



Fund for Teachers Education Grant Fuels Atlanta School's Recycling Experiment

ATLANTA, GA – APRIL 3, 2009 – As Earth Day 2009 approaches, one Atlanta elementary school teacher is celebrating the success of her recycling campaign that reduced plastic food packaging waste in her grade level by at least 18 percent, doubled recycling rates, and proved a hit amongst the fourth grade. Michell Carter's conservation interest was catalyzed after receiving a Fund for Teachers grant through the Atlanta Education Fund to travel to Australia's Great Barrier Reef and study endangered Hawksbill turtles.

Carter's journey began last summer when she journeyed to Australia to work alongside The Earthwatch Institute, a group dedicated to the conservation of the planet. There she spent her days diving off of a speed boat and onto the backs of enormous Hawksbill turtles to measure, tag and weigh them for future study.

In between wrangling turtles in the sea, Carter joined others collecting trash washed up on the shoreline. She was shocked by the sheer amount of waste they collected. Because Carter's own childhood schooling lacked education about conservation, she decided to make it a crucial lesson of her students' learning.

Upon returning to Atlanta, she set a goal to provide her students with a deeper understanding of the scientific process and how it can relate to real world issues, such as conservation. As the new school year began, Carter collected the entire fourth grade's trash from a single day. She dumped it on a tarp in the middle of the classroom, supplied her students with plastic gloves and let them dig in.

Her students sorted and weighed the trash and calculated that 50 percent of it should have been recycled. Also, half of the trash remaining was plastic food packaging waste. This discovery fueled their campaign to reduce plastics and increase recycling at Smith Elementary. By March 2009, three fourth grade classes reduced their plastic food packaging waste by at least 50 percent and doubled their recycling rates.

"Armed with successful experiences like this one, my students see that they can make a difference in our environment," said Carter. "After our experiment in recycling worked so well, one student proclaimed, 'Today our classroom, tomorrow the world!'"

Fund for Teachers Executive Director Karen Kovach Webb remarked, "Fund for Teachers grants enable teachers to pass on knowledge and influence the lives of students by opening to them a world of possibilities. Throughout their career, one teacher can impact as many as 3,000 students; and those students go on to influence countless others."

Over the last eight years, Fund for Teachers has awarded \$419,598 in teacher grants to 108 teachers in the Atlanta area and more than \$10.5 million in grants nationwide. Visit www.fundforteachers.org on May 5, National Teachers Day, when the organization announces its 2009 Fellows who will travel this summer.

Fund for Teachers enriches the personal and professional growth of teachers by recognizing and supporting them as they identify and pursue opportunities around the globe that will have the greatest impact on their practice, the academic lives of their students and on their school communities.

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