



For Immediate Release

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Contact:

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Media Release

Students at Chicora receive desks from generous couple

Chicora Elementary School

Gerrita Postlewait, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Karolyn Belcher
Chief Academic Officer

Jackie Haynes
Executive Director
Acceleration Schools

Deborah Smith
Interim Principal

Charleston, SC – Anita and Neil Gorfain aren't from Charleston County; they moved here from Connecticut a few years ago. However, thanks to their past involvement with and dedication to public education, they developed a connection to Chicora Elementary School.

The Gorfains recently constructed desks for three students at Chicora who are learning remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. They were inspired to build the desks from a story they saw during a newscast where a family did the same thing in another part of the country.

The Gorfains began reaching out to organizations in late October to see if they could help children in the Charleston community. Charleston County Social Services pointed them to Charleston County School District. After a couple of emails to CCSD, Chicora's interim principal, Debbie Smith, contacted the Gorfains and informed them there were three families who could use their support.

"Since woodworking has been a hobby of mine, this serves a number of benefits," said Neil Gorfain. "It keeps me busy during the day which is important for mental health and even better, it provides kids and families who are in need something special. When we were raising our kids, we felt it was important for them to have their own space for studying and creating. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we learned that many kids are home and have no place to do their school work. Since plenty of people are having a tough time making ends meet right now, buying a desk or piece of furniture is not realistic or possible."

The prototype was based on a photo the Gorfains saw in the news coverage. The desks are 30 inches high, two feet wide, and 16 inches deep; they are made from finished plywood and can be painted or decorated by the students to make them more personal.

"From start to finish, a desk takes approximately three to four hours," explained Neil Gorfain. "It is not a production operation. They are made one by one. The nice thing is, if there is a student who has a special need,

whether it is the height of the desk or special dimensions, we can accommodate that as well.”

Anita Gorfain taught at the elementary school level in the past and Neil Gorfain taught high school as well as at the American School for the Deaf. The family has been involved with several organizations committed to community service, and that involvement continued with their move to the Lowcountry.

“We are so thankful for the Gorfains and their act of love and generosity,” Smith explained. “They made a significant difference in the education of three of our scholars. More importantly, they showed our families that there are good and kind people who are willing and able to help them, even if they don’t know them.”

“We have not met any of the recipients of the desks, but Principal Smith was kind enough to take pictures and forward them to us,” said Neil Gorfain. “It was nice to see the smiles on their faces.”

Neil Gorfain added they are willing to help other families at Chicora and throughout the area if the opportunity presents. In fact, they are set to build three more desks for students at Chicora.

The Gorfains are interested in teaming up with local philanthropists and companies who can assist in the production of more desks.

For more information, please contact Debbie Smith at (843) 746-2210 or Anita and Neil Gorfain at neil@thecruiseoutlet.com.

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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.