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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ORANGEBURG COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT TO OBSERVE SUICIDE
AWARENESS AND PREVENTION MONTH, ENCOURAGES
COMMUNITY TO WEAR TURQUOISE**

ORANGEBURG S.C. - Orangeburg County School District (OCSD) is dedicating September 20, 2023, to observe Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month. The district is calling upon students, staff, and community members to wear turquoise on this day as a visible pledge of unity and awareness. This special observance underscores OCSD's commitment to creating a support system for the mental well-being of everyone in the school community.

"Suicide is a complex and difficult subject, but we must talk about it openly to remove the stigma and encourage those who are struggling to seek help," says Joyce McDaniel-Felder, OCSD Mental Health Facilitator. "We believe in fostering an environment where every student knows that their life matters and that they have a community that cares."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, suicide is the second leading cause of death among individuals between the ages of 10 and 34. This sobering statistic highlights the importance of comprehensive preventive measures, particularly among school-aged youth.

"The stigma associated with mental health issues and seeking help is one of the most significant barriers to prevention," adds McDaniel-Felder. "It's time to change the narrative. The conversation must start with us, and it must start now. No one should have to suffer in silence."

Beyond the stats, it's important to recognize certain risk factors that can elevate the likelihood of suicidal thoughts or actions. These include but are not limited to feelings of hopelessness, history of trauma or abuse, and ongoing challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you or someone you know is struggling with suicidal thoughts or tendencies, immediate help is available. Dial 988 for the Crisis Lifeline, available 24/7, or 911 for emergency services in the U.S. For local resources, Community Crisis Response and Intervention can be reached at (833) 364-2274.

OCSD remains committed to the health and well-being of its students, staff, and community. Let us all come together to support this vital cause by participating on September 20, 2023, and wearing turquoise.

For more information, please contact the Joyce McDaniel-Felder, joyce.felder@ocsdsc.org

Orangeburg County School District

The mission of Orangeburg County School District, the catalyst of innovation and excellence, is to ensure all students discover and develop their person, purpose, and platform through high-quality educational experiences distinguished by a culture of collaboration, equity, and inclusion; a creative learning environment with inspiring opportunities; a commitment to nurture the academic, physical, social and emotional well-being of all. Visit us online at ocsdsc.org

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