

For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Ocean Literacy Sets Sail at Mount Pleasant Academy



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Mount Pleasant, SC – Ocean and Environmental Literacy are popular curriculums being taught across the country. Educational Passages, an international company, is making this type of hands-on learning experience more accessible to students everywhere, including in Charleston County School District (CCSD).

Mount Pleasant Academy (MPA) is the most recent CCSD school to get onboard with the instruction.

GPS-equipped mini-boats designed by Educational Passages follows ocean currents and winds, allowing students of all ages to explore oceanic phenomena while the company develops transoceanic classrooms.

The goal of Educational Passages is to introduce participants to sailing, engage students in collaborative learning through international cultural experiences, and increase understanding of the value of the hydrosphere as a shared resource through ocean literacy. The program brings the ocean to the classroom, whether you're on the coast or landlocked.

"After reading about Harbor View Elementary School and St. Andrews School of Math and Science's mini-boat and their voyages, we knew that a mini-boat would be a perfect teaching tool," said teacher Laura Graham.

MPA purchased a vessel in Fall of 2017, and it arrived that winter.

"We were thrilled to receive our mini-boat," said Graham. "Third-grade SAIL (Gifted and Talented) students made model boats as part of their Marine Science unit."

As part of the larger project, students designed and painted the mast of their mini-boat, and the entire school voted on the name - the MPA Sewee Spirit.

"We were so anxious to put the MPA Sewee Spirit in the water, but we also wanted to track her as a school, so we decided to wait until summer was over before we launched her," said Graham. "We waited until the Atlantic hurricane season was over before we put the Sewee Spirit out to sea. We painted the hull and gathered some things to put in the hatch."

Included was a letter from Principal Kim Jackson, some coins, a map of Mount Pleasant, an MPA t-shirt, pictures of the Charleston area, and a Flat Stanley action figure.

Parent volunteers whose children attend MPA helped attach the GPS and seal the hatch. The boat was then delivered to the docks on Shem Creek on Wednesday, January 9, 2019.

Local fisherman, Mark Marhefka, owner of Abundant Seafood, took the MPA Sewee Spirit out to sea on his boat, the Amy Marie on January 10. The following day he dropped MPA's vessel in the ocean.

"We were thrilled that the GPS worked and our boat was on its way to a great adventure," said Graham. "We are now checking her progress from the GPS tracking. We thought it would go in the Gulf Stream and but winds are have been pushing it south, so we're learning about the wind and how that affects things."

In the case of the Harbor View Elementary School cruiser, the vessel was taken to Drumgallagh National School in Ballycroy, Ireland by Ethan and John Conway whose dad found the boat. Inside the waterproof compartment were a painting of the South Carolina flag, a keyring, coins, and some handwritten notes from children from the school. Drumgallagh N.S contacted those in America who had launched the boat to report its safe landing by email.

The MPA Sewee Spirit is still at sea between the Bahamas and Bermuda. GPS coordinates are updated daily at educationalpassages.org/boats/mpaseweespirit.

To learn about other vessels, visit the active boat map at educationalpassages.org/events/atsea.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools that span 1,000 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 86 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.