



Murray-LaSaine Montessori  
School

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## Media Release

### **Pulse of CCSD – Dianna Luff living her best life as technology and health teacher**

**Charleston, S.C.** – Murray-LaSaine Montessori School is a special place to anyone fortunate enough to have attended or taught there. It is like a home away from home, according to Dianna Luff, a Technology Teaching Assistant.

After a career in non-traditional educational settings, Luff had the urge to get into the classroom and experience that side of teaching. She said she was fortunate enough to be assigned a teacher assistant position in a primary classroom in 2017 and has loved every minute of her time at the school.

“It is all I had hoped for,” said Luff. “I had never had any exposure to the Montessori model and I didn’t know that I was stepping into something very special. I saw a lot of aha moments as a teacher assistant and in my new role teaching technology and health, I get to see their excitement as they learn new things.”

#### **A natural progression to the classroom**

“I’ve always been an educator of sorts,” said Luff. “I was a corporate educator and then worked in healthcare teaching parents through the federal WIC program as an education manager. I have also worked in patient relations and as an advocate. It’s really been a natural progression going from being a community educator to a classroom educator.”

Luff’s students are fascinated with what they are learning in her classes, such as coding and brain health. Students also love learning about the environment and participating in activities such as gardening.

Luff said the reward is the light in a student’s eyes when they grasp a concept or fully understand what they are learning. Secondary to that is watching them “bridge” to the next level.

“I’ve known many of these students since they were in primary so as they go on to the next level, the whole school celebrates them,” said Luff. “Many of my former students are bridging on to sixth grade, which makes it bittersweet for me.”

### **It is a wonderful life**

Luff's niece lives in the area, and her children attend Murray-LaSaine. Therefore, when she says the people inside the school building are like family, Luff means it literally and figuratively.

"It feels like home," said Luff. "It is a small school and one that parents choose to send their students to. We are very hands-on here and provide a loving atmosphere, playing off of the theme of Peace, Love, and Montessori."

One aspect of the Montessori model is to have a teacher's assistant in every classroom. The students at Murray-LaSaine enjoy that because they receive the attention they need to be academically and emotionally successful.

"There are many familiar faces in this building every day," said Luff. "From regular and long-term substitute teachers to our parent volunteer base, you see the same faces because these people want to be here."

That has created an atmosphere at Murray-LaSaine where the children in the building trust every adult in the building.

"I see it every day," explained Luff. "I thought it was because I knew these kids. I thought it was organic, but those trusting bonds are built by design here at this school."

Colleague Jackie Kenworthy described Luff as someone who goes beyond for both students and staff.

"She creates lessons and special visitors from the community for health and wellness enrichment for her students," said Kenworthy. "Additionally, she has previously served as the Sunshine Committee for staff, providing luncheons, celebrations, and acknowledgments for staff in many capacities. She is relentless in her pursuit of supporting and celebrating those around her."

One example of that is when representatives from The City of Charleston's Keep Charleston Beautiful Committee came to the school for a special presentation and family picnic.

"Dianna has been a bright light for us at Murray-LaSaine," said Principal Meredith Wallace. "In addition to providing great experiences for students, she goes above and beyond by coordinating special events like visits from the fire department, a local dentist, or our school nurse. Dianna has set a high bar for how to make staff feel appreciated. Dianna is a strong advocate for educators, and especially for classified staff. I appreciate her dedication, flexibility, and commitment to Murray-LaSaine and CCSD."

When Principal Wallace hired Luff, she recognized her unique skill set immediately.

I am grateful for that," said Luff. "She uses me where I am needed and it has always turned out to be the best place for me. She puts me where I can bloom."

Luff said all of her professional experiences have allowed her to see people where they are and with no preconceived notions.

"There is a very diverse socioeconomic makeup at Murray-LaSaine," said Luff. "That's how a school should be. However, we do emphasize that 'we're all the same in here' despite anyone's background."

Luff, who is married and has two grown children, has four grandchildren who light up her life. She said she loves being a grandmother.

"I think of myself as the school's Grandmom," said Luff. "I guess I bring that Grammy energy, and I'm proud of it. Ultimately, this sums up my life. It is a wonderful life. I am happy to be where I am, with the people I am with, and the life I get to have."

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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 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 50,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse portfolio of educational options and specialized programs delivered to the students of CCSD through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools and programs. Rich educational opportunities for students include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; military; dual credit; and many more.