

Learning to share

By **NICHOLE LIVENGOOD** | contributor

As the livability educator for the City of Greenville, Jaclin DuRant is teaching kids that you do not have to head for the hills to enjoy nature.

Her program is part of a larger city grant project called Connections for Sustainability: Linking Greenville's Neighborhoods to Jobs and Open Space that began in the spring of 2011.

Greenville received \$1.8 million from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Transportation for the three-year planning project. The city's proposal was one of 42 chosen throughout the country to receive funds, and only one of 14 to receive joint funding from HUD and DOT.

DuRant is tasked with educating people around Greenville about sustainability, their connections to the built and natural environment and to each other within society.

"Living sustainably is nothing new," DuRant said. "We have new jargon for it, but it's not a new idea. We may have stepped away from it for a little while, but it is time to go back to living closer to the

City livability educator seeks to teach students about 'living sustainably'

land and closer to the community."

DuRant created the Urban Naturalist Program to connect urban youth with nature in their own environment. "I'm really trying to dispel the notion that you have to get in your car and travel to nature. I want to make sure kids have this connection to nature here in the city."

This program is a part of an ongoing Curriculum for Sustainability project that includes a series of lesson plans that will be available to educators in the coming months to integrate sustainability into different classroom topics.

DuRant piloted her program at A.J. Whittenberg Elementary and has worked with the eighth-grade Explorer Group at Hughes Academy. She will also be teaching at several camps around the city this summer.

On walks around the school grounds, students learned to identify trees and plants and about the importance of in-



Students at the Boys and Girls Club make terrariums from recycled plastic bottles.

sects to their environment. "The kids are able to see, even in their schoolyard, how much diversity there is here around them," DuRant said. "I don't think it is natural for people to really want to take care of something unless they understand it."

DuRant said she hopes that by teaching people to pay attention to their surroundings, they will learn to make better decisions about taking care of the environment and themselves.

Students are also learning about the value of recycling and up-cycling everyday objects. They built bird feeders out of plastic bottles and brainstormed ways to live sustainably at home. Durant said students came up with ideas such as riding their bikes more, going outside to play to save electricity, turning off the water while they

JOURNAL COMMUNITY

brush their teeth, and putting a bucket in the sink while waiting for water to heat up and giving that water to pets or using it to water plants. They are learning about gardening and sharing resources.

"I don't know why 'used' became a stigma, but we need to get past that," DuRant said. "Having used things is wonderfully sustainable. It is something kids can do so easily and it teaches really strong social values. Hand-me-downs are great. They increase a feeling of community. They are also reducing the amount of things going into the landfill and the amount of energy used on the production side."

DuRant said jargon "can get in the way, but really sustainability is about using resources in a way that won't entirely deplete them. It's not about altering your lifestyle completely, but making choices so that we can live happy and healthy lives and so can future generations."

As a kid growing up in South Carolina, DuRant spent most of her time playing outside.

"My parents taught me to respect the natural environment and it's something I want to help impart to the next generation. Hopefully, they will continue to carry these values all through their lives."

Contact Nicholè Livengood at nlivengood@greenvillejournal.com.