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Destrehan Students Honored at White House

Washington, D.C. – Three Harry Hurst Middle School students and their teacher were honored today at the White House as “Champions of Change” for initiating a campus-wide recycling program at their school and collecting over 16,000 gallons of recyclable materials during the 2010-2011 school year.

The White House Champions of Change initiative profiles Americans from all walks of life who are helping the country rise to the challenges of the 21st century. These Champions of Change are doing extraordinary things in their communities to innovate, educate and build a better America. For more on the Champions of Change initiative, please visit <http://www.whitehouse.gov/champions>.

“It was an honor to have the White House recognize Harry Hurst Middle School,” said Julie Rexford, the students’ teacher. **“The smart and motivated students on our ‘Green Team’ have done an incredible job getting the school recycling, and they are all very deserving of this honor.”**

Recycling programs in the New Orleans area were scaled back after Hurricane Katrina. The students saw a need for increased recycling in their community and thought their school would be a great place to start. The students persuaded a local commercial recycler to pick up their school’s recycled materials for free for half the school year, and they organized a campus-wide, “classroom-curb-side” collection program. They also educated students and faculty at the school about the importance of recycling.

The three students who were honored at the White House—Courtney Crane, Collin Duffel and Sean Walsh—represented the school’s 35-member Green Team. In addition to being formally recognized at a White House ceremony, the students briefed officials in the U.S. Department of Energy on the details of their successful program.

Shannon Smith the CEO and Managing Partner of Abundant Power (<http://www.abundantpower.com>), and Abundant Power’s Foundation, Abundant Hope, heard about the Green Team’s great work. After the ceremony and meetings, Smith presented the students with a \$2,000 check from Abundant Hope to fund their program through the 2011-2012 school year. The Department of Energy and the Clean Economy Development Center also presented graduating Harry Hurst student Colin Duffel with a \$2,000 check so he can expand the recycling program to the high school he’ll be attending this fall.

“These Green Team students are innovators who represent the future of America’s clean economy,” said Smith. “These students are finding creative ways to make their school and their community a better place, and Abundant Hope is pleased to support their innovative spirit and hard work.”

The Clean Economy Development Center (CEDC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping local public officials and community leaders execute clean energy projects and create jobs of the future. CEDC staff met these students through its Gulf Coast Sustainable Economies project, which aims to help local Gulf Coast leaders develop community-based projects that encourage sustainable economic development and recovery.

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