Michél McLaughlin, Executive Director  
WE CAN Foundation • West East Community Access Network  
Phone: 323 967 0500 • Fax: 323 967 0521  
Email: urbanfarm@wecan-foundation.org

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **South Los Angeles Leads City in Renewal of Parking Strips**

*On September 11<sup>th</sup>, National Service Day, WE CAN Foundation and the 60<sup>th</sup> Street Community come out to dig into parking strips for 21<sup>st</sup> Century conservation in South LA*

**Los Angeles, CA, September 9, 2009:** In honor of the ‘National Day of Service’ on September 11, the WE CAN Foundation is organizing the 60<sup>th</sup> Street community in South Los Angeles to gather in street-fair fashion to dig in and advance conservation and urban renewal with its September 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> *Planting a Little Piece of Paradise Parkway* project.

Recent achievements by L.A. City Mayor Villaraigosa and the Department of Water and Power with their water restrictions and energy usage programs demonstrate how much can be accomplished through a united city effort. Obviously, it is going to take more than local government programs and updating city water ordinances to get the job done. Everyone from home gardeners to students to business people is taking an interest, and they’re not only envisioning a greener future for Los Angeles but figuring prominently in its creation.

Few understand the value of collective effort in building a greener urban LA better than Michél McLaughlin, executive director of the WE CAN Foundation, sponsor of the September 11<sup>th</sup> event. According to McLaughlin, “Turf strips are a big problem. In LA alone, tens of thousands of acres are dedicated to this most imprudent of all land uses; throughout the US, the number probably approaches the millions. Narrow strips of land protracted between sidewalks and streets, expensive and challenging to maintain, and now turning dry, brown and ugly, they are often called ‘hell strips’. There is a saner and sounder policy: they can be changed to multi-storied micro-climates of flora and fauna that optimize land use; enrich soils; filter and clean water run-off; build water-shedding capabilities; clean and cool the air; preserve biodiversity; quiet urban bustle; build a sense of community; and a great deal more.” McLaughlin calls *sustainability* a mandatory 21<sup>st</sup> century standard and WE CAN is striving to set the bar for meeting this standard starting in South Los Angeles, by transforming one parking strip at a time.

The 60<sup>th</sup> Street *Planting a Little Piece of Paradise Parkway* project is the first in the ambitious WE CAN mission to spearhead an urban renewal process toward: more sustainable land use; development of urban micro-farms that will provide local supplies of low-cost healthy foods for inner-city communities; reduction and transformation of turf grass strips and lawns; and expansion of the water-shedding capabilities of the city landscape. *RootDown LA* also will be present with information, snacks, and tips for preparing healthy nutritious foods.

WE CAN has been active in the South LA community since 1995, bridging both the digital and cultural divides; providing free tutoring services to students under the No Child Left Behind Program; and a roster of programs that foster literacy, critical thinking, and the Arts. The Urban Farm Network Programs, of which the *Planting a Little Piece of Paradise Parkway* project is a part, are the foundation’s most recent body of work intended to promote green education, community action, and economic well-being. For more information about this or other WE CAN programs or to volunteer, contact the WE CAN Community Learning Center: 323 759 9734.