

For Immediate Release
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Lucy Beckham High School

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Media Release

Beckham hosts school dedication and Coast Guard JROTC Congressional Establishment ceremony

Mount Pleasant, SC – Lucy Garrett Beckham High School (LBHS) opened its doors in Mount Pleasant just one year ago. Currently serving grades 9-11, the school was officially recognized today, October 8, 2021, as being the only Coast Guard JROTC unit in South Carolina and the third in the nation. The celebration was also held to dedicate the school.

Principal Anna Dassing explained that the pandemic delayed the dedication ceremony but created a blessing in disguise by allowing the ceremonies to be combined.

About the school

Beckham will accommodate 1,500 students once all four grade levels are housed in the 242,000 square-foot building. The 44.1-acre campus is located at the former Wando High School site.

Spaces in the new school include two gymnasiums, a performing arts center, student commons, collaborative learning areas, classrooms, science labs, and specialty spaces for Career and Technology Education programs. The facility also houses a state-of-the-art media center with a makerspace.

The state-of-the-art facility is a true reflection of the vision Lucy Garrett Beckham had for the school. As a district official, the former Wando High School principal had been tasked with overseeing the design and construction of the new East Cooper high school. Beckham passed away unexpectedly in December of 2015.

The role was passed on to Anna Dassing, who considered Beckham a mentor.

“Lucy always put students first,” said Dassing. “She instilled that in me and hundreds of other educators. Her motto was always ‘do what is best for the students,’ and that motto lives on today here at Beckham. Her impact was mighty and we will honor her with this building and all that we do inside it.”

About the Coast Guard JROTC

A congressional undertaking spearheaded by S.C. District 1 U.S. Rep. Joe Cunningham and Majority Whip, S.C. District 6 Congressman James Clyburn. On July 8, an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) was passed that authorizes the establishment of Coast Guard JROTC units in high schools across the country. It took Principal Anna Dassing several years to get that needed approval, but 2021-2022 will mark the program's inaugural year.

"Master Chief Kevin Leask and I are very excited to see where the cadets can take the program in the years to come," said the JROTC unit's Senior Maritime Science Instructor Lt. Junior Grade, Ron Blake, USCG ret. "As a graduate of Navy JROTC and the Citadel, having a CGJROTC unit at LBHS means a great deal to me. I know the skills and benefits a program like this can provide cadets is invaluable. It puts them leaps and bounds ahead of many of their classmates. We are very appreciative of the super supportive administration and staff here at LBHS and look forward to the excitement that will be the Coast Guard JROTC program."

According to Commander Clay Cromer, JROTC Program Manager for the Coast Guard, this establishment marked a significant moment for the Coast Guard.

"LBHS is the first unit we're establishing under recently-expanded federal law," said Cromer. "While our program may be small, we're now officially on a big stage alongside the other service branches. With a supportive administration such as this at Beckham, this unit is primed for growth. I am glad we have had the opportunity to partner with them in the establishment."

Per federal statute, the program teaches citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment.

The CGJROTC Program Pillars, captured in the acronym COAST, stand for citizenship, operations, advancement, service, and teamwork.

"These pillars guide the learning that takes place in and outside of the classroom," said Cromer. "Our mission is to develop service-minded citizens of character."

Statistically, of the cadets who participate in JROTC through their senior year, about forty percent will affiliate with a branch of the United States Armed Services.

"It is bound to happen when you have dedicated mentors like our JROTC instructors," added Cromer. "Our nation's youth have a lot of options, but it is our hope that they will ultimately embrace service to their country, regardless of the path they take."

For more information, contact Anna Dassing at (843) 953-2900.

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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 of 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 49,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools. Options include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), music and other creative and performing arts, career and technical preparation programs, and military.