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Teen gives tykes sober, yet hopeful, look at world

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When gasoline prices peaked last fall and discussions sparked over a plan to create a landfill in Enoree, a Dorman High School student found a creative way to present these issues on a kid's level.

Patrick Sellars, a Dorman senior, created a children's book that focuses on conservation. He incorporated the mascots of all nine elementary schools in District 6 and even included the name of a teacher at each school to make the book unique to them.

Each school soon will receive one paperback copy of the colorful storybook along with a coloring book that teachers can copy and distribute to students.

"The main reason for this book is to create awareness in the community about conservation of natural resources," said Sellars, 18. "I was able to pick elementary students mainly because they would be the most

impressionable. Most of the things in the book are things they can do themselves."

Sellars came up with the idea while attending the Richard Riley Institute for Emerging Public Leaders at Furman University last summer. He was the only student selected to represent Dorman at the weeklong program, where all participants had to propose a project that would benefit their community.

After the institute, Sellars enlisted the help of some teachers and students in District 6. Lone Oak Elementary teacher Thomas Webster and Dorman High assistant principal Linda Leary helped Sellars write the storyline. District 6 graphic artist Marcia Wilson helped print the books.

"I like the way he decided to make each book more personal and more specific to each school," Leary said. "Through this project, you are asking young people to stop and think about what is wrong in their community and what they can do to help improve it."

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Photo: ALEX C. HICKS JR.

Patrick Sellars, a Dorman High School senior, has designed books about conservation geared toward each of the District 6 elementary schools. Some of the books have been printed and bound so each school can have a copy.

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Dorman senior Chelsea Chapman and junior Kaitlyn Grant also were Violence instrumental to the project. Grant drew all illustrations for the storybook and the coloring book. Her vivid drawings depict students and their teacher on an adventure to find problems in the community that they can address, such as pollution and littering.

Chapman designed the book's principal character -- Cowl the Conservation Cavalier. Cowl is a black and white cow who wears a blue cape and hat, leading the students and each school's mascot on a conservation quest.

"I've been amazed at the interest in this issue and the public support," said Sellars, who contacted local Boy Scout troops to encourage them to earn environmental science merit badges.

Robin Wright read the book to her third-grade students at Roebuck Elementary this past week. She said the students thought it was "really cool" that Wright's name appeared in the book made for Roebuck.

"They were really making the connection between their environment and themselves in terms of finding ways they could help," Wright said, adding that several of her students said they were inspired to pick up litter and to carpool to sporting events.

"We really liked it."

This fall, Sellars will head to Wofford College or Clemson University to study biology or agriculture. After this undertaking, would he consider being an author or publisher?

"That'd be all right, I guess," he said.

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