



For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Food drive puts school back at the center of the community

**St. James-Santee Elementary
Middle School**

Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Karolyn Belcher
Chief Academic Officer

Joseph Williams, Ed.D.
Associate Superintendent of Secondary
Learning Community

Lacarma Brown-McMillan
Principal

Charleston, SC – St. James-Santee Elementary Middle School has become the site of monthly food drives for the Awendaw and McClellanville communities. Families line up hours before distribution begins to wait for the much-needed food items. The food drive not only serves a need but builds a relationship with the community.

Dennis Muhammad, a Charleston County School District Family and Community Engagement (FACE) Officer, was concerned about the lack of attention rural schools receive.

St. James-Santee principal LaCarma McMillan and Muhammad brainstormed ways to bridge the school, district, and community gap. The result was a food drive sponsored by the North Charleston Community Resource Center. The first food drive was held in July 2020 to serve those needing a hand up during the pandemic. Over 200 families were served that day.

“It’s important to educate and nurture the whole child,” said Principal McMillan. “Since July, St. James-Santee has hosted seven food distribution events to serve the Awendaw and McClellanville communities. The school works in partnership with the International Longshoreman’s Association organization, North Charleston Resource Center, and Lowcountry Food Bank. Each event has served between 200 to 300 families.”

The Community Resource Center supported the first five food drives by sharing the food they receive from the Charleston Food Bank. The number of families in need continued to rise, and the Charleston Food Bank agreed to take on the effort organized by Muhammad and the FACE office. The effort has been so successful that it will now be expanded to CCSD District 23 and possibly District 9.

“We’re servicing a big need out there, and we’ve made great strides in terms of improving relationships,” said Muhammad. “We’ve received positive feedback from the recipients as well.”

Over half of the staff at St. James-Santee volunteers to box and distribute the food. Many are familiar with the families they are serving, which helps build upon the connections being made.

"The FACE team is always looking for partnerships we can forge that will serve our schools," said Muhammad. "I would encourage entities to embrace the nearest school to them and ask the principal what they need and provide if you can."

Muhammad believes that the food distributions can connect the community back to the schools.

"I hope the distributions at St. James-Santee show the community that the school cares, the staff cares, and the district does cares," said Muhammad. "We will continue to do everything we can, particularly through the FACE office, to bridge the gap with our parents and families. We are not in the food business, but we are still in the service business, and that means servicing our schools and community."

"It is a pleasure for us to serve our community," said McMillan. "Students are the heart of our work!"

For more information, contact the Office of Strategy and 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 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.