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ONE SCHOOL AND ONE UNIVERSITY HONORED AS 2016 ALABAMA GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS

Montgomery, Ala. – The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) is pleased to announce the state’s 2016 Green Ribbon Schools. The schools are honored for their approach to creating "green" environments through reducing environmental impact, promoting health, and ensuring a high-quality environmental and outdoor education.

The 2016 Alabama Green Ribbon School and University are:
• A. H. Watwood Elementary School, Talladega County Schools
• University of Montevallo

“We are so proud to honor these schools and their tremendous efforts to reduce environmental impact and utility costs, promote health and offer environmental education,” said Dr. Tommy Bice, State Superintendent of Education. “They are leaders and important examples for all schools examining their own ways to become more environmentally friendly,” Bice continued.

All nominated and winning K-12 schools will receive Alabama State Board of Education recognition at the May 12th meeting. The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) worked in collaboration with the ALSDE to nominate the University of Montevallo and will be honoring the university. All schools will be celebrated with a picnic lunch at Eat South Farm in downtown Montgomery provided by the Environmental Education Association of Alabama (EEAA). Green Ribbon Flags, sponsored by Legacy, Partners in Environmental Education, will be presented to each of the schools. Special environmental-related gifts will be presented by Noresco and Wave PowerSteward.

The U. S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools Program (GRS) is a federal recognition program that began in 2011. Honored schools exercise a comprehensive approach to creating "green" environments through reducing environmental impact, promoting health, and ensuring a high-quality environmental and outdoor education to prepare students with the 21st century skills and sustainability concepts needed in the growing global economy.

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The Alabama Green Ribbon Schools have been submitted to the U. S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School Program. National honorees will be announced on Earth Day, April 22, 2016.

About the Schools:

**A. H. Watwood Elementary School** is a place where students are leading the learning. The school's unique culture and climate are the result of "Leader In Me" paradigm shifts where everyone can be a leader. The school serves approximately 375 students, pre-school through fourth grade. Watwood Elementary is a Title I School and is part of the Talladega County School System.

Today it is more important than ever before for students to be taught how to live a healthy, balanced life. Statistics consistently reveal that families living in poverty are often food insecure, obese, and die at an earlier age due to health related illness. The school’s goal is to combat the startling statistics through education.

The school is known for its warm, student-centered environment, which is experienced when walking in the front door and being welcomed by student leaders. Leadership resonates through the student body when observing practices such as leadership roles, notebooks, celebrations and clubs, all of which are embedded in daily routines. One habit that has become an important focus is Habit 7, Sharpen the Saw. This habit promotes a balanced life style and encourages children to take care of their body by eating right, exercising, getting enough sleep, and finding meaningful ways to help others.

Teachers embrace physical fitness and health and sponsor the "Trailblazers" running club and "iFit" fitness club. Students in these clubs participated in Club Days at school and participated in the Color Me Rad 5k in Birmingham. The "Curb Appeal" club is responsible for campus enhancements. The “Green Thumb” club takes care of all the planters and gardens on campus. School clubs compliment a Project-Based Learning (PBL) model by providing experiences filled with communication and collaboration challenges. As with PBL, clubs require involvement of community partners. Home Depot is a community partner that provided supplies and assisted the “Green Thumb” club by building raised beds and planting a vegetable garden. A local business, Blair Block, donated a concrete table, and the Sylacauga Arts Council awarded a $500 grant to the “Curb Appeal” club. These contributions enabled the school to create a collaborative mosaic tile masterpiece on a concrete table in an outdoor classroom area that will beautify the school courtyard for many years to come.

The **University of Montevallo (UM)** has been a leader in higher education in Alabama for environmental stewardship and sustainability. UM was the first university in the state to implement a Green Fund, which has contributed to the reduction of UM’s ecological footprint. This initiative generates approximately $30,000 per year, funding campus grants for projects that cut energy costs, decrease the university’s carbon footprint, and reduce waste.

