The Center for the Environment has assumed the leadership of the N.C. Green Schools program, a non-profit organization that promotes sustainability in the state’s schools from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade.

The Reading, Riding Retrofit: N.C. Green Schools Program began in 2009 under the auspices of Asheville Buncombe Sustainable Community Initiatives Inc. based in Asheville. It was developed to encourage and recognize green initiatives in North Carolina schools.

The program helps teachers connect and share ideas, offers resources and tools to help them start green initiatives and recognizes schools that meet specified goals.

Center Executive Director John Wear calls the program “a good fit” for the Center. Its National Environmental Summit for High School Students and Campaign for Clean Air have promoted sustainability in North Carolina schools for years. Countless other programs have educated children about the natural environment.

“It’s a need we can fill,” Wear says. “It will also be a value-added educational opportunity for our students.”

Katie Ferrell has joined the Center to coordinate the effort. “I’m super-excited about this partnership,” she says. “The Center has so many connections around the state that it will infuse the program with new energy.”

The resources that both organizations bring to the table will strengthen the program’s network, says Ferrell. “We’ll be able to reach out to more schools to increase sustainable practices.”

First Electric Charging Station Installed in Salisbury

Salisbury is now a pit stop for long-range electric vehicles. A ribbon cutting was held September 17 for a new direct-current fast charger installed behind Nashville Nights in downtown Salisbury. The charging station is the work of Wallace Realty, BrightField Transportation Solutions and Nissan.

The charging station is one of about 30 total locations across the state and the only one in Rowan County. It takes only half an hour to fully charge the battery on an electronic vehicle (EV), making it one of the fastest charging stations in the region and the only station in North America with a universal charging plug.

Lane Wallace outlined the benefits of transitions from gas-powered vehicles to electric. EVs are quieter, require less maintenance than a gas-powered vehicle, drive better in snow and ice, decrease dependence on foreign oil and don’t contribute to air pollution.

John Wear and Lane Wallace (left) with Catawba students at electric charging station event.

(For more on First Electric Charging Station, go to page 8.)
It is gratifying to look back at all the high points we experienced during 2015. Surely one of the most memorable was our Environmental Stewards retreat in late August at Lake Junaluska in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

I am increasingly impressed with these bright, energetic students, who have committed themselves to environmental stewardship and to service on the campus and beyond. The program is custom-designed for students who really want to get involved in campus projects and the Center’s outreach to the community. They each receive a scholarship that is tied to this commitment.

Watching them connect with each other at the retreat and come up with exciting ideas for this academic year was very satisfying. Their energy for these projects seems boundless. Listening to them describe the benefits of being a part of the group speaks volumes about the Center’s influence on these students, who will carry their passion for the environment into their lives and careers.

Payton Coleman sees nothing but opportunity when she reflects on the program. Not only does she appreciate the scholarship; she is also glad that she can assume a leadership role as a freshman and can contribute ideas to the environmental projects the group undertakes.

Those who have been in the program for a while know well how beneficial it has been to them. Junior Joel Schlaudt has devoted a lot of time and effort to two projects especially: our water conservation/Bike Share program and the beekeeping project. He will tell you that the program has honed his skills in leadership, communication and collaboration. He also notes that he has a better understanding of how to bring a project to fruition since he became a Steward.

We continue to raise awareness and educate through our speakers and conferences, which we view as a significant part of our outreach to the larger community. But mentoring students – giving them opportunities to work on environmental issues, to increase their knowledge and refine their leadership skills – is incredibly important. They are our ambassadors. By transforming their lives, we influence countless others they will encounter when they leave this campus and work in the world.
Landmark Catawba Solar Project Uncommon

Catawba College’s landmark solar installation is garnering attention for a number of reasons. One is that it is mounted only on existing rooftops and parking lots.

That is uncommon, according to Mike Nicklaus, president of Innovative Design, the project’s consultant and facilitator. More often, the projects are installed on large field areas. “Catawba’s project is significant because it doesn’t take up additional land resources,” he says.

In addition, the eight new solar electric systems, which provide nearly one megawatt of solar electricity for the campus, produce more than all the other colleges and universities in North Carolina combined.

Catawba President Brien Lewis notes that the installation is a major undertaking with significant outcomes. “It is a giant step forward for our efforts on sustainability in general and to the energy reductions reflected in the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) that Catawba signed in 2007,” he says.

The installation, which includes solar electric systems, solar water heating systems, campus-wide water fixture replacements and extra insulation in the roofs, is projected to save the college nearly $5 million over the next 20 years and more than $11 million over 30 years.

It will also reduce annual carbon emissions by nearly 1,050 metric tons. That is the equivalent of taking 193 vehicles off the road each year.

“This a shining example of the great things that can be accomplished when our trustees, administration and others come together to both reduce our energy consumption and lower our carbon footprint,” says Center Executive Director John Wear.

