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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**OCSD STUDENTS SHINE IN MLK ORATORY COMPETITION
STUDENTS EARN \$20,000 CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS**

ORANGEBURG, S.C. – In a night that celebrated the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. through the voices of its youth, the 3rd Annual MLK Oratory Competition, held at the Santee Convention Center, became a platform for future leaders to shine. Fourteen elementary school students from across the Orangeburg County School District (OCSD) captivated the audience with their insightful speeches, inspired by this year's theme, "Reconstructing the Future: The Hard Reset."

The competition, which has become a cornerstone event in the district, saw students presenting their interpretations of Dr. King's enduring question, "What is your Life's Blueprint?" Each speaker brought a unique perspective, weaving their thoughts and dreams into a tapestry that honored the civil rights leader's legacy.

Imani Jean of Edisto Elementary was crowned the first-place winner, receiving a \$500 cash prize for her stirring speech. Neshel Mantle of Ellore Elementary was awarded second place with a \$300 prize, and Zionna Carmon of Dover Elementary took home the third-place prize of \$150. These young orators, with their poise and passion, demonstrated a deep understanding of Dr. King's vision, resonating with the theme of reconstructing the future.

In a surprise announcement that brought on cheers and applause from the audience, Claflin University's President, Dr. Dwaun Warmack, extended a life-changing opportunity to the participants. He committed to providing each student who took part in the 2024 OCSD MLK District Oratory Competition with a \$20,000 scholarship to Claflin University, conditional upon maintaining a 3.0 GPA throughout high school.

"Tonight's event is more than a competition; it's a celebration of the potential and brilliance of our students. President Warmack's generous offer is a testament to the impact of Dr. King's legacy on our future leaders. This scholarship is not just financial assistance; it's an investment in the dreams and aspirations of our students. We are incredibly proud of all the participants

and grateful to Claflin University for recognizing and nurturing their talents," said Dr. Shawn Foster, Superintendent of OCSD.

Adding to the excitement of the evening, it was announced that each participant in the 3rd Annual MLK Oratory Competition will be given a unique opportunity to host the district's weekly program, "Fostering OCSD." This initiative allows these talented young speakers to further hone their communication skills and engage with the community in a meaningful way. Each week, a different student will take the helm of the program, discussing various topics that are important to the students and the community, thereby fostering a deeper connection between the schools and the residents of Orangeburg County.

The 3rd Annual MLK Oratory Competition not only highlighted the talents of OCSD's students but also emphasized the district's commitment to providing platforms for young voices to be heard and celebrated. Events like these are instrumental in encouraging students to explore their potential and become articulate, confident leaders.

As the evening drew to a close, the air was filled with a sense of achievement and hope. The participants left the stage not just as competitors, but as young individuals who had been given a significant opportunity to shape their futures, inspired by the teachings and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Photos of the event can be found here: [2024 OCSD ORATORY](#). Please credit OCSD.

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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