UM has made significant improvements in managing energy use on campus. HVAC renovations in Main Hall now allow UM to regulate temperatures for energy conservation. HVAC upgrades in Brooke Hall, Einstein’s Brothers Bagels, and Palmer Hall resulted in electricity, gas, and steam savings as well as a reduction in water usage. UM recently replaced windows in major residence halls and other buildings with custom windows that retain their historic appearance but reduce energy loss. Solar shades have been installed on the west side of Carmichael Library, reducing heat gain by at least 97%.

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UM encourages recycling on campus. The University recycles approximately 3,000 pounds of aluminum, 18,000 pounds of plastic, and 65,000 pounds of paper annually. UM also recycles other waste, including computers and electronics, metal, glass, batteries, and light bulbs. The “Table to Garden to Table” initiative reduces food waste on the UM campus by composting unused vegetable matter from the Cafeteria to fertilize the UM Organic Community Garden. Gardeners turn the materials, render them usable, and fertilize the garden with the compost. This initiative generates 50 gallons a week in composted materials.

The UM Organic Community Garden was established as a project of the Environmental Club. The garden is available for both students and community members. Produce grown in the community sections of the garden is donated to Shelby Emergency Assistance (SEA) to be given to local families in need. More than 1,200 pounds of produce was donated to SEA in 2014. Two mason bee hives were installed in 2014 to encourage local pollinators.

UM offers a minor in Environmental Studies (ES) with an option to major through the Interdisciplinary Studies Program. ES incorporates perspectives from the natural and social sciences, the arts and humanities, and business. Since establishment, 610 students have enrolled in ES courses.

Alabama’s previous GRS state nominees include:

- 2015: Lincoln Elementary School and Lincoln High School, Talladega County School; Bluff Park Elementary School, Hoover City Schools; Auburn University
- 2014: Brock’s Gap Intermediate School, Hoover City Schools; F. E. Burleson Elementary School, Hartselle City Schools; Homewood Middle School, Homewood City Schools
- 2013: Munford Middle and High Schools, Talladega County Schools; Fayetteville High School, Talladega County Schools; Gwin Elementary School, Hoover City Schools; Talladega County School System (district winner)
- 2012: Munford Elementary School, Talladega County Schools; Winterboro High School, Talladega County Schools; Mill Creek Elementary School, Madison City Schools

About the EEAA: The Environmental Education Association of Alabama (EEAA) is a non-profit group comprised of educators and professionals involved in teaching about the environment. EEAA is an affiliate of the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE). Throughout the year, EEAA conducts workshops, hosts an annual conference, and offers members trips to various natural sites. EEAA also sponsors an annual awards program, maintains free teaching trunks, and offers financial grants to its membership.

About Legacy: Legacy is an organization making a difference in Alabama's environment. This is evidenced by more than $2.5 million in grants and scholarships Legacy has offered Alabamians for environmental-related projects and education. Legacy has trained more than 3,000 of Alabama's teachers about our environment in a fun and exciting way. In turn, those teachers pass the knowledge along to their students. Legacy is educating Alabama's future generations about the importance of protecting our environment for future generations. The “Protect Our Environment” car tag provides money to support their projects.
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About NORESCO United Technologies: NORESCO United Technologies is one of the largest energy services companies in the U.S. that utilizes design-build and a variety of performance-based contracting vehicles to deliver energy and maintenance savings and significant infrastructure upgrades to existing facilities. These upgrades can be funded through cost savings that the projects generate without the need for up-front capital expenditures by the customer. NORESCO offers a full suite of energy efficiency and sustainable design consulting services. The company collaborates with building owners, architects, and engineers to identify and integrate viable sustainable design strategies into projects to optimize overall energy and environmental performance in new construction and existing buildings. Services include energy auditing, commissioning and retro-commissioning, energy and daylighting analysis, LEED® certification consulting, and sustainability master-planning.

About WAVE PowerSteward: Wave PowerSteward uses patent-pending technology to effectively measure the power being consumed by actual computers rather than relying on average power consumption data. This unique methodology allows the company to accurately measure a business’s total cost and savings. Wave PowerSteward’s intuitive user interface and dashboard allows any authorized member of a team to manage computer power settings. There is no need for complex networking or system management tools. Computers are simply placed into user groups where usage patterns can be easily set, managed, and reported.

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