Two Staff Members Join Center for Environment

Lane Wallace has joined the Center for the Environment to promote energy efficiency and clean energy within the state. She assists in fundraising for programs, program development and community outreach.

Wallace holds a B.S. degree in business administration from the University of North Carolina’s Kenan-Flagler Business School and a B.A. in public policy analysis from UNC-Chapel Hill as well as a master’s degree in environmental management from the Nicholas School for the Environment at Duke University.

She served as an energy consultant for Solarize Salisbury-Rowan, a joint initiative of SmartPower and the Center for the Environment. In addition, she consults on a number of energy- and sustainability-related projects for other institutions and corporations. She interned with Rocky Mountain Institute and was a renewable energy consultant with Sundance Power Systems.

Katie Cavert Ferrell, who has worked for two years with the N.C. Green Schools program, will continue to direct the program, which is now under the leadership of the Center.

She has been an educator since 1998 and has worked in the field of sustainability since 2009. Her recent positions include production assistant for BotaniPharm, communications coordinator for the Blue Ridge Sustainability Institute and an education and outreach assistant for the Appalachian State University Office of Waste Reduction and Recycling.

Ferrell holds a bachelor of science degree in geology from the University of the South and a master of science degree in technology from Appalachian State University. Her graduate studies concentrated on appropriate technology, defined as “creating sustainable solutions using renewable resources to address community needs.”
Alumni and current Environmental Stewards sound like a choir when they talk about their relationship with the Center. They all cite the importance of the hands-on experience and leadership opportunities the Center offers, and they all sing its praises.

**Ben Prater**

Center Executive Director John Wear gave Ben Prater a personal tour of the Stanback Ecological Preserve when he was in high school. “That was all it took for me,” Prater says. A 2002 Catawba graduate and now the director of the Southeastern Program of the national organization Defenders of Wildlife, Prater knew from an early age that he wanted to do something in science, so the Center didn’t exactly plant the seed. “But it gave it all the right nourishment that it needed to really flourish and challenged me in the right ways,” he says.

“What I think about most when I think of the benefits that I received as a student at Catawba and at the Center is the true hands-on, boots-on-the-ground, dirt-under-the-fingernails experiences that really helped to mold me as a young environmental scientist and career conservationist,” he says.

Those experiences outside the traditional classroom were formational for Prater. “Whether you’re meeting with various stakeholders, talking about an environmental issue, or swinging pit gravel on a trail like we did in the preserve – all these things go into helping to strengthen your character and also give meaning and depth to all the things you’re learning, all the conceptual and abstract ideas you’re confronting in the classroom,” he says. “It gives them gravity and helps you appreciate them.

“Catawba nourished all the things I wanted to see happen in my career and in my life,” Prater says. “It was the fertile soil that I needed.”

**Dan Couchenour**

Dan Couchenour, a 2014 Catawba graduate, now teaches at Myers Park High School in Charlotte. He draws from his experiences at the Center for the Environment and in the Environmental Stewards Program as he teaches biology and greenhouse biology, which includes units on ecology and environmental science.

Couchenour describes participating in the Environmental Stewards Program as “life-changing.” The only senior in the program at the time, he initiated the project to conserve water in the residence halls in order to save money to purchase bicycles for the campus, which students check out much like they check out a library book.

“It was really my first taste of the real world,” he says. “When you’re working to represent an organization, you can’t live by the seat of your pants. You have to be organized; you have to set dates when things need to be done.”

Couchenour credits the program and Center Executive Director John Wear for helping to develop his leadership and organizational skills. The program “let me be creative and grow into who I was my senior year,” he says.
The Center also had a significant impact on Coleman’s life. “It provided me with a lot of opportunities to exercise the knowledge I was gaining and to share it with others,” he says. “When you teach someone, it helps to solidify your knowledge of the subject.” Coleman went from, in his words, “an idealist to a realist” during his undergraduate years at Catawba. He learned to bring everyone to the table when discussing environmental issues, a skill that serves him well now that his work involves both oil and gas companies as well as environmental advocates. “Dr. Wear encouraged me to look at the big picture,” he says.

Coleman cites the importance of hands-on learning. Through his internship opportunities at Catawba, he got to experience real-world situations. “I got to apply the learnings and adjust them from an academic to an application standpoint,” he says. “That was invaluable.”

David Burman

David Burman, a 2004 Catawba graduate, credits the Center for the Environment and the Center’s executive director, John Wear, for helping him grow as an environmental educator and for setting him on a path that has allowed him to follow his passion. Currently a park ranger at Anne Arundel County Recreation and Parks in Annapolis, Maryland, Burman speaks again and again of Wear’s positive influence.

“John Wear was very, very instrumental in my life as a person, a mentor, a professor. There’s no money or degree that can quantify the relationship I had and still have with him.”

