

Pickens County lands environmental award

BY GREG OLIVER
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PICKENS — Efforts by Pickens County to improve air quality have gained the state's attention as the Department of Health and Environmental Control announced this week the county has been included among four recipients of its 2010 "Spare the Air Award."

The award recognizes leaders — such as businesses, organizations, communities, schools, local governments and indi-

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viduals — that have made a voluntary commitment to implement new policies, ideas or innovative methods that improve air quality in South Carolina. Recipients exhibit good

environmental stewardship, exercise positive environmental practices and promote environmental awareness.

Pickens County won for "Outstanding Local

Government," with DHEC citing the county's efforts in converting used cooking oil from restaurants and schools into biodiesel fuel that powers a number of county-owned and operated vehicles. This marks the first year that Pickens County has received the award, which has existed since 2008.

Pickens County Administrator Chap Hurst said the county is pleased to be the recipient of such a prestigious award.

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AWARD: Presentation will be at 6:30 p.m. Monday in

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"This entire program has enabled us to engage the community, reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality in our corner of the world," Hurst said. "Our commitment to a cleaner environment has also led to a reduction in fuel costs for the county as a whole."

Pickens County Council

member Jim London, of Clemson, said the biodiesel program makes sense.

"It is the type of program local governments and the business community ought to be implementing," London said.

"The result is air quality improvement, saving money over conventional vehicle fuels and addressing a waste management issue of spent cooking oil.

"It's a creative solution to a problem with a no regrets outcome."

A DHEC representative will present the award to each winner. The Pickens County presentation will be 6:30 p.m. Monday in the Pickens County Auditorium.

Dover Elementary School in North also was named Outstanding School or District, and

Marine Corps Air Station, in Beaufort and Abitibi Bowater in Catawba were each named Outstanding Business.

St. John's Lutheran Church in Walhalla was among the 2009 recipients, named as "Outstanding Volunteer."

Myra Reece, chief of DHEC's Bureau of Air Quality, said this year's winners have gone beyond

Pickens County

the call of duty to protect the environment.

"Thanks to these partners and their level of commitment through innovative ideas, the air quality in our state is better," Reece said.

For more information on the "Spare the Air" awards, visit <http://www.scdhec.gov/mailbag>.

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