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*"Civic Engagement at Work for Public Education"*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Hilton Head Island Middle School Improvement Council named winner of 2019 Riley Award for SIC Excellence**

COLUMBIA – The School Improvement Council (SIC) of Hilton Head Island Middle School in the Beaufort County School District has been named the recipient of the 2019 Dick and Tunky Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence.

The award was presented Saturday afternoon during the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) Annual Meeting in Columbia.

The annual Riley Award for SIC Excellence was created in 2002 to highlight the significant contributions made to public education by the over 13,000 School Improvement Council members who volunteer in every public school in the state. The award is named in honor of the former SC Governor and U.S. Secretary of Education and his late wife, recognizing the couple's longstanding commitment to quality public education.

"The Hilton Head Island Middle SIC has done outstanding work very much deserving of this statewide honor," said SC-SIC Board of Trustees Chair Dora Leonard. "The work of our School Improvement Councils – involving all stakeholders – is so necessary to make positive and lasting change for our schools, our students, their families, and our state. The Hilton Head Island Middle SIC is a true example of such meaningful collaboration."

Presented with Honorable Mentions for their work last school year were: Chandler Creek Elementary SIC (Greenville County Schools); Chapin Middle SIC (School District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties); Flowertown Elementary SIC (Dorchester School District Two); and Hilton Head Island High SIC (Beaufort County School District).

Brief descriptions of the work of this year's Riley Award winner and Honorable Mention SICs are included with this release.

Part of the Center for Education Partnerships within the University of South Carolina College of Education, the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) was established in state law over 40 years ago to provide the member training, technical assistance, statutory accountability, and other operational resources necessary for the continued success of the community-based SICs in each of the state's 1,110-plus K-12 public schools. More information on SC-SIC's programmatic efforts can be found online at <http://sic.sc.gov>.

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## **2019 Finalists – SC-SIC Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence**

### **2019 WINNER – Hilton Head Island Middle SIC – Beaufort County School District**

This middle school serves students in grades 6-8; a significant percentage speak English as a second language. It has a poverty index of nearly 50%. The centerpiece of this SIC's work, begun in the 2016-17 school year, is the Stingray Support Circle (SSC). The SSC is a school-based pantry of uniforms, toiletries, school supplies, household items and food items that are available, free of charge, to students and families in need. In 2017-18, the SIC worked to expand and strengthen the school/community network around SSC to further support students and families. The SIC increased the number of its SSC Facebook followers to over 350 and expanded its email support circle to almost 200. As a result, the number of registered long-term volunteers at the school increased by 169 and SSC has been able to meet 97% of all needs presented including requests for bikes for transportation, furniture, clothing, and equipment needed for school sports. The SIC successfully generated publicity for their work through electronic newsletters, a local magazine spread, and a segment on a local news broadcast. The SIC held a teacher coffee in the SSC pantry to raise teacher awareness about available resources for students and was able to fill many items on teachers' classroom wish lists through community donations. SSC doubled the number of students served in the 2017-18 school year, increased the reach of their Christmas bag distribution, added an 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Promotion Ceremony clothing drive, and distributed over 75 Stingray hoodies to students so that all students had access to spirit gear. The SIC also raised community awareness of the challenges facing their students and their school in 2017-18 by holding several of their regular SIC meetings off campus in different community locations.

### **2019 HONORABLE MENTION – Chandler Creek Elementary SIC – Greenville County Schools**

Chandler Creek Elementary serves 1,020 students with an overall poverty index of over 80%. The SIC sought to increase community outreach and school partnerships to increase support for student achievement, social and emotional development, attendance, and parental involvement. To this end, the SIC developed the Chandler Creek Block Party model. This model was the result of collaborative work between the SIC, school staff, community organizations and businesses including churches and police and fire community outreach divisions, and Greer High School's principal who secured the involvement of his school's service clubs and athletic teams. The SIC and its partners determined where best to focus their efforts by studying the school's bus routes to identify neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of Chandler Creek students. They organized three parties during the 2017-18 school year impacting more than 400 neighborhood residents. Bus riders brought home flyers from school and teachers canvassed neighborhoods prior to each party. Participants received a meal and could choose a clothing/hygiene kit from items donated by Chandler Creek staff, teachers, and Greer high school students. Teachers and administrators took part in fun activities with students and families, and community partners worked to increase awareness of their services. The block parties improved community perceptions of the school overall and has attracted new community partners to the school and SIC. SC's yearly school climate survey also showed increases in levels of parent satisfaction with all aspects of the school at the end of the school year.

