

Sandhills Alternative kids weld rams for Sheriff

by By Kelli Easterling

05.21.11 - 12:01 am



The kids at Sandhills Alternative Academy often spend their time developing useful skills, like carpentry, landscaping and welding.

One group of young welders put their heads together, trying to come up with a project that they could donate to the community.

They decided to make two dynamic entry door rams, to donate to the Sheriff's Department. Rams are tactical entry tools designed for use by law enforcement, fire and rescue personnel for accomplishing forcible entry into buildings, vehicles and other locked enclosures.

"These are door breaching tools, that will be used by special response teams, on everything from drug raids to high-risk warrants," said Sheriff James Clemmons.

The youth presented the Sheriff with the devices on Friday. When Clemmons arrived, the kids were initially bashful, peeking around building corners until invited to join him at the welding shop. Excited shouts of "It's the Sheriff!" could be heard as the group ran up the hill.

The youngsters proudly showed the Sheriff their welding masks and jackets, their pet frog and even agreed to work on his own personal grill, as their next project.

"The Sheriff's Department appreciates the effort the kids made to do this for us," said Clemmons. "This project was successful in two ways - the students learned a useful skill while they did the work, and it resulted in a finished product that will be put to use by us. These rams will not be collecting dust."

"The students weld on Fridays only, so it took them two or three weeks to make these," said instructor Roger Boone. "It's our mission to help prepare these kids for the real world, give them tools and skills they can use to have a productive life."

Sandhills Alternative Academy is for children and adolescents who may face challenges in traditional educational settings. The facility operates five days a week, and kids attend for an

average of six hours per day. Referrals are accepted through the school system, juvenile justice, department of social services, private referrals and other agencies.

“The program is designed to help develop needed skills for young individuals, who need assistance, to be successful,” said Dan Wright, quality management director.

Staff writer Kelli Easterling can be reached at (910) 997-3111 ext. 18, or by email at keasterling@heartlandpublications.com