

For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Three District Schools Named Champions of the Environment

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Charleston, SC – Burke High School, James Island Charter High School, and Jane Edwards Elementary School are three of eight schools named “Champions of the Environment” by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) for the 2018-2019 school year. By earning this honor, staff and students received thousands of dollars in grant money for their schools, and are featured in this year’s Champions of the Environment commercial, which is airing this week on WCIV-TV (ABC News 4) in the Charleston area. You can also view the commercial on [YouTube](#).

DHEC launched this program in 1993 to encourage students to identify ways they can protect the natural world and boost environmental awareness. This is the first time since the 2013-14 school year that a Charleston County School District school was named a “Champion of the Environment” by DHEC; Jane Edwards and West Ashley High School both earned the honor that school year (West Ashley was also a “Champion of the Environment” in the 2011-2012 school year).

“This year, more than half of our winners came from the Lowcountry, with three in particular coming from within CCSD,” said Amanda Ley, DHEC’s coordinator for the Champions of the Environment program. “We hope these wonderful projects inspire the students to embrace environmental stewardship and work to make a lasting impact in their communities.”

Burke High School – Oyster Reef Habitat Restoration

Students partnered with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) to restore local oyster reef habitats by planting cordgrass and installing oyster castles along Charleston’s shorelines. Students harvested cordgrass seedlings from the marshes in December and cultivated them in an “ebb-and-flow” hydroponics system over the winter. They also bagged oysters over the winter. This spring, SCDNR will supervise the planting of the cordgrass seedlings and the deployment of the oyster bags into the rivers to create new oyster reefs that will protect the cordgrass. The restoration of this habitat will improve water quality and support local fisheries and the economy.

The completion of this project will earn the school their National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador Certification. The school also plans to develop a documentary highlighting their successful project and share it both locally and as part of the New Tech Network of schools.

James Island Charter High School – Hydroponics and Spartina

Earth Science students worked on restoring a salt marsh ecosystem with *Spartina alterniflora* plants and artificial oyster reefs. Students harvested *Spartina* seeds (which were germinated hydroponically) and monitored water and air quality in the greenhouse. They also completed an oyster bag dissection. In the spring, the students will participate in a Seeds to Shoreline planting and oyster reef restoration day. The planting location will be noted so that future students can see progress that has been made over time.

SCDNR and Seeds to Shoreline staff helped construct the greenhouse, and Clemson Extension staff installed rain gutters onto the greenhouse and connected them to rain barrels.

Jane Edwards Elementary School – In the Ground or Hydroponics

Students are comparing the environmental benefits of hydroponic gardens to the school's existing traditional in-ground gardens. Volunteers helped sixth-grade students build three hydroponic towers, and eventually, seeds will be planted inside a plant cart. The seedlings will start in the same climate, then they will be transferred to either in-ground or hydroponic gardens. Students will compare the differences in production between the two gardens.

The community has been very involved in this project. Two Master Gardeners have volunteered at the school, Lowe's donated \$750 worth of plants, and Edisto True Value and Donors Choose donated garden tools and supplies. Edisto Island Youth and Recreation performed heavy-duty garden chores.

To learn more about the individual projects that led to the schools receiving this honor, contact Peter Locher at Burke at peter_locher@charleston.k12.sc.us, Tracy Lyles at James Island Charter at tracy_lyles@charleston.k12.sc.us, or Paula Burns at Jane Edwards at paula_burns@charleston.k12.sc.us. For more information about DHEC's Champions of the Environment initiative, visit their [website](#).

Champions of the Environment is sponsored by Dominion Energy, International Paper, and DHEC.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves

more than 50,000 students in 86 schools and several specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities led by associate superintendents. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.