Burman lists the multiple ways the Center and Wear impacted him: 1) the lifelong friendships and networking opportunities he gained through the Center; 2) opportunities to both participate in and create programs, like the one on reptile and amphibian conservation, which he led in the Stanback Ecological Preserve; and opportunities to hone his instructional and communication skills.

Burman’s current position requires skill in educating people of all ages about the environment in general and reptiles and amphibians in particular – skills he learned at Catawba. He is comfortable being in front of people, something he also developed at Catawba.

He openly acknowledges that choosing Catawba and environmental education and responding to Wear’s guidance were some of the best decisions he ever made.

Environmental Stewards

Joel Schlaudt

Joel Schlaudt, a junior from Chesterfield, Va., has been deeply involved in the Environmental Stewards Program. He assumed the leadership for the water conservation/Bike Share program when the project’s initiator, Dan Couchenour, graduated in 2014. He also started the beekeeping program in the Stanback Ecological Preserve on campus.

And this year, in addition to his other projects, he is co-leading a campus educational effort on recycling.

Schlaudt notes that his skills in leadership, communication and collaboration have improved significantly as a result of the Environmental Stewards Program.

Including others in projects has been an important lesson. “When you get more people involved, more ideas come out of it and there’s a higher possibility of things getting accomplished,” he says.

Seth Stephens

In his second year as an Environmental Steward, Seth Stephens of Lexington notes that he is much more environmentally minded and service-oriented as a result of the Stewards Program.

For more on Students and Alumni, go to page 9)
The fifth annual National Environmental Summit for High School Students brought motivated students and instructors together in July to explore the skills and knowledge it takes to foster environmental stewardship.

It is a chance for high school students with a passion for the environment to get a taste for field work, learn leadership and communication skills, hear nationally renowned environmental speakers and use their particular skills and interests to create positive change.

Catawba professors teach eager students everything from debate tactics and international policy to trapping techniques and the value of biodiversity.

Center for the Environment Executive Director Dr. John Wear says he got the idea for the summit several years ago when he noticed a pattern among students. “I had more and more students walking into my office who were interested in environmental stewardship but didn’t necessarily want it as a career,” he says.

Wear started to think about how he could best serve these students and others like them who were still in high school. The answer he came up with was the National Environmental Summit.

Wear notes that he is continually surprised by how engaged and involved the students are, and faculty members who work with the participants seem eager to participate, too. Dr. Jay Bolin, assistant professor of biology, has been running a focus group at the summit for the past four years and says that the students who come to the summit are passionate, intelligent and motivated. Interacting with them helps him get excited about his next semester of teaching.

Participants agree that the connections they make here—with teachers, counselors and other students—are some of the real takeaways from the summit. They leave each year with better friends, better connections and a strong drive to transform their schools and communities.

Students Motivated by National Environmental Summit

An inspiration. Motivational. One of the greatest things I’ve done.

These are some of the words two National Environmental Summit participants used as they reflected on their experience.

Chance Ratliff noted that the people he met were an inspiration. “They want to change things,” he said.

Ratliff cited a new determination to create a better world as his biggest takeaway from the week. He believes that young people, these young people, can change the world. “We just need to speak up and not be afraid to take action,” Ratliff said.

Makayla Utt was particularly impressed with the

For more on Students Motivated, go to page 7)
Summit Partners Bring Real World to Students

Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) of Colorado has partnered with the Center for the Environment on the National Environmental Summit for High School Students since the summit’s inception five years ago. Environmental Working Group (EWG), headquartered in Washington, D.C., joined the summit as a partner this year.

Martha Pickett, RMI managing director, says RMI’s partnership with the Center is a good match. While the summit is different from RMI’s day-to-day activities, Pickett knows how important fostering a passion for environmental stewardship in young people is. They’re the ones who will carry the mantle forward, she says.

“These students seem very aware of the future they’re inheriting,” Pickett says. They don’t shrink from the challenge. During the four sessions that RMI teaches during the summit, students are presented with real-world problems and asked to think critically and creatively about how to solve them by taking all the variables into account and searching for the best possible answer.

“It’s important for high school students to have this kind of thinking under their belt before they go off to college,” Pickett says.

EWG Executive Director Heather White applauds the students’ determination to fix the broken world they have inherited from previous generations and their desire for change and connection.

“We all have to connect with something bigger than ourselves,” White says. For the students who attend the summit, that cause is the environment.

Rebecca Rider contributed to this story.

Students Motivated by Summit
(Continued from page 6)

Makayla Utt says summit “one of the greatest things I’ve done in my life.”

2016 National Environmental Summit for High School Students
July 12-16, 2016

Rebecca Rider contributed to this story.
First Electric Charging Station Installed in Salisbury

(Continued from page 1)

“It’s a community health concern,” Wallace said.

