

Christ Church student raises funds for public schools

Project was started as part of Furman's Emerging Public Leaders program

By CINDY LANDRUM | staff

Nina Conits has never attended public school, but that doesn't mean she doesn't support it.

Conits created "Teens for Tomorrow," a nonprofit organization created to money for Greenville County Schools. She's raised about \$4,000 so far.

"Something simple can have a profound effect," said Conits, a senior at Christ Church Episcopal School.

The project got its start this past June when Conits attended the Riley Institute's Emerging Public Leaders program at Furman University and participants were told to create a project to improve something in their own community.

The mission grew legs when a friend told Conits, who has attended school at Christ Church since kindergarten, how public schools lacked funding and didn't have enough classroom supplies.

The project was cemented when Conits saw a quote by Thomas Jefferson while touring the University of Virginia campus that said, "Nothing but a strong education enhances the prosperity of a nation."

"I feel so lucky that I've been able to attend Christ Church that I wanted to help



Nina Conits,
Christ Church senior

my friends who attend public school to have the same education that I have," she said. "I'm part of this community."

Conits teamed with local artist Deborah Davis to create a calendar containing public and private school holidays and football schedules for all of the county's high schools as well as Clemson University, the University of South Carolina, the Citadel, Wofford College and Furman. She sold more than 500.

Then, she mailed a fund-raising letter to Greenville residents soliciting donations.

Finally, she held a drop-in at her house with U.S. Rep. Trey Gowdy as the featured speaker.

"I raised more than \$700 in those two hours, but just as importantly, I think it raised awareness," she said. "I'm still receiving donations."

Conits said she toyed with the idea of creating a 501c3 organization, but decided against it. Her non-profit is not registered with the state.

Conits has used the nonprofit as her senior thesis for school.

"I think it shows anyone with a strong idea should go for it," she said.

Conits plans to give the money to a school board member during a presentation she'll make on the project at her school. She said she is not putting a restriction on what the money she's collected can be used for by the school district.

Conits plans to major in business or political science in college. She's been accepted to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of Georgia, Clemson University, Wake Forest University and Wofford College.

Contact Cindy Landrum at 679-1237 or clandrum@greenvillejournal.com.