

## Four schools named Palmetto's Finest

Posted Tuesday, March 15, 2005 - 10:51 pm

By April M. Silvaggio  
STAFF WRITER  
[asilvagg@greenvillenews.com](mailto:asilvagg@greenvillenews.com)

A Rock Hill elementary school and an elementary, middle and high school from the greater Columbia area have been selected as the 2005 Carolina First Palmetto's Finest Schools.

Independence Elementary of Rock Hill in York School District 3, Keels Elementary of Columbia in Richland School District 2, Northside Middle School of Columbia in Lexington School District 2 and W.J. Keenan High School of Columbia in Richland School District received the top honors Tuesday night at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center.

Winners are chosen on the basis of achievement, training, goals and community involvement, officials said. The award is sponsored by Carolina First bank and the South Carolina Association of School Administrators.

Four Upstate schools Greenville Technical Charter High in the Greenville County Schools, Palmetto Elementary and Pre-School and Wren Elementary in Anderson School District 1 and New Prospect Elementary in Spartanburg School District 1 were among the 16 finalist for the awards, given to the state's top schools.

Greenville Tech Charter High School Principal Fred Crawford said educators were proud of their showing and will aim higher next time.

It was "the first time a charter school was recognized," Crawford said. "It's breaking new ground so to speak."

"This is a highly competitive award, and it's an honor simply to be among the finalists, said Jim Terry, president of Carolina First. "Carolina First is delighted to help recognize these high-achieving schools."

Molly Spearman, executive director of the South Carolina Association of School Administrators said the Palmetto's Finest competition authenticates the importance of academics in the state.

"We are very pleased to partner with Carolina First to offer this recognition for innovative, effective schools," Spearman said. "The generous support of Carolina First and our other sponsors Promethean, Data Recognition Corporation, the City of Columbia and SC ETV validates the importance of good education for South Carolina's young people."

The application process includes elements on student achievement, faculty training, program goals and delivery systems, office practices and community involvement.

"It's not unusual for schools to report that the application process itself helped them become better schools," Spearman said. "It requires a deep and honest evaluation of every aspect of their offerings, which can mean important improvements for the students even if the school is not selected as a winner. All those who make it to the finals are among the best in the state."

Terry and Spearman were among those who joined state Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum in recognizing the winners during the ceremony Tuesday night.

Last fall, more than 40 South Carolina schools submitted a 17-page application and received an onsite visit by a review committee. The 16 finalists received a second onsite visit.

*Staff writer April M. Silvaggio can be reached at 298-4801. Staff writer E. Richard Walton contributed to this article.*