She is proud that Salisbury is taking a step in the right direction to improving air quality. The charging station is for long-range EVs, which means that people driving up I-85 will be able to stop and charge their cars, which in turn brings business to downtown Salisbury.

Eventually, BrightField Founder Matt Johnson says he hopes to install a solar-powered charger in Salisbury, which will help move the city off the coal grid. The vision, Johnson says, is that Salisbury will become a solar energy community, independent of coal.

“Salisbury is now part of a global energy movement,” Johnson said.

EnviroMingle® - A Gathering Place to Discuss Big Ideas

After the ribbon cutting, guests were invited to the Center for the Environment’s EnviroMingle® at Nashville Nights to help support and promote the charging station. EnviroMingles® are get-togethers sponsored by the Center for the Environment for environmentally conscious people who are working together toward a sustainable future.

September’s EnviroMingle® was full of local policy makers, including Salisbury Mayor Paul Woodson and local business owners. The unveiling of the charging station also attracted many out of town guests, such as Appalachian State Professor of Renewable Energy Jeremy Ferrell and his students.

Ferrell says that his department is interested in all things involving sustainable transportation. His students spent the summer building a solar-powered race car, and the university has partnered with BrightField on EV chargers.

“It’s good to see what’s going on,” Ferrell said. “It’s nice to see how the community is responding so positively.”

Rebecca Rider

Catawba Begins Discussion of Sustainability Plan

Catawba officials have begun discussions about a comprehensive sustainability plan for the college.

Based on STARS (The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System), the plan covers everything from academic courses to the dining service, from buildings and grounds to sustainability research. STARS is a voluntary, self-reporting framework for helping colleges and universities track and measure their sustainability progress.

“Sustainability planning affords Catawba the opportunity to clarify its vision of a sustainable future and provides a road map to help guide decision-making,” wrote Catawba President Brien Lewis.

“Establishing measurable goals and objectives allows Catawba to track its future progress, identify and document its successes, and manage the levels of resources devoted to (and required for) the attainment of its sustainability goals.

“Including sustainability at a high level in Catawba’s strategic plan and other guiding documents also signals Catawba’s commitment to sustainability and may help infuse an ethic of environmental, fiscal and social responsibility throughout the campus community,” Lewis said.
Bob Volker tries to stay a little ahead of the curve when it comes to living sustainably. A former biologist and geneticist, Volker realizes how closely our daily lives are tied to the environment, and how each affects and impacts the other. In early 2014, Volker decided he wanted to make a larger impact.

“I thought, ‘Where I am in life now? What can I do to make this world a better place?’”

After talking things over with his wife, Volker decided to make the switch to solar energy. It was clean, they were in a financial position to do it, and it was just a smart move, Volker said.

It’s been worth it. Since Volker installed the panels, his highest energy bill has been $30. But that wasn’t the end of it.

“About a month after we installed, we realized we were producing more energy than what we used,” he said.

Volker and his wife decided to buy an electric vehicle, as well. They purchased a 2015 Chevy Volt in November 2014, and began using it as their primary car for errands and jaunts around town.

In the past year, they’ve put 7,300 miles on the car and have only used 16 gallons of gas. Volker estimates that this means the car gets about 451 miles to the gallon.

And since they don’t take the car on long distance trips, they can always recharge it at home. Not only are the Volkers saving a lot of money on electricity and gasoline; they know they’re living cleaner, more sustainable lives. “It was emotionally very satisfying,” Volker said.

Rebecca Rider

Students, Alumni Value Hands-On Experience Center Provides
(Continued from page 5)

Stephens admits that his ideas about the environment, and especially recycling, have been expanded and deepened through his work with the Environmental Stewards. And he has changed his personal habits as well. He avoids buying bottled water and recycles and reuses objects more. He also is mindful of the importance of good gas mileage to air quality: “I sold my old car and now have one that gets 30-some miles to the gallon.”

Hannah Davis

Hannah Davis, a junior from Raleigh, is majoring in communications and minoring in environmental studies. Now in her second year as an Environmental Steward, she appreciates the fact that the stewards are typically well informed about environmental matters. “You have people who have a basic knowledge of all the environmental things that are going on in the world so you can talk about changing things instead of having to explain why it’s a problem,” she says.

Being a part of the Stewards Program has made her hopeful about the environment. “When you try to tackle environmental issues, you can get bogged down in how much work needs to be done,” she says, “but when you see that changes are being made, it gives you a lot more hope.”

Rebecca Rider

Bob Volker (second from left) has put 7,300 miles on his 2015 Chevy Volt and only used 16 gallons of gas.
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Alumni, students laud Center for boots-on-the-ground experience. Page 4-5

Students call Summit experience “an inspiration.” Page 6-7

Volkers harness the sun for home, car. Page 9

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