



For Immediate Release
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Contact:
Steve Larson, 843-764-2200

Media Release

R.B. Stall High School

Anita W. Huggins, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools

Luke Clamp, Ed.D.
Deputy Superintendent

Sherry M. Eppelsheimer, Ed.D.
Associate Superintendent of the
High School Learning Community

Steve Larson
Executive Principal

Stall students proud to be members of the Student DREAMers Alliance

North Charleston, SC - R.B. Stall High School is growing the next generation of Hispanic leaders in many ways. One such program is the Student DREAMers Alliance (SDA). In recognition of National Hispanic Heritage Month, Charleston County School District (CCSD) celebrates the participants and the program.

The Hispanic Alliance is the parent organization of the Student DREAMers Alliance. This is the third year students from Stall have participated in the alliance. Stall is the only school in the Lowcountry participating in the program. By the time they complete the year-long program, students will be able to go out into the world and use the knowledge they learned through the Student DREAMers Alliance to help others through service, leadership, and empowerment.

As a part of the DREAMers Alliance, students participate in six seminars throughout the year that will allow them to open doors of opportunity for themselves and for generations to come. The SDA provides students a space for self-discovery and the resources needed to unleash their potential, develop resilience, and build their own toolbox to position themselves for success and leadership. The ultimate goal is to cultivate and mentor the next generation of leaders while offering support and guidance as they transition from high school to college and career.

The six themed seminars focus on resilience, leadership, courage, advocacy, authenticity, communication, empowerment, and service. They are held around the Lowcountry at area colleges, libraries, and museums. All sessions, meals, and locations are made available to students at no charge. In return, students formulate and execute a "Day of Service."

Hispanic juniors and seniors are invited to apply to the program and only 24 applicants are selected. It is a competitive process but one that students eagerly anticipate. Through word of mouth, enthusiasm for the program has grown, and over 50 students applied this year.

Claudia Newbern is an assistant principal at Stall and oversees the program. She said it has opened doors for the students and the school.

“Charleston Southern University has hosted the students on many occasions, allowing them to be immersed in a true college setting,” said Newbern. “They have also awarded three full scholarships to our students, with the promise of continued opportunities.”

Building community

The program is designed for students to participate just one time. Because the experience is so rewarding, the Hispanic Alliance added another layer to the opportunity by creating ambassador positions so that two students can return to assist the new group.

Luz Pichardo is excited to be an ambassador. She enjoyed her experience so much last year that she wants to ensure others walk away with the same experience.

“The Alliance helped me to put my fears aside because they offered so many resources and ways to navigate difficult things and situations,” said Pichardo.

She came out of the experience with the goal of attending college to become an elementary school teacher and eventually an administrator.

“I had so many dreams, but I wasn't sure any of them were possible,” said Pichardo. “Now that I know I have many people advocating for me, I want to one day be able to do that for the bilingual students that come after me.”

Pichardo and classmate Noemi Reyna are already doing that for their classmates. Both are interns in their classes, helping teachers and new students in their classes in order to make the content accessible to those students. The position is very similar to being a teacher's assistant.

“When new kids come here, they are very timid,” said Reyna. “They need assistance, and we are here to help.”

Picardo said their assistance is also helpful to the teachers, some of whom are learning Spanish.

“Our greatest talents are our students, so I am glad we can utilize their strengths this way,” added Newbern.

Creating community and powerful allies are major components of the program, starting at the very seminar.

According to Newbern, many of the students do not know each other so much of the work focuses on team building and communication.

“The students are encouraged to be vulnerable and share their stories,” said Newbern. “It can be emotional at times when they open up about their experiences.”

Reyna now has the courage to express herself freely, thanks to the experiences the Student DREAMers Alliance offers.

Neyla Borjas is also an ambassador this year. One of her biggest takeaways from the experience was her improvement in public speaking and trying new and different things. She aspires to go into aviation and is encouraged by the support she received from the Alliance.

“I hope to encourage the new group of students in that same way,” said Borjas. “Many activities encourage the students to share their stories, enabling them to get to know each other more deeply. In my experience, it was comforting to know that I wasn’t the only one who had gone through certain things. Many of our stories were similar.”

Reyna agreed, adding that the struggles were embarrassing to share until everyone realized they were not alone.

Yuribeth Valencia is a senior this year, and when she became a member of the Alliance, she was shocked to learn that there were opportunities available to her, such as scholarships. She wants to become a nurse and now knows she will be eligible to fulfill that dream thanks to available financial aid and assistance in applying. She said Stall has transitioned into an amazing school that offers many resources to meet the many needs of the diverse student populations.

“I am thankful that Stall has allowed me to participate in the Student DREAMers Alliance as well as having bilingual teachers on staff,” said Valencia. “Many of our parents do not speak English, and it is so helpful when our bilingual teachers and administrators can communicate with them in Spanish. It makes all of our families feel welcomed and supported.”

According to Newbern, the students graduate from the program more mature and confident, and that’s all she could ever want for these special students.

In just a few short months, the seniors who participated in the program will walk across the graduation stage wearing brightly colored stoles around their shoulders, indicating that they are proud DREAMers.

For more information, contact Principal Steve Larson at (843) 764-2200.

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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.

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