FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 22, 2016

U. S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION NAMES 2016 GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS NOMINATED BY ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Secretary of Education John King announced that A.H. Watwood Elementary School, Talladega County Schools, and the University of Montevallo are among the 2016 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools.

A.H. Watwood Elementary School, Talladega County Schools, and the University of Montevallo were also nominated at the state level as Alabama Green Ribbon Schools.

“These schools, as well as our numerous past state and national awardees, are models of environmental stewardship and innovative education. We are proud of their continued, sustainable work,” said Dr. Philip Cleveland, Interim State Superintendent of Education. The schools will be honored at the May 12th Alabama State Board of Education meeting, followed by a picnic lunch.

Across the country, a total of 47 schools, 15 districts, and 11 postsecondary institutions are being honored for their innovative efforts to reduce environmental impact and utility costs, improve health and wellness, and ensure effective sustainability education.

The list of 73 total honorees includes 41 public schools and 6 private schools. Fifty-one percent of the 2016 honorees serve a disadvantaged student body. The list of all selected schools, districts, colleges, and universities, as well as their nomination packages, can be found here. A report with highlights on the 73 honorees can be found here.

More information on the federal recognition award can be found here. Resources for all schools to move toward the three Pillars of Green Ribbon Schools can be found here.

For more information on Alabama’s Green Ribbon Schools program, please contact Shirley Farrell at 334-242-8317, sfarrell@alsde.edu.

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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.

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. 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. 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.

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. Solar shades have been installed on the west side of Carmichael Library, reducing heat gain by at least 97%.

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. 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. 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. Since establishment, 610 students have enrolled in ES courses.

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