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School

For Immediate Release

For more information, contact:
Whitney Campbell
Media Relations, North Cross School
540-989-6641 ext. 303
wcampbell@northcross.org

Plastic's Permanent Place

Plastic - made to last forever, designed to throw away

ROANOKE, VA (April 24th, 2013)— To help North Cross School celebrate Earth Day and demonstrate plastics' permanence in our world, internationally-known Dr. H. Bruce Rinker led a hands-on team experience, then spoke to middle and upper school students about the significant global impact of water-borne plastics.

Early Monday morning, Rinker led a group of students in a North Cross community clean-up of plastics and pollution from Tinker Creek. Working in a small area, the 20 students worked on the shore and in the water. They removed twenty bags filled with garbage and recyclables, several tires, two bicycles, and a lawn chair. Students reported that the morning was a lot of work, a lot of fun, and worth the effort. Freshman Campbell Lake said, "After working in the river and picking up all that garbage, I promised I would pick up plastic bottles when I saw them. This morning, it was easy to see what Dr. Rinker means when he talks about just how much plastic finds its way into our water!"

Rinker's presence gave students who have enrolled in North Cross' Horace G. Fralin Program for Global Studies another opportunity to experience the world around them, sensitize them to its issues, and allow them a chance to make a difference by taking action. Director of the Global Studies program, Robert Robillard, says, "The problem is easy to see for anyone who enjoys the greenways in the Roanoke Valley - our waters are thoroughly littered with plastic bags, bottles and worse. We are fortunate to have the help of someone as respected as Dr. Rinker in raising our awareness and comprehension of this ongoing problem. More to the point, today our students were actively engaged in being part of the solution - if only for this one day. We hope that the lessons we learned on Earth Day will last long beyond Monday."

On Wednesday, April 17, North Cross senior, Gussie Revercomb, delivered her Senior speech to students on the problems created by plastics globally. Revercomb, and her father, Stuart, travelled to join others and helped clean beaches in Mahahual, Mexico with Dr. Rinker. "I was shocked to learn that I wasn't actually standing on sand that first day. I was actually standing on pulverized plastic bags that kept rolling ashore with each wave. Knowing that we could never clean it all up was alarming", she said. "I can remember how, after I got back home, I wanted to live one day without touching plastic at all. As I shut off my alarm, I'd already failed, and with each step I took - brushing my teeth, opening a box of cereal, turning the ignition switch on my car - I realized how pervasive

plastics are in my world, and my work in Mexico was a reminder of how permanent plastics are in our world, and how toxic they are to every living thing.”

Rinker’s message went beyond the “reduce, reuse, and recycle” themes, encouraging students to take a more active and personally responsible role and add three more “r’s” - “refuse, redesign, and respect”. Rinker challenged the students, “Our oceans contain giant patches of garbage - gyres - like the one twice the size of Texas in the Pacific. In the U.S., we consume 2,000,000 plastic bottles every 5 minutes. We must face these facts and work to make changes.”

About Bruce Rinker

In his capacity as BRI’s Director of Scientific Advancement and Development, Dr. Bruce Rinker is focused on strategic partnerships, emerging areas of research, and funding opportunities globally to advance BRI’s mission. He is a National Fellow of The Explorers Club, a Fellow of the New York Academy of Sciences, and a Switzer Environmental Fellow. He is also the science advisor for Sustenta.com and a member of the board of directors for Naturalia, both based in México City, as well as a member of the research board for the Amazon Conservatory of Tropical Studies (Iquitos, Peru). He is co-editor and contributor to Forest Canopies (2004, Elsevier Press) and Gaia in Turmoil: Climate Change, Biodepletion, and Earth Ethics in an Age of Crisis (2010, MIT Press). His scientific expeditions include sites in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East, and Australia. He has participated twice on the French-sponsored international Radeau des Cimes mission (Cameroon and French Guiana). Dr. Rinker has received numerous science education awards including "Outstanding Science Teacher" (1991, Science Teachers Association of New York State), "Outstanding Biology Teacher" (1997, National Association of Biology Teachers), and the "Environmental Education Award" from the County of Sarasota, Florida in 2004. For more information, visit: <http://www.briloon.org/about-bri/the-people-of-bri/staff/science-directors/h-bruce-rinker>

About North Cross School

North Cross School is a college-preparatory day school grounded in a strong liberal arts and science curriculum combined with exceptional co-curricular programs. The academic program, from junior kindergarten through twelfth grade, prepares students to become responsible, successful citizens by encouraging them to explore their interests and develop their talents. The School is located at 4254 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA, 24018. For more information, visit www.northcross.org.

About the Horace G. Fralin Program for Global Studies at North Cross School

The Horace G. Fralin Program for Global Studies at North Cross School is designed to make students more aware, capable, and interested in a globalized and interconnected world. Through coursework and experiential education, students will become more knowledgeable and engaged in 21st century issues with greater international outlook, insight, and perspective. Students who successfully complete the established requirements will earn the designation of Global Studies Scholar on their diploma and transcript.