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Local Teachers Win Bright Ideas Grants

GRANTSBORO, NC – For the sixteenth consecutive year, Tideland Electric Membership Corporation has honored outstanding local teachers with Bright Ideas grants. In a surprise visit to 10 classrooms in Beaufort, Washington, Pamlico and Craven counties, the electric cooperative notified winning teachers of their selection in sharing over \$11,500 to fund creative, educational projects.

Local winners included Arapahoe Charter School teachers Ginny Vogt and Mary Ellen Stalnaker along with West Craven High School (WCHS) teachers Justin Harris and Brenda Laughinghouse.

Vogt received funding for her project “From Pocahontas to Osama bin Laden: Using Historical Fiction to Integrate Literature and History.” Using seven award winning historical fiction novels, Vogt’s students will study important events in U.S. history from the days of early explorers to September 11, 2001.

Classroom sets of the following six titles will be purchased with Bright Ideas funding: “Sign of the Beaver” by Elizabeth George Speare; “The Kidnapped Prince” by Ann Cameron; “Bull Run” by Paul Fleischman; “The Fighting Ground” by Avi; “Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes” by Eleanor Coerr; and “The Boy in the Striped Pajamas” by John Boyne. Vogt already has a classroom set of “The Breadwinner” by Deborah Ellis that will also be utilized during the students’ studies. The main characters

in each text are children roughly the same age as Vogt's fifth graders which will enhance their engagement with and comprehension of events and concepts that shape U.S. history.

The 31 week project will include classroom videos, guest speakers and the study of original source documents like the Gettysburg Address.

Stalnaker's project, "Hands On Equations Learning System," will focus on fifth grade mathematical concepts. Using what look like the pieces of a Parcheesi game, Hands On Equations provides a game-like approach to algebraic learning. The learning method was developed by Pennsylvania educator Dr. Henry Borenson in his attempt to demystify algebra.

Harris along with three other WCHS teachers, William Shaw, Anthony Ranieri and Janna Dennis, received funding to construct an electric wiring demonstration wall. Students will draw plans and blueprints and eventually construct a wall that will then be used to practice electrical wiring skills including the installation of switches and receptacles.

Laughinghouse received funding for her project "Please Fence Me In!" To receive a high school diploma, students with exceptional needs must complete 300 hours of work in a school based enterprise. WCHS is the only school in North Carolina incorporating animal husbandry and agriculture to meet that requirement. The campus currently houses 15 chickens and 2 lambs and students sell the eggs and sheep's wool. The Bright Ideas funding will be used to buy materials that will be used by the school's agriculture and construction technology classes to erect more fencing and section off grazing paddocks.

"The Bright Ideas grant program was established to encourage and underwrite innovation in education," said Tideland EMC's general manager and chief executive officer Cecil Smith, Jr. "In the past 16 years, North Carolina's electric co-ops have given more than \$7 million to support educational initiatives in all subject areas."

Teachers interested in applying for the next round of Bright Ideas grants may do so online in the spring of 2011 by visiting www.ncbrightideas.com. To learn more about the Hands On Equations learning system visit www.borenson.com.

Tideland EMC is a not-for-profit electric cooperative serving 22,600 accounts in Beaufort, Pamlico, Hyde, Craven, Washington and Dare counties.

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Photo: West Craven High School teacher Justin Harris landed in the winners' circle when he and his students were selected by Tideland EMC to receive a Bright Ideas classroom grant.