### **2019 HONORABLE MENTION – Chapin Middle SIC – School District Five of Lexington & Richland Counties**

This SIC at Chapin Middle, which serves grades 7-8, used a committee model to address five goals: (1) create a bully-free school; (2) increase support for the We Care Center; (3) address the needs of students carrying heavy backpacks, musical instruments, etc. during the school day in a school that doesn't have lockers; (4) increase awareness of substance abuse problems in the community; and (5) produce a monthly parent newsletter to communicate SIC information, plans and goals. The Anti-Bullying committee worked with the guidance department to survey students about the extent of the problem at their school. Actions taken included publishing an informational series about the prevention, signs, and symptoms of bullying in the school's newsletter, creating an anonymous process for reporting bullying, and hosting an SIC-sponsored parent night with a speaker from the SC Attorney General's office. For goal 2, SIC members and students participated in various activities to support the We Care Center, a place where families facing emergencies can get assistance in meeting basic living needs. The SIC committee on storage needs did research on alternatives to locker storage adopted by other schools and surveyed both students and parents for preferred solutions. Public cubbies were installed and the SIC requested that teachers take steps to reduce the number of heavy items students must carry. In response to concerns about substance abuse including increased use of e-cigarettes, the SIC sponsored two well-attended town hall meetings featuring experts in the field. Finally, the SIC provided parents with monthly updates on its goals and activities through a new SIC feature in the school's newsletter.

## 2019 Riley Award Finalists, continued

### **2019 HONORABLE MENTION – Flowertown Elementary SIC – Dorchester County School District Two**

Flowertown Elementary is a Title I school serving over 1,000 K5 - 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. The SIC's first goal was to increase parent communication and opportunities to get involved. Actions included co-sponsoring two Family Movie nights and a Family Valentine's Dance with the PTA. The SIC also held its annual "What to Expect Night," at which an SIC volunteer and teacher for each grade co-sponsor a "real-talk" Q&A session about what students will be learning in the next grade from the parent perspective. The SIC also helped to promote their school's Title I parent workshops. The SIC's second goal was to increase student awareness of STEAM career options. The SIC organized a Career Panel of speakers for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders that included a chemical engineer, rocket scientist, and website designer, and hosted an information table that included a take-home science experiment for families. The SIC also assisted the school guidance department in coordinating a Career Vehicle Day for younger students. Finally, members worked to increase awareness about their SIC. Actions included setting up information tables at school events and providing periodic SIC updates in the school newsletter. As a result, the SIC saw a significant increase in parents running for SIC parent representative positions.

### **2019 HONORABLE MENTION – Hilton Head Island High SIC – Beaufort County School District**

This high school serves approximately 1,250 students with diverse demographics: 51.2% white, 8.5% African-American, 36% Latino, and 1.2% Asian. The poverty index is 34%. The SIC's first goal was to continue to increase the level of engagement among community members. It continued to sponsor its successful "Island Connections" forum during which business and community leaders visit the school, learn about the school directly from students, and share their own ideas on improving education. Attendance at the 2017-18 forum included 42 business and community members, many of whom went on to donate resources, volunteers, and other support to the school during the year. Next, the SIC continued to work to increase parent involvement through a series of free monthly parent/guardian workshops with topics and speakers chosen based on feedback from an annual SIC parent/family survey. Topics included FAFSA information, college scholarship information, senior year Information, etc. Finally, the SIC has continued to focus on improving communication and connections with Hispanic families. This process began with a survey conducted during the 2015-16 school year that included interviews with Hispanic parents and Q&A sessions during ESOL meetings and at community and church events. Based on the information it gathered, the SIC decided to partner with the administration and the school's Hispanic parent liaison to host two Hispanic Parents Nights during the 2016-17 school year. In 2017-18, it increased the number of these Parent Nights to two times per semester. This initiative has increased the school's understanding of the unique needs of Hispanic parents and increased the level of engagement among these parents; many are now actively involved in providing the annual Teacher Appreciation lunch and two have run for positions on the SIC.

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*Created in 2002, the annual Dick and Tunky Riley Award for School Improvement Council Excellence was created to recognize the significant contributions made to public education by the over 13,000 School Improvement Council (SIC) members who volunteer on the more than 1,100 SICs across South Carolina. The Riley Award is named in honor of former SC Governor and US Education Secretary Richard Riley and his late wife, Tunky, and recognizes the couple's longstanding commitment to quality public education.*

*A core partner in the Center for Educational Partnerships at the University of South Carolina College of Education, the SC School Improvement Council (SC-SIC) was established in state law over 40 years ago to provide members with the tools, training, and technical assistance vital to the success of School Improvement Councils serving South Carolina's K-12 public schools.*