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From: Debbie Levin

To: EMA Board of Directors

Sent: Fri, May 6, 2011 2:37:06 PM

Subject: Bloggers

Hi everyone,

As you know, the EMA school garden program, established two years ago continues to grow. Thanks to our committed Young Hollywood Board, our generous sponsors and the teachers and students of the Los Angeles Unified School District, the program has become very successful. It's unfortunate in the midst of this great success, some can try to find controversy where none exists. The standards of the gardening program and our relationship with Kellogg Garden Products have been called into question. A San Francisco-based blogger posted a story last week claiming that Kellogg's nonorganic materials were being used in school garden programs. Following that, an environmental blog picked up the story and expanded upon it by questioning our relationship with Kellogg since the company sells products that aren't considered environmentally correct. Let me walk you through some of the facts:

The stories claim that nonorganic materials were used at school sites.

This is not accurate. Schools only have access to Kellogg organic materials. This misconception may come from the fact that shortly after our program started two years ago, one participating school reached out directly to Kellogg and obtained mulch that is not considered organic. We regret that one school acted on its own in securing nonorganic materials and immediately buttoned-up our policies/procedures so that the Kellogg order form provided to schools only gives schools access to Kellogg's organic materials and all schools must place their orders through us so that we can verify that only organic materials will be delivered.

The story claims that nonorganic materials were used in a school garden because a photo available on the Internet shows an EMA Young Hollywood Board Member posing with kids next to a bag of nonorganic materials. The first half of the statement is not accurate—nonorganic materials were not used in the photographed garden. The latter part of the statement—that a bag of the nonorganic material is visible in an EMA photo—is accurate. To be candid, these were props for photos and we just didn't catch it (not knowing the names of any nonorganic products so it didn't register). We have developed an internal list of Standards for EMA School Gardens that will ensure that no such mistake is made going forward. Our gardens only use Kellogg organic

materials and we'll ensure that promotional photos reflect it.

I'm proud to say that in the 20-plus years since EMA was first established, we've never had any of our practices called into question. With a record like that, as you can imagine, we are taking this story/inquiry very seriously. The mission of our school garden program is to engage young people in a dialog about the environment and help them understand the importance of environmentally friendly garden techniques. According to the many teachers and students we are in regular contact with and reputable organizations like the Organic Farming Research Foundation, we are achieving these goals. We'll keep you posted on how we are dealing with the situation and as always, appreciate your support of our work.

Please call or email me with any questions about this.

xo

Debbie