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Orangeburg County School District Kicks Off 2025 with High-Energy Employee Convocation Focused on Excellence, Unity, and Customer Service

ORANGEBURG, S.C. – Orangeburg County School District (OCSD) officially kicked off the 2025-2026 school year with a convocation that was anything but ordinary. Held on the campus of South Carolina State University, the event brought together nearly 2,000 OCSD employees under one roof for a morning of purpose, pride, and powerful motivation. With host Jay Dukes on the mic, the room stayed energetic with school shoutouts, a live music light show, and the unmistakable spirit of a district that's locked in and ready for the year ahead.

Superintendent Dr. Shawn D. Foster delivered a charge that was both bold and heartfelt, unveiling this year's district-wide theme: "Building Capacity & Sustaining Success 2.0." His message was rooted in intentional growth, next-level service, and a continued commitment to excellence.

"This is our brand," Dr. Foster said. "Orangeburg County School District is our brand, and it's up to us, collectively, to keep that brand strong, respected, and at the top of the charts." At the heart of his message was the district's mission: ensuring every student discovers and develops their person, purpose, and platform through high-quality educational experiences.

As a district that leads with community partnerships, MUSC Boeing Center for Children's Wellness, gifted 22 schools \$1,000 for celebrating their work around health and wellness. Elloree Elementary took home the Grand Prize of \$2,000. The funds can be used to support health and wealth in their schools.

The events keynote speaker, national author and educator, Dr. Shree Walker took the stage and delivered a message that resonated with every educator in the room: *“Education starts with self. You’ve got to have the mindset to shift. Wherever life takes you, be a resilient walker.”* Dr. Walker described a *resilient walker* as someone who shows up, leads with consistency, and moves with purpose, regardless of what life throws their way. She honored two standout OCSD employees, Joanna Milledge and Dr. Steven Preast, as this year’s *Resilient Walker* award recipients.

Of course, it wouldn’t be convocation without honoring the people who go above and beyond for students every single day. The district proudly recognized its 2025 top performers: **Teacher of the Year** – *Talicia Clarke* (William J. Clark Middle) **Alternate Teacher of the Year** – *Roman Singleton* (Edisto High) **Support Staff of the Year** – *Melissa Kinard* (Cope Area Career Center) **Alternate Support Staff of the Year** – *Keith Parks* (North Middle/High) **Assistant Principal of the Year** – *Lynette Milhouse* (Lake Marion Middle) **Principal of the Year** – *Debra Norman* (North Middle/High.) Their dedication, leadership, and passion remind us what’s possible when we show up for students and each other.

Dr. Foster and the entire OCSD sends a heartfelt thank you to Jostens for generously gifting our award recipients with custom-designed rings, and to Nissan for their incredible support in donating two vehicles for our 2025–2026 Teacher of the Year and Support Staff of the Year.

To wrap up the celebration, employees made their way to the Orangeburg County Fairgrounds, where they were gifted to an unforgettable experience. With 40 food trucks on-site, the atmosphere felt more like a family reunion. The 2025 Convocation wasn’t just a moment, it was a movement. A bold reminder that when educators unite around a shared vision, there's no limit to the impact they can make.

For additional information, please contact Taylor R. Johnson, Communications and Multi-Media Specialist, at taylor.johnson@ocsdsc.org or 839-253-2070.

Orangeburg County School District

The mission of Orangeburg County School District, the catalyst of innovation and excellence, is to ensure all students discover and develop their person, purpose, and platform through high-quality educational experiences distinguished by a culture of collaboration, equity, and inclusion; a creative learning environment with inspiring opportunities; a commitment to nurture the academic, physical, social and emotional well-being of all. Visit us online at ocsdsc.org

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