



S P R E A D I N G T H E N E W S

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CONTACT: Jon East, 813-258-2700 x232, 727-420-6993, jeast@stepupforstudents.org
Adam Emerson, 813-258-2700 x233, 813-777-1903, aemerson@stepupforstudents.org

Waste Management and Step Up For Students partner to turn landfill into classroom

JACKSONVILLE — What happens to my soda bottle? Where does rainwater go? What happens to all those newspapers that get recycled? The answers to those questions launched students from The Potter's House Christian Academy onto an extraordinary field trip to the Trail Ridge Landfill last week with Waste Management Inc. as part of a day camp into environmental awareness.

Many students at The Potter's House benefit from the Step Up For Students scholarship program, which awards tax-credit scholarships to low-income students. Waste Management, the leading provider of comprehensive waste management services in North America, is a strong supporter of the program and has donated \$3 million to provide more than 774 scholarships since 2007. Of that amount, \$700,000 has gone to 177 scholarships in Duval County alone.

Partnering with Step Up For Students allowed the Waste Management team to connect with the scholarship children through a day full of activities that encourage students to "think green."

"As a corporate custodian, it is our responsibility to address the needs of our communities, including the education of our youth," said Karen Stern, government affairs manager for Waste Management. "Joining Step Up For Students was an easy decision for us because it is a win-win situation."

The stories of students who benefit from the scholarship were on display at a reception that preceded the field trip. Denisha Merriweather, a 12th-grader at Esprit de Corps Center for Learning in Jacksonville, told a distinguished collection of guests about how she overcame a series of significant challenges in her life and in her academics during her elementary school years. Denisha has attended Esprit de Corps for the past six years and has landed on the honor roll consistently ever since.

"If it wasn't for Step Up For Students, I might have been one more student who dropped out of school. I might have been one more statistic," Denisha said. "Today, I stand before you with a 4.0 GPA. I now have goals for my future."

Waste Management spent an afternoon turning the Trail Ridge Landfill west of Jacksonville into an environmental classroom. Students learned how they can protect the environment in their everyday lives and discovered some eye-opening energy facts.

Retired Jacksonville Sheriff Nathaniel "Nat" Glover Jr., who himself has donated hundreds of thousands of his own money to benefit the education of low-income children in Jacksonville, lauded the work Waste Management has done for students.

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“In the long run, the return on your investment is obvious,” Glover told the Waste Management team and guests at the reception. “If we don’t educate them, we will have to support them in their adult lives. That’s why the investment up front is so important.”

Step Up For Students Chairman John Kirtley said that the support from companies like Waste Management helps low-income families find the learning environment that best meets their needs, noting that The Potter’s House Christian Academy has a 99 percent graduation rate.

“Every child is unique and needs a unique learning environment to succeed,” Kirtley said. “The public schools are doing a great job creating options. But some kids, particularly low-income children, need an environment like The Potter’s House to succeed. Low-income parents must be empowered to have that choice.”

(Note to photo editors: The low-resolution photographs of the event that accompany this release are available in high resolution upon request).

About Step Up For Students

Step Up For Students is an initiative of the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program and provides K-12 scholarships for more than 23,000 low-income students to attend a private school or out-of-district public school. Step Up For Students Scholarships are funded by corporations that redirect up to 75 percent of their corporate state income tax or insurance premium tax liability to a qualified scholarship funding organization in exchange for a dollar-for-dollar tax credit. For more information, visit www.stepupforstudents.org.

About Waste Management

Waste Management, Inc., based in Houston, Texas, is the leading provider of comprehensive waste management services in North America. Through its subsidiaries, the company provides collection, transfer, recycling and resource recovery, and disposal services. It is also a leading residential recycler, as well as developer, operator, and owner of waste-to-energy and landfill gas-to-energy facilities in the United States. The Company serves residential, commercial, industrial, and municipal customers throughout North America. To learn more, visit www.wm.com or www.thinkgreen.com.

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