

For Immediate Release
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North Charleston High School

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Media Release

NCHS hosts ESOL Family Connection Walk

Charleston, SC – Staff members from North Charleston High School, Charleston County School District's ESOL Department, and local community members participated in an outreach called North Charleston High School ESOL Family Connection Walk (Caminata de Conexión con las familias ESOL de NCHS) which was held Saturday, March 27, 2021. The purpose of this effort was to build positive relationships between NCHS and the ESOL (English as a second or foreign language) families, and to develop trust between the community and police and firemen.

It was organized by Charleston County School District (CCSD) Title I Bilingual Coordinator Celina Anthony, Lydia Cotton from "Charleston Aquí Estamos," Maribel Acosta, Executive Director of Art Pot, Christiane Camarillo, North Charleston High School (NCHS) ESOL Instructional Coach, and Elizabeth Bowens, NCHS parent advocate, the school administration organized the event last month.

Members of the North Charleston Police Department joined volunteers from NCHS and walked around areas where the NCHS ESOL students live. The participants wanted to address some misunderstandings held by some of the Hispanic families in the area.

"We wanted to provide the opportunity for police officers to speak to Hispanic families and encourage them to report crimes to the police," said Anthony.

Camarillo prepared a protocol for the NCHS ESOL Family Connection Walk to ensure the safety of the students, their families, and volunteers. Volunteers were divided into groups of five people, with each group slated to visit five ESOL families each. Volunteers received names and addresses, and each group transported gifts for families.

"This allowed for conversations to take place with students regarding graduation plans, grades and what resources they might need," Anthony added.

The organizers of the NCHS ESOL Family Connection Walk described the event as successful. Along with the volunteers, they were able to reach out to 20 ESOL families.

"This family connection walk was meaningful because we clearly observed that the families and students encountered a moment of care, awareness, consciousness, and hope," said Cotton.

Camarillo enjoyed planning this event for the benefit of the families and connecting teachers and staff with the families of students even further.

"There are few words to describe how this was such a rewarding experience," said Camarillo. "We saw students' faces light up when we arrived. It was not just because we arrived with items and necessities, but simply sitting and talking with them, listening to them, and making existing connections even stronger. Also, it gave the students a chance to see their teachers, other educators, community members, and police officers in a different and personal setting."

Anthony was grateful that the volunteers were a diverse group that included assistant principals and teachers from NCHS, and some district coordinators.

"I am also glad that we had bilingual volunteers, such as Spanish teachers and members of Art Pot, to speak in Spanish to the parents and students," said Anthony. "I was impressed that some families that we visited knew Lydia Cotton and were pleased to see her accompanied by a policeman and a firewoman. It was evident that they felt very comfortable interacting with us due to their presence. The families and students were very receptive and appreciative of this effort. This "Family Connection Walk" helped families and students feel valued and enabled educators to see the different cultures of students and their families. Interacting with diverse groups and getting to know the students they serve beyond the classroom is an important piece of becoming culturally competent."

"This effort has made a positive impact on students' grades and has facilitated more parent communication and involvement in the success of their children," added Camarillo. "It has resulted in stronger relationships between students and teachers. I look forward to planning and participating in many more of these community walks."

For more information, please contact Principal Henry Darby at (843) 745-7140.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally-accredited school district that is 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 more than 50,000 students in 87 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.