

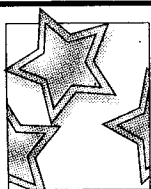
# Coming out of their shells

Local students are showing their support for an area wildlife crossing while learning valuable lessons in communication and civic action

By Kim McCoy Vann  
DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER

It all started with an article in a community newspaper, *Apalachee Tortoise*. When students at Cornerstone Learning Community read about a project that would help wildlife safely cross a busy street, they were spurred to action.

The students want money for the Lake Jackson Ecopassage, an underpass that would help wildlife cross U.S. 27 North. On May 23, the Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency will vote on whether the project should receive \$3.5 million in federal funds.



**GOLD STARS**

Good news from our schools

Students at the private school think the decision is obvious. They've visited the site where ecopassage advocate Matt Aresco has safely moved turtles and other wildlife across the road for the past five years. He would have less work to do if the underpass money comes through.

The students have expressed their support by writing letters to Leon County commissioners and letters to the editor in the *Tallahassee Democrat*.

"It's a lesson in communication, dialogue, science, civic action and the power of being involved," fourth-grade teacher Jason Flom said. "They started to understand how humans and nature interact."

On Monday, about 50 students in third through eighth grade held a rally in front of the Leon County Courthouse. They carried handmade signs and cheered when drivers honked in support.

Seventh-grader Shelby McKay's sign said: "Got money? Save the turtles."

"The turtles might become endangered since they are getting killed on the highways," Shelby



MARK WALLHEISER / Democrat

Ten-year-old Bethany Thomas, a Cornerstone Learning Community School student, gives a thumbs up to a driver after he honked during a rally at the Leon County Courthouse. She and her classmates want money for the Lake Jackson Ecopassage, an underpass that would help wildlife cross U.S. 27 North.

# CIVICS

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said. "They can also hurt people. If you get in a car crash . . . when the tire hits the turtle, it could fly through the window."

Fourth-grader Bethany Thomas said people and wildlife have something in common.

"It's important to me because I don't like animals dying — more than 1,000 each year," she said. "We're also animals. They're sharing the habitat with us."

Fourth-grader Phoebe Scott agreed.

"We need to be kind and respect animals we're sharing the earth with," she said.

County Commissioner Bob Rackleff, who said he supports the ecopassage, stopped by the rally. And so did Aresco, who said he appreciates the students' efforts.

"They understand why it's an important project for the community, and they are here demonstrating that," Aresco said of the students.

## Other school news

Trinity Catholic School met its goal of collecting 150,000 pennies for tsunami victims. The amount represents the original number of disaster victims. For each penny donated, the students placed a face on a poster collage. Teachers and parents supported students by joining with them to raise \$1,500, which was presented to Catholic Relief Services. In addition, community partner Waste Management matched the students' efforts. City and rural letter carriers at the Centerville Road Post Office also joined the project by collecting coins.

■ Sealey Elementary students are being recognized for their hard work. Sealey congratulates the following Superstars who represented the school at the recent Science Fair Expo: **Tyler Gardner, Tiffany Carpenter, Tambari Piawah, Olivia Odom, Darian Colbert, Justin Countryman, Jeffrey Clark, Savanna Lyle, Jonathan Nelson** and **Cristian Rivera**. In addition, Florida A&M University's Environmental Institute presented awards to Sealey's third-, fourth- and fifth-graders who participated in the Environmental Poster Contest. Fifteen blue, red and yellow ribbons were presented as well as 45 honorable-

## TO OUR READERS

■ There will be no Gold Stars on May 10. It will return May 17. Gold Stars is looking for submissions from K-12 public and private schools in Franklin, Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty and Wakulla counties. The deadline for submissions is 5 p.m. Friday for publication the following Tuesday, space permitting. If you have a Gold Star you'd like to submit, contact Kim McCoy Vann by e-mail at [kmccoy@tallahassee.com](mailto:kmccoy@tallahassee.com) or by fax at 599-2143. Sorry, we don't accept submitted photos.

Rising Scientist. The following fifth-grade Master Scientists represented the school at the Challenger Learning Center Science Expo on May 7: **DeAntrez Frazier, Taylor Blanton, Dakota Godfrey, Emily Lawson, Robby Manders, Lily Moline, Ram Paruchuri, and Eli Fox.**

■ The Swift Creek Middle School Wind Ensemble traveled to Washington April 13 - 17 to perform in the National Adjudicators Invitational Dixie Classic Band Festival, a premier auditioned event. Ratings are based upon a national standard that is more stringent than state or district-level events. The Wind Ensemble was the only middle school concert band that performed that weekend and it received a superior rating. It also received the Festival Honor Award for the concert band with highest overall rating regardless of classification or division. The ensemble will be featured in the 2006 NAI brochure which is distributed to approximately 10,000 schools throughout the country. **Michael Antmann** is the director of bands.

■ Operation Occupation, or career week, began Monday at Oak Ridge Elementary. The school's business partners and community members will tell students about their careers and backgrounds. And today is Vehicle Day. Vehicles such as an ambulance, limousine, fire truck, animal-control truck will be brought to the school campus so students can ask questions about how they're used.

■ Fifteen seventh-graders at Maclay School have made high marks on the SAT college entrance exam. They are being recognized by the Duke University Talent Identification Program, which identifies gifted junior-high and middle-school students in 16 states, and

**Elizabeth Clark, Colleen Cowdery, Jonathan Enlow, Katelyn Harrison, Joseph Kalicki, Riley McCord, John McLeod, Elizabeth Odom, Alexandra Scanameo, Phillip Schlenoff, and Laura Whitehouse** will participate in TIP's State Recognition Ceremony at Florida State University, also on May 23. These students scored a 510 or better on either the SAT math or verbal sections, or scored at least 500 on both sections of the exam.

■ Buck Lake Elementary teachers **Betty Rinehart** and **Susan Teel** were recognized as Innovation Sustainers at the 15th annual Project CHILD Conference held in Orlando. The Institute for School Innovation recognizes exemplary educators who have reached the milestone of having been CHILD teachers for more than three years. Rinehart has been a CHILD teacher for 13 years, and Teel for 10 years.

■ Fifteen Buck Lake Elementary teachers and support staff "took the fight into the night" to raise money to find a cure for cancer on May 6. Buck Lake's team, the SPF15ers, were one of over 100 teams that participated in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life held at the Leon County Fairgrounds. As a result of the joint effort between parents, students, teachers, support staff, and community members, the Buck Lake SPF15ers contributed nearly \$17,000 to the cause. The team earned the the Devante Kennedy Award for the second year in a row. It recognizes the school that raises the most money.

■ Sealey Elementary will host its annual Young Authors' Conference on Wednesday. K-5 students will read stories they have written to local published authors and community members. This year's guest speaker is **Julianna Baggott**, author of "The Anybodies" and "The Nobodies." Her pen name is N.E. Bode.

■ Students in the SSTRIDE — Science Students Together Reaching Instructional Diversity and Excellence — an outreach program developed by the Florida State University College of Medicine were recently honored for their creativity. The program hopes to produce physicians and other medical professionals who will stay and practice in Florida's rural and inner-city communities.