

Faith at the flagpole

Students gather each morning to start their day off with moment of prayer

by meriwether joyner

STAFF WRITER

You've seen them. The front entrance. Circled around the flag-pole. *every* morning. Maybe you've always wondered what they are doing, circled like that. Maybe you glance at them, but it's just too early in the morning to really question anything. And maybe you haven't even noticed them.

But still they stand there, every morning.

A group of about 20 students, about half from Seacoast Church, half from East Cooper Baptist and a few from First Baptist, decided their mornings needed to be different. Group members now start their day off with a prayer, for the school, the students, ones they know and the ones they don't and for themselves.

"We, Amy [Billings, the other founder] and I, were at camp, with our church, and thought up this idea for a prayer group, a group that would meet every morning, before school for about 20 minutes. We talked to our youth pastor, and some friends and they liked the idea, so we started it. It's just an awesome start to the day," said junior Matt Wright, one of the leaders and founders of the prayer group.

But, every morning? For senior Dillon Milholland, it's more a necessity than an obligation.

"Going [to prayer group] in the morning is like a breath of fresh air," she said. "When you're in school, it's like the breath of Jesus is getting sucked out of you, then you get your fuel at the flag pole."

For junior Maddy Trott, who doesn't regularly attend, it's more a matter of just seeing the group there every morning.

"I think it's awesome that a group of students are



CAROLINE HOWARD/STAFF

LINKING ARMS IN PRAYER: Juniors Amy Billings, Matt Wright, Anthony Shimanek, Ralphie Wilson and Renny Pitner are making a morning ritual by starting their day with prayer. A group of students from three different churches in the area meet each day at the flagpole in front of the school.

committed to praying every morning before school," she said, "I'm definitely encouraged by it!"

"Teachers, students and leaders have been very supportive of this group," Billings said.

And Wright confirmed, "We haven't really had any opposition to our group," he said.

Even junior Sarah Saunders, who classifies herself as an agnostic, said, "You're not really supposed to pray in school. But everyone's always saying like 'fight the system.' That's their way of sticking it to the man, kind of. I think it's just cool that they're out there, sticking up for what they believe in."

Saunders sees it as an expression of rebellion and strong

people not letting others tell them no. Although she is agnostic, meaning she believes there is some higher power, but does not really know what or who that higher power is, she appreciates what the group is doing.

Billings said the positive reaction to the group, even from students of another faith, makes it that much stronger.

"I believe with all my heart that God hears our prayers and can use us to change this school for the better. When you give God everything you have, He

can do more than you could ever imagine," Billings said. "We love seeing new faces, and it keeps us motivated! We invite all students to come out with us in the mornings."

"Going in the morning is like a breath of fresh air."

Senior Dillon Milholland