



**James B. Edwards Elementary
School**

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Media Release

JBE celebrates unique volunteer group **- The Grands**

Mount Pleasant, SC - A special group of people have dedicated their free time to students at one of the Charleston County School District's (CCSD) historic elementary schools. James B. Edwards Elementary School (JBE) is a beloved neighborhood campus that is highly supported by families and the community at large.

This tireless group, called The Grands, consists of (mostly retired) men and women. They take shifts volunteering every day in virtually every aspect of school life at JBE. From special events to classroom tutoring, The Grands are there to assist teachers and staff in various ways.

Although most of The Grands are grandparents of students, being a grandparent is not a requirement. Any special friend who wants to become involved is welcome, and, no special talent is required to volunteer.

The Grands was an idea of Fran Hawk and Valerie Papadopoulos that evolved into 75 members that operate under the community outreach wing of the school's PTO.

"We wanted to be helpful around the school, but not serve as a fundraising arm," said Hawk.

As a group, The Grands generated organic ideas about being involved at JBE. In the fall of 2022, volunteers participated in their first Grandparents Day with kindergartners. Over 100 grandparents came and visited with their grandchildren in their classrooms and played on the playground where refreshments were served. After a tour of the library, the grandparents were shown the school's greenhouse, which is something the school is especially proud of. The Greenhouse has turned into a favorite of many of The Grands, too. They can often be found in there tending to the plants or helping with their annual plant sale.

That first Grandparents Day generated an extensive list of interested grandparents and today, the grandparents volunteer their time by laminating items for the librarian and teachers, shelving books, and by working with students through mentoring and tutoring.

The annual Grandparents Day celebration was held earlier this month and hundreds of children entertained and performed to a packed house.

"This year was my first year getting to experience the "The Grands at JBE" and the Grandparents Day," said Principal Ashley Dorsey who is new to JBE. "I am so impressed with this group's dedication to our students and school. Our Grandparents' Day Event was a beautiful morning celebrating our grands and giving them a unique opportunity to interact with their grandchildren at school."

Meaningful work

"We are extra hands in the library, on reading duty, and helpers with stuffing folders/binder projects," explained Papadopoulos. "Many grandparents work one-on-one with students who need extra help or mentoring while others work with high-level learners who love a good challenge."

The principal, teachers, parents, and students attest to The Grands large and positive impact on the school. Grandparents attest to the meaningful jobs, fun, and friendships that membership in the Grands has brought to their lives.

"Many of the grandparents have known each other for years and this effort has allowed us to reconnect with old friends," added Hawk. "It is also a great way for newcomers to meet like-minded people. The grandparents have verbalized how much that has meant to them - especially those who moved here to be with their grandchildren. This gives them a way to connect. A large percentage of them are former educators this is their happy place."

To learn more, visit The Grands [website](#) or contact Principal Ashley Dorsey at (843) 849-2805.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally accredited school district committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all its students. CCSD is the second-largest school system in South Carolina and represents a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves approximately 50,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse portfolio of educational options and specialized programs delivered to the students of CCSD through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools and programs. Rich educational opportunities for students include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; military; dual credit; and many more.