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Media Release

CCSD remembers African-American pioneers who shaped local education

**Division of Strategy and
Communications**

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Charleston, SC – In Charleston County School District (CCSD), the contributions of African-Americans in the Lowcountry are memorialized and honored in various ways. Countless African-American citizens helped shape the public school system in Charleston County through the years, and they are often remembered through the dedication or naming of a school or district facility.

These men and women were pioneers and advocates for children. They demanded a quality education for their peers, particularly, children of color.

In celebration of Black History Month, CCSD remembers the men and women of the district who created opportunities for the children of Charleston County.

Linda Murphy graduated from the former Bonds-Wilson High School in 1968. She played clarinet in the marching and concert bands under director Lonnie Hamilton. It is also where she became motivated by her beloved teachers to attend college and become an educator.

Murphy went on to become a teacher with CCSD and retired after 42 years. She looks back with fond memories of her time at Bonds-Wilson, named after Dr. James Roosevelt Bonds (1904-1992) and John T. Wilson (1910-1973).

Bonds was Supervisor of Schools for Cooper River District 4. Wilson was a longtime educator at what was originally called Six Mile School.

“My teacher and my band director encouraged me to pursue music in college and a degree in education,” said Murphy. “That shaped my future. Even though I am retired I am still working with students in various capacities at Deer Park Middle School, motivating future generations to pursue college and their career dreams.”

And as for her alma mater, she and her fellow classmates still celebrate the “Cobra Spirit.” The Cobra was the Bonds Wilson mascot.

"We had students from Lincolnvile to Mount Pleasant Street attending school at Bonds-Wilson and we somehow all merged into a family," said Murphy. "We still get together as a Bonds-Wilson chapter, and still have grade-level reunions, and fellowship."

John Smalls, a 1959 Laing High School graduate, also went on to become a longtime CCSD educator.

In 1866, Laing was founded by Cornelia Hancock, a Quaker from New Jersey and a former Union Army nurse in Gettysburg. The school was named for Henry M. Laing, the treasurer of a Quaker organization and abolitionist society. While Laing was not African-American, he financially supported the school and its mission to provide an opportunity for recently freed slaves in the Mount Pleasant area to learn to live as free men and women with a desire for better living, higher ideals, and good citizenship.

Smalls credits his high school football coach at Laing, Joseph Dunkin, and Principal William E. Rouse with helping him get an athletic scholarship to college. Smalls attended Kittrell (NC) and then went to Claflin University where he received a major in health and PE and a minor in biology which led to a 49-year career in education with CCSD.

"I came back home to the Lowcountry because I had to do as much as I could for the area I grew up in," said Smalls.

Smalls is still serving at Charleston Progressive Academy as a volunteer and substitute.

Fast forward to 2022, where for the first time ever, CCSD recognizes interim superintendent Don Kennedy, who is the first Black man to serve in the role. The first woman was the late Dr. Maria Goodloe-Johnson.

There are countless other African American graduates and educators with hundreds of stories to tell and memories of events that shaped their lives and their communities. The district is honored to remember those trailblazing individuals who left their mark in the community and will forever be memorialized.

For more information, contact the Division of Strategy and Communication at (843) 937-6603.

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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.