



## **‘Kids breathe here’: Dover students work to make adults environmentally aware**

By DALE LINDER-ALTMAN, T&D Staff Writer | Posted: Friday, January 14, 2011 3:00 am

NORTH -- Parents can breathe a little easier in North now that students are working to make the air cleaner.

In Dover Elementary School's award-winning clean air program, a 15-member team of students donates time before and after school to educate adults about the harmful effects of vehicular emissions on human health and the environment.

The clean air team goes to work when parents are dropping their kids off or picking them up, said fifth-grader Keri Kibodeaux.

"They count the cars and see how many there are that are leaving their engine running," she said.

"They tell them that kids will be breathing the chemicals and ask them to try to remember to turn their engines off the next time. When the kids talk, their parents usually listen."

There's also a sign on the wall that says, "Turn your engine off. Kids breathe here," Keri said.

This project is just part of what Dover students are doing to improve and protect the environment, said Jennifer Bolin Fanning, the teacher who organized the program. The program recently led to the school winning the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's Spare the Air award.

The school's efforts at improving the environment began with a Green Steps recycling project in 2008 that is still in operation.

"We are reducing trash by recycling," Fanning said. "Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, our recycling troopers pick up the trash from the classrooms, and it's picked up by Sonoco Recycling in Columbia."

On Friday afternoons, Keri and another recycling trooper are on duty. They go to all the classrooms and collect the paper for recycling. If the kids haven't put the paper in the correct bin, she tells them, "If you don't recycle, we'll be cutting down more trees and that takes away from our clean air."

"Sometimes we take a piece of paper out of the trash can and show it to them and tell them it belongs in the recycling bin.

Sometimes the kids say 'OK,' but it seems to me they ignore us. Then we tell the teachers and they listen better than the students," Keri said.

The Green Steps program challenges participants to come up with new projects every year and in

2009, the students began working on improving air quality by adding plants to the environment, Fanning said.

"We started last year with poinsettias in each classroom that we got free from community churches after Christmas," she said.

The students also planted a Carolina fence garden and 21 trees.

Dover students also partner with the Orangeburg Soil and Water Conservation District in another project. The district provides the funding and the students provide the labor to clean up the river landing in North at least once a year, Fanning said.

Interest in the Green Step projects is increasing among the students, according to Fanning.

"The first year, we had just a few, but I see a difference every year in the number of applications asking to be on the recycling team and the clean air team," she said.

Doing the projects is a valuable lesson for the students, according to Fanning.

"They are learning to take care of the resources that we have," she said. "We teach that the Earth is not just ours to use."



#### **Dover poinsettia**

Poinsettias have been placed in Dover Elementary School classrooms as part of its award-winning clean air project



#### **Dover garden**

Students work in the Carolina garden at Dover Elementary School.

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