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Media Release

Pulse of CCSD – Seth Summers makes caring for kids his life’s work

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Charleston, SC – The influence that Seth Summers has on students is what motivates him every single day. As the Kaleidoscope site coordinator at W.B. Goodwin Elementary School, his mission is to provide high quality afterschool care in a safe, challenging environment. His program, and those across Charleston County School District (CCSD), provide age-appropriate activities that focus on the physical, social, emotional and educational needs of students.

“I love that the education students receive is different in our afterschool programs than during the regular school day,” said Summers. “It is not just curriculum-based, but rather focused on the special interests of the students. Our program allows students many options and is extremely versatile.”

“The mission of our department is to bridge the gap between the school day and after school,” said Summers. “Kaleidoscope works closely with organizations such as the [National Society of Black Engineers](#) and major corporations such as Boeing. For those interested in the arts, there is everything from music to hip-hop dance classes to karate. At Goodwin, our staff is held to an extremely high standard. We are here to educate children, not just hand out board games. We have goals for the kids to accomplish.”

Summers and his team work with each student on their progress toward that goal.

“We implement critical thinking in all of our programs and encourage students to work with each other using learning aids and instruction,” added Summers.

Just one of the kids

Summers grew up in Summerville where he attended Dorchester School District Two schools. He often volunteered at summer camps and has always

liked being a role model for younger kids. His mother Charity Summers worked for CCSD and suggested he apply to work with the Kaleidoscope program.

"I always knew I wanted to work with kids," Summers stated. "I just didn't know how best to do that."

Summers attended South Carolina State University and majored in Physical Education and each summer he would return home to his job as a Kaleidoscope counselor. Upon graduation in 2012 he took a part-time position working with the afterschool program and was eventually promoted to site coordinator at Goodwin in 2015.

"When I was a counselor, I could see making a career out of it because I like being able to have an impact," said Summers. "When I realized that an afterschool program can be incredibly beneficial for at-risk and under privileged children, I knew I had found my calling. Test scores can improve and children have a less chance of getting in trouble. Our programs specifically build social skills and communications skills for these kids. More importantly, we create an environment for children to do things that they might not be able to do at home."

Summers' willingness to serve is evident in all he does, especially in his decision to serve as site coordinator during a [temporary Kaleidoscope program](#) for the children of local healthcare workers.

"We were asked if any site coordinators would be willing to jump in and I was immediately interested," said Summers. "I am good at planning and running the program and I just wanted to help. Those healthcare workers need to go to work and not worry about their children."

While practicing social distancing, counselors helped students with their schoolwork and threw in a little fun. To ensure they stayed six feet apart, students walked around with hula-hoops on and had to sit at a lunch table by themselves. Precautions of every kind were taken to ensure the safety of everyone.

"I didn't realize how happy it would make me feel," said Summers. "I didn't realize how this quarantine was really affecting the kids not being able to see friends and being at school. I immediately noticed the students in this situation became happy to be there and have a great time. It was electric."

Jason A. Sakran, CCSD Director of Expanded Learning (Kaleidoscope) said Summers has a bright future ahead of him.

'In addition to Seth's commitment to the Kaleidoscope program and our families, he is also an active Air Force reservist," explained Sakran. "His focus on service-over-self shines through in everything he does. I, along with his immediate supervisor Harold Sanders, are proud to call him a team member."

Sanders, who is program officer for 21st Century Programs, called Summers a selfless person.

"When the school district decided to close schools for two weeks, Seth was the first one to call me asking if he could do anything," said Sanders. "He is very dedicated to his community and school district."

All day learning

"Afterschool programing has evolved so much because of the way we think about learning," said Summers. "We're figuring out that education should not stop once the school day is over; it should continue all day, every day and in all aspects of life."

Summers explained that Kaleidoscope does a fantastic job of using certified educators to conduct much of their programming.

"Educators do a great job, especially at Goodwin, but it takes a village of parents, community, and other educators to serve students and make sure we are meeting their needs," said Summers.

Goodwin's Principal, Natasha Jones and her staff are very supportive of the Kaleidoscope program. Jones provides extensive space so that programming runs smoothly.

In addition, Kaleidoscope staff attend PTA meetings and school events to bridge the gap.

"There is no disconnect," said Summers. "I also use my program as intervention for some students. I give applications to the guidance department and the principal. If a student needs intervention our program might be a great option because sometimes home might not be so great."

Summers said support from his wife Tyler, who also worked as a Kaleidoscope counselor, motivates him to continuously improve on what Kaleidoscope can offer the children. His mother Charity, a former principal of Garrett Academy, helps him model his interactions with the students.

"Watching how she treated and cared for her students was amazing," said Summers. "I've seen her weep on our couch when she lost a student - like it was one of her own kids. She drove kids to college when they didn't have a ride and helped where she was needed. I want to fill those shoes and make as big of an impact as she did."

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD), a nationally-accredited school district, is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing 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. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.