



For Immediate Release

May 16, 2022

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Media Release

Cario students earn a Young Hero grant

Cario Middle School

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Charleston, SC – Students at Thomas C. Cario Middle School were awarded a 2022 King-Size Hershey Heartwarming Young Hero Grant for \$500. The grant money was used to engage 50 youth as volunteers in Global Youth Service Day (April 29, 2022). Grants for Global Youth Service Day projects focus on inclusion, empathy, and connections.

Cario's project, "[Reaching over the river with KINDNESS](#)" benefitted their peers at Morningside Middle School as they settled in for a week of state testing. Kristen Lewis is the instructional coach at Morningside and explained that the students improved on their winter test scores, and Cario students wanted to help them keep that going. A small team, spearheaded by eighth grader Bella Samuelson brainstormed how they could best use the grant money to accomplish that.

The team determined that decorating Morningside, their sister-school, with posters and signs of encouragement might lift moral during testing. They also organized other students at Cario to put together "test survival kits," complete with letters of encouragement, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, candies, and more. Cario teachers even wrote letters of encouragement to their colleagues as well.

Members of the Cario PTO learned about the project and were so impressed, that they donated to the initiative.

After weeks of planning and preparation, students arrived on the Morningside campus, May 6, 2022 to decorate the halls and pass out goodies.

Sheila Osborne, Instructional Coach at Cario, and seventh grade math teacher Traci Peters chaperoned the project, but essentially allowed the children to take the lead.

"The idea was to reach out to a sister school to raise morale and excitement the week of state testing," said Osborne. "District-wide there is a middle school initiative called 'Make it Happen' which is designed to encourage others, inside and outside of school. 'Reaching over the river with KINDNESS' was an extension of that."

During state testing week at Cario, students are treated with the same type of support. Samuelson and her classmates appreciate the effort during that stressful week and thought spreading that type of joy to others may be beneficial.

Eighth grader Angel Mitchell was also a team leader for the project. She asked fellow Comets to volunteer in sorting, bagging, and decorating.

"This brought classmates together that may not have otherwise interacted," he said. "It also gave us a chance to give back to our middle school peers who also may need that extra boost during testing week."

Eighth grader Emerson Benkoski said participating made her feel like she accomplished something in her community and made people happy.

"I think what we are doing is very important because we are helping others that don't have as much as we do," said Benkoski. "We have a lot of privileges throughout our school and community compared. This project is very thoughtful and I feel it will make Morningside very thankful for us to think about them and care for them."

Samuelson agreed.

"I truly feel like our world is made a better place when its people give back to the community," said Samuelson. "Not because we feel like we have to, but because we can find the goodness in our hearts to think about others and help who we can."

Peters described the project as an amazing accomplishment.

"It is wonderful to have our school children recognize and appreciate what they have and be so motivated to help and encourage others," said Peters. "Kids helping kids is what real teaching is all about- building the whole person!"

"With all that is going on in today's world, I believe taking one step at a time in doing our part can improve the environments of all schools in our district," added Samuelson. "Making one student smile is a victory on its own."

"I am very proud of our students and staff," said Principal Sharon Randall. "Experiences based on giving and helping others build community for our school and now with our sister school, Morningside Middle. This is a great learning experience for all involved, and I hope we may continue and build upon these partnerships in the coming years."

"To me, giving back to my classmates and peers is a very rewarding and fulfilling feeling," added Benkoski. "It is a great way to get to know your community, boosts self-confidence, and makes me feel happy. I can't wait to do more exciting projects like this for the people around me in the future."

“The students and staff at Morningside were so welcoming,” said Osborne. “They really opened their arms to us and embraced our students’ efforts. We look forward to hosting Morningside students at our school later this month and continuing this partnership for years to come.”

For more information on the grant, visit <https://ysa.org/grants/hershey>.

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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.