



For Immediate Release

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Cape Fear Future Sponsors *Project Lead The Way* STEM Education Program at Trask Middle School

Wilmington, NC – The Wilmington Chamber of Commerce announced today that its Cape Fear Future (CFF) initiative will fund Project Lead The Way (PLTW) at Trask Middle School to enable offering courses in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) at the beginning of the 2013-14 school year. PLTW is the nation’s leading provider of STEM curricula to middle and high schools with more than 5,200 programs in over 4,700 schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. It was recently cited by the Harvard Graduate School of Education as a “model for 21st century career and technical education.”

Trask Middle will offer PLTW’s Gateway To Technology program. Gateway To Technology (GTT) is a program that engages the natural curiosity and imagination of middle school students, while introducing them to engineering, robotics, computer modeling, and energy, among other STEM-related subjects. GTT courses are often used as electives or as part of a school’s core science and math curricula, allowing students the opportunity to apply what they are learning in traditional math and science classes to real-world, hands-on problems and projects. The curricula is designed to give students a solid foundation for further STEM learning in high school and beyond.



(l-r) Trask Middle School teacher Charles “Chuck” Leake; New Hanover County Schools Superintendent Dr. Tim Markley; Trask Middle School Principal Sharon Dousharm; Cape Fear Future Education Team Leader John Gizdic (New Hanover Regional Medical Center); and Chamber Chairman Hal Kitchin (McGuireWoods, LLP).

“Project Lead the Way has a long history of successfully engaging students in STEM subjects,” said CFF Education Team Leader John Gizdic. “The program fits perfectly into the mission of the Chamber’s Cape Fear Future initiative and we are pleased that CFF can sponsor Project Lead the Way, giving students an advantage over their peers when it comes to high school, college and career readiness. Having the business community partner with the school system is important to improving our region, and we believe our businesses will see the benefits of PLTW as the pool of highly-skilled workers increases.”

In addition to providing world-class STEM curricula to middle and high schools, PLTW provides ongoing, high-quality professional development training for middle and high school teachers so they can effectively implement – and teach – the engaging hands-on, project-based curriculum. Trask Middle School science teacher Charles “Chuck” Leake will receive PLTW training over the summer break and will be the first teacher certified to teach the courses. After completing his coursework at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, he will be able to provide PLTW training to other school personnel.

“We are very excited to bring Project Lead the Way to Trask,” said Leake. “Some of the students will get to see robotics, engineering, and technical design for first time. That’s a big thing, especially with the standards that we have to meet for increasing technology exposure. It’s going to be a great program.”

New Hanover County Schools Superintendent Dr. Tim Markley echoed those sentiments saying: “We are excited about what Chuck’s classroom will be transformed into next year, thanks to a partnership with the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce’s Cape Fear Future initiative. We’re going to start [Project Lead The Way] with sixth grade and build it up to eighth grade. We are truly excited about the prospects and appreciate the help of the Chamber in getting us started.”

PLTW schools also benefit from the organization’s engaged network of Fortune 500 companies, state leaders, and university affiliations, which provide students opportunities for college credit, scholarships and admissions preferences. School-based PLTW Partnership Teams complement the curriculum by recruiting local business and industry professionals to serve as mentors and share their real-world experiences with students.

“Our region is competing against other cities nationwide, and globally against countries like China and India,” said Chamber Chairman Hal Kitchin (McGuireWoods, LLP). “It is critical that our education system helps students develop critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, and that they are prepared to perform in technology jobs that haven’t even been developed yet.”

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About Cape Fear Future

The mission of Cape Fear Future - the flagship program of the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce - is to further develop the region’s knowledge sector economy to promote economic development and ensure the prosperity of the region. The initiative aims to create a community where knowledge sector workers would like to live, work and play. CFF has three main focus areas:

- Assist the improvement of our area school systems and expand emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM);
- Improve the overall image of the greater Wilmington region by delivering community improvement projects that enhance quality of life; and
- Foster an entrepreneurial community by supporting and promoting entrepreneurs.

About Project Lead the Way

Project Lead The Way (PLTW) is the leading provider of rigorous and innovative STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education curricular programs used in schools. As a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, PLTW exists to prepare students for the global economy through its world-class curriculum, high-quality professional development, and an engaged network of educators, students, universities and professionals. PLTW's comprehensive curriculum has been collaboratively designed by PLTW teachers, university educators, engineering and biomedical professionals, and school administrators to promote critical thinking, creativity, innovation and real-world problem solving skills in students. The hands-on, project-based program engages students on multiple levels, exposes them to areas of study that they typically do not pursue, and provides them with a foundation and proven path to college and career success. More than 4,700 schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia are currently offering PLTW courses to their students. For more information, visit www.pltw.org.