



Charleston County News Release

Release Number: 2836
Date: November 1, 2007

See photos: <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/newsimages/wastefreelunch.htm>

Mt. Pleasant Students Participate in Waste-Free Lunch Project

The Charleston County Solid Waste and Recycling Department assisted in a Waste-Free Lunch event at Charles Pinckney Elementary School in Mt. Pleasant on Thursday, Oct. 25.

The purpose of the project was to teach students and parents how to minimize waste that accumulates daily during lunchtime.

Michael Cline, the SAIL teacher and Ecology Club organizer for the school, came up with the idea for his students. Jenny Bloom and Theresa Martin of the County's Recycling Department assisted with the event, which was good practice for the County's new Waste-Free Lunch Project.

During the event at Charles Pinckney Elementary School, Cline measured how much waste students produce during lunch.

Cline kept track of the weight of the waste from each class on a board in the cafeteria, with the help of two parent volunteers and the County's Recycling Department. Each student threw their trash in a bin, and the bins were weighed after each class finished their lunch. The class from each grade with the lowest amount of waste won for their grade.

Cline used software to total the waste collections, and found that the school averaged 5.9 pounds of waste per class. The breakdown by grades is as follows:

- The third grade classes averaged 5.1 pounds of waste per class
- The fourth grade classes averaged 7.7 pounds of waste per class
- The fifth grade classes averaged 4.9 pounds of waste per class

The Charleston County Recycling Department gave Cline gift bags of recycled items to distribute to the students. Cline also gave out reusable sandwich containers to the students who brought their lunch, and therefore had less waste. During the event, students were taught what items could be recycled, and they were able to recycle those items during lunch.

In addition, the school's PTA is donating an ice cream party to the class with the least waste out of all three grades. Prior to the day's events, Cline promoted the benefits of waste-free lunches and asked parents to encourage their children to pack only what is necessary if they bring their lunches to school.

Charleston County's Solid Waste and Recycling Department first announced its new Waste-Free Lunch Project in its teacher newsletter in August of 2007. During the annual First Day Event, which is held every year when school starts, the Recycling Department gave out 3,000 insulated lunch bags with a card detailing how and why to pack a waste-free lunch.

"Mr. Cline is a dedicated environmental educator, and his school is the first to hold a Waste-Free Lunch event," Bloom said. "Although he came up with the idea for his school's event

independently of the County's program, we are hopeful that other schools will begin calling about this exciting new project."

Charleston County's Waste-Free Lunch Project teaches students to reduce, reuse and recycle, based on the following facts:

- The average student throws away 67 pounds of lunch waste per school year.
- When students reduce the amount of waste they produce during lunch, schools save money by not having to haul away the waste as frequently.
- Extra waste leads to increased disposal fees, truck traffic and air pollution, and uses unneeded landfill space.

Visit the Charleston County Web site at www.charlestoncounty.org for news, services and up-to-date information relating to Charleston County Government.