

**For Immediate Release**

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## Media Release

### **CCSD celebrates school bus drivers on Bus Driver Appreciation Day**

#### Office of Communications

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**Charleston, SC** — Charleston County School District (CCSD) in partnership with CCSD's Transportation Services and First Student, Inc. celebrate and appreciate bus drivers every day, but especially on [National School Bus Drivers' Appreciation Day](#), Wednesday, February 22, 2023.

First Student, Inc. makes safety a top priority and so do the drivers who serve CCSD students. Three individuals, who have a total of almost 100 years of service to students between them, are recognized on this special day for exceeding safety expectations.

Sandra Brantley (North Charleston route), Demetrica George (Mount Pleasant route), and Jackie Washington (Johns Island route) achieved a 5 Star rating for safety with First Student, Inc.

Drivers are judged using a metric system that measures speeding, rapid acceleration, hard breaking, idling and more according to Gary Reese, Sr. Senior Location Manager with First Student, Inc.

"They will all receive their 5 Star pin, along with many other colleagues, for being model drivers that our staff all strive to be," said Reese. "On School Bus Driver Appreciation Day we'll be providing an appreciation lunch to all the drivers and monitors."

First Student, Inc. is contracted to secure experienced drivers and essential staff for all bus operations and 365 bus routes for CCSD.

"Our entire team puts student safety first," said Reese. "These three women are not only some of our top drivers but are compassionate and truly have a heart for children. "You really have to care for children in this industry. If you don't, you're in the wrong business."

#### **Sandra Brantley**

Brantley adores children. She has been driving routes in North Charleston for over 40 years and is now driving the children of the children she originally transported.

Although she has just turned 72, she has no plans to slow down.

"As long as I am physically able to do it, I am going to keep going," said Brantley. "Their safety is a top priority to me. I always make sure my students in wheelchairs are secured, locked down, and strapped in correctly. I've created special bonds with the children over the years."

Brantley drives students ranging in age from three years old to high school. She enjoys all of their stories and antics.

"I am especially proud that families in North Charleston specifically request me," said Brantley. "These parents know I am going to take good care of their babies. They know the kids are in safe hands."

### **Jacqueline Washington**

The Johns Island native has 24 years of experience driving CCSD students. Like her colleagues, she puts safety first.

As a bench driver, which is a substitute driver, Washington is able to fill in for drivers all over the area. She also gets to transport students of all ages. As a result, she knows all the routes by heart, is familiar with so many of the families, and is considered a true team player by her peers.

"The drivers on Johns Island know they can count on me to fill in when things come up," said Washington. "We are here to help each other out in any way because the end result is servicing our children in the safest way possible."

For Washington, safety has more to do with just driving. Safety also means proper shoes, a visible safety vest, and vehicle pre-checks.

"I always say to new drivers, use your mirror, it will be your best friend," Washington said. "It's almost as good as having eyes in the back of your head."

Washington's favorite aspect of the job is the joy that the children give her.

"They always bring my spirits up," Washington said.

### **Demetrica George**

George has been a driver in the East Cooper area for over 20 years, serving students from McClellanville, Awendaw, and Mount Pleasant. She serves special needs students, elementary school students, and high school students.

"I had a lot of fun being a student on the bus so when the opportunity presented itself for me to apply, I jumped at the chance," said George. "I wanted a flexible job so I could be there for my kids and it was a great decision."

George's route is unique in that some of the stops are in business parking lots, unlike the traditional neighborhood stops. The stops are in strategic geographic areas so that magnet school students can receive bus transportation. A great deal of caution must be taken to ensure student safety.

"These business areas can be very busy," said George. "I scan the lot, I won't let the kids off the bus until they see their parent. I'll even come down the bus stairs to make sure I see the parents for myself and that my babies are getting into the right car. They can't just go off with anybody."

The students and the families appreciate George and have developed tight bonds with each other. So much so that if she ever has to take a day off, George hears about it from the students.

"We're so much a part of each other's lives that I am more than just a bus driver to them," said George. "I am a mentor and a trusting adult when they need one."

### **Bus driver appreciation**

Reese is proud of his entire team and praises the attention to safety each driver is committed to. He came to the industry by way of law enforcement. He was brought in to teach the importance of safety to a group of bus drivers. His natural ability to connect with the drivers and educate them on the reasoning behind proper procedure sent him on an entirely different career path. Today as the First Student, Inc. leader of the CCSD teams, he is honored to be able to continue to serve and protect.

Much has changed since student transportation was first introduced to public education systems across the country. What does remain a constant is the color of the bus and the friendly faces of the drivers as they transport CCSD's precious cargo.

Additional 5 Star Drivers include:

Terri Aiken, Connie Bailey, Persia Bennett, Robert Best, Lucille Capers, Kennard Capers, Alexander Cheney, Marthiana Clayton, Ceathonia Collins, Ervin Commodore, Estella Craven, Linda Dean, Charles Dickens, Zana Dixon-Burns, Pamela Doctor, Marcus Duggins, Yvonne Fagan, Tara Finnigan, Iris Flores, Debbie Fludd, Stephanie Ford, Barry Gadsden, Hannah Garrett, Demetrica George, Christopher George, Deborah Goss, Patricia Grant, Gericka Gray, Lynda Harrison, Maria Heyward, Kaylene Hincks, Sherie James, Marvin Jenkins, Stacey Judy, Shonda King, Chris Lane, Virginia Lane, Sharon Lara, Janice Lopez, Larry Martin, Willie D. Maxwell, Stephanie McGrew, Caroline Mcneil-Gadsden, Karlie Melander, Carla Middleton, Ramona Middleton, Tomeka Middleton, Deanna Milazzo, Jermaine Mithchell, Sharon Moody, Erika Moon, Tiffany Moon, Charlene Murray, Osborn Parker, Demetrius Porter, Kim Quarles, Sabrina Robinson, Betsy Scott, Tawanda Singleton, Ella Mae Smalls, Jacqueline Smith, Jennifer Smith, Sharon Smith, Gloria Snipe, Sada Solomon, Randy Stevens, Barney Strock, Shelly Suarez, Dorothea

Sumter, Charminda Taylor, Natasha Wallace, Evelina Washington, Jacqueline Washington, Evelina Washington, Sheimeka White, Sherena Williams, Sonya Williams, Patricia Wright, Raven WRIGHT, and Shantay Young.

For more information, contact the Office of Communications at (843) 937-6303.

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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 of 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 49,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools. Options include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military.