

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, January 11, 2022

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Dodie Clark named SC PLT Outstanding Educator of the Year

COLUMBIA — Dodie Clark of Belton has been named the 2021 South Carolina Project Learning Tree Jerry L. Shrum Outstanding Educator of the Year. She was selected by the South Carolina PLT Steering Committee.

Clark serves as the children’s library clerk at the main branch of the Anderson County Public Library.

“I see the power of PLT every time I use it,” Clark said. “Because it helps my students, hikers and patrons make a personal connection with nature. I have used the PLT activity Adopt-A-Tree with my second graders where they have excitedly visited their adopted trees on the playground with their journals in-hand. I love PLT’s incorporation of literature into the activities, especially the activity Trees for Many Reasons, to help build a stewardship ethic. My library patrons read the Lorax and realized ‘Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.’”

Clark was introduced to PLT in 2012 while attending Anderson University to earn her Master of Arts in Teaching in elementary education. In 2015 she attended the South Carolina Sustainable Forestry Teachers’ Tour, which helped prepare her to incorporate PLT in her second-grade classroom at Anderson Christian School.

During her time at Anderson Christian, her students participated in Adopt-a-Tree, engaging in fun educational PLT activities and journaling about the trees they adopted on campus.

In 2017 Clark became a certified PLT Facilitator while serving as the outdoor education director at River Oaks Retreat in Honea Path. While working at River Oaks, she incorporated PLT activities throughout her school field trips and camp hikes.

Clark joined the Anderson County Library’s (ACL) Youth Services Department in 2018 and began renovating the children’s courtyard gardens, looking for ways to connect the library resources with formal and informal environmentally minded educators in the community. In 2019 she provided ACL reading and online resource connections for educators at an Anderson School District Five PLT training that she helped co-facilitate. She also keeps an ongoing list of new environmental education books added to the library’s print collection that can accompany PLT activities.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Clark helped create a three-pack grab-and-go kit of free PLT family activities, supplies, SC PLT information and ACL Reading & Resource Connections to hand out during the library’s 2021 summer reading program. A total of 250 kits were produced and distributed to all nine branches of the library in July.

Clark’s background in biology and passion for sustainability has led her to become a certified SC Master Gardener, SC Beekeeper, Upstate SC Master Naturalist and SC Native Plant Society member. She is also a volunteer for SC Adopt-a-Stream and the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) and networks with service organizations such as the Environmental Education Association of South Carolina (EEASC) and Clemson University Cooperative Extension.



Dodie Clark

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Project Learning Tree is a nationwide, award-winning environmental education program that supplements curricula used by teachers, parents, and community leaders for students from preschool to 12th grade. A program of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, PLT uses trees and forests as windows on the world to advance environmental literacy and promote stewardship to students while fostering professional development among the educators who use it. In South Carolina, PLT is sponsored by the Forestry Association of South Carolina’s SC Forestry Foundation, the SC Forestry Commission and the State Department of Education.