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Pee Dee Electric honors local teachers for 'bright ideas'

by Cassidy Odom
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Contributed photo The Rockingham Middle School Science Olympiad team is one of the many groups benefiting from the grants awarded by Pee Dee Electric.

Pee Dee Electric is honoring teachers and celebrating innovation in education this month by awarding \$13,500 in "Bright Ideas" education grants to local educators.

More than 750 students in elementary, middle and high schools in Richmond, Scotland and Anson counties will participate in the nine projects funded by Pee Dee's "Bright Ideas" grants this year.

"We're thrilled to award these dedicated educators with Bright Ideas grants," said Anne Edwards, marketing representative of Pee Dee Electric. "Their creative projects will

no doubt help students reach their full potential and spark higher interest in learning for years to come."

Bright Ideas education grants, sponsored by Pee Dee Electric and North Carolina's electric cooperatives, are available to North Carolina teachers for innovative, hands-on, classroom projects that would not otherwise be funded.

"Pee Dee Electric is committed to bettering the communities we serve, and we believe there is no better way than through the education of our youth," Edwards said.

The winning teachers will be honored at a special luncheon on Dec. 5, where they can share their ideas with all of the teachers and enjoy each other's company.

One of the 10 teachers to be honored, Amy Tadlock, of West Rockingham Elementary School, proposed a project for the Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) students of fourth and fifth grades throughout the county. Her proposal, Essential Elementary Economy, focuses on giving children the experience and responsibilities of participating in the economy. The students will come up with their own currency, job descriptions, spreadsheets, bills, payroll checks and banks.

"They will even create their own notices for late payments on bills," said Tadlock. "Every person is going to have to learn the real world experience of economy."

Richmond Senior High teacher Megan Hall will be honored for her proposal on Occupational Course Study School-Based Enterprise. Her "bright idea," aims to teach students how to start and operate successful businesses. The project will make its debut at the City of Rockingham's Christmas on the Square event this Saturday, Dec. 1. Some of the products Tadlock and her students will introduce are Christmas trees, snowmen, various other Christmas decor, as well as night lights.

"We're trying to teach kids all the different aspects of running a business such as marketing, administration and creativity," said Hall. "This grant will help get the program up and running in the right direction."

Two teachers from Rockingham Middle School, Rachel Peters and Nikki Covington, paired together in efforts for their project, More Than Rocket Science. The mission of Science Olympiad is to capture and retain student interest and enthusiasm for science. As America strives to boost its supply of scientists, engineers and mathematicians, Science Olympiad makes students eligible for the best jobs of the 21st century, according to the project outline.

"Winning the grant is wonderful ...," said Covington, "... it will help alleviate some of the stress to raise funds. These kids meet three times a week from 3 to 5 p.m. already and it's a huge investment on their part."

Statewide, the electric co-ops are expected to award more than \$620,000 in Bright Ideas grant funding to educators this school year.

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Since the Bright Ideas grant program began in 1994, Pee Dee Electric has contributed more than \$177,500 to local teachers, and North Carolina's Touchstone Energy cooperatives collectively have awarded more than \$7.9 million to teachers across the state. The Bright Ideas program has reached more than 1.4 million North Carolina students and sponsored more than 7,700 projects in all subjects including math, reading, science and technology, history, music and the arts.

Bright Ideas grant applications are collected each year through Sept. 30, and winning proposals are selected in a competitive evaluation process by a panel of judges. The application process will reopen for interested teachers in April 2013.

To find out more information about the Bright Ideas grant program, visit www.pdemc.com or Bright Ideas website at www.ncbrightideas.com.

The complete list of winners for Pee Dee's Bright Ideas grants is here:

- Amy Tadlock, WestRockingham Elementary, Essential Elementary Economy.
- Chris Stinson, Anson New Technology High, Living off the Land "Past, Present Future."
- Erin McNair, Ellerbe Middle School, So Much more than Noise: Cooperative Learning Groups.
- Jeff Pressley, Richmond Sr. High School, Flying for our Future.
- Shanda Shaw, Wadesboro Elementary, Getting to the Core: Common Core.
- Megan Hall, Richmond Sr. High School, OCS School-based Enterprise.
- Angela LeFlore, Covington Street Elementary, Music Madness.
- Leslie Knauss, Laurel Hill Elementary, Who's Listening? Listening to Reading in Kindergarten.
- Rachel Peters and Nikki Covington, Rockingham Middle School, More than Rocket